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Lecture 24-11-2023

Colloquium 'Arts Meet Sciences'

TUNING THE WORLD-POSTCOLONIALISM AND WORLD MUSIC TUNING SYSTEMS

One important topic in Music Ethnology is measuring of the tuning of instruments or recorded music. The first question usually was, if there is a „tuning system“ within the investigated musical practice. And the second question was, how we „understand“ the music, when we know how the tuning systems works. Last but not least, one could ask, if all these questions and all these types of investigations are „typical Western“ and adequate to the musical culture, which was supposed to be „understood“. In other words, if the entire research approach is politically or morally responsible in our days.

I want to demonstrate this typical postcolonial problem along my own research of Indonesian Gamelan Tuning. Here the above mentioned questions are particularly explosive because it is not sure, if Gamelan music is made of and has to be perceived along pitches, scales and tunings, or along rhythm with sound colour (as pure „Klangfarbenmelodie“). After having produced some hybrid music for „Gamelan and tuned Synthesizers“ in 1997, I discovered in 2022, when I had to prepare an old hybrid composition for a revival in the Hamburg Elb-Philharmony, that I was reproducing a typical „postcolonial“ way of perceiving music of a non-Western culture.