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The Science-Music Borderlands

Reckoning with the Past and Imagining the Future

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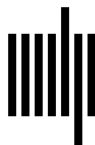
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16 “The Musical Mind Is the Normal Mind”: Remaking Musicianship for Eugenics

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What makes a musician? As the chapters in this volume explore, it can have everything to do with training, heredity, class, caste, race, gender, development, ability, and innumerable other factors, up to and including species. And as these same chapters suggest, the simple division between musician and nonmusician—a commonplace in the modern West—breaks along the same fault lines. Where it remains a factor in scientific research (see Ilari and Habibi’s chapter 17 in this volume), it usually exists as a self-identified category, and usually for the sake of expedience—an artifact of the social division of (musical) labor that precedes any physiological or neurological observation. What makes a musician is, in the final analysis, something best answered by musicians themselves.

This simple division between musician and nonmusician has, however, been questioned before, from both within and without the sciences of music. This chapter examines one such instance. In the early 1920s, leading music psychologist Carl E. Seashore called for the sweeping removal of all existing work on the biological grounding of musical talent, for some of the same reasons listed above: the biases that creep in when defining musicianship along social lines. His critique was, by and large, successful. Seashore initiated a self-proclaimed paradigm shift in the psychology of music, the effects of which are still felt in research and education today (see Koza, 2021). The result was the establishment of a prevailing view in which musical talent was thought to be an amalgam of discrete psychophysical traits that were measurable, innate, and heritable. But as has now been firmly established (Cowan, 2016; Devaney, 2019; Koza, 2021), Seashore’s work in music was inseparable from his involvement in a more pernicious human science: eugenics. The relationship between Seashore’s revision of what it means to be a musician and the broader eugenic revision of what it means to be human is a question beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the specific argument Seashore brings to bear against a strict binary interpretation of musicianship—which he renders in somewhat crude terminology as a problematic focus on the musical “genius” and

the “defective”—bears a resemblance to contemporary criticisms of this division, making it worthwhile to consider what role Seashore’s eugenics played in its genesis.

Seashore’s argument proceeds in three stages, some of which sound familiar based on modern arguments against the division between musician and nonmusician. First, its premise: A hard-and-fast biological division between musician and nonmusician is not, and never has been, supported by experimental evidence. Its persistence in the science of music is an anachronism and, worse than that, actively harms the recruitment and training of musicians by spreading misinformation about who would and would not benefit from such training, especially groups hitherto underrepresented among prominent musicians.

Second, a proposal: Replace this biological foundation of musicality with another—the insistence that the musician is a person like any other, that “the musical mind is the normal mind,” and, although there might be genetic variations that make musical success more or less likely, we are all measurable by the same yardstick.

Third, some recommendations: As evidence mounts for the accuracy of these measurements and for the precise effects of these genetic variables, we should think about how they can be used to our advantage, to distribute more efficiently the limited resources of musical training to those best prepared, biologically and temperamentally, to make the most of them. Might it even be possible, given advances in the understanding of genetics, to selectively breed for such traits?

Here we reach the argument’s sleight of hand: there is no valid reason why the rethinking of musicality from an exceptional state to a combination of individual variables should necessarily end in eugenic selection. It is therefore significant that whenever Seashore made the first two parts of his argument, he almost always made the third. The seemingly democratic disavowal of musicality as limited only to the genius was apparently inseparable from his eugenic belief in musical capacities as heritable and improvable through selective breeding. Why tear down one regime of innate musicality and raise another in its place?

I approach this apparent contradiction through an examination of Seashore’s paradigm-shifting dictum “the musical mind is the normal mind,” which occurs, in some variation, in three texts clustered around the turn of the 1920s, a pivotal phase in his career: the monograph *The Psychology of Musical Talent* (1919); an article titled “The Inheritance of Musical Talent,” published in *Musical Quarterly* in 1920; and a speech based on the same article delivered to the Second International Congress of Eugenics in 1921, titled—with telling additions—“Individual and Racial Inheritance of Musical Talent.” Taking these texts as its corpus, this chapter retraces the path of Seashore’s argument through its three stages, attempting to account for its development.

I examine the existing literature that Seashore viewed as an inadequate foundation; the intellectual and social preconditions for his new vision of musical capacity; and the musician's relation to the social totality that must, he concluded, end in eugenic intervention. In each instance, the relationship between the changing scientific theories of inheritance and musicality and the changing social definitions of musicianship and (musical) labor emerges as a path by which the apparent contradictions of Seashore's argument can be resolved.

Discarding Prior Foundations

Seashore made the first complete statement of the argument outlined above in his 1920 *Musical Quarterly* article, under the heading "The Normal Mind versus the Genius and the Defective." After the clear assertion that "the normal mind is musical," Seashore sounded a note of caution against centering the "most tangible types of case; that is, on the one hand the genius and on the other the defective." "This distinction," we are advised, "is not as simple as it might seem" (Seashore, 1920, p. 588). Just as musical achievement is, in his analysis, made up of multiple different interacting capacities and learned behaviors, purported musical inability is too complex a phenomenon to be considered a single type. On account of this misplaced focus, he concluded, "we can get little or no help from works now extant on the inheritance of musical talent" (p. 593).

The critique was made in broad strokes, and in every instance, Seashore provided no specific examples of works he deemed inadequate. However, he named two categories that provide clues to his intended targets: musical biography, and biometric studies of inherited traits that take certain musical capacities into account.

He made his objections to musical biography clear in his 1919 monograph: "The comparatively large, though scattered, literature on the inheritance of musical genius is of little value because it does not deal with tangible fact. It merely essays to determine whether or not the ancestors of a given musician were or were not musical, on the whole" (Seashore, 1919, p. 69). Seashore was not the first to level this critique. Eugenics founder Francis Galton (1822–1911), in his first foray into the study of inheritance, identified this as a weakness of his own biographical method. After asserting that "the fact of the inheritance of musical taste is notorious and undeniable," Galton conceded that he found it "impossible" to achieve a workable list of "first-class" musicians from which to begin his study, for "most biographers are unusually adulatory of their heroes, and unjust to those with whom they compare them" (1869, p. 230).

Seashore pressed the critique of subjective biography further in his 1920 article, drawing on the half-century of advances in genetics since Galton's initial assessment

in the 1860s. Because women were rarely permitted to achieve eminence and fame in most musical professions, data for half of every family tree would be missing, he noted, rendering them useless from the perspective of modern Mendelian genetics: “The male musical genius has often come from a mother whose extraordinary talent has passed undiscovered until it has appeared in the career of a son . . . [Acquiring information on the ability of women] has not been done in musical biography because biography deals primarily with achievement” (Seashore, 1920, p. 593). Gregor Mendel’s (1822–1884) recently rediscovered work concerned inheritance in plants, but it was quickly applied to the physical attributes of animals and humans, in the latter case, most notably by Charles B. Davenport (1866–1944), a zoologist who would emerge in the same decade as America’s leading eugenic scientist and become a close collaborator of Seashore’s (see Davenport, 1911; on the Mendelian turn, see Bowler, 1989). Seashore noted that, although there was yet little precedent for applying Mendel’s laws to the inheritance of mental traits in humans, accepting “as a general working basis, the Mendelian hypothesis” was “the only logical and economic way to proceed” (1920, p. 592). The criticism of masculinist history echoed arguments taking place in the field of genealogy, which was rapidly professionalizing and simultaneously undergoing its own Mendelian turn (Teicher, 2020, pp. 48–52). As Mendel’s work proved that hereditary characteristics were an equal product of both parents, patrilineal ancestral charts became just as useless as the male-dominated realm of biography for the systematic study of heredity. Social eminence, dictated as it was by gender, could no longer substitute for empirical fact.

Biometric studies, while avoiding the errors of subjective assessment, still proved inadequate, for “none of them deal with specific capacities” (Seashore, 1920, p. 593). As in the case of biography, though, Seashore offered no specific examples, and it is possible to construct a counterarchive that suggests certain capacities were, in fact, considered in some of the literature. Gestures toward the study of heredity’s role in pitch perception and the upper bounds of hearing can be found in the later work of Galton (1883) and that of his students (notably, James McKeen Cattell and Karl Pearson). There were also biometric studies of the absence of musical feeling, such as Carl Stumpf’s roughly contemporaneous studies of “amusia,” although these were aimed at investigating the deep past of music’s evolution rather than the immediate mechanism of its inheritance (see Kursell, 2018). Nevertheless, it was not such a well-developed body of literature that Seashore could find satisfactory answers in it. A 1921 literature review bolsters Seashore’s assessment, making no reference to any biometric studies other than a gesture toward Seashore himself (Weidemann, 1921).

The continual reference to the “genius” and the “defective” as archetypes suggests another broader field of discourse that Seashore had to sidestep: the long-standing

cultural fascination with figures of purportedly superhuman—or subhuman—achievement. Musical genius, as a trope, long precedes the era of empirical psychology. Some versions of the musician endowed with divine inspiration or (un)natural creative power can be found as early as the sixteenth century, but the trope is typically associated with the aesthetics of Romanticism and, in music, with the figure of Beethoven in particular—at once a commanding individual subject and a vessel for some greater force (see, e.g., Lowinsky, 1964; Burnham, 1995).

Drawing a contrast with these earlier versions of divine genius, American studies scholar Gustavus Stadler has argued that the trope underwent a transformation in the middle of the nineteenth century, moving away from spiritual possession and toward "an increasingly detailed, psychologized, and sexualized notion of the individual genius: the genius as pathological subject." (2006, p. xv). This was a more conventionally threatening figure, whose formerly supernatural alterity was mapped in public consciousness onto the very human alterities of race, gender, and ability. Composers were the most common subjects of musical biography, but this new version of genius was open to performers too, and their race and gender more often set them apart from the idealized white male subject. For example, Stadler (2006) examines opera singer Jenny Lind as an avatar of a sexualized Nordic cosmopolitanism. And recent work by Lindsay Wright has shown how African American pianist Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins was framed using the racialized trope of the savant, one capable of extraordinary feats of technical display but little original creativity, in addition to being considered intellectually and physically disabled (see Wright, 2018; on music and the "idiot savant" trope more generally, see Straus, 2011). In a moment of increasingly sharp division of labor and increasingly strong delineation between cultural production and consumption, Stadler argues, "the geniuses' labor is to fortify middle-class men and women by taking upon their own minds and bodies the troubling, potentially shattering phenomena associated with modernity" (2006, p. xv). In his 1920 paper, Seashore retained the idea of genius as an aesthetic category, seeing it as almost self-evident. But as scientific grounding, the states of exception characterized by the "genius" and the "defective" now proved inadequate. The "pathological" subject, in other words, was out of time, and something new was needed to replace it.

A New "Normal"

It was from outside the sphere of musical heredity that Seashore began to develop his new method. Psychologists following Hermann von Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt had, for decades, investigated psychophysical attributes related to music, such as the

perception of pitch differences or the upper and lower bounds of hearing. (On the role of auditory and musical stimuli in the development of modern psychology, see Erlmann, 2014; Klempe, 2011; Hui et al., 2020). Seashore built his reputation on the application of these measurement techniques to the assessment of musical talent, culminating in a set of Measures of Musical Talent, standardized tests that cemented his status as the foremost psychologist of music in the United States. The Measures relied on reconfiguring talent as a *capacity* rather than an *ability*; they were based on the supposedly innate psychophysical limits of musical achievement, rather than the quality of the achievement itself (see, e.g., Seashore, 1919, pp. 14–15). This strategy was thought to bypass the problems, on the subject's end, of varying levels of musical training—nurture as opposed to nature—and, on the observer's end, of impartial assessment. From the beginning, Seashore considered these capacities not only innate but hereditary. “Musical talent,” he wrote, “like all other talent, is a gift of nature—inherited, not acquired; in so far as a musician has natural ability in music, he [*sic*] has been born with it” (Seashore, 1915, p. 129).

Seashore argued that the capacity for musical achievement was an aggregate of multiple discrete perceptual capacities, loosely mapped onto what he considered the core qualities of musical sound: pitch, time, and intensity. If a musician could not hear fine gradations in pitch, for example, the ability to play or sing in tune would inevitably be hampered, or so the logic goes. Musical talent, formerly thought of as an outward-facing quality discernible in performance or composition, was flipped; it was now rendered as an *internal* quality discernible not by the ear of the audience but through that of the performers themselves. Crucially, these purportedly essential traits were accessible to measurement, and the form and structure of the tests would change as Seashore developed different measuring technologies (Cowan, forthcoming). Nevertheless, they were consistent enough, and in 1919 recordings of the tests were made available commercially, for use in schools, universities, and the home.

Seashore's Measures—and their practical application for finding the “gold in the dross,” as he put it (1915, p. 148)—rested on a number of preconditions, measurability being only one. The language of “traits” suggests another: a further indebtedness to Mendel, the significance of which, I argue, has been understated in assessments of Seashore's work. Mendelian genetics offered not just a mechanism of inheritance but also a total vision of the human organism—body and mind—as being composed of a number of independent variables that could be isolated and manipulated (Bowler, 1989; Teicher, 2020, p. 6). Seashore's framing of musical capacity around isolable traits believed to be linked to fundamental aspects of perception suggests that, even if he considered Mendel's theory untested with regard to mental traits, it at least offered an

internally consistent way to derive measurable musical attributes from the basic sensorium. Put differently, although the heredity of musical traits required further testing, the very idea of a musical trait suggests a presupposition of Mendelian logic.

In Seashore's 1919 monograph, the phrase "the musical mind is first of all a normal mind" occurred at the end of the first section of the first chapter, "The Point of View," which outlined his principles for the study of musical talent. He continued, "Indeed, the normal mind is musical to the extent that it is normal" (Seashore, 1919, p. 6). The role of standardized testing in producing a very particular vision of "normal" has been well documented (for a version of this critique related to hearing tests in a Foucauldian frame, see Hui et al., 2020, p. 6; on psychology in general, see Rose, 1996). On the surface, though, Seashore presented this maxim first as a matter of expediency, to dispense with potentially complicating nonmusical aspects of the mind: "We must take it for granted that the musical mind is an aspect of a normal personality with endowments for a general mental life, and we must also take the general psychology of such mental life for granted," permitting a concern only with "aspects of talent which are peculiarly necessary for music" (Seashore, 1919, p. 6). This intervention is not presented as revolutionary, as such, but as a guardrail to limit the scope of inquiry. However, its position as a de facto conclusion to the book's opening section, and its implied rebuttal of the idea that musical genius is associated with mental abnormality (requiring a more holistic view of the mind, as a result), suggests that Seashore believed it had at least some significance.

The 1920 article "The Inheritance of Musical Talent" recapitulated many key components of Seashore's music psychology, including the division of musical talent into a hierarchy of component talents best approached as capacities, rather than abilities. But the turning point came soon after. "The normal mind is the average mind," Seashore wrote, "but such average does not represent a single dead level for all the various human capacities" (1920, p. 588). In what would become a refrain in his work, he eventually concluded, "This is only saying in other words, 'We normal people are so different'" (1920, p. 588). Absent was the argument's eugenic coda, although Seashore's other writings dispel any illusion that "normality" signifies equality. Seashore was clear on this point in his monograph: "Musical talent [is] an inborn gift. Musical talent is a gift bestowed very unequally upon individuals. . . . This fact presents an opportunity and places a great responsibility for the systemic inventory of the presence or absence of musical talent" (1919, p. 6). His signal contribution to music studies, the *Measures of Musical Talent*, were also published in 1919, providing the tool with which this systemic inventory could be conducted. The monograph thus had a dual function: to establish the psychological grounding for his theory of musicality, and to offer suggestions for the theory's practical application, embodied by the *Measures*.

Seashore was cautious on the question of inheritance, suggesting that it might be “reasonable to suppose” that certain musical attributes could be “inherited according to the Mendelian laws” (1919, p. 69), but he stops short of calling for intervention in this inheritance by eugenic selection. It is enough to simply uncover latent talent, without seeking to improve it. A year later, however, these reservations began to fade.

“Conscious Selection”

In 1921, hundreds of leaders in the global eugenics movement gathered at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City for a week of scientific presentations on the state of eugenic research (Davenport & Laughlin, 1923). Seashore was among the speakers.

Like many of the papers presented at the Second International Congress of Eugenics, Seashore’s walked a narrow line between research report and manifesto. Some phrasing was recycled: the “genius” and the “defective” were interesting types, Seashore admitted, but again, “the musical mind is the normal mind” (Davenport & Laughlin, 1923, p. 232). Again, he claimed, “we must discard the literature on musical inheritance now extant, because it is not based on scientific conceptions of the musical mind.” Seashore’s argument advanced tentatively toward its end:

The eugenicist [*sic*] might rightly expect me to recite established facts on the inheritance of musical talent and present arguments showing that they should be applied. But the time is not yet ripe for either. The object of this paper is merely to present a point of view, showing that such facts can be gathered; and this is done in the anticipation that, once established, the desirability of their application will be taken for granted by those who are interested in this phase of eugenics. (Davenport & Laughlin, 1923, p. 232)

Seashore stopped short of making a definite pronouncement about the eugenic possibilities of his *Measures of Musical Talent*. It was enough to state that the importance of such research and the necessity of action were self-evident. He concluded: “My proposition is that if certain musical talents are heritable, as we believe them to be, it is quite within the power of future generations to enhance the quality and degree of a musical talent by conscious selection” (Davenport & Laughlin, 1923, p. 238). In offering this vision to this particular audience, Seashore made his strongest public statement in favor of an explicitly musical eugenic program: nothing less than the selective breeding of musicians.

Seashore’s intervention into music psychology often changed emphases but kept a consistent form: when the musical mind is understood properly—and thus, when we begin music science anew—its development can be controlled. An obvious but

necessary observation is that the eugenic conclusion was stated most fully in the version of the argument directed at an audience of eugenicists. It also bears noting that Seashore did not begin corresponding with Davenport directly until 1919, and his involvement with and understanding of eugenics were in the process of deepening during these pivotal years of his intellectual project. Nevertheless, it is clear that even in this short time, eugenics had become increasingly important in Seashore’s thought: a goal that might, for now, be out of reach, but one that was always the end point of the study of musical talent.

Just as the first part of Seashore’s argument presupposes scientific Mendelism, the last, I argue, presupposes what historian of science Amir Teicher recently termed “social Mendelism”: a value system based on the “atomization of humans into fixed traits, and the need to prevent at any cost malignant elements from recoupling” (Teicher, 2020, p. 18). The first decades of the twentieth century saw waves of migration to the northern United States—overseas from Europe and internally from the South—which threatened existing hierarchies of race and labor (Roediger, 2005). At the same time, consolidation of industry and rapid technological development were remaking the nation’s social fabric. Counter to these ruptures, psychology and biology were emerging as the sciences of a new form of social engineering: from the micromanaged movements of the Taylorist workplace to the racial hygiene of the eugenic state. It is against this backdrop that Seashore’s disciplinary revolution was staged.

Eugenics as “Social Psychology”

Over the course of Seashore’s argument, the musician and nonmusician were replaced by the “normal” mind-body-human, who is unevenly endowed with certain heritable perceptual capacities. As Seashore acknowledged, though, what makes a musician is as much a social question as one of psychophysical equipment. To accurately retrace the path of his intervention, then, requires an additional step: to examine his writing on the social purpose of psychological research.

Seashore’s 1923 textbook *Introduction to Psychology* presents his social thought at its most expansive and systematic, tying together the psychology of the individual (the understanding of capability and talent, including musical talent), economic efficiency, and eugenics, which were present only inconsistently in his earlier publications. The textbook opens with an overview of the branches of psychology, two of which stand out: social psychology and individual psychology. Social psychology and its subfield applied social psychology are defined as “treat[ing] the social aspects of mental life,” and these are the branches that Seashore thought had a role in eugenics (Seashore,

1923, pp. 4, 6). But individual psychology was the jewel in the crown. “[A]ll technical studies in psychology are merely a preliminary to [individual psychology],” he wrote, “for we are working under the slogan, ‘Know thyself’” (p. 384). Individual psychology “consists of scientific analyses, tests, ratings and measurements in the identification of a given individual’s psychophysical equipment, both as to original nature or inherited capacity, and nurtured or acquired abilities, for the purpose of scientific understanding, description, and motivation of the individual” (p. 384). The measurement of musical talent was merely one exceptionally well-developed method in this field, and eugenic enhancement of the population was only one possible outcome, but the dyad of measurement and action, especially as it pertained to aptitude and occupational fitness, appears throughout as the pinnacle of psychological endeavor.

The social question comes into focus at the section’s conclusion. Seashore praised the fact that tests of occupational fitness—psychology as “good business”—were now commonplace, preventing economic waste, and he wrote with pride of the army intelligence tests, referring to them as a “project of human engineering” that “marked an epoch in history” (p. 394). He went on, in a preemptive rebuttal to political criticism of psychological intervention in the workplace: “Labor organizations have objected to the application of individual psychology on the ground that it would discourage uniformity of treatment. But the time has passed when one man can be regarded as good as another” (p. 407). Seashore’s open disdain for labor unions was not representative of the general attitudes of psychologists, which tended to range from neutral to sympathetic (Gordon & Burt, 1981). However, in this dismissal he accurately represents the charges unions leveled against applied psychology in this period: that psychology and the broader program of scientific management together represented a new technology of extractive human engineering (Gordon & Burt, 1981, pp. 141–143). Individual psychology—as the basis of social psychology—provided a scientific grounding by which collective action could be dismissed, by centering the individual and thus eliminating the very possibility of a collective (Rose, 1996, pp. 105–107).

The connection to eugenics emerges clearly in this vision of the individual as the sum of various isolable capacities. As suggested earlier, this is a hallmark of Mendelian thinking, and in its economic form, it bears traces of the Fordist and Taylorist revolutions in production: the breaking down of complex manufacturing processes into discrete tasks and the honing of those tasks to optimal efficiency. (On Ford, Taylor, and efficiency, see Haber, 1964; Alexander, 2008; on its relation to eugenics, see Currell & Cogdell, 2006.) The language of efficiency shapes Seashore’s discussion of individual psychology, which is presented as “a scientific approach to the problem of the conservation of human energies” (1923, p. 406). (On the history of industrial psychology

in this period, see Van De Water, 1997.) Eugenics offered a “rational” solution to what political theorist Cedric Robinson framed as the irrational character of racial divisions of labor: the supplementation of base prejudices with a new universal metric (2000, p. 9). Vague language of racial inferiority could be replaced by talk of specific traits, of occupational and social fitness. Recalling Seashore’s comment that “we normal people are so different,” an expanded sphere of “normal” humanity permits ever-finer differentiation within it and opens up the entire population to the logic of eugenic improvement.

Examining Seashore’s vision of what social psychology can accomplish, and the way he places his musical work within it, offers a way out of the problem with which this chapter began: the seeming contradiction between leveling the musical playing field and erecting a new hierarchy in its place. The concepts of the genius and the defective—standing for the idea of musicality as aberrant—had to be discarded because they represented a vision of human endowment incompatible with an increasingly rational world. The shift from the *laissez-faire* social Darwinism of the Gilded Age to the managed world of “social Mendelism” in the early twentieth century left no room for exceptions.

The elision of the scientific and the political that freely took place in this discourse is the final precondition for Seashore’s paradigm shift: an intellectual clime that permitted, and encouraged, an effortless move from the statement that something can be measured to the suggestion that those measurements should be put to work. And it is from this elision that we may draw conclusions about our present exploration of the science-music borderlands. Certain species of universalism have now, rightly, been called into question—as engaged by many essays in this volume (e.g., the chapters by Mundy; Kragness, Hannon, and Cirelli; and Ilari and Habibi)—yet one can envision an epistemology of difference in place of Seashore’s universalism that is equally flawed. Difference shunned in one era can be embraced in another, with the racialized division of labor looming behind both unchallenged (see, e.g., McWhorter, 2017). Put differently: an effort to narrow the scope of a claim—a frequent method of rapprochement between scientists and humanists and a common point of critique when engaging popular-press treatment of scientific work—can still operate only within the claim’s original logic. If arguments over precision often function as a proxy for politics, perhaps Seashore’s example is instructive, in that he was quite open about the political motivations and implications of his research. Recent work illustrates that reclaiming this strategy is not always successful, and rightfully so—for example, attempts to develop a model of educational genetics purportedly from the Left have ended up receiving no small praise from the Right (deBoer, 2020; Harden, 2021). There are institutional challenges, too, when attempting to develop a more explicitly politicized research agenda.

These include government censorship and the professional precariousness of the neo-liberal university—a burden that, until recently, was associated primarily with the humanities but is now increasingly shared across the disciplines, in another example of the necessity of common cause.

However, such a strategy may offer a way out of many of the problems addressed in this volume: from avoiding the remnants of Seashore's eugenic legacy and other troubling inheritances in the history of music science to increasing the opportunities for intellectual collaboration between subfields of musical investigation and for professional cooperation in the face of threats to the university itself. The seeming contradiction with which this chapter began, between disciplinary progress and social conservatism, is thus resolved quite easily: the rhetoric of progress implies only a teleology, never a destination. And when a discipline lags so far behind the intellectual and political demands of modern life, it can take what looks like a revolution just to catch up to the status quo.

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