

# Musicking to Music Worlds: On Christopher Small's Important Innovation

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article, I discuss Christopher Small's concept of "musicking." Music is not an object or "thing," according to Small, but rather an activity. I outline his argument, consider some of its applications and developments, and suggest further developments of my own. Conceptualizing music as an activity in which people participate affords a new and interesting perspective on its effects; this has been explored in a number of fields of study, including music therapy and research on its uses in both religion and social movements. In addition, as these examples suggest, it renders visible the connections between music and other domains of activity (e.g., economics and politics), enabling analysis of this intersection and thereby attracting the interest of writers from a variety of social sciences. My own developments focus chiefly on the phenomena of embodiment and networks. Small discusses embodiment but suggests no means of empirically capturing its involvement and importance. I suggest that Marcel Mauss's concept of "body techniques" fills this gap. Likewise, Small emphasizes the importance of "relations" within musicking. I suggest that this idea might be developed through a consideration of social networks and the techniques of social network analysis, and I combine this with a discussion of my own conception of "music worlds." This concept, building upon the work of Howard Becker, provides a way of capturing the differentiation of musicking along such lines as style and location.

**KEYWORDS:** body techniques, embodiment, listening, musicking, music worlds, relations, social networks, social network analysis

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The concept of "musicking" was coined and developed by Christopher Small (1927–2011) in his books *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in Afro-American Music* (1987) and *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998). Born in Palmerston North, New Zealand, Small lived most of his adult life in Europe, first in London, England, and later Sitges, near Barcelona, in Spain. He was a teacher for much of his career, with strong and radical ideas about pedagogy that were informed by his involvement in the counterculture in London and outlined in his first book, *Music, Society, Education* (1977a). Small combined teaching with composition, writing chiefly for film, and in his later career engaged in academic writing in musicology and ethnomusicology (Cohen 2010). His academic works include a (very) short biography of Schoenberg (Small 1977b), reflecting an interest in the avant-garde, which he developed during his time in London, but it was *Common Tongue*, *Musicking*, and the concept of "musicking" that he developed therein that were to prove particularly influential, capturing the attention of musicologists Charles Keil, Susan McClary, and Robert Walser, and rock critic Robert Christgau, among others.

In *Common Tongue*, Small introduces and sketches the concept of musicking before using it in an analysis of a variety of African musicking forms, exploring both their combination with European elements in African American forms and the wider impact of these latter forms. *Musicking* is devoted entirely to an elaboration and development of the concept and is, for this reason, my key reference. However, it is important to look beyond *Musicking*, even for purposes of exposition and illustration. Most of its examples are drawn from the Western classical concert "music world" (a concept discussed further below), though they are treated critically and with

occasional reference to contrasts drawn from *Common Tongue*. Indeed, the book is loosely structured around the facets and sequence of an imagined classical performance. This constrains the discussion and development of the concept in ways that Small does not intend. The classical concert world, as he emphasizes at numerous points, draws upon only some potential aspects of musicking, at the expense of others, and contrasts sharply with other forms of musicking, which draw upon other aspects. In an effort to correct this bias in my discussion, I will take examples from both *Common Tongue* and *Musicking* and draw upon the wider musicological and music sociology literature, discussing studies that do not make explicit use of the musicking concept but nevertheless allow me to exemplify some of its facets. I will illustrate, test, and extend some of Small's key contentions with a wider range of examples of musicking than he uses himself.

I begin with a discussion of the definition of musicking, followed by a consideration of key appropriations of it. I then turn to the concept of "relations," which Small deems central to musicking, outlining both his argument and some of its limitations. This is followed by two brief sections focused on the possibility of solitary musicking and the implications of musicking for the traditional distinction between musicology and social scientific studies of music, respectively. Finally, I introduce the concept of "music worlds," which I have developed through my engagement with both Small's work and that of the sociologist Howard Becker (esp. 1974, 1982). In this work, I use social network analysis to draw out certain relations that are, as Small observes, integral to musicking (Crossley 2015a, 2020; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015; Crossley and Emms 2016; Emms and Crossley 2018; Crossley and Ozturk 2019). All of the literature referred to in this article is from the English-speaking world and, for the most part, discusses musicking in that context, particularly "popular music" from the global North. Perhaps inevitably, I have been drawn to literature from my own discipline, sociology, but I have searched across a range of disciplines and the article also discusses work from history, geography, anthropology, and religious studies, as well as musicology, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies.

## MUSICKING DEFINED

"There is no such thing as music," according to Small (1998, 2). Music is not a "thing" or object. We only come to think of it as such because we are misled by our own abstractions and reifications. Music is an activity, something we do, and the word "music" is better considered a verb than a noun ("to music"), one that takes the present participle "musicking." Musicking encompasses a range of activities, as Small conceives of it, varying both within and across different societies and typically involving *interaction* between multiple participants, playing a variety of roles. He explains, "*To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing [author's emphasis]. We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door, ... the roadies ... [or] the cleaners. ... They, too, are contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance*" (9).

This strong claim raises an obvious question: What distinguishes musicking, as a form of social activity, from other (nonmusical) forms of social activity? Small does not directly address or answer this question, but at a number of points in his discussion he refers to the organization of sound and the meaning attached to such organization. This resonates with a widely used definition of music as "humanly organised sound" (Blacking 1973), albeit perhaps emphasizing organization as ongoing activity more than sound as an outcome of this activity. It is not perfect as a definition because it fails to distinguish musicking from speaking, which also organizes sound, rendering it meaningful, and has nothing to say about "silent" compositions such as John Cage's *4'33"*, but it will suffice for present purposes (see Crossley 2020, 12–15, for further discussion of this issue). *Musicking is activity that organizes sound and renders it meaningful to its participants.*

Beyond this, the concept is open and serves, like one of sociologist Herbert Blumer's (1954) "sensitising concepts," to encourage observation and analysis of the widest possible range of potential cases, using their differences as a means to shed light upon them rather than as a reason to exclude some. Any activity that organizes sound so as to render it meaningful for its participants may be considered musicking.

This is an analytic decision, but it also reflects Small's inclusive normative orientation. In contrast to some, such as philosopher Theodore Adorno ([1962] 1976), who judge all forms of music by reference to criteria drawn from the particular forms of musicking to which they are committed, criticizing other forms by reference to these criteria, Small is excited by the diversity of musicking's forms and attentive to differences in the evaluative criteria and conventions of composition and listening observed by their participants. Analysis of musicking can be critical, and Small is critical of the Western classical concert tradition in particular (discussed below); however, judging one form of musicking by reference to criteria derived from another is ethnocentric and fails to recognize that musicking can be oriented to a variety of different ends, entailing very different criteria for its value and success—criteria that the analyst ought to seek to discover through research and analysis rather than imposing.

This gives further meaning to the claim that "music does not exist." There is no single form of musicking. There are many. Moreover, each has its own criteria and standards by which pieces and performances can be judged. Small calls upon researchers to temporarily suspend their own value judgments in order to better see and hear what is going on in different forms of musicking. Instead of condemning the listener whose ear is not trained to their own specification and whose manner of listening is similarly divergent, the researcher should allow for the possibility that there are different ways of engaging with, listening to, and enjoying a recording or performance, and we should seek to understand and analyze these diverse ways of musicking.

Recognition of the diverse forms that musicking can assume, even within a single society, invites the question of whether we need further concepts to capture and analyze this differentiation. I return to this issue below when I discuss the concept of "music worlds." At this point, though it is somewhat oversimplified, I will consider ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino's (2008) division of musical activity into two live and two recording-centered forms (see Figure 1). *Participatory music*, as Turino defines it, is live music that involves no distinction between performer and audience (e.g., collective singing in church, on a football terrace, at a birthday party, or at a folk singaround in a pub). *Presentational music* is live music in which a designated performer plays for an audience. It is not clear where live events involving recorded music (e.g., DJ sets) fit into this schema, but Turino distinguishes between two forms of musical recording: *high-fidelity recording*, which purports (with varying degrees of credibility) to faithfully capture a performance that was independent of it (albeit perhaps in the studio and without an audience), and *studio audio art*, in which it is recognized, with positive appraisal, that the studio and its technologies not only record but also contribute to the making and organizing of the sounds involved and there is no suggestion that the recording captures an independent musical event.

Much of what Small says suggests that each of these forms, as well as the many that fall between the cracks of Turino's typology, are captured by the concept of musicking. However, he has little to say about recorded music, and he does sometimes seem to prioritize participatory forms. In both *Common Tongue* and *Musicking*, for example, he criticizes the Western classical concert tradition for relegating the majority of society to an audience role. This limits their involvement in musicking to listening, Small argues, causing them to waste and ultimately lose (through lack of practice) the potential for playing a more productive role in musicking. As an example of a better alternative, he points to certain African musical forms in which everybody plays a productive role (singing, clapping, playing an instrument, or directing players by way of dance), even if some are evidently more able than others.

While it can be useful to distinguish between participatory and presentational modes of musicking, it is important to stress that listening is an activity and is essential to musicking because it organizes sound, rendering it meaningful. In this respect, audiences are always active participants in musicking, even in its most

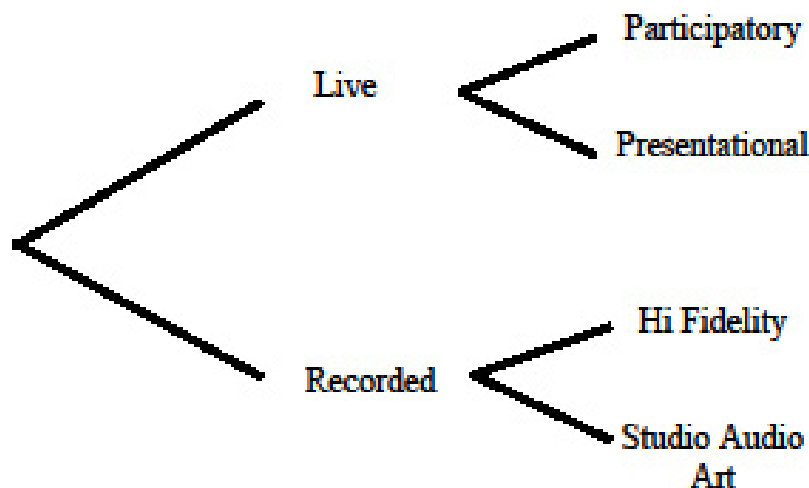


Figure 1. Turino's (2008) Typology of Musical Activity

([1928] 1964) argues with respect to melody, the listener gathers together and groups what, objectively, are discrete sonic events (beats, notes, etc.), bringing them into relation with one another and thereby hearing them as a structured, temporal whole. To develop this idea a little, we might note that the abovementioned relations forged by the listener center on such matters as tonal distance, comparative duration, and the duration of time between notes. This is why a melody is recognizable, whatever key it is played in. The same melody played in C major and B major will comprise a completely different set of notes but will be heard as the same melody by a listener, and this is because the listener “interrogates” (see below) the auditory stimuli they encounter, grouping notes in search of patterns and recognizing the same sequence of tonal distances and differences in relative duration between consecutive notes.

In addition, listeners bring background expectations and knowledge to bear upon what they hear, thereby lending it further layers of meaning. And further meaning again is added by the way in which they frame their listening experience by creating a context for it and using it for particular purposes (e.g., playing air guitar while listening, in an effort to vent frustration, or dimming the lights and allowing the music to wash over them as a way to relax). Sound is organized and made meaningful on several levels in musicking—from the arrangement and patterning of sounds, through their use as referential signs, to the broader use of musicking practices in wider rituals and contexts—and listeners are actively involved at each of these levels.

From this perspective, listening is not the exclusive preserve of the ears. All forms of perception involve an active “interrogation” of the world, to borrow a description from philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1962). Furthermore, as Merleau-Ponty notes, this interrogation is shaped both by acquired perceptual habits and skills (which I theorize below as “body techniques”; see Crossley 2015b) and by our wider embodied state, activity, and context. What we hear is influenced by what we are listening for, and what we are listening for is shaped by interests deriving from our activities (Husserl [1939] 1973). Thus, a bassist may draw the bass line of a song into their perceptual foreground, scarcely hearing other instrumental contributions; a dancer will focus upon rhythm and beat; and an individual seeking background music for work might ignore the content and meaning of the lyrics, hearing words as mere tones within a broader melodic structure whose unfolding helps the individual to remain “in the zone.”

Reception and listening are elements of musicking in this account because they play an active, sound-organizing, meaning-conferring role. Even when they respond as composers and performers anticipate (which they do not always do), audiences are never passive recipients of a finished product. They always play an active role in organizing their own sonic experiences and conferring meaning upon them. And their role is necessary

“presentational” forms and in relation to recorded as well as live renditions. When I listen to a recording or live performance, I resume the organizational and meaning work begun by the composer and/or performer. Without being fully conscious of the fact, I seek out patterns (e.g., melody, harmony, and rhythm), drawing upon expectations and competence forged through previous experience, in an effort to order the auditory materials available to me and render them meaningful. As philosopher Edmund Husserl

to music because, in contrast to mere vibrations in air or some other medium, which are transformed into an experience of sound within human (and some animal) auditory systems, sound itself only exists within the auditory fields of hearing beings and depends for its existence on both this process of transformation and the abovementioned interrogatory activities of the listener (Crossley 2020; on the notion of “vibration” more generally, see Henriques 2010, 2011).<sup>1</sup> Physical vibrations exist in the absence of listeners, but sound must be experienced to exist and therefore music must as well. (Though, of course, performers listen to and hear what they play, rendering a separate audience unnecessary; see below for further discussion.)

We should add that audiences fund performances, making them economically viable through the purchase of recordings, tickets, and merchandise, and in this way also provide the performer with feedback, which may in turn shape their future performances. A change in musical direction that results in poor sales will often be discontinued. Moreover, in the live setting, the sheer presence of an audience, its size, and its responses to the performance as it unfolds all provide feedback, which influences the performer in a more immediate way, shaping the performance. And of course, fans communicate with artists in a variety of other ways, not least via social media, again providing feedback, which is liable to affect the performer.

## THE WIDER LITERATURE

The musicking concept has gained currency in a wide range of literatures, both musicological and social scientific, and has informed studies on various topics, including musical pedagogy (Oehrle 2016; Giddings 2020), community musicking (Reily and Brucher 2017), religious musicking (Balén 2017; Porter 2020; Myrick and Porter 2021), and cross/subcultural variations in musicking forms (Barjolen-Smith 2020; Nathous and Rempe 2020; Rahaim 2012). These studies are a testament to the persuasiveness, versatility, and utility of the concept, and they teach us a great deal about the ways in which music is practiced. Much of this work uses “musicking” as a jumping-off point for investigations that, though empirically very rich, tend to ignore the many interesting theoretical issues that Small’s arguments raise and thus fail to extend or develop his concept and broader theoretical framework. However, a number of authors have sought to develop Small’s idea. I will briefly review these developments before suggesting one or two of my own.

In an interesting synthesis, sociologist John Sonnett (2021) links “musicking” to work by fellow sociologist Tia DeNora (2000, 2010) and others (e.g., Krueger 2014) on the uses to which musicking and listening to recordings in particular are put (e.g., listening to relax, studying or exercising to music, and dancing). He encourages us to inquire into and reflect on musicking’s uses and the various other activities with which it sometimes intersects. This connects with my observation above that our auditory field is shaped by (while simultaneously shaping) our embodied activity as a whole—that running, dancing, lying flat with our eyes closed, and so forth influence what we hear and therefore belong to our various different ways of listening. In addition, it further broadens the scope of “musicking” as a concept and also challenges any inclination we might have to consider the activity to which it refers as necessarily discrete and separate from other social activities and practices. While musicking is a central focus for participants in some contexts, and engaged in for its own sake, it is often woven into other activities and practices, serving a variety of different ends.

In her earlier work (which does not explicitly draw upon Small), DeNora (2000) focuses on the role of listening to recordings in regulating emotion and constructing and sustaining a sense of self. There, she deems music a “technology of self.” In more recent work, where she does draw upon Small, DeNora (2016) extends this analysis, reflecting upon the role of and potential for musicking in psychotherapy. This work is one of a number of Small-inspired studies on therapeutic uses of musicking (Pravaz 2009; Ansdell 2016; Ansdell and DeNora 2016; Hjørnevik and Waage 2018). The power of music to affect individuals can be difficult to understand if music is conceptualized as an object, independent of those whom it affects. However, if

music is an activity in which individuals participate, whether as performers or listeners, then, as these various studies show, both its parallels with therapy and its therapeutic benefits are much easier to comprehend and investigate.

In a further development, sociologist Nick Prior (2018) calls for greater attention to be paid to the role of technology in musicking, arguing that Small largely ignores musicking's technologically mediated nature (on technology and music, see also Loughridge 2021). Whether Prior is correct that all musicking is necessarily technologically mediated depends on what we understand by this concept. At first blush, such practices as humming a tune to ourselves or singing in the bath, while clearly instances of musicking, are not obviously technologically mediated—unless we follow anthropologist Marcel Mauss ([1934] 1973) in defining our own bodies as “tools” and posit that the “body techniques” (discussed further below) involved in humming and singing constitute “technological mediations.” However, many forms of musicking clearly are technologically mediated in a more straightforward manner, and importantly, as Prior suggests, technology is not merely a neutral conduit in most such cases. It makes a material difference to the organization of sound.

We see this in relation to individual instruments. Much contemporary musicking makes use of the electric guitar, for example; in its absence, this musicking would be very different, if not impossible. Similarly, in a fascinating account of Beethoven's rise to prominence, DeNora (1995) argues for the importance of the invention of the piano (around 1700) and its subsequent growth in popularity. The piano, she argues, was much more responsive to Beethoven's dynamic and heavy-handed approach than its predecessor, the harpsichord. Had the piano been invented later, Beethoven might have failed to make the impression he did. Finally, sociologists Richard Peterson and Narasimhan Anand (2004) observe that crooning, as practiced by such singers as Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, was impossible before the invention of the microphone, which amplifies and renders audible quietly delivered lines that would otherwise be drowned out by an accompanying band or orchestra.

The written score is another interesting example of technological mediation. As philosopher Kathleen Higgins (2011) notes, being able to write down and therefore return to and revise their compositions allowed composers to create much longer and more complex pieces than was previously possible. They were no longer constrained by what they could remember and “hold in their heads.” Recording does something similar. Discussing musicking in societies that do not write or record, Small notes how music evolves in ways that are largely imperceptible to its participants. Recording changes this. Borrowing from scholars who have explored the social impact of literacy (e.g., Goody and Watt 1963), we may hypothesize that recording increases the historicity of musical consciousness. Not only do musickers have access to a much wider repertoire than would otherwise be possible and enjoy a hugely increased opportunity for repeated listening; they can also hear (historical) differences in recording technology, performance style, and so forth. Listening now to a recording from the 1950s, I am confronted with the difference of the past and forced to recognize the fact of musical change. This transforms musical consciousness and the way in which we approach musicking. And it supports Prior's (2018) contention that we should attend to the technological mediation of musicking.

Small's emphasis on activity and participation is important for many of those who have used his work. In an interesting paper on “Scottishness” and music, for example, geographer Nichola Wood (2012) argues that a focus on the doing of music affords a more plausible and fruitful avenue for exploring such links. Most accounts of music and national identity focus on sonic signs deemed to represent national character, she argues, but such approaches are problematic and fail to explain how and why the emotions of participants are engaged. Considering how music is “done,” by contrast, allows one to consider these topics—how national identity is achieved and, simultaneously, how emotion and identification are excited. As I noted above with respect to music therapy, foregrounding the active and participatory nature of music makes its effects easier to comprehend and investigate.

There is a similar emphasis in a number of studies that use Small's work to reflect on the role of music, and particularly folk music, in social movement mobilization (Roy 2010; Rosenthal and Flacks 2012; Balén

2017). Like Small himself, the authors of these studies often express a preference for “participatory” over “presentational” musical forms. In an important study of two mid-twentieth-century folk revivals in the United States and their impact on concurrent waves of political mobilization, for example, sociologist William Roy (2010) argues that the second revival had a bigger impact because it involved participatory musicking. During the first wave, members of the US Communist Party encouraged potential supporters to sit and listen to renditions of traditional folk songs by accomplished players. During the second, which involved the various social movements of the 1960s, everybody was involved in making sounds: singing, clapping, playing guitars, banging tambourines, and so forth. The experience of full participation, Roy argues, was far more effective in generating a sense of solidarity and winning over hearts and minds.

As I argued above, the distinction between participatory and presentational forms of musicking can be useful, and Roy’s suggestion that they have different effects on participants is plausible. However, to return briefly to my earlier critique of this distinction, the boundary between participation and presentation is blurred because audiences participate in and contribute to “presentational” performances in many ways, both direct and indirect. In the case of call-and-response sequences, common at rock and pop gigs, for example, audiences actively generate sounds that are organized and rendered meaningful in the musicking process. Often they dance, and even if they sit motionless and silent in the concert hall, as in the stereotypical classical recital, their doing so is very much a part of the rituals constitutive of that form of musicking; they are playing their role in the musicking process. It is also important to note that from Rock Against Racism to raves, from Live Aid to the campaign against apartheid in South Africa, presentational and recording-based forms of musicking have proved very effective in mobilizing collective action and the pressure necessary to lever change (Crossley 2020). Roy’s descriptions of the Communist Party’s folk recitals suggest they were very dour occasions, organized by activists far removed from the lives of those they were seeking to mobilize. Their political failure may be less attributable to their presentational format *per se* than he suggests.

As I discuss further below, Small’s challenge to the idea that music is an object and his insistence that we conceive of it as interaction or as a social practice suggests that sociologists need not be confined to analyzing the external context of music, as was typically assumed in the past, and might rather study “the music” (*qua* musicking) itself. While a full understanding of musicking unquestionably requires the expertise and tools of the various musicological disciplines, defining it in terms of social interaction brings it squarely within the purview of sociologists (Crossley 2020; Prior 2018). In a similar vein, historian David Suisman (2018) describes “musicking” as “a potent concept for historians” because “it places music in a web of social and economic relations and brings to the fore the interconnectedness of production, distribution, and consumption for understanding the causes, contexts, and consequences of a given musical phenomenon” (384). Like the sociologists, Suisman notes that scholars in his discipline have traditionally struggled to achieve a purchase upon music and that the idea of “musicking” provides that purchase.

The situation is similar in religious studies, where “musicking” enjoys a twofold appeal. On one side, echoing much of what I said above regarding the therapeutic uses of musicking, scholars of religion have found “musicking” an invaluable conceptual tool for accessing and exploring music’s affective dimension and effects. Singing in concert with other members of a choir or congregation, for example, is often a moving experience that can engender a sense of power and purpose beyond that of the individual, priming individuals for religious accounts of such power and purpose. On the other side, and picking up upon Small’s own interest in the ritual character of musicking (e.g., 1998, 94–99), a focus upon the “doing” of music affords fresh insights into its role in religious ritual (Porter 2020; Myrick and Porter 2021). Many religious rituals involve musicking and, conversely, musicking, in both religious and nonreligious contexts, is itself typically ritualized to some extent.

## RELATIONS: SONIC, SOCIAL, AND IMAGINED

Having briefly reviewed a number of uses and developments of Small's thesis, I now turn back to the thesis itself, drilling down into some of its details, identifying some of its further strengths and weaknesses, and suggesting a number of further developments. I begin with a reflection on "relations." For Small, musicking centers on relations, and he identifies three key sets of relations that combine within it: relations between sounds, relations between participants, and, more problematically in my view, relations constitutive of what for participants would be the ideal society (1998, 13–14). These sets of relations, and their relations with one another, require brief elaboration.

The organizational activity that Small's definition of musicking refers to involves forging relations between sounds. Composers and performers juxtapose sounds of different pitches, both simultaneously and consecutively, to produce what can be heard as harmonic and melodic structures. They sequence sounds across time so as to produce hearable rhythmic structures. And they employ different instruments, techniques, and sound sources to generate different timbres, inducing the effects they believe such timbres evoke. Moreover, to reiterate, these relations and structures exist within the auditory fields of listeners (composers and performers being listeners too, of course) and depend for their existence upon the active, organizational nature of listening. Different forms of musicking place different emphases on harmony, melody, and rhythm. Small observes—albeit in an oversimplified manner (Agawu 2003)—that the European classical tradition tends to prioritize harmony, for example, while African forms often prioritize rhythm. As a consequence, the complexity of each of these forms tends to lie in a different place. However, all musicking, as an effort to organize sounds, involves the forging of relations between sounds.

In addition to relations between sounds, and in some part by way of them, musicking also forges relations between its participants, both within and between the role sets they occupy, individually and collectively. Individual musicians interact with one another and forge relations within bands and orchestras (see also Bennett 1980; Cohen 1991). Audience members interact with one another and forge both fleeting relations, such as on the dance floor or in a mosh pit (Shank 1994; Fonarow 2006), and more enduring relations, in fan clubs, appreciation societies, and music-related subcultures (Willis 1978; Hodgkinson 2002; Emms 2017). Performers interact with composers via the mediation of a score or recordings that they seek to emulate. Performers and audiences interact and forge relations on numerous levels, such as through economic relations, by social exchanges in performance contexts, or via recordings and social media. And both audiences and artists interact and forge relations with an assortment of what Becker (1982) calls "support personnel" (e.g., managers, promoters, and roadies).

As noted, these social relations are in some cases partially mediated by the aforementioned relations between sounds. The interplay between sonic and social relations is nicely captured in social theorist Alfred Schutz's (1951) account of "making music together" and the participants' mutual "tuning in." Though he does not use the term, Schutz argues that successful musicking requires that participants synchronize their respective flows of lived time. To perform well together, for example, musicians must find and lock into what today we might call a common groove (see also Monson 1996). Likewise, listeners must "tune in" to music, slowing or increasing the pace of their listening and wider activities to match that of the piece, moving with the rhythm and beat and, to augment Schutz's account a little, rising and falling with the melody. This is most obvious in the case of dance, where movement tracks the beat, rhythm, and other perceived dynamics of a song, gesturing its perceived sentiment and sometimes even miming key events in the story it is heard to tell. It is less obvious in the case of the famously motionless audience at a classical concert, but they follow the music too, within their perception and imagination, and can be emotionally and physiologically moved as a result. It is because of the need to tune in that we are sometimes not in the mood for particular types of music, for example, when music demands a mode of engagement from us (e.g., fast or slow, lively or contemplative) that we are unable or unwilling to muster.

For Schutz, tuning in is a fundamental aspect of intersubjectivity that underpins many forms of social interaction. Before parents can communicate in any other way with their children, for example, they can bond



through synchronized bouncing, rocking, and games such peekaboo, which rely on coordination between participants and orientation to a mutually anticipated future event (see also Trevarthen 1999). Likewise, playing catch or passing in a ball game requires participants to establish a common rhythm. Indeed, synchronization and coordination are essential to all effective communication and most social activities. However, musicking draws out this temporal aspect of human relations in a purified form. It is an exercise in bonding and intersubjectivity. The forging of relations between sounds simultaneously forges relations between participants.

In addition, musicking often requires that participants assume “the role of the other,” to borrow an expression from philosopher and psychologist George Herbert Mead (1967). As I discuss further below with respect to Becker’s (1982) concept of “editing,” for example, composers and performers anticipate the likely responses of audiences when listening to their own works, using this empathic bond, which is rooted in shared musical experiences and the common associations and expectations born of them, to positively enhance their compositions/performances and avoid negative responses. They anticipate what will pleasantly surprise an audience and what will sound clichéd, choosing the former and avoiding the latter. Likewise, audiences often project themselves, empathically, into one of the “voices” they detect in a performance, whether instrumental or literally vocal. They “become” the character assumed to lie behind the narrative voice of the lyrics or feel the sadness that, as they hear it, is expressed in an instrumental passage. Indeed, sociological pioneer Herbert Spencer ([1890] 1916) argued that music’s ability to exercise and develop the human capacity for empathy was a key component of its social and evolutionary value (see also Levitin 2006).

Beyond this, Small suggests that musicking enacts what is, for participants, an idealized form of social relations. In *Common Tongue* (1987) he initially expresses this idea in terms of identity (e.g., 55–59, 67). Different types and instances of musicking enact different identities, Small argues, expressing where participants feel that they belong or aspire to be, with whom, and in what ways. However, he is clear that identity is a function of relations with others (both real and idealized) and he suggests that musicking generates, in ritual form and via relations between sounds, the relations of what participants believe to be the ideal society.

Small revisits this idea in *Musicking* (1998), shifting the emphasis more decisively from identity to relations (e.g., 13, 94–100). Participants in musicking, he argues, prefiguratively enact and ritually invoke the relations of their ideal society. For example, the formalized manners of the classical concert hall embody an ideal of polite society to which participants aspire, one that is very different from the constitutive social relations of the good society imagined and prefiguratively performed at a rock concert or folk night, where informality and the appearance of equality prevail, in contrast to the very visible hierarchy of the concert tradition. (Roger Scruton’s [1997, 390–391] philosophical discussion of the moral dimension of music and dance suggests something similar to this.) In each case, this may involve relations of exclusion, tacitly (or perhaps explicitly) excluding a “them” in the process of constituting an “us” and suspending relations with what is perceived as the “profane world” outside of the sacred space that musicking generates. Various studies of early rave culture, which focus on raves’ ethos of equality and apparent rejection of the culture of masculinity and heterosexual “hookups” common at other, similar dance contexts, suggest a version of this (Pini 1997; Gilbert and Pearson 1999).

Small acknowledges that it is often easy to spot elements of pretense, inconsistency, and contradiction in these efforts (e.g., 1998, 13–18). The ethos of equality in the rock world (thinly) masks fairly obvious hierarchies, for example, when a great deal of money changes hands in the organization of events that purport to be anti-commercial or anti-consumerist, not the least of which comes from the audiences who pay to participate. This is why Small refers to such relations as “idealized.” They imaginatively perform relations that participants believe they value, without fully realizing these relations or putting them to the test. Importantly, moreover, he suggests that this relates to musical taste. Music appeals to us when we perceive it to resonate with our sense of identity and configurations of relations to which we aspire, affording us an opportunity to enact that identity and those relations in ritual form.

This notion of ideal relations is interesting and appealing. It is not difficult to think of plausible examples. However, Small's insistence that musicking always entails this element is problematic, particularly in the contemporary context, where performance is a job and technology affords very easy access to a wide range of recordings, making them available for a diverse range of purposes. For example, professional musicians frequently play simply to make money, the sheer repetition of particular pieces and the need to select pieces according to audience demand causing them to disengage from their performance. Becker's (1951) observation that the dance-band performers whom he studied were disdainful of both the pieces they had to play and the audiences whose preferences they had to appease—because the performers wanted to play more avant-garde (jazz) pieces that spoke directly to their identities—is surely true of many professional musicians today. Conversely, amateurs often play simply for the fun of doing so, establishing rewarding relations with others and perhaps enacting a cherished “musician” identity but in either case having no thought of enacting idealized social relations. Likewise, listeners may use recorded music as light distraction, as a means of relaxing and zoning out from wider concerns, or indeed as an aid to venting frustrations and anger (Bessett 2006). And dancers may view dance as a brief, temporary escape from more serious concerns (Riley, Griffin, and Morey 2010), distinguishing clearly between music that is good for dancing, which they prefer for that purpose, and music that they feel in some way captures and expresses their identity. Indeed, they may enjoy the ironic pleasure of what sociologist Andy Bennett (2013) dubs “cheesy listening.”

This is not to deny that what Small describes with respect to ideal relations and identity is true some of the time, and I would further suggest that musicking always involves both sonic and social relations. However, the range of musicking practices in contemporary societies is simply too wide and diverse to support the claim that they are always centered on idealized relations and identities. Musicking is often integral to rituals that either affirm existing social relations or anticipate those of a desired, projected future, and Small helps us to understand why; however, this does not exhaust the range of uses to which musicking is put or, indeed, the range of rituals in which it is involved. (On the varied uses of musicking, see DeNora 2000, 2010; Clarke 2005; Bessett 2006; Krueger 2014.)

In addition, types of relations other than those Small discusses are often in play in music, and we might develop and extend his concept by bringing these into focus. To give two further examples, musicking often involves relations between instrumentalists and their instruments, and it always involves relations between musickers and the physical environments in which they music. These points require brief elaboration.

In the case of the highly trained virtuoso, as Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1962, 145–147) suggests, their instrument is for much of the time an extension of their body and is mobilized, as their body is mobilized, without reflection or noticeable effort. The instrument embodies and executes their will in musicking as their larynx does in speech. However, when the instrument fails in some way, as most instruments do on occasion (e.g., a valve sticks, a reed or string breaks, the instrument goes out of tune), the player's relation to it becomes more conspicuous, and anticipation of these possibilities motivates a relation of monitoring and care between player and instrument. Furthermore, the relationship between instrumentalist and instrument enacted in performance is mediated by what Mauss ([1934] 1973) calls “body techniques”—that is, “uses” of the body specific to a particular social group (in this case, players of a particular instrument) and acquired through a long and hard process of training (Crossley 2015b; see also Blacking 1992). The apparent ease with which the virtuoso plays and their ability to “speak” with their instrument often render the work required to reach and maintain this level of proficiency invisible, but the efforts of the novice serve to illustrate clearly the work required not only to learn how to use the instrument but also to learn the uses of one's body (i.e., body techniques) that it demands.

Sociologist David Sudnow's (2001) autoethnographic account of learning jazz improvisation captures the higher end of this pedagogic spectrum. Already an accomplished pianist, Sudnow describes a process that he likens to learning a second language. Here, he ceases “translating” preconceived musical ideas into practice and learns instead to think musically with his fingers, “speaking” with his audience and fellow musicians without

having to think, reflectively, about what to “say” or how to say it. (Elsewhere, Sudnow [1979] devotes a whole book to the comparison between playing an instrument and speaking.) Before reaching these dizzy heights, however, beginners acquire basic physical skills. In the case of brass and woodwind instruments, for example, novices must learn how to blow and breathe in order to get a passable sound out of their instrument. Guitarists and pianists must learn to form chord shapes on a fretboard or keyboard. And in some cases, they must learn to read music, training their body to understand and follow the codified instructions provided for them by the composer.

As this discussion suggests, the musicking concept serves to bring human embodiment—and the reflexive relation of the embodied performer to their own embodiment—to the fore. Bringing the doing of music into focus, this notion of musicking simultaneously brings the embodied nature of that doing into focus. Small makes this explicit at a number of places, mounting a direct challenge to Cartesian (mind/body) dualism at one point, but he does not suggest any concepts that might allow us to explore embodiment further or capture it empirically (1998, 50–56). Mauss’s aforementioned “body technique” concept fills this gap to an extent (Crossley 2007, 2015b). From performer, via support personnel, to listener, all of the roles involved in musicking entail learned and culturally specific forms of embodied competence, which is to say body techniques, and though Mauss’s theorization of these techniques as “uses” of the body might lend itself to a dualistic interpretation, this is not his intention; body techniques are uses that irreducibly embodied beings learn to make of their own embodiment.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Mauss’s claim that body techniques embody the “practical reason” of the groups in which they are observed clearly captures the mindfulness of (embodied) musicking: what the novice acquires here, even by way of exercises or drills, is not a mechanical propensity to repeat what has been learned but rather an embodied understanding and competence, which is deployed in flexible and imaginative ways—“knowledge in the hands” (or the mouth, lungs, arms, etc.), as Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1962, 144) puts it. This embodied knowledge and understanding may elude the discursive consciousness of the player. Many musicians can do far more, in practice, than they can explain or describe. But their knowledge and understanding are plain to see, or rather hear, in what they do—in their embodied competence.

Finally, the concept of body techniques is important because it reminds us that the forms of competence employed in musicking and the relations forged between instrumentalists and their instruments are social facts, generated, diffused, and concentrated within particular social groups. Musicking bodies, whatever roles they are playing, are trained in and attuned to the particularities of specific musical cultures. They embody the knowledge and understanding of that culture, deploying it in order to organize sounds in ways that they and other parties to that culture will find meaningful.

The relation of music to its immediate physical environment is touched on by Small (1998, 19–29) in a brief discussion of the architecture and layout of the typical Western concert hall, which, he argues, structures orchestra-audience relations and channels and constrains sociability. Others have addressed this theme in more detail, however, discussing the sonic impact of musicking environments and their anticipation by composers and performers. For example, pop musician David Byrne (2012) notes that the composition of religious music in medieval Europe had to take account of the reverberation generated by the size and design of the typical cathedral. Reverberation causes successive notes to overlap and merge, he observes, tending to obscure detail, rendering key changes unpleasant to the ear, and thereby dissuading composers and performers from incorporating either in their work. Likewise, Byrne notes that the early compositions of his own band, Talking Heads, were written with the knowledge that they would have to compete with the background noise and rival distractions of the seminal New York punk clubs (notably CBGB) in which the band cut their musical teeth.

We could expand the list of types of relationship forged in musicking further. It must suffice at present, however, to note that relations of many kinds are integral to musicking and that its constitutive activities are therefore better considered *interactivities*. We should conceptualize and analyze them relationally.

## SOLITARY MUSICKING?

Small's relational focus and, in particular, his insistence that musicking involves relations between multiple participants might be challenged by reference to instances of apparently solitary musicking. The case of solitary listening is relatively easily disposed of because what the listener listens to in most cases are recordings made by somebody else, and relations between the listener and multiple performers, a producer, record executives, and so forth are therefore clearly in play. But what of the musician playing alone at home? Small tackles this issue in the penultimate chapter of *Musicking*, where he offers a brief reflection on a hypothetical "solitary flute player," a herdsman on the African plains who is well beyond earshot of others and apparently playing entirely for his own entertainment. This choice of example is potentially problematic, as Small himself seems to acknowledge, as it risks both caricature and ethnocentrism (Agawu 2003). Arguably, Small constructs the herdsman as an exotic "other." Yet the point he is seeking to make is important and interesting.

The solitary flautist seems to contradict everything that Small has said in the book about the relational, social nature of musicking. However, the contradiction is more apparent than real, according to Small. He begins by observing that even if the flautist made his own flute, he will have drawn upon the collective wisdom of his social group when selecting, gathering, and working upon its raw materials, a collective wisdom combining the experiences of multiple generations of the group. Making an instrument requires body techniques, to invoke Mauss again, that are borrowed from the stock of one's social group. Moreover, "simple" instruments are often the most difficult to play, again requiring employment of specialized body techniques, forged, cultivated, and passed on within the player's social group over generations. In these respects, Small suggests, "between the herdsman and his flute there already exists a complex set of relationships before he ever uses it to make a note" (1998, 202).

Moreover, when he does begin to make sounds, further relations come into play. What is played would probably be difficult for a listener unfamiliar with the musical traditions of the herdsman to make sense of. Indeed, it may involve subtleties of tone and/or timbre only discernible to ears trained in the musical tradition of the herdsman (body techniques again). But those gestures will be meaningful to the herdsman, or at least he will be able to gauge their meaning and appropriateness relative to embodied expectations and knowledge he has acquired through participation in the musical life of his society. He may be playing a piece remembered and borrowed from the repertoire of his group, but even if he is inventing a tune for himself or improvising, he is "guided...by the assumptions, the practices and the customs of the society in which he...lives—in other words, by its *style* [author's emphasis]" (Small 1998, 203). And style, Small continues, as a patterning of sonic elements, is a metaphor for the relationships idealized within a group, such that "the way in which the flutist brings the sounds into relation with one another as he plays is in a general way determined by the set of ideal relationships that he holds in common with the other members of his social group... How he plays will be within the limits of the style he has received from the group, and in playing in that style he will be exploring, affirming, and celebrating the concepts of relationship of the group, as well as his own relationships within it and with it" (204).

As noted above, Small's insistence that musicking always conjures up ideal relations is overly reductive and precludes proper appreciation of the many different uses to which musicking is put and the many and varied meanings it assumes as a consequence. However, his insistence that the player will adopt a style borrowed from their social group, which has a meaningful resonance because and only because of this, is more persuasive. If the flautist is aiming to organize sounds in a meaningful way, it is inevitable that they will draw upon the stylistic-organizational conventions of their group and that what they recognize and aim for as meaningful will likewise bear the stylistic hallmarks of their group.

What Small says of the solitary herdsman resonates in an interesting way with what Mead (1967) says of "internal conversation" and can be further developed by way of this concept. Our private reflections assume a conversational form, according to Mead. They are effectively continuations of the conversations we enjoy with

other people and enabled by our participation in such “external” conversations. We think in and by way of language, a social institution, and beyond this, to think is to converse, either externally or internally. We learn to do the latter by first learning to do the former and simulating its form: we make claims, which we then respond to, subsequently responding to our own response, and so on. Moreover, Mead continues, in doing so, we tacitly assume the roles of others, both particular others and what he calls “generalized others,” in relation to our own utterances. We respond to ourselves in the way we anticipate that others in our social circles would respond to us. Learning to imaginatively assume the roles of others in relation to ourselves is, for Mead, an important aspect of childhood socialization and is integral to the development of a sense of self. It provides a crucial resource in our internal conversations because it allows us to adopt an external perspective—indeed, various perspectives—upon our immediate thoughts and inclinations. This may be a matter of anticipating (with varying degrees of reflexive awareness) the responses of particular others but, as I noted, Mead also believes that we can anticipate the views of generalized others; that is, we have a sense of perspectives shared within one or more of the various social circles in which we move, and we can and do bring these perspectives to bear upon our thoughts, intentions, and so forth as we articulate and become aware of them through language. In this respect, the perspectives of others from our various social groups populate even our most private thoughts, and we might think of them as simulated continuations of the external conversations that make up much of the rest of our lives.

Solitary musicking is very similar to this. The performer plays and listens, hearing what they play from the perspective of others (e.g., friends, teachers, critics, and audiences), anticipating how those others might respond and bringing to bear the generalized evaluative criteria of the musical circles to which they belong. Moreover, having perhaps been tutored and advised by others in the past, or indeed having tutored and advised others, performers are able to shift between roles in order to think their way through difficulties they may be experiencing. They can advise themselves as they know others would advise them or as they would and perhaps in the past have advised others.

Becker (1982) suggests a version of this in his account of “editing.” Whether playing alone or with others, performing before an audience or listening back to something one has recorded, musicians listen critically, Becker argues, anticipating responses and applying the standards and criteria of the “art world” to which they belong. And they revise their performance accordingly, whether that means tightening up technique and striving to rise to the occasion in live performance, rerecording parts of a song in the studio, or altering a written manuscript. Though all of this is largely habitual and often unnoticed by those involved, it is no less important to the creative process, according to Becker, and, along with Mead’s “internal conversations,” it adds a further relational dimension to Small’s conception of musicking. Participants interact and forge relations with others involved in musicking but also internalize the roles and perspectives of those others, bringing these “external” influences to bear on “internal conversations,” which simulate such interactions and relations. In these respects, musickers are never truly alone (see also Born 2012).

## MUSICOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Small posits his concept of musicking in opposition to certain tendencies that he perceives in Western musicology, particularly assumptions it has inherited from the Western classical concert music tradition it derives from. This tradition focuses upon individual works, which are often reduced to a written score, with performance (whether live or recorded) being viewed as, at best, an imperfect attempt to realize such works. Brahms, Small notes (1998, 5), once declined an invitation to a recitation of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* on the grounds that he would prefer to read the score at home! Indeed, as Higgins (2011) notes, there is a Platonic tendency within some strands of musicology and aesthetics that goes so far as to deem compositions imperfect approximations of preexisting “forms,” which exist independently of them and which the composer “discovers” rather than creates.

Such Platonism is an extreme example of the reification that Small opposes. Reducing music to works and works to scores narrows the focus of musicological study to that which is captured by the score, chiefly harmony, melody, and rhythm. There may be some justification for this in relation to the Western concert tradition, whose participants typically orient themselves primarily to these variables. However, it is evident to the social scientist (and to Small, who structures all of *Musicking* around a hypothetical concert performance in the Western classical tradition) that there is a lot more going on in the concert hall beyond the instructions specified in the score and a great deal of meaning in music that cannot be reduced to harmony, melody, and rhythm. More to the point, as ethnomusicologists have insisted for a long time, this approach is ill suited to capturing forms of musicking outside the Western concert tradition, which are often not centered on a score or the variables it captures (see, e.g., Lomax 1959). The musicking concept challenges this reduction of “music” to “score,” considering the score as a tool that some but not all traditions employ and that perhaps only one deems central. Moreover, it puts the Western concert tradition into perspective by considering it alongside other musicking forms, whose conventions and values are different.

In doing so, the concept of musicking contributes to the efforts of contemporary musicologists and social scientists to break down the barrier between their respective disciplines by challenging the distinction that once underlay it: the distinction between “music,” which is defined by reference to its internal structure, and the external context of music. If music, as Small suggests, is a web of social interaction, then the social scientist is able to engage with it directly and “internally” (though in this context the internal/external distinction ceases to make much sense or serve any purpose). The expertise of the musicologist is not thereby diminished nor that of the social scientist unduly elevated. Analysis of musicking will often need to draw upon the conceptual tools of both musicology and the social sciences, making them work together. What is challenged is the artificial separation of their respective research domains and the equally artificial construction of an object (“the music itself”) deemed to be the exclusive preserve of musicology. Music is social activity and, as such, falls within the remit of the social scientist, but it is social activity of a particular kind, centered on particular ways of organizing sounds and rendering them meaningful. Thus, its analysis requires a form of expertise that goes beyond the normal training of the social scientist: musicological expertise.

This claim raises the question of the relation of text to context (another relation). In an interesting anecdote, Small (1998, 7) discusses the quizzical response of some of his friends and colleagues to his antipathy to Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. To him, the piece belongs to and signifies a religious ritual and meaning with which he disagrees, and he therefore dislikes the piece and finds it difficult to listen to. To them, it is possible to strip away this religious context and enjoy what they regard, with his grudging acknowledgment, as a beautiful piece of music. It is possible to listen to the music, as Kant’s ([1790] 1978) aesthetics demands, in a disinterested manner. Small questions whether one can or indeed should do this. However, the broader implication of his work, in my view, is that his friends and colleagues do not so much decontextualize the piece as set it in a different context—a musicological rather than religious context. And their reception of it is not so much disinterested as it is interested in things other than his reception is. Small is interested in (and repelled by) religious meanings he cannot help hearing in the piece—ones that he hears, at least partially, because of his interest in and knowledge about the piece. The others are interested in the patterning of sounds they can hear, which come to the foreground of their auditory field on account of their musicological interests and training. However, both necessarily approach the piece with an interest and purpose that shapes their approach to listening and what they hear. Moreover, his friends’ manner of listening (e.g., silently and respectfully, seated in a concert hall, with a program, directed by a conductor) is no less ritualized than if the piece were performed for religious purposes in a church and no less supported by ritual props. Sound cannot be organized in the manner of *St. Matthew Passion* independently of some sort of context of performance and reception, and there are perhaps as many *St. Matthew Passions* as there are such contexts. The sounds involved must always be made, organized, and thereby rendered meaningful anew by participants whose

preconceptions of the piece, composer, genre, and so forth—which are inescapable and necessarily inform their participation—furnish a listening context.

## MUSIC WORLDS

I want to conclude this article with a brief discussion of an extension to Small's idea that I have developed over a number of publications, drawing also upon the work of Becker (1974, 1982) and others influenced by him (Gilmore 1987, 1988; Finnegan 1989; Martin 2005, 2006). Specifically, I have sought to capture the differentiation and diversity of musicking practices and relations that can be observed both within and between societies by way of a concept of distinct "music worlds," which connect and converge to form a "musical universe" (Crossley 2015a, 2020; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015; Crossley and Emms 2016; Emms and Crossley 2018). A musical universe comprises all forms and instances of musicking within a particular society at a given point in time. Music worlds are specific subsets of musicking practices and relations within that universe, distinguishable to both their participants and external observers on the basis of one or more criteria that matter to participants: principally, style, geographical location, organizational ethos, and/or politics. Thus, we might refer to "feminist music worlds" (O'Shea 2015, 2020), "the New York jazz world," "DIY music worlds," "the Sheffield folk-singing world" (Hield and Crossley 2015), "the classical concert world," and so forth.

The "worlds" concept resonates with Small's idea of musicking as interactivity and his insistence that this interaction involves multiple parties, including artists, audiences, and a range of support personnel (e.g., managers, promoters, producers, and venue owners). However, in making reference to worlds, in the plural, we bring into clear focus the fact that musicking is differentiated into distinct forms, and we equip ourselves, conceptually, to investigate, compare, and map those different forms. Small acknowledges variation, of course, and in his two main books on the topic explores two very different musicking traditions. However, as noted above, his main statement on musicking is focused quite strictly on one of the many music worlds that compete for audiences in most contemporary Western societies: the classical concert world. This inevitably raises questions about the ways in which musicking in other worlds might differ and about how well his various claims stand up in relation to other forms of musicking in other worlds. Moreover, it tends to obscure the sociologically significant possibility that the division of musicking into worlds constitutes a form of social division and might correspond with further such divisions—for example, that class and ethnic divides affect participation in particular music worlds. Small hints at this possibility at various points in his work, not least when he discusses his own discomfort and feeling of not fitting into the concert world (e.g., Small 1989, 15–16), but the idea of "worlds" allows us to better capture, acknowledge, and explore these issues by opening and foregrounding diversity in musicking practices.

Music scholars have coined many competing concepts to capture the differentiation of musical activity into distinct clusters, including "subculture" (Slobin 1993; Hebdige 1998), "scene" (Bennett and Peterson 2004), and "genre" (Negus 1999; Holt 2007). This is not the place to debate the strengths and weaknesses of these different conceptions relative either to one another or to "music worlds" (see Crossley 2020, 69–83). Briefly, however, the concept of "music worlds" that I have developed, which builds on the work of Becker (1974, 1982), connects more directly with, and extends, the concept of musicking. Like Small, Becker argues against the reduction of music, or any other art, to objects or artifacts, stressing instead the ongoing "collective action" involved in the production, preservation, presentation, and reception of any such objects. "Art work," for Becker, refers to the ongoing "work," not least the continual symbolic work, necessary not only to the production and maintenance of activities and objects (broadly conceived) that are commonly regarded as art but also to the framing and perceptual and interpretive work that maintain our sense of them as "art" and establish their meaning(s). Moreover, he draws our attention to three key aspects of this collective action.

First, he notes that participants orient themselves to distinct conventions, which, I would add, differ between and distinguish different music worlds. We recognize reggae when we hear it, for example, because performers orient themselves to reggae's distinctive stylistic conventions—ones that differ from, for example, those of heavy metal. The role of convention is widely acknowledged among music scholars. Indeed, musicologist Susan McClary (2001) argues that music is convention “all the way down.” However, Becker's account is important because he stresses the relational nature of conventions: their role in the coordination of artistic and more generally social interactions. Participants in musicking, whether performers, audiences, or support personnel, need to coordinate their contributions if their collective action is to be successful. This is perhaps obvious in the case of performers, who, among other things, must ordinarily be in time with one another and in the same key, but it is also true of audiences, who must be “on the same page” as performers if they are to play their role and derive pleasure from doing so. Following musicologist Leonard Meyer (1956), Becker (1982) argues that the capacity of audiences to make sense of sonic materials as they unfold across time, and indeed their vulnerability to the pleasure-inducing “teases” deposited therein by composers and performers, depends on their habitual reliance on musical conventions employed (again largely habitually) by composers and performers. Moreover, both live performance and the sale and distribution of recordings are huge organizational undertakings that demand coordination among many parties. In the absence of conventions, which cover everything from agreement over tonal distances between notes and the use of time signatures to behavior in a venue and ticketing procedures, achieving this coordination would be an enormous and very difficult task. Even the smallest of tasks could potentially be done in a multitude of different ways, none obviously better than the others, necessitating lengthy negotiation between the involved parties. Conventions, which are effectively sedimented agreements born of previous interactions, ease this process because they give participants a template that they can both follow and anticipate that others will follow. Conventions constantly evolve and are always open to challenge, of course, but even the most innovative musickers generally stick to convention in much of what they do.

The second aspect that Becker draws out is “resources” (see esp. 1982, 69–92). Musicking requires resources, typically including time, skills, equipment, space, and money. This is sociologically important because the distribution of such resources affects opportunities for musicking. It also underlines the relational nature of musicking, again echoing Small, because musicking involves exchanges and pooling of resources *between* different participants. Nobody has all of the resources required for the types of musicking in which they wish to engage, in the quantities and forms necessary, and therefore they must collaborate with others. Again, different worlds might be distinguished by the types and quantities of resources that they require, as well as the sources from which they are derived.

It is the third of Becker's aspects that I wish to highlight particularly here: networks (see, e.g., 1982, 24–28). To say that musicking is collective action is to raise the question of what constitutes a “collective.” In part, this is a matter of numbers, and we might argue that certain forms of musicking presuppose a “critical mass” in order to be possible (Crossley 2015a). Four or five musicians will suffice to form a rock band, assuming that they collectively possess the right combination of skills (resources), but this number will not suffice for a full orchestra, whatever their skills. However, a collective is more than an aggregate. It involves interaction and, to return once more to Small, relations between participants who combine and coordinate their contributions. It is a network.

Becker uses the term “network” relatively loosely, but in my work I have drawn upon the definitions and techniques of formal social network analysis (SNA) in an effort to expand the analytic potential of this idea and make it more rigorous (Crossley 2015a, 2020; Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop 2015; Hield and Crossley 2015; Crossley and Emms 2016; Emms and Crossley 2018; Crossley and Ozturk 2019; for an introduction to SNA, see Scott 2000). SNA is a mathematically based set of techniques for capturing and analyzing data on sets of relations between sets of objects (in this case, participants in musicking). It allows



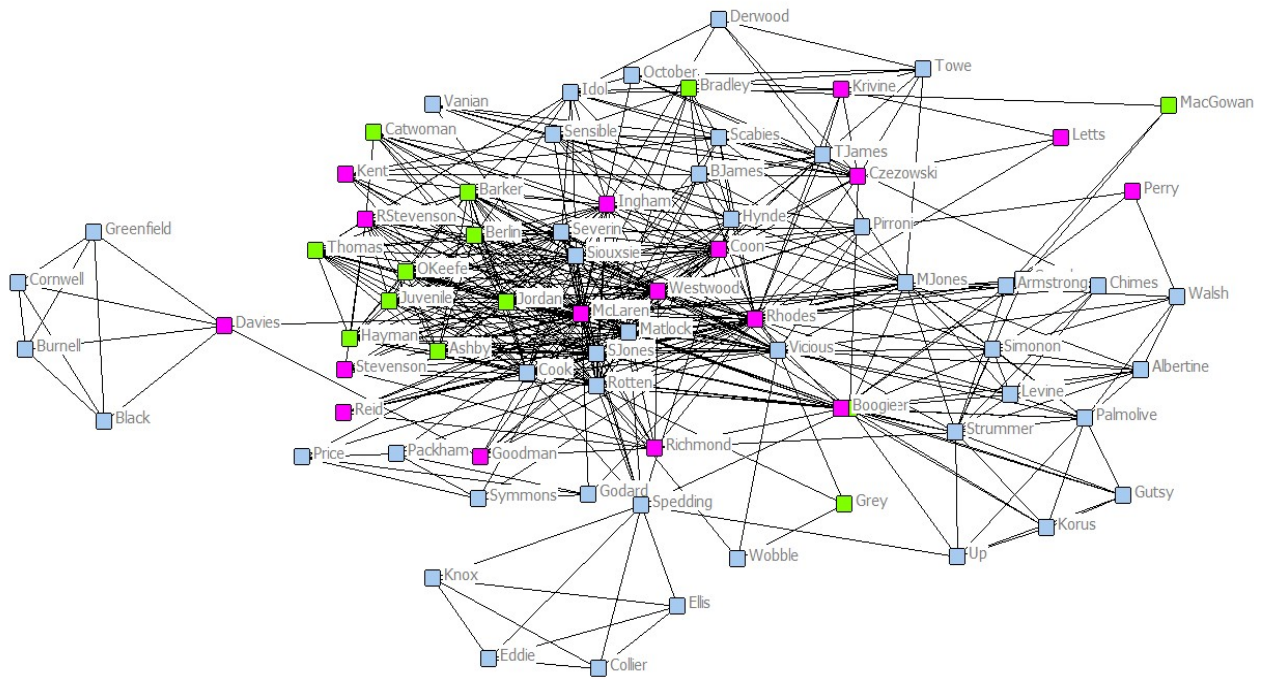


Figure 2. London's Punk World, December 1, 1976

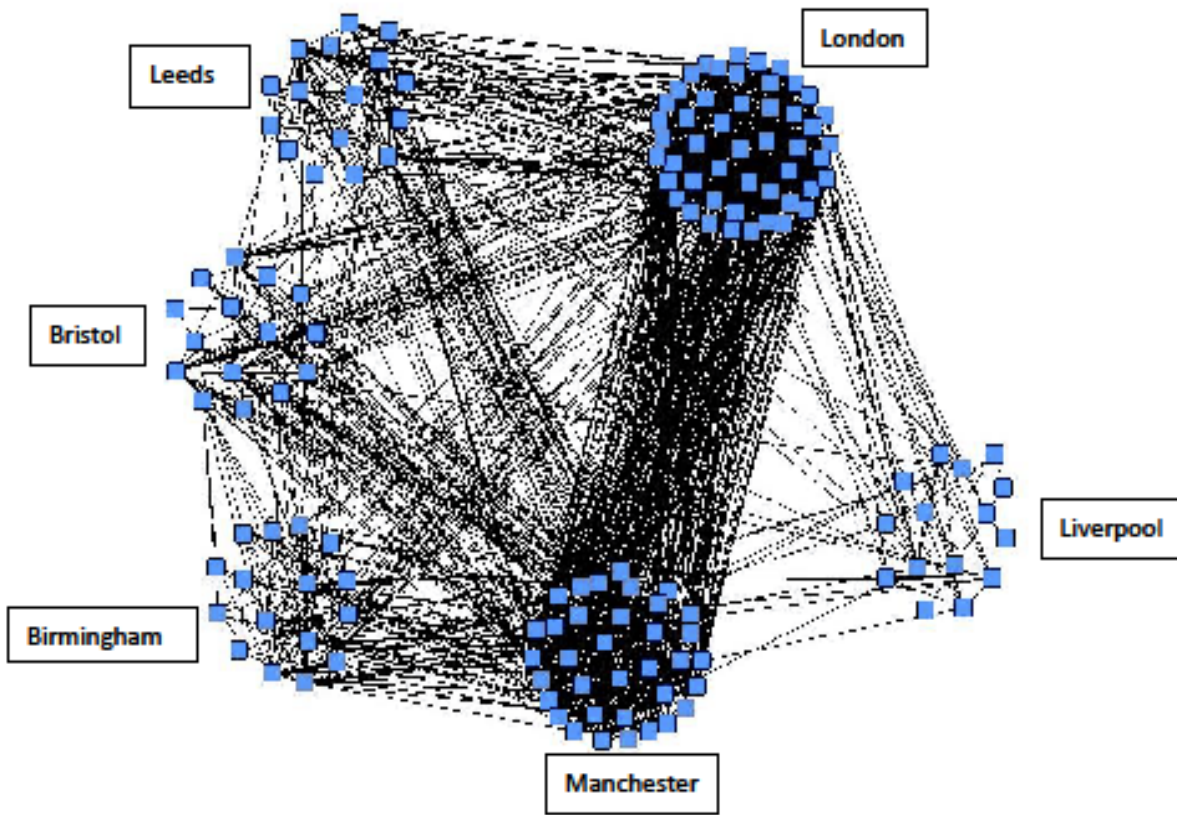


Figure 3. Key Gigs and Localities in the UK's Trans-Local Underground Metal World, 2015

us to visualize such networks and to explore and measure their structural properties, including the patterns of segregation and clustering that might distinguish different music worlds and the internal cohesion that identifies them and contributes to their capacity for collective action. In what follows I will discuss a number of examples of this work.

Figure 2 visualizes the network of relations between the protagonists in London's pioneering punk world at the beginning of December 1976, shortly before it was catapulted into the mainstream following a televised interview with punk's seminal band, the Sex Pistols, and the moral panic that the interview triggered (see Crossley 2015a). Protagonists, who were identified as such from the secondary literature, are represented by small squares (technically "vertices"). Relations between them—which in this case include both friendships and professional-musical relations and were, again, identified from the secondary literature and various archival sources—are represented by lines connecting these vertices (technically "edges").

The network, which had been evolving over the previous twelve months, contains musicians; support personnel, who had resources, including money, that the musicians needed if they were to rehearse, perform, and record; and a number of "faces," some of whom featured alongside the Sex Pistols in the abovementioned interview and who were a key focus of early media interest in punk.<sup>3</sup> These roles are represented on the graph by the colors of the vertices: musicians are blue, support personnel pink, and "faces" green. (Where participants played more than one role, as many did, I have used their main role as of December 1976.)

Among them, the various individuals assembled in the network had all the ingredients necessary to generate the exciting and innovative local music world that punk initially was, and collectively they constituted the "critical mass" necessary for such a world. None of this would have mattered, however, had they not, over the course of 1976, converged to form a relatively dense network (see below). The high level of interconnection allowed musicians to find both fellow musicians with complementary skills, with whom they could form bands, and well-resourced support personnel to help and invest in them. In addition, the network created a safe environment for artistic experimentation (visual and sartorial as well as musical), rewarding what outsiders to the network deemed deviance and protecting and supporting those "deviants" from the hostilities to which they were sometimes subject. Moreover, the stylistic innovations cultivated within the network were also diffused by way of it. New stylistic norms took hold, which those involved were obliged to follow. At a time when long hair and flared trousers were de rigueur for young people, for example, members of the network were persuaded, and in a few cases coerced, to cut their hair short and wear tighter trousers. Finally, communication through the network ensured that audiences not only knew about and came to gigs but knew what to do when they got there—how to respond, dance, and so forth. The network facilitated the coordination necessary for collective action.

The punk world was created by its participants but is not reducible to them as an aggregate because the network connecting them, in various ways and on various levels, was a source of both opportunities for and constraints on their collective action. The existence of the network helps us to explain why and how punk emerged when and where it did. Indeed, I have suggested elsewhere that it helps to explain why critical masses of protopunks in other UK cities did not form their own punk worlds until after their London counterparts did (Crossley 2015a).

Networks cannot be taken for granted, of course. Analysis must focus on and explain their formation (and perhaps dissolution), as well as their effects. But they are important aspects of musicking and music worlds, and we should be cognizant of them and of their effects.

In my second example, the 148 vertices in Figure 3 are not individual actors but rather underground heavy metal gigs (including a few small festivals) that were staged in one of six UK cities between February and April 2015 and attended by one or more of 474 underground metal enthusiasts surveyed by myself and a colleague (Emms and Crossley 2018). For illustrative purposes, the nodes in the graph have been grouped according to their locality. They are linked where they share one or more participants. (We know exactly how many they share

	Birmingham	Bristol	Leeds	Liverpool	London	Manchester
Birmingham						
Bristol	.02					
Leeds	.03	.02				
Liverpool	.05	.02	.06			
London	0.7	.03	.07	.06		
Manchester	.09	.04	.11	.14	.14	

Table 1. Densities within and between Localities

and can use this information for purposes of analysis.) If one of our survey participants attended four of the gigs we asked them about, for example, then we count each of the four as connected to each of the three others.

In contrast to Figure 2, whose participants were concentrated in a single city, Figure 3 captures a trans-local music world, constituted in some part by the willingness of audiences to travel between localities to see their favorite artists. (Artists contribute to trans-locality too, by touring, though that is not captured in this particular network snapshot.) Our analysis was particularly focused on this trans-locality. This is not the place to reproduce this analysis in detail, but a brief elaboration would be illuminating. I begin with a reflection upon density.

The term “density” refers to the number of ties observed between all nodes in a specified set, divided by the number of potential ties for that set. It is typically a figure between 0 (which would indicate no ties at all between nodes in the set) and 1 (which would indicate that every tie that could be observed is observed). The set in question might include all of the nodes in the network or a subset of them, such as “all nodes from a particular locality.” For example, there were sixteen underground metal gigs in Birmingham during the time period we surveyed. If we allow one connection between every possible pair of gigs, there would be 120 (i.e.,  $\frac{16 \cdot 15}{2}$ ) possible connections.<sup>4</sup> Of the 120 possible connections in our survey, we observed 38 connections, giving a density of 0.32 (i.e.,  $\frac{38}{120}$ ). When we do this calculation both for each locality and between pairs of localities, we derive the set of scores shown in Table 1.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we found a greater density between gigs within any given locality than between gigs in different localities. Moreover, using a permutation test we were able to establish that this finding is very unlikely to be due to chance.<sup>5</sup> We interpreted the existence of these localized pockets of dense connection as evidence for the existence of local music worlds. Most of the movement between gigs is occurring within localities, suggesting that those localities are nexus of musical activity. However, we do observe connections between localities (e.g., between gigs in Manchester and London). Our network comprises both dense local clusters (local metal worlds) and connections across these clusters. This allows us to speak of a trans-local metal world. Moreover, we can compare the density of connection between different cities, determining which are closely connected and which are not. In this case we were able to determine that Manchester and London were hubs in this trans-local music world; trans-local ties tended to center on these cities. Fans who travel typically travel between Manchester or London and one other city, but they travel less often between the rest of the cities in the study.

This study focused exclusively on underground metal, with locality as a variable. In a further study, we examined music festivals representing different musical styles (chiefly jazz, metal, folk, and an eclectic blend of more mainstream styles), linked in this case by the artists playing at them, and we found something similar (Crossley and Emms 2016). There was a greater density of connection between festivals representing the same style (e.g., jazz) than between festivals representing different styles, and this generated clustering in the network, which

we interpreted as evidence of the existence of distinct stylistic music worlds. Again, there were also connections between clusters/worlds, linking them in a connected musical universe. Moreover, in this case we observed that the cluster of “mainstream” festivals formed a hub in the network. Density was highest within stylistic clusters, but each of these clusters was also relatively densely connected to the mainstream cluster. This points to the relative importance of the mainstream in the musical universe.

## CONCLUSION

I have offered only the briefest of sketches of the music world idea here. More to the point, however, the music world concept is just one way in which we might develop Small’s suggestive and fecund notion of musicking. Beginning with what is a relatively simple idea—that music is an activity rather than an object—he suggests a new way of thinking about music and approaching its study. This approach emphasizes practices and relations. It brings listeners to the fore, demanding that we scholars attend to the work that listeners perform but also that we look beyond recordings and scores to recognize the work of performers, composers, and assorted “support personnel.” And it challenges traditional hierarchies and distinctions within music research, including the divide between musicology and the social scientific study of music.

In this article, I have suggested developments of these ideas centering on embodiment (“body techniques”), on one side, and on the “music worlds” constituted by the interactions and relations of cohesively bonded clusters of musickers, on the other. There is clearly much to be done to build on these developments. For example, Suisman’s (2018) reflections on the usefulness of the concept of musicking for historians (discussed above) and Becker’s (1982) discussion of the notion of resources suggest that “musicking” affords new ways of conceptualizing and analyzing the political economy of music. Exchanges of resources are no longer relegated to the external context of music but rather characterize the very interactions constitutive of music, allowing us to explore in detail the effect of the various flows of resources in and out of particular music worlds. Relatedly, we can follow Prior (2018) and observe that more work is to be done to draw out the impact of technology on musicking and its role therein (see also Loughridge 2021); however, it is evident that the concept of musicking furthers the analysis of technology by, again, liberating it from its previous position as part of the external context of music and drawing it into the very work of music. The doing of music is technologically mediated doing.

Finally, the concept of musicking ought to facilitate greater and more revealing cross-cultural and historical comparison, as well as comparative work across different music worlds within the same society at the same time. At least some of the inspiration and impetus behind Small’s formulation of the “musicking” concept derives from his familiarity with and admiration of a number of African musicking practices. To date, however, there seems to be very little work applying the musicking concept outside of the Western context where Small was working (although, see Oehrle 2016). This is perhaps because ethnomusicologists working in these contexts have their own ways of capturing what Small seeks to capture and therefore have less need of his concept. If this is so, however, Small’s work still has the value of suggesting that all music can and should be approached in this way and thereby lays a common ground on which comparative studies might be based.

## NOTES

1. Individuals who are profoundly deaf often feel these vibrations and thereby experience sound (Cripps, Rosenblum, and Small 2015; Holmes 2017; Best 2018). This is consistent with my argument because sound in this case remains an experiential phenomenon and remains dependent on the sentience of the experiencing being for its existence.

2. Discussing the “uses” to which I put “my body” might seem to suggest that “my body” is an object external to me, which I merely own (like my car), thereby invoking the mind/body dualism that Small rejects. However, this is not what Mauss means. For him, I am my body, and training my body is training myself.

3. The term “face” is sometimes used to denote individuals, often audience members, who enjoy a degree of celebrity within a music world. This usage was popularized by Alan Fletcher’s (1979) novel *Quadrophenia*, a fictional account of the world of the Mods in Britain in the 1960s, and received even greater attention when the novel was adapted as a film. The soundtrack to the film includes a song by the Who (playing as the High Numbers) called “I’m the Face.”

4. Each of the sixteen gigs could be connected to each of the fifteen others, so we multiply 16 by 15. However, this counts each connection twice (that is, gig A’s connection to gig B and vice versa) so we divide by 2.

5. A permutation test is a common technique in social network analysis. The network represented in Figure 3 can be represented as a matrix. By randomly mixing up (“permuting”) the figures in that matrix and remeasuring density within and between localities, we can determine how likely it is that our originally observed density values came about by chance.

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