

## Why IASPM?

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### THE CASE FOR IASPM

One of the most radical changes in the everyday life of inhabitants in industrialised nations is surely that brought about by the advent of the mass media. This has meant profound changes for the production, dissemination and reception of music. Such a development is historically unprecedented and has only recently become a matter for general concern. Mass media music is a comparatively neglected area for serious study although sound recording has existed for more than a century.

### Interdisciplinary Reasons

Despite persistent notions of 'absolute music' and 'high art', music itself has never been conveniently separable from the rest of human activity and communication. And yet its **interdisciplinary** character seems only to have become evident once again since the advent of musical mass production and distribution.

During the past hundred years composers, writers, arrangers, musicians, choreographers, costume designers, scenographers and publishers have been joined by technicians, sound engineers, cover designers, camera crews, advertisers, market researchers, economists, psychologists, sociologists, etc. in the production of music for mass markets.

This specialisation and coordination of labour follows the general pattern of production in industrialised society. However, whereas modern cultural production and distribution (including music) is characterised by both specialisation of labour and interdisciplinary coordination, the study of mass media music is generally conducted in the splendid isolation of individual disciplinary traditions.

For example, some musicians may be trying to work out alternative forms of expression, production, performance and distribution for what they see as a new sociocultural situation while someone at the sociology department of a nearby university might be studying the role of music in a similar culture or sub-culture. Similarly, perhaps a psychologist might be studying particular patterns of music reception while a musicologist is trying to analyse aspects of musical meaning and expression in the same area. All this could be going on while educationalists are trying to produce new teaching materials for school pupils nurtured on rock, TV commercials and film music and while members of cultural committees or local councils decide how best to spend their ever-decreasing music budget.

In other words, the practical levels of making music in society and the theoretical levels of explaining the nature and function of music in industrialised society are separated from each other outside the area of commercial production and distribution. Moreover, the various academic disciplines concerned with different aspects of the same phenomenon seem to live in mutual isolation. This is why there is an obvious need for interdisciplinary cooperation and coordination in the study of popular music.

### International Reasons

The production and distribution of music in the modern media is also international in a number of ways (and to varying extents). Certain forms of rock, pop, film music, advertising music, jingles, background ('functional') music, etc. are often produced by multinational concerns for distribution through various media for similar functions in many different countries. And yet there is hardly any international information available about this phenomenon. Even when popular music assumes different forms in different nations, regions and sub-cultures, it is possible that such variations can be interpreted as different expressions of reaction to a general tendency in the whole of international industrialised society. The explanation of diverse musical utterances in similar sociocultural situations also requires international coordination and cooperation. All this means that any organisation seeking to promote the understanding of music in modern society should be not only interdisciplinarily but also internationally constituted. And this is what IASPM aims to be.

**Philip Tagg** (Secretary).