

# What Makes Us Musical Animals? Cognition, Biology and the Origins of Musicality

07 – 11 April 2014 @Snellius

The focus of this Distinguished Lorentz Fellowship workshop at the Lorentz Center@Snellius venue was to discuss the cognitive and biological nature and origins of musicality. The primary aim of the workshop was to identify the basic mechanisms that make up musicality, their function and development, as well as effective ways to probe and study them. The secondary aim of the workshop was to put further constraints on evolutionary theories of musicality by evaluating recent findings from the fields of biology, musicology, neurology, computer science, genetics, anthropology and psychology.

The workshop consisted of a series of morning and afternoon sessions, with plenty of time in between for informal discussion. The morning sessions were plenary and intended to inform all the participants on a particular subtopic. The afternoons started with a plenary session that was led by two moderators that framed and introduced the potential discussion topics. The morning plenary was followed by three parallel Working Sessions (each made up of 6 - 8 participants), the outcome of which was reported back at the end of the day in a plenary session. This resulted at the end of the week in a number of current issues that formed the basis for an outline of a foreseen publication.

The workshop would be considered a success if consensus was reached on what cognitive mechanisms and biological functions might be fundamental to musicality and how to probe these in human and nonhuman animals. This was indeed the case (A total of 20+ issues were agreed upon). Every Working Session (nine in total) resulted in a report with a list of issues on which the group agreed and on which there was disagreement. These documents formed the basis of about ten consortiums that worked on a chapter proposal. On the last day the topics of the Working Session were once more discussed and a potential outline of a publication on Musicality was agreed upon.

During the workshop we all agreed that the topic is more than timely, and a Special Issue should be preferred over a book. In the week after the workshop we were invited by the Commissioning Editor of *Philosophical Transactions B* (the 2 (of 2) oldest scientific journals, Impact Factor 6) to submit a Theme Issue on Musicality, appearing in the Spring of 2015. In addition, quite some discussion went in how to take advantage of the apparent momentum of the topic. An ERC Advanced Grant application is currently under consideration. A book, based on the Theme Issue but elaborated with more review papers, is also under consideration.

Several media were interested in the topic of the workshop (including the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* and the talkshow *Pauw & Witteman*). However, we decided to respond only to requests that did not press for time. The *New Scientist* will publish a feature article on musicality and the evolution of music this summer.

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