

The GMTH has launched an international lecture series comprising music theory/analysis papers and panels with subsequent discussions, to be held about three times per year. We are proud to announce that the series will be launched with an opening lecture by Prof. Kofi Agawu (Distinguished Professor at The Graduate Center, City University of New York). His talk on **25 April 2022, 7.30 pm CEST** is entitled »Rethinking (American) Music Theory, with African Aid«. Anyone interested is invited to register through [this form](#).

Die Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie hat eine internationale Vortragsreihe ins Leben gerufen, bei der etwa drei Mal pro Jahr musiktheoretische Fachvorträge oder Panels mit anschließenden Diskussionen vorgesehen sind. Für den Auftakt der Reihe konnte Prof. Dr. Kofi Agawu (The Graduate Center, City University of New York) gewonnen werden. Sein Eröffnungsvortrag am **25. April 2022, 19:30 Uhr MESZ** trägt den Titel »Rethinking (American) Music Theory, with African Aid«. Interessierte melden sich bitte über [dieses Formular](#) an.

Rethinking (American) Music Theory, with African Aid

Research into music theory in the Western academy has traditionally focused on Western 'Classical' music. Recent globalizing and post-globalizing trends have engendered a broadening of repertoires to include non-canonical music (including popular music), non-Western music (from Southeast Asia, India, China, and Africa), and miscellaneous sound sources, be they ring tones, protest songs or urban soundscapes. In this talk, I join in affirming these new developments by suggesting that the quotidian practice of music theory in the Anglo-American academy stands to be enriched specifically by greater contact with Black African music. At the core of the chapter are eight platforms drawn from my 2016 book, *The African Imagination in Music*, upon which the engagement with African music might proceed. Setting these platforms into relief requires that we rehearse music theory's previous encounters with the non-West. Here it emerges that at different points in history the non-West has played variable roles in the Western imaginary. These roles foster a range of attitudes, from downright dismissal of the music of others through exoticization to acknowledgement and genuine appreciation. To rethink music theory with African aid, therefore, is to retrieve from the margins of theory's own history the sorts of engagement that have become ethical imperatives in our time. I end the talk on a pedagogical note by advocating two practices: transcription (of African musics into various standard notations to facilitate analysis) and contrapuntal reading (after Edward Said), with its potential to unveil unsuspected parallels between compositions and performances of diverse, perhaps even far-flung origins, and in the process, expose deep-lying convergences in the ways in which human beings imagine and make music.



Kofi Agawu was born in Ghana, where he received his initial education before studying composition and analysis in the UK and musicology in the US. He is currently Distinguished Professor at The Graduate Center, City University of New York. His books include *Playing with Signs* (1991), *African Rhythm* (1996), *Music as Discourse* (2008) and *The African Imagination in Music* (2016). He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship (1991), the Dent Medal (1992), and the Harrison Medal (2009). A Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, he is also Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and Honorary Member of the Royal Musical Association.