

Stillingsplan Comments: Devine

I am writing these comments about the revisions to the stillingsplan while wearing my Head of Research hat. I'm sorry that several of my comments are about how we should *think about* the stillingsplan, rather than direct and practical comments on / arguments for what should be included in the stillingsplan itself. But it seems crucial to get our thoughts in order before setting about our work.

My starting point for the stillingsplan discussion is that we should begin with a clean slate, as far as that is possible. In previous rounds of hiring it has been productive to prioritize and expand designated "fields" of research and teaching. In the present context, I am concerned that arguing in favour of "fields" could mean that our own intellectual affiliations and musical predilections may actually get in the way of what is best for our team and the future of IMV writ large.

Additionally, while I acknowledge that we've had some flops in trying to hire for the so-called Nordic position and the so-called popular music position, I do not think that these flops are automatic justifications to pursue additional hires in these directions. Things have changed on many fronts, at IMV and HF, which means that our non-recruitment for the Nordic and popular music positions offer a unique opportunity to respond to changes that have taken place since those positions were conceived and announced (e.g. budgetary issues). I'm not saying that we should dismiss the idea of hiring in these areas. All I'm saying is that we need to think carefully about whether things have changed to the extent that we may now have other priorities.

Of course, the stillingsplan should also function as a kind of wish-list for the kind of research-and-teaching institution we want to be. On this front, there are lots of good ideas in the previous stillingsplan and I am sure that many more good ideas will be presented in this round of revisions—which is terrific. My own conviction here is that we ought to do more to decolonize our department. This is not simply a matter of revising our curricula to include non-western musics (which of course we should also do). Decolonization is not a metaphor, as they say. To decolonize our curricula (and our research) in the interest of responding to (and helping to shape) a changing world and a changing Norway would mean hiring someone who is committed to studying, resounding, and working with those people, those ways of life, those ways of knowing, and those musics/sounds (as well as those scholars themselves) that have been systemically disadvantaged when it comes to having their perspectives taken seriously in public discourse and intellectual work, whether in historical terms or in terms of contemporary musical communities and musical practice (or, ideally, both). As a publicly-funded and public-serving institution, I would argue that this is one of our most important responsibilities to the students, the general public, and the intellectual community that we serve.

In any case, my understanding of the situation at IMV is that the most important issue for us right now, and moving forward, is teaching. It appears that we should be thinking in terms of which teaching areas need additional resources. There are three obvious gaps, again as I understand things. One is the historical period 1600–1900 (regardless of methodological approach or geographical focus or genre expertise). Another is music production. And another is the hole left by Kristian. I hasten to add here that mere gap filling or retirement/departure replacements are not necessarily strong rationales for intellectual work or hiring initiatives. Just because a gap exists, or just because we have said (or will soon say)

farewell to valued colleagues who do certain kinds of work, this does not automatically mean that we should fill those holes. Gaps can be strategic. They can be politically, intellectually, and educationally deliberate—as well as productive and beneficial. And, for those same reasons, we may choose not to replace certain kinds of lost expertise. Again, I'm not suggesting that we definitely should not fill certain gaps. I'm only suggesting that we should think carefully about this matter. In any case, if we are responding to teaching needs and thinking about our students' needs, then the areas of 1600–1900 and production and MCT seem to require coverage.

My position as Head of Research means that, with this focus on teaching needs, I'd nevertheless emphasize our need to hire people (in whatever areas) who are research active and likely to generate external funding as well as to contribute to the research environment at IMV. (This would of course lead to additional buyouts, which would, like our RITMO buyouts, put us in a difficult position regarding temporary replacement hires. Yet these are issues that have to be taken up at higher levels. Our own departmental commitment should be to hiring world-class scholar-teachers.)

One idea that has been discussed in the past is to hire someone who is a scholar-teacher in music production. The Art of Record Production organization has many people who do such work (and not just in so-called popular music). However, this idea was doused because we worried that we'd end up with someone who was neither a top producer nor a top scholar but who was, instead, mediocre in both areas. I understand that concern. It may be worth revisiting this idea, though, because needs are needs. Plus, we don't know what kinds of applicants we would attract. There are also lots of sound artists out there who are doing interesting research. They may be worth thinking about in terms of offering teaching in recording methods and production techniques as well as research into musical and sonic practices. Just an idea. And if we decide we need someone with expertise in the historical period 1600–1900, I support the wording of that position in the current stillingsplan—which is open in terms of method, approach, geography, and genre, and which places emphasis on someone who is engaged with bringing the musics of that period to life in contemporary musical culture in Norway (which is not the same as “Norwegian” or “Nordic” music as such).