



Meredith Nicoll

**“Folksongs of Our Time”: Song Production as Discourse in the GDR 1961-1967
(Arbeitstitel)**

Abstract

Meredith Nicoll’s current research focuses on song production as a discourse of national identity in the early years of the German Democratic Republic. While composers and musicologists in the West shied away from traditional singing practices which had been appropriated by the Nazis and instead doubled down on romantic goals of creating elite, autonomous music, many composers and musicologists in the East sought to create a wealth of new repertoire to be sung by the public at large. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, members of the Association of Composers and Musicologists of the GDR (VKM) created a discourse with and around the production of “folksongs of [their] time” with the explicit aim of what Nicoll calls a “folksongization,” i.e., canonizing a new repertoire that would support, reify and develop a national identity. This isolated performative turn created alternative singing cultures, a mass of musical publications, as well as unique definitions of genre, performance and compositional ideals that competed with institutionalized aesthetic expectations of compositional success. Nicoll’s dissertation aims to analyze this discourse in order to provide alternative views on performative history of German music and insight into the relationship between vocal performance and identity.