

## Fellows



**Benjamin K. Korstvedt**  
IFK\_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship  
01. March 2007 bis 30. June 2007

**Benjamin K. Korstvedt**

## **PROJECT TITLE**

Rhetorical excess and the cultural unconscious in Viennese music criticism

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Music was a distinctively meaningful cultural form in late nineteenth-century Viennese culture and a lively tradition of music criticism, published in the popular press and characterized by vociferous declarations of critical approval and especially disapproval, grew up around the city's flourishing concert life. The best, most successful music critics voiced their opinions strongly, often in inflammatory and partisan tones. Many modern scholars feel that such rhetorical excess weakened the authority of this criticism by obviating reasonable discussion and blunting fair judgment. My approach, however, begins with the insight that far from undermining the validity of music criticism, verbal extremity played an essential role in enabling meaning by connecting criticism with unspoken, and perhaps unspeakable, cultural assumptions and prejudices. Therefore, rather than concentrating on the aesthetic validity of the opinions offered by different critics, my purpose is to treat music criticism as a window onto the meaning of concert music by rethinking the relationship between criticism's verbal texts, its cultural pretexts, and the sounding forms of the music it addressed. The particular aim of the project is to explore how the act of listening, as reflected in the often extreme words of music criticism, engaged important cultural concerns, notably the competing claims of reason and the non-rational, in order to reconstruct how these themes were made manifest musically in the minds and ears of listeners.

## **CV**

Associate Professor of Music at Clark University, Worcester

## **Publications**

(among others): Anton Bruckner in the Third Reich and After: an Essay on Ideology and Bruckner Reception, in: *The Musical Quarterly*, 80, 1996