

Curriculum Vitae (last update: Sept 2018)

Rainer Polak (Dr. phil.), music researcher

Position

current Post-Doctoral Researcher
 Department of Music
 Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics

Contact

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Research interests

- rhythm performance and perception
- West-African drumming and dance; drum-dance relationships
- music in/as culture
- cultural variation in music perception and cognition

Education

2002 Dr. phil., Bayreuth University
 (Social Anthropology)

1996 M.A., Bayreuth University
 (Social Anthropology, African Languages, and African History)

Research grants, fellowships, stipends, and awards

2016 research grant (12 months), German Research Council (DFG)

2011–15 research grant (42 months), German Research Council (DFG)

2006–07 post-doc research fellowship (24 months), German Research Council (DFG)

2004 book publication stipend, German Research Council (DFG)

2004 best dissertation thesis award 2003/04, German African Studies Association (VAD)

1996–99 doctoral research fellowship (36 months), German Research Council (DFG)

Research experience

1991–2002 (undergraduate and doctoral research)

- issues: performance of jembe drum ensemble music for vernacular dance events in Mali; emic conceptualization of instrumental music as work (not art); embeddedness and change in social processes of urbanization, professionalization, commodification, and globalization
- fieldwork: six periods in Mali, summing up to 20 months
- research methods: radically participant observation (music apprenticeship and performance); qualitative and quantitative social research; music analysis

2006–today (research as postdoc and principal investigator)

- issues: rhythm performance and perception
- character: empirical, interdisciplinary, and increasingly collaborative
- methods: multi-track audio-visual field recordings; chronometric performance timing analysis; controlled experiments in fieldwork situations; participant observation
- fieldwork: six periods in Mali, summing up to 15 months

Free-lance professional work

- jembe music teaching (performance, music theory, and social, cultural, and historical contexts) at all levels, yet with a focus on professional development classes for jembe-teachers in the German-speaking countries.
- concerts and workshops in Europe (organization and ensemble member), with artists from Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinée: years 2000, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013, and 2014.
- radio features for Bayern 4 Klassik (Bavarian State Broadcast)
- CD editions (conception, liner notes, recordings)

Membership in professional societies

- International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), life member
- Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), life member
- Percussion Creativ (German division of Percussive Arts Society), regular member