

Analyses on the History, Form, and Use of the Essen Folksong Collection

Abstract

Cited in over 200 scholarly articles covering a vast assortment of fields including music theory, corpus study research, music cognition, empirical musicology, computational modeling, and folk song research, the Essen Folksong Collection is one of the most popular and widely used corpora of musical material of the past two decades (Schaffrath 1995). While the popularity of the Essen Collection manifests primarily from its usefulness as a large corpus of monophonic musical data, much of the scholarly literature involving the collection, consciously or otherwise, allows this popularity to help scholars avoid addressing the Collection's rather foggy origins and structure. Since its assemblage in 1995, questions concerning the content and background of the Essen Collection have gone largely unanswered. Through the use of comprehensive meta-analyses, personal interviews, and detailed examination of primary sources, this paper seeks to address many issues concerning the organization, content, origins, and development of the Essen Collection.