

Approved by the Regents  
May 15, 2008

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Vanessa H. Agnew, assistant professor of Germanic languages and literatures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Germanic languages and literatures, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	1998	University of Wales
M.A.	1991	New York University
B.Mus.	1987	University of Queensland

Professional Record:

2001 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures and Affiliated Faculty, Museum Studies Program, University of Michigan
1998 – 1999	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan

Summary Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Agnew has expanded the Department’s curriculum and made it the home of courses that approach German music as a cultural idiom within a global horizon. Her use of performance in several undergraduate classes is particularly remarkable and has invigorated the students’ level of engagement. She has been a member of six dissertation committees, two of them on-going, and is actively involved in mentoring several graduate students in Germanic languages and literatures. On all levels, she is an ingenious, committed, and successful teacher who excels in seminars and small classes.

Research – Professor Agnew’s first book is forthcoming from one of the premier university presses. Other publications include several peer-reviewed articles as well as book chapters and encyclopedia entries. She has begun publishing on a second major research project on historical re-enactment. Her writings explore intersections among multiple areas of research: cultural history, eighteenth-century studies, the history of colonial encounters, and German studies. Above all, she is a pioneer who pushes the transnational edge in German cultural history. Her work has found ready recognition in her field as well as in other disciplines.

Recent and Significant Publications:

*Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds*, Oxford University Press, in production.

“Listening to others: Eighteenth-century encounters in Polynesia and their reception in German musical thought,” Special Issue on the Pacific in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 41(2), 2008, pp. 165-188.

“History’s affective turn: Historical reenactment and its work in the present,” Special Issue on historical reenactment (V. Agnew, ed.), *Rethinking History*, 11(3), 2007, pp. 299-312.

Service – Professor Agnew has served on several committees within the Department, including a lecturer review committee and the executive committee. She has organized or co-organized events, including the Werner Griik lecture, and served on the selection committee for the Global Ethnic Literatures Seminar (GELS) in Comparative Literature. She has been a reader for several academic journals in the profession and is the co-editor of a book series with Palgrave press.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“She has already made significant contributions to German studies in several different arenas of research and debate, and her future work promises much more of her signature combination of sophisticated theoretical musings and fresh, sometimes startling historical insights. I don’t think it’s going too far to say that Vanessa’s work is helping to shape German studies as a collective undertaking...”

Reviewer (B)

“...Dr. Agnew’s publications are bold and eloquent, and she has built a distinguished record as one of the most original scholars of our day. ...I read *Enlightenment Orpheus* as a major contribution to the deeper understanding of ethnography, anthropology, and ethnomusicology. It does so many things so very well that one can have no doubt whatsoever that it will be paradigm-setting for a truly new cultural history of music.”

Reviewer (C)

“The book [*Enlightenment Orpheus*...] is wide in its range of reference: British, German and even French musicology...eighteenth-century musical composition and performance...travel literature, intellectual history, history of aesthetics, and the history of South Pacific exploration. It is not clear that there is another scholar who could have produced it.”

Reviewer (D)

“Professor Agnew is an extremely talented, resourceful, and already accomplished scholar who ranks as one of the best and most interesting of her generation in the discipline of German Studies. Her research and writing is engaging, sharp, challenging, solidly researched, and of great intelligence. She will certainly emerge as a prolific leader of our field in the years to come.”

Reviewer (E)

“...Agnew’s radical reinterpretation of the Orpheus myth brings the chamber of music into company with those other locales of knowledge in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries—the laboratory, the studio, the eidophysikon, and the voyage—where modern investigators...have located an energy, voice and autonomy in things parallel to that which Agnew is locating in music. ... So here is someone with a broad and intricate knowledge of a fascinating side of the Enlightenment who is also an architect of a whole new branch of intellectual enquiry.”

Reviewer (F)

“In these various publications of striking originality, it becomes clear that Professor Agnew is a first-class intellect, widely read both in the history of political, social, and cultural ideas across Europe and in contemporary theory of all sorts. Indeed, she is able to press a wide range of

current thinkers...into the service of her analyses in often surprising yet always convincing ways, but (in some contrast to other cultural studies scholars) she never sacrifices historical sensitivity to theoretical flourish.”

Reviewer (G)

“First off, there is nothing else quite like *Enlightenment Orpheus*. Agnew has aptly recognized a fundamental yet essentially overlooked reality concerning the principles that underwrite early-modern musical aesthetics. ...this is significant scholarship that holds promise for far more than the history of music.”

Reviewer (H)

“The study of global encounters tends to attract scholars of unusual imagination, a quality that certainly characterizes Agnew’s work. If one compares this to other first books from literary or cultural studies, what stands out in addition is her unusual historical erudition. ... Agnew’s archival research as well as her wide reading in printed historical sources turn her work into a real dialogue partner for historians, unlike literary and cultural studies that work from ‘theory’ back to historical subjects.”

Reviewer (I)

“...Vanessa has established herself as one of the important voices [of her generation] in research on German colonialism, and one of the leading researchers on European cultural contact with the South Seas in the period of the late-Enlightenment. With her forthcoming book, she will further secure her position as a force to be reckoned with in any discussions of comparative culture, performance and musical form in 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany and England.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Agnew is a cutting-edge scholar whose expertise, accomplishments, and vision are far-reaching. Her courses have broadened the teaching mission of the department. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Assistant Professor Vanessa H. Agnew be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Germanic languages and literatures, with tenure, in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Terrence J. McDonald  
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,  
Professor of History, and Dean  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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