

**For Graduate Students of Musicology:  
Six Thoughts on Professional Writing within the Discipline**

1. To decide to become a musicologist is to decide to become a professional writer. True, one's musical and theoretical background must be solidly grounded, but becoming a writer is different in fundamental ways from becoming what is normally considered to be a "musician." Turning musical material into words now becomes primary. One's definition of oneself becomes as literary as it is musical—perhaps even more so.
2. Once one has decided to enter the scholarly life, or the life of reflection, writing is the most serious thing that one can do. It is no by-product of the "real thing." It is the "real thing."
3. Every sentence that you write not only invites others to assess your intellectual qualifications, but it also proclaims the level of thought and care that you believe your chosen subject deserves.
4. Carl Dahlhaus on the impact of Theodor Adorno: "Große Philosophen haben selten etwas von Musik verstanden über das Maß bürgerlicher Allgemeinbildung hinaus. Auf der andere Seite waren Musiker selten Philosophen. Und das war es wohl, was unserer Generation einen so tiefen Eindruck gemacht hat. Und ich sehe darum Adornos Bedeutung . . . zu einem großen Teil darin, daß er ein Niveau festgesetzt hat, auf dem über Musik geschrieben kann. . . . Von Adorno kann man unter anderem auch lernen, daß man heute vielleicht nicht über Musik mehr sinnvoll schreiben kann, wenn man gänzlich literaturfremd ist." (Dahlhaus, et al., "Was haben wir von Adorno gehabt?", *Musica* 24 [1970], 436-37.)
5. As reported in *The New York Times* (6 November 1988, p. 30, in the wake of a pernicious "computer-virus" scandal), a colleague of the computer-security specialist Robert Morris of the National Security Center described him as follows: "He views his work as an incredibly complex set of abstractions. . . . If you ask him a question, he will say: 'What level are you looking at? Are you looking for what's obvious or what's subtle, or what's buried beneath it?'"
6. As a matter of principle, one should spend as little time as possible with the obvious.