

From Authorship and Spectatorship to Usership in Music

21-22 February 2019

Orpheus Institute (Ghent, Belgium)

From car-sharing to international housing networks, recent shifts in consumer behaviour have demonstrated increased demand for high-quality services over the ownership of things. In such a 'usership economy', opportunities have arisen for dialogue between 'user' and 'provider'. Consumers now anticipate the implementation of their feedback.

In the performing arts, participatory, immersive spectatorship is commonplace, and in the political economy of music, funding follows usership in its various modes. As musicians working in contemporary culture, we might see ourselves as having moved from a polarised situation of authorship and spectatorship to a common state of usership. As theorist Stephen Wright suggests, 'Usership represents a radical challenge to at least three stalwart conceptual institutions in contemporary culture: spectatorship, expert culture, and ownership.' (*Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, Museum of Arte Útil, Van Abbemuseum, 2013).

Composers, performers, promoters and interested listeners all search for ways of shaking off their conventional roles in musical experience: composers curate 'shows', performers give talks, academics make *YouTube* videos; promoters and arts organizations, meanwhile, maximize 'opportunity'. Yet, the very stuff of musical experience – its sonic materials, its performance practices, its listening conventions – carries the author-spectator relationship forward to such an extent that contemporary, musical activity is often a matter of adopting conscious strategies for escape.

CALL FOR PROPSALS ****Deadline extended to 8 December****

Proposals (c. 200 words) for 20-minute presentations are invited from artists/researchers working in all areas of music practice and theory. Alternative modes of presentation, including performance-based presentation/demonstration/film, are particularly welcome. Please include details of any specific technological requirements along with your proposal. The convenors hope to produce a publication developed from selected presentations at this seminar.

Topics might include:

- Perspectives on usership in music from other arts, other disciplines - fine art, live art, theatre etc.
- Historical and ethnomusicological concepts of musical use and the 'user'. Is this issue entirely modern, Western?
- Consequences of usership for aesthetic or critical criteria in music studies.
- The intersection of usership with rhetorical approaches to older music.
- Future virtuosity, future expertise in user-oriented musical performance.
- Socio-political implications of music in a 'usership economy'.
- Creating dialogue with 'users' through alternative structures for education, societies, festivals, labels, outreach.
- Ethical issues surrounding different modes of usership in music.
- Musical activity after the concert/new modes of engagement.
- Going beyond presentational gimmick to a state of real transformation.
- The roles of consensus and individualism in a usership culture.
- The role and relevance of Western Art Music within a usership culture.

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Please upload proposals by **8 December 2018**: www.airtable.com/shrIMmZWHeLqeOIUE

We aim to send notifications of acceptance by 15 December.