

ORPHEUS

INSTITUUT

SOUND WORK

Composition as Critical Technical Practice

Orpheus Research Seminar 2016

21-23 November 2016, Ghent, Belgium

MONDAY 21 NOVEMBER

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|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14:00 | Welcome Jonathan Impett , director of research Orpheus Institute, Ghent |
| 14:30 | Keynote 1 <i>Nicolas Collins</i> , Professor of Sound at SAIC, Chicago |
| 15:30 - 16:00 | BREAK |
| 16:00 - 18:00 | 4 Papers (20'+10') |
| 16:00 | <i>Johannes Bergmark</i> : Composition, Improvisation and Experimental Musical Instrument Design |
| 16:30 | <i>Tom Hall</i> : Slowness Now - A reflective approach to composing with music technologies |
| 17:00 | <i>Giovanni Varrando</i> : Composition and lutherie |
| 17:30 | <i>Thor Magnusson</i> : Designing the Threnoscope - On composing a piece turned system |
| 18:00 - 19:30 | DINNER (OWN ARRANGEMENTS) |
| 19:30 | Performance <i>Richard Craig</i> <i>Jurgen De Blonde</i> <i>Sam Hayden & Mieko Kanno</i> |

Schedule

TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER

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|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:30 - 11:00 | 3 Papers (20'+10') |
| 09:30 | <i>Sam Hayden & Mieko Kanno</i>: Live Notation as a Hybrid Composition and Performance Tool |
| 10:00 | <i>Oded Ben-Tal</i>: Modes of Collaborative Composition |
| 10:30 | <i>Aaron Einbond</i>: Reproduction as Compositional Research in the Wake of Big Data |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | BREAK |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | 3 papers (20'+10') |
| 11:30 | <i>Eduardo Abrantes</i>: Now Wait For It – Call-and- response as compositional process |
| 12:00 | <i>Scott McLaughlin</i>: Material Topologies |
| 12:30 | <i>Patricia Alessandrini</i>: Parlour Sounds - Working towards a practice-based feminist theory of music technology through a critical compositional process |
| 13:00 - 14:30 | LUNCH (IN HOUSE) |
| 14:30 - 16:00 | 3 papers (20'+10') |
| 14:30 | <i>Lula Romero</i>: Composition as Experiment |
| 15:00 | <i>Simon Waters</i>: Changing Countries' - Studio-based composition across the shift from analogue to digital technologies 1980-1995 |
| 15:30 | <i>Nicholas Brown</i>: Composition Pedagogy in an Age of Electronic Media |
| 16:00 - 16:30 | BREAK |
| 16:30 - 18:00 | 3 Papers (20'+10') |
| 16:30 | <i>Richard Craig</i>: A Work-in- Progress (the Performer as a Composer) |
| 17:00 | <i>Harald Muenz</i>: Aesthetic Phonetics - Composition-based research in a borderline area of perception |
| 17:30 | <i>Ben Dwyer</i>: 'KnowingUnknowing' - Thoughts on the dynamics of improvised and "crystalised" composition |
| 19:00 | DINNER (IN HOUSE) |

Schedule

WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER

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|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:30 - 10:30 | 2 papers (20'+10') |
| 09:30 | <i>Sandeep Baghwati</i>: Composition as Critical Technical Practice |
| 10:00 | <i>Ann M. Ward</i>: Toward a Critical Musical Practice |
| 10:30 - 11:00 | BREAK |
| 11:00 | Keynote 2 Alan Blackwell, Prof. Interdisciplinary Design, Computer Laboratory, University of Cambridge |
| 12:00 - 13:00 | Wrap up and discussion |

Schedule

MORE INFO ON THE SEMINAR

Given the prominence of the work and its author, of originality and development in Western art music, we might expect composition to be seen as the very embodiment of the notion of music as knowledge-production. Practice-as-research and artistic research have reached a relatively mature stage of assimilation and consensus, and yet the role of composition as research remains much debated in some quarters, unhelpfully unclear in others. Is this a question of communication, of discourse, of process and reflection, of composition as a cultural activity, or of its wider intellectual context?

The self-reporting of composition tends to consider the areas in which it aspires to be innovative, or the theories – musical, aesthetic, social, scientific, technological – that have informed the work, rather than research aspects of the activity of composition itself. The knowledge presented in such cases often lies outside composition. There is no shortage of investigation of the ontology and epistemology of the ‘work’ as a persisting historical cultural phenomenon, but the technologies and context of composition have undergone a paradigm shift. The present, to repurpose a phrase, is another country.

This seminar will consider composition as a research activity, as reflective critical making. Composition walks a tightrope between formalism and the arbitrary, a process informed by theory and intuition, constraint and contingency, expectation and experience. It is a continuous iterative process of inscription and reflection in which its models, metaphors, aspirations, obligations, tools and technologies all play a part. This process is distributed temporally, socially and materially. The artefacts of composition – however notated, improvised, virtual, embodied or technologically implemented – are hybrid technical objects. Neither pure ‘inspiration’ nor unmediated formalism account for what they contribute. We might rather consider composition as a design process, and study its dynamics and decisions in the spirit of *critical technical practice* – a term coined by Philip Agre in his work on the creation of the artefacts of artificial intelligence.

Keynote speakers

Nicolas Collins, Professor of Sound at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC)

Alan Blackwell, Professor of Interdisciplinary Design, University of Cambridge