

## Call for Proposals

O R P H E U S

INSTITUUT

# SOUND WORK

## Composition as Critical Technical Practice

### Orpheus Research Seminar 2016

21-23 November 2016, Ghent, Belgium

The 10th Orpheus Research Seminar offers the opportunity for contributors from around the world to gather and explore the theme of composition as critical technical practice.

This seminar – convened by Jonathan Impett - will consider composition as a research activity - 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.

#### Call for Proposals

Practitioners from all disciplines are invited to submit proposals for presentations. We particularly welcome proposals for presentations that explore the demonstration of composition as research in innovative ways.

**Deadline for Proposals: August 17, 2016.**

Send us your proposal through [info@orpheusinstituut.be](mailto:info@orpheusinstituut.be)

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## 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 (TBC)

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## DETAILS OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

We invite proposals for presentations in the form of paper, demonstration or performance, or any hybrid thereof. We particularly welcome proposals for presentations that explore the demonstration of composition as research in innovative ways.

Proposals are welcomed from researchers in areas such as critical theory, epistemology, research assessment, the study of composition and creativity, and design process in other disciplines, but especially from composers.

Presentations might relate to the following topics, among others:

- the **nature** of composition as individual and cultural activity
- the understanding of composition as a **design** process
- the **production** of knowledge through composition and the nature of that knowledge
- the **communication** of composition as research
- the **evaluation** of research aspects of composition, particularly in the absence of coherent critical context
- the embedding of composition in its own current **discourses**, or its transposition to others
- particular issues relating to **non-symbolic** modes (for example sound art, improvisation)

Proposals (abstract, brief CV and technical requirements) should be submitted through the website of Orpheus Instituut or to the email address below. Please specify whether your proposal relates to a short (20) or long (30 minute) presentation, and whether your presentation includes live music.

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Enquiries should be addressed to Jonathan Impett, [jonathan.impett@orpheusinstituut.be](mailto:jonathan.impett@orpheusinstituut.be)

Notes:

- Notification of acceptance will be made by mid-September, 2016.
- The convenors hope to produce a publication developed from selected presentations at this seminar.