Call for papers

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Music and Transcendence in a Posthuman Age
PIERRE-PÉLADEAU CENTER (UQAM), MONTREAL, FEBRUARY 23-25 2023

The purpose of this conference, organized in partnership with the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ), is to bring together composers, performers, and scholars to engage with the theme of the Montreal/New Musics Festival (MNM), “Music(s) and Spirituality,” exploring its meaning in the world today through the lens of posthumanist thought. Narratives of spirituality and transcendence tend to focus on individual human experiences or to investigate those of groups treated as homogeneous entities. The view of the composer as a mediator between the individual and the divine (or the sublime) continues to influence the composition and analysis of music characterized as “spiritual” through the composer’s stated intent, the work’s title or subject matter, or the ritualistic context of its performance. Posthumanism invites a turn away from the humanist ideal of a universal (meaning white, male, able-bodied, and heterosexual) “Man” as agent, as well as an alternative to the positioning of humanity as superior to and separate from other living organisms. It calls for a new way to view our relationship to nature, to each other, and to technology, leading us to consider the many dimensions (transversal, affective, embodied) and ecosystems in which and with which we create.

In this conference, we hope to investigate how the move away from a human-centered and humanist approach that focuses on the agency of man on his environment can help us rethink musical compositions and their relationship to spirituality. How can music help us to view the world as a connected entity and to engage with it in diverse and new ways? How can posthumanist thought bring a new perspective on contemporary music, spirituality, and ecology and on the ecosystems in which they were created and are performed today? How can an approach that takes into account our relationship to nature and to each other, our differences, and the importance of emotions and affective dimensions of music-making renew our understanding of the relationship between music and
spirituality, underlining its importance in the world today? How does the concept of the “sublime,” fundamental to nineteenth-century instrumental music, relate to the contemporary concept of transhumanism, which questions the frontiers of the “human” in this technological age? Posthumanism calls into question the centrality (and agency) of the white, male, able-bodied, and heterosexual subject; in order to explore the many dimensions of spirituality and music-making, we welcome perspectives that go beyond the Western art-music tradition.

We invite 350-word proposals for individual in-person papers (20 minutes), pre-recorded or live-streamed video lectures (20 minutes), and artists’ talks or manifestos (20 minutes) in English or French that engage with the many dimensions of spirituality and music-making. We also invite proposals for lecture-recitals (45 minutes) and roundtables or panels (up to 90 minutes). Proposals should be submitted directly through this form by 15 September 2022: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfNQYg-食品安全WfStcmxebzseOUug8aiXfjQDFPdBkrNFOJTvQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Presentations may address the work of composers who could be performed during the festival (listed below). However, we also invite proposals beyond the scope of this list and/or the classical Western tradition.


Any questions or communications may be addressed at: festivalmnm2023@gmail.com

Scientific Committee
Sandeep Bhagwati (Université Concordia/Matralab)
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Ariane Couture (Université de Sherbrooke)
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