

16<sup>th</sup> annual Congress of the GMTH (association of German-speaking Music Theory) in Hannover (Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien), 30 September – 2 October 2016

## Sound: A lucky bag or a poor cousin of music theory

The term 'sound' is widely used in music theory circles. Whether it is within contemporary classical music, the music of the late Romantic period, contemporary popular music: in all these areas there has been a tendency (possibly triggered by developments in post-avant-garde music) to discuss sound as a central, unavoidable aspect of music. This is reflected not only in the analytical and theoretical writings but also in the design of academic study programmes.

Yet, there is much debate on what we mean when we speak of ›sound‹ in the individual case: is it timbre, noise, chords, is it a complex phenomenon constituted by harmonic, instrumental, figurative and rhythmic determinants, or is it simply a lucky bag from which people can take what they choose from it? What is the difference between musical and 'extramusical' sound, and what conceptual means should we use in order to surpass a purely associative level of meaning?

By choosing sound as the topic of the sixteenth annual conference of our society, we want to highlight the potential but also the problems associated with the term. We also intend to transfer the interest in ›sound‹ from the music ›since Berlioz‹ to that of earlier centuries. While we will focus on orchestration, we shall also explore various other aspects that ›resonate‹ while we are speaking of ›sound‹: its registration, staging, expansion, its signifier character, structural and choreographic functions, and its role within compositional-historical turnovers.

We call for papers in five sections:

### 1. Terminology, historical theory and philosophy

*Keynote: Christian Grüny, Witten / Herdecke*

This section deals with fundamental questions, such as: What is ›sound‹, and how do we translate the term? Is it a synonym for harmony or musical timbre, or is it a superordinate term that covers categories such as register, texture and process? Is it an acoustic issue, or a collection of more or less synchronous performance instructions within the score? Is it an aspect of the psychology of perception, aesthetics, semiotics or sociological momentum? Is it a kaleidoscope of aural memories, which we associate with an acoustic phenomenon? Or is it a label for all those aspects of music which are non-structural, elusive, surface-level, pure 'presence'? Further, how does one distinguish between musical and extramusical sound?

### 2. Sound as a subject of composition

*Keynote: Oliver Schneller, Eastman School of Music, Rochester*

That sound has more and more (though not continuously) found a central position in compositional study, is considered to be a *fait accompli*. This section will, therefore, focus on

the music of the recent past, including rock, popular music and electronic music. Nonetheless, within the emerging historiography of music theory, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain this simplistic view. First, also in earlier centuries sound has played a formative role in the approach to music composition, and has been a mainspring for stylistic changes. Second, the way in which a particular chord is registered and performed by one single instrument, constitutes its sound similar to the representation of the same chord in a full orchestral setting. It is neither the chord itself nor its *'Tonsatz'*, but the illumination, virtual soundstaging and the resulting sound that determine its character within a given passage.

### 3. Sound as an analytical category in contemporary classical music

*Keynote: Helga de la Motte-Haber, Technische Universität Berlin (emerita)*

Since the late 1960s, there has been discussion about the analytical approaches toward those branches of contemporary music that focus to a large extent on sound, particularly since (in 1966) Pierre Schaeffer and Helmut Lachenmann presented their categories for electro-acoustic music and for (with regard to sound and playing technique) advanced instrumental music, respectively. In 1970, Rainer Wehinger demonstrated with his »Hörpartitur« (listening score) of Ligeti's electronic piece *Artikulation* the potential of graphical forms of analysis. During the 1980s and 1990s, the exponents of *musique spectrale* provided their own vocabulary necessary to understand their music. New methods of digitally analysing recordings have since been invented, while other methods focus on pure aural analysis or correlate sound with structure in individual works. This section offers an overview of the diverse methods currently in use, which should stimulate further investigation.

### 4. Sound as a partial discipline within the teaching of composition

*Keynote: Fabien Lévy, Hochschule für Musik Detmold*

Is orchestration an inherent aspect of today's music composition study? If yes, how so? Or is it now obsolete to teach orchestration, because every individual's aesthetics enforces an individual orchestration technique, turning traditional orchestration and its devices into an outdated concept?

To what extent do electronic instruments, live electronics and computer-based compositions change the compositional terrain and techniques? What happens to the technical and aesthetic endurance of composition when music production and performance is bound to a software?

In addition, this section will explore historically informed music theory. How was orchestration taught in earlier epochs? What factors influenced changes in the construction and sound production of instruments? How did new performance locations, regional schools and changing social conditions impact it?

### 5. Sound in popular music

There is one particular type of music where the conventional score is subordinate to the often complex, hard-to-analyse sound: popular music. In this field the analysis of sound has been, if anything, a major topic within musicological and music theory circles since the 1990s.

However, this remains a vague topic without an adequate, cohesive concept. Case studies, repertoire studies and aesthetic questions are possible topics for this section.

### 6. Free papers

No requirements.

Self-organised panels: sound and...

This sections could relate to the previously mentioned sections. Since ›sound‹ is a quite broad topic, several other combinations are possible.

## Application

The following formats are, as usual, possible:

- Paper (20 minutes + 10 minutes discussion)
- Book presentation (20 minutes + 10 minutes discussion)
- Workshops (length by agreement with the chair)
- Panels (max. 4 hours. The leader of a panel is free to organize the time as it seems appropriate. The following formats are possible: papers, seminars, workshops, lecture recitals, discussion rounds, etc.)

The lengths of abstracts for single papers:

- Max. 2000 characters, including spaces
- Biographical information: max. 1000 characters, including spaces

Proposals for panels should include the following information:

- Summary (max. 3500 characters, including spaces)
- Short presentation of each paper of the section (max. 2000 characters per paper, including spaces)
- Biographical information of each participant (max. 1000 characters per candidate)

If someone intends to invite other participants to his/her section, he should make use (preferably at an early stage) of the GMTH newsletter system: or contact the president of the GMTH (schroeder@mdw.ac.at).

The languages to be used at the Conference and for the abstracts are German, English and French.

Proposals should be submitted until of **May 1, 2016**, via the following forms:

Individual papers:

<http://www.gmth.de/veranstaltungen/jahreskongress/beitragsanmeldung.aspx>

Panels: <http://www.gmth.de/veranstaltungen/jahreskongress/panelanmeldung.aspx>