Call for Papers

Poetry, Music and Sound Art: Recent Medial Correlations /
Lyrik, Musik und Klangkunst: Neuere mediale Konstellationen

Conference, June 20-22, 2024 / Konferenz, 20.-22.6.2024

Warburg-Haus, Hamburg

Poetry and music have been closely intertwined since ancient times – a relationship reflected in the very term "lyric" being derived from "lyre", a musical instrument. While the modern era has been largely dominated by print poetry, the "secondary orality" of audiovisual media and the "tertiary orality" of digital culture have brought about a resurgence of diverse oral and musicalized poetic forms. They span the range from recent avant-garde transformations of the traditional genres like the art song, to pop and rap lyrics, whose ever-increasing prominence demands an expanded concept of the poetic, to sound-based art forms that exist fully outside of music – such as sound installations or soundwalks – and offer fundamentally new possibilities for sonic settings of poetry. At the same time, the popularity of new oral poetry formats such as spoken word has brought renewed attention to the musicality of poetic speech and the role of vocal stylings in the performance and perception of poetry. The international and interdisciplinary conference **Poetry, Music and Sound Art: Recent Medial Correlations** thus aims to explore how poetry is represented in musical and sonic forms in the digital age.

The conference takes place in the frame of the ERC project **Poetry in the Digital Age** at the University of Hamburg. The research project is situated between literary, cultural and interart studies. It is developing tools to analyse today's multifaceted poetry formats, ranging from pop culture to works of "high" art, by scrutinising their forms and sites of presentation and performance, ranging from the stage to social media, from the written page to urban space. Research in the project is divided into three areas, focusing on (1) poetry and performance, (2)

poetry and music and (3) poetry and visual culture. This conference is the third organised by project, after **Poetry and Contemporary Visual Culture** (2021) and **Audioliterary Poetry between Performance and Mediatisation** (2022)**.**

The conference is organised into two tracks, reflecting the reciprocal relationship between poetry and sound/music. Track 1 explores musicality inherent to current poetry: the ways sound and music are present in poetic texts, be it as an organising principle (through rhythm, intonation or form), or as subject matter. Conversely, Track 2 is dedicated to the various musical or sonic settings of poetry in the digital age: from contemporary art songs, to rap and experimental spoken word, to poetic sound installations.

Track 1: Music, sound and listening in contemporary poetry

The conference's first track approaches contemporary written and performed poetry from the perspective of sound studies and musicology. It centres on the two interrelated questions: How do we listen to poetry? And how do the poets - and their lyric personas - themselves listen? On the one hand, the popularity of poetry performances and recordings has brought the oral dimension of poetry back to the foreground, while at the same time offering a powerful tool for the research of contemporary poetic prosody. In this track we would thus like to re-examine the relationship between the written and spoken realisations of poetry in the digital age: What prosodic, rhythmic and phonetic elements are emphasised, introduced or, conversely, disregarded in the poem's performance compared to the written form and vice versa? What is the role of musicality, or *Sangbarkeit* – the ability to be sung – in contemporary poetry and spoken word? In what ways is the perception of written poetry – its "silent" reading – is influenced by the popularity of poetry recordings?

On the other hand, poetry is not only listened to but itself listens – insofar it reflects and is shaped by the listening practices and listening experiences of its authors. Alongside the musicality and sound *of* poetry, this track also explores music and sound *in* poetry - as both its theme and structuring principle. Shaped by the ever-expanding audiovisual media, the current music and sound culture is often reflected and referenced in written poetry, whether directly, through quoting pop song lyrics or meditating on everyday listening experiences, or indirectly, by adopting the formal principles of e.g. jazz or polyphonic music. How does the lyric subject manifest itself as a listening subject? And how is the tradition of making music the subject matter of the poetic texts transformed in contemporary culture?

Within this track we welcome submissions that address (but are not limited to) the following topics:

- Poetics of silence and noise in contemporary lyric
- Music and sound as metaphors
- Listening *to* and *through* poetry
- Musical ekphrasis and poetry
- Rhythm and prosody in the digital age
- Poetic speech between text and voice

- Listening and/as reading poetry

- Music composition principles and forms in poetry

Track 2: Contemporary poetry in music and sonic arts

Whereas Track 1 deals with the internal musical dimensions of contemporary poetry, the conference second track focuses on its external relations and interactions with musical and sonic art forms. It considers the contemporary challenges and transformations of traditional music-poetic genres, as well as the newly emerging intermedia and interart forms. Genres like opera and art song are critically questioned and often considered outdated in contemporary composition landscapes, while at the same time continuing to evolve. At the same time, poets today may collaborate directly with musicians and sound artists for their performances, or themselves become sound artists, manipulating their voices – e.g. using loop pads – or adding sounds or electronic beats to their audio recordings. Popular formats such as rap or spoken word further blur the boundaries between the spoken and the sung, the oral and the literary. This track thus aims to formulate the approaches to research these new art forms and the kinds of aesthetic they create. How do contemporary musical settings of poetry challenge and rethink the global song traditions? What previously untapped dimensions of musicality or sonicity of poetry are revealed in the new musical-lyrical forms?

Another focus of this track is the voice as the primary medium of human expression that plays an equally prominent role in poetry, music, and sound art, and as such can bring these art forms together. The so-called 'natural', unprocessed voices and speaking styles that are found in more traditional poetry readings are no longer the only option, since synthetically generated and/or technically processed voices as well as extended voice techniques such as beatboxing have become common creative means. In this track we would also like to explore these new poetic vocalities and the ways they affect the performance and perception of poetry. How would a poem that is written by humans but spoken by computers without the limits of human articulation sound like? And how do new technologies and media influence the ways poems are spoken – or sung – by humans in the digital age?

Within this track we welcome submissions that address (but are not limited to) the following topics:

- The lyric and the lyrics

- Art song in the digital age

- Poetry in sound installations and soundwalks

- Musicalisation as poeticization: musical settings of found texts

- Poetics of text scores

- In-between spoken and sung poetry: rap, chant, recitation

- Poetry music videos / poetry clips

- Technologies and techniques of musical poetry production

We welcome interdisciplinary contributions in German and English. Please submit your abstract (350 words) together with a short bio-bibliography (150 words) to Vadim Keylin (vadim.keylin@uni-hamburg.de) and Kira Henkel (kira.henkel@uni-hamburg.de) by September 29, 2023. Speakers will present the selected papers at the conference in a panel format (25-minute presentation plus discussion). The project covers accommodation in Hamburg for two nights and travel expenses (economy/second class). The papers will be published in a peer-reviewed edited volume (as a hardcover book and in open access with De Gruyter).

Project webpage: https://www.poetry-digital-age.uni-hamburg.de/en.html

Social Media: Twitter @ERCPoetryDA
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