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ON AND AROUND THE  
KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC

FRI 26/05/17 — SAT 27/05/17

**MUSIC IS NOT!**

**ON AND AROUND THE  
KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC**

**FRI 26/05/17 – SAT 27/05/17**

**“THAT MUSIC MUST BE  
HEARD IS NOT ESSENTIAL  
—WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE  
MAY NOT BE WHAT IT IS.”**

**CHARLES IVES**

**“I WANT EVERYTHING  
I DO TO BE PRESENTED  
IN AN ART CONTEXT.”**

**KANYE WEST**

Music is not necessarily what you think it is. Can we imagine a space for music that exists outside of any media and beyond the stage? A space for unrecordable music, music of undefined duration, existing even when no audience is present? A dissolution of performer and audience, of rehearsal and performance? A music existing in the world based in a space of musical action and activity, production and performance that can be entered into and exited from at will. A space wherein the ideal listening and viewing position is determined independently by each artist, performer or visitor, not determined beforehand by a seat number on a ticket. Having an ensemble at the center of its activity carrying out or otherwise enacting the work which continues during the opening hours whether there are visitors present or not.

Music today is encountered primarily as that which we consume, through a remove, usually neatly pre-packaged, either as a recording or on a stage. And yet throughout most of its history, to experience music one had to perform it. Music was by definition: live, social and spatial. In other words also: messy, political, meta-temporal. Music was not merely in space; it was space. Music was not only social through listening; it was social in its conception. Music didn't happen in time; it defined time. Music is not necessarily what you think it is.

Music is inherently not about perfection or reproducibility. Music is the act of an orchestra rehearsing. Music is “John Baldessari Sings Sol LeWitt.” Music is a group of people becoming a choir, or a band, whether they perform publically or not. Music is two strangers singing a duet.

In short, how can we reimagine music, composition, and music performance as contemporary art today? When did we forget that music—compositional strategies, formal structures, harmony and dissonance, orchestration, scoring, arrangement, rhythm, tempo—is at the base of it all? Music traditionally had been a driver of the contemporary; all the more striking then the situation wherein music qua music has mostly separated itself and been separated from what is considered to be contemporary art. It is in this schism that the Kunsthalle for Music operates.

So what, in this sense, would be the institution for music inside and alongside the contemporary art institution? What would be its repertoire? What kind of a school and educational attitudes would it have at its heart? How should it relate to the musical and visual avant-gardes of the past that strived for a symbiosis of sound and image, music and concept? Would its ensemble include musicians and non-musicians alike? Would it have a collection? What kind of a mythical new audience would it desire?

# FRIDAY, 5.30–8.30 PM

## AUDITORIUM

### 5.30 PM INTRODUCTION

Defne Ayas (Director, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art)

### 5.45 PM SESSION 1: MUSIC/INSTITUTION

Introduction: Ari Benjamin Meyers (Composer & Director, Kunsthalle for Music)

Respondents: Victoria Ivanova (Writer and Curator) and Jörn Schafaff (Art Historian)

What does it mean today to create a new institution? What are the historical precedents (if any) for a new institution such as the Kunsthalle for Music proposes? If institutions can be understood as interfaces between different value regimes and interests, which aren't necessarily always directly related to 'what is on show for the public', then how does this proposed new institutional arrangement think of and construct its interface?

Does the creation of the Kunsthalle for Music in fact disrupt the idea or functioning of institutions (qua vehicles of agendas) as positioned above and beyond individual or collective human input? What can be said regarding the element of 'smuggling in from the future', purposefully subjecting to mutation? Further, what can be said of the kind of encounters that occur between bodies, systems, and forms of processing that the institutional form maintains and inaugurates?

Ari Benjamin Meyers introduces a series of problems raised through the example of his early work SOLO (2009), which respondents are invited to collectively tackle through discussion.

### 6.30 PM BREAK

### 6.45 PM SESSION 2: MUSIC/CONTEMPORARY-POSTCONCEPTUAL

Keynote: Peter Osborne (Professor of Modern European Philosophy)

Q&A and response: Moderated by Armen Avanesian (Philosopher, Literary & Political theorist)

This keynote lecture, 'Musical Negations, Negations of Music', reflects on the concepts of negation and negativity at stake in the symposium: the dialectical negations of modernism, and the immanent negation of modernism itself by the generic 'postconceptuality' of contemporary art.

### 7.45 PM SESSION 3: MUSIC/CONTEMPORARY ART

Introduction: Ari Benjamin Meyers and Armen Avanesian

Respondents: Marie-France Rafael (Art Historian), Francois Quintin (Director, Lafayette Anticipations), Lisette Smits (Curator)

How is music presented in the context of contemporary art and what does it mean to display music within this context? Why has there traditionally been a wide gulf between (unmediated) music and contemporary art? How far is this related to a perceived "objectless-ness" of music? To what extent is the (aesthetic) experience a completely different one in a concert hall or in a gallery, and further – as a recording? And to what degree can music operate as a 'scientific' research tool for the exploration of (the contemporary art) space, not just temporality?

Ari Benjamin Meyers introduces a series of problems, which respondents are invited to collectively tackle through discussion. Closing comments by Armen Avanesian.

### 8.30 PM HAYDN FAREWELL SYMPHONY

# SATURDAY, 10 AM – 7.30 PM 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR EXHIBITION SPACE

10 AM AUDITIONS FOR FUTURE KUNSTHALLE  
FOR MUSIC ENSEMBLE

2.00 PM COMPOSERS INTRODUCTION

Composers Elena Rykova, Wojtek Blecharz,  
and Jonathan Bepler introduce their work.

3 PM WORKSHOPS

Introduced by Defne Ayas and Ari Benjamin  
Meyers, composers and invited performers  
Sandhya Daemgen and Ayumi Paul.

Collaborate with select open call performers across the building  
on the creation of new music/performance works. Watch the  
workshops as they unfold.

7 PM CLOSING ANTHEM

# OPEN CALL FOR THE INAUGURAL ENSEMBLE OF THE KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC, JAN–FEB 2018

MUSICIANS  
DANCERS  
PERFORMERS  
THINKERS

Artist and composer Ari Benjamin Meyers and Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art are looking for musicians / dancers / performers / thinkers who have a strong interest or background in music. Preferably applicants can play an instrument or read music, are open to singing, and generally interested in performance. A willingness to sing and move is essential. All instruments are welcome.

The casting of potential performers for the Kunsthalle for Music's future ensemble will feature as part of the symposium *Music Is Not!*, taking place at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, on May 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>. During the auditions on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 10am – 1pm, applicants are invited to present a short solo or solo performance of their choice. Selected applicants will then be invited to participate in public workshops as part of the symposium's Saturday afternoon program. Those invited to perform in collaboration with the participating composers will receive a small fee. Applicants are invited and encouraged to attend the full symposium, and must be available for the inaugural Kunsthalle for Music exhibition at Witte de With in January and February of 2018, as well as the rehearsals in the run-up to the opening.

Further audition dates may be scheduled. Please send a CV, a paragraph of motivation and links to previous work (if available) to [contact@kunsthalleformusic.org](mailto:contact@kunsthalleformusic.org) by 30 June 2017. If overseas, please feel free to submit your application including a video recording. Availability for the rehearsal and exhibition period, spanning December 2017–February 2018, is mandatory. The Kunsthalle for Music ensemble members will be remunerated for rehearsal and exhibition performances.

# PARTICIPANTS

**ARI BENJAMIN MEYERS (US)** was trained as composer and conductor. He is the founding director of the Kunsthalle for Music. In his work, he explores structures and processes that redefine the performative, social, and ephemeral nature of music.

**ARMEN AVANESSIAN (DE)** is a philosopher, literary and political theorist, and has previously been a Visiting Fellow in the German Department at Columbia University and in the German Department at Yale University and visiting professor at various art academies in Europe and the US. He is editor at large at Merve Verlag Berlin and in 2012 he founded the bilingual research platform [spekulative-poetik.de](http://spekulative-poetik.de).

**AYUMI PAUL (DE)** is a violinist, composer, improvisator, and artist who embodies a genre transcending practice committed to creating experiences of music and sound through site specific performances and concert programs which engage process, flux and social context.

**ELENA RYKOVA (RU)** is a composer, performance artist, and improvisator. Her work as a composer is experimental in nature, often situating itself in the overlaps between music and art.

**FRANCOIS QUINTIN (FR)** is the Director of Lafayette Anticipations – Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette and Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris.

**JONATHAN BEPLER (US)** is a composer who has worked with diverse choreographers including John Jasperse, Sasha Waltz, Jennifer Lacey, and Wally Cardona, and has also led ensembles of both improvised and pre-composed music, appearing often in New York and Europe. His long-term collaboration with American artist Matthew Barney has led to the creation of, amongst others, Cremaster Cycle and Rivers of Fundament.

**JÖRN SCHAFFAFF (DE)** is an art historian who researches, writes, and teaches about art of the 20th and 21st century. In 2017, he writes a treatise on “sets, scenarios and the art of situation” in which he discusses the relationship between exhibiting and performing.

**LISETTE SMITS (NL)** is a freelance curator, editor and educator. She initiated and wrote the curriculum for the temporary and experimental master program Master of Voice, launched October 2016 at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam.

**MARIE-FRANCE RAFAEL (DE)** is an art historian and researcher at the Muthesius Kunsthochschule in Kiel. In 2015, Rafael was awarded a PhD in ‘Media Display Situations in Film and Video Works of Contemporary Artists’, and carries out extensive exchange with artists such as Pierre Huyghe, Ari Benjamin Meyers, and Clemens von Wedemeyer, regarding their practice.

**PETER OSBORNE (UK)** is Professor of Modern European Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University, London.

**SANDHYA DAEMGEN (US)** is a performer and choreographer based in Berlin. She is interested in ideas exploring the multi-dimensional reality of the everyday, using music/voice, sci-fi and new modes of personal and societal interaction.

**VICTORIA IVANOVA (UK)** is a writer and a curator. Her practice is largely informed by systems analysis and her interest in infrastructures as mechanisms for shaping and (re)producing socio-economic and political realities.

**WOJTEK BLECHARZ (PL)** received a PhD in music composition. His projects feature non-concert music: sound installations, performance installations, sound sculptures, music videos, and music theater.

# FOUNDING OF THE KUNSTHALLE FOR MUSIC

*The Kunsthalle for Music* is commissioned by Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam) together with Spring Workshop (Hong Kong) and will make additional appearances at locations to be announced. *An exposition, not an exhibition* by Ari Benjamin Meyers unfolded the Kunsthalle's foundational themes at Spring Workshop (11 March–1 April 2017), taken up by *Music is Not! A Conference On and Around the Kunsthalle for Music* at Witte de With (26–27 May 2017), culminating in an inaugural take-over, featuring a series of new commissions at Witte de With (Opening 25 January 2018).

For inquiries and schedule of activities, as well as more information on the ensemble and repertoire, please write to: [contact@kunsthalleformusic.org](mailto:contact@kunsthalleformusic.org).

The conference program was conceived by Ari Benjamin Meyers (Founding Director, Kunsthalle for Music) and Defne Ayas (Director, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art) together with Armen Avanesian (Philosopher, Literary & Political Theorist). The program is coordinated by Rosa de Graaf (Assistant Curator, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art).

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