



Universiteit
Leiden

(Re)positioning Modern Concert Music in Contemporary Society

Applicants

Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferable from two different institutes.

Supervisor Name	Institute
Mr. Prof. dr. Marcel Cobussen	Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA)
Mrs. dr. Marion Boers	Leiden University Center for Arts and Society (LUCAS)

Project description (max. 300 words)

1. Project title

(Re)positioning modern concert music in contemporary society

2. Context and Research Question

For several years, contemporary composed music has been critiqued among others by funds, sponsors, and festival organizers for having lost contact with their audiences. This music has increasingly become a pursuit of a privileged, well-situated, and higher educated public, and is most often confined to the elitist space of concert halls (Small 1998; Kramer 2007; Johnson 2011). The research question resulting from this briefly sketched context is one that is both theoretical and practical: how can contemporary performance practices be restructured, first to engage a broader audience and second to increase societal importance?

3. Two Projects

The question as defined above will be investigated in two different, though connected projects, both specifically dealing with the Dutch situation.

The first project has as its main focus the role of the audience: from passive consumer to active participant. How would the audience experience listening to contemporary music performances if these were transformed into interactive projects? Could such an approach inspire people to engage more with the music, but also with each other, thus also addressing current societal issues such as stratification and integration?

The second project concentrates on two Dutch ensembles, Maze and 7090, and deals with the question what musicians themselves can do to restructure their performance practices. Whereas Maze challenges in their concerts the idea of fixed musical form and a fixed listening perspective, 7090 integrates theatrical elements, changes performance spaces, and collaborates with artists from other disciplines (writers, actors, painters). The project analyzes how and if such changes in performance practices can attract people from different cultural backgrounds, but also from various social classes.

Research Trainee Profile

- Trainees should either be in the last phase of their Bachelor program or in their Master program.
- Trainees have a background in either musicology or in an interdisciplinary Bachelor or Master study that entails Cultural Studies. This is necessary in order to be able to reflect on the role of music in relation to wider societal processes.
- Trainees have a substantial background in music making (composing and/or performing).
- Trainees have broad knowledge of music and music history, predominantly from the twentieth and twenty-first century.
- Trainees possess the skills to connect extra-musical, theoretical concepts to music.
- Trainees are acquainted with research methods from both the Humanities and the Social Sciences (interview techniques and data analysis).
- Trainees have elementary knowledge in concert production and management.

Collaboration

If applicable: Describe how your research improves collaboration and cross-pollination between the disciplines involved (max. 300 words)

This research proposal is multi-, inter- and/or transdisciplinary in at least two respects. First, it combines academic work with artistic work. Based on academic research the trainees are required to turn their initial research into concrete artistic projects. These artistic experimentations then feedback on the theoretical output of the project. Second, the project combines theoretical and embodied knowledge of music with socio-philosophical concepts, reflections, and ideas as well as socio-cultural analyses of the current music performance practice. Whereas the discourse on music is enriched by concepts and ideas coming from extra-musical disciplines, these disciplines might benefit from concrete artistic adaptations to rethink or refine certain ideas and theories.

Deliverables

Project 1

- A preparatory paper that reflects on existing literature about ways to approach music listening creatively (Petersen 2002; Kenny 1995). The paper consists of a literature overview as well as the development of an own concept of interactive and creative listening.
- An interactive concert in order to turn the theoretical research into practice.
- An academic article that integrates the theoretical considerations and the analysis of the concert (based on observation, questionnaires, and interviews).

Project 2

- An academic article, based on (a) interviews with the musicians of Maze and 7090, (b) recent literature on changing performance practices (Hamel 2016; Gumbrecht 2003) and (c) Gilles Deleuze's concept of "the exhaustion of the possible."
- Organizing and composing the first drafts to rework the research into a music-theater performance.

It is the explicit aim of the project that the outcomes are both academic and artistic, in line with the principles and goals of the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts.

Planning

Provide a breakdown of the project into phases with tentative timing (max 150 words)

- Months 1-4: Reading of relevant literature. Plenary seminars with the two supervisors. Writing the preparatory paper or the first draft of the academic paper. Visiting concerts.
- Months 5-6: Preparing the concert. Doing the interviews.
- Month 7: Analyzing the concert and the interviews. Feedback from supervisors.
- Months 9-12: Writing the academic articles and working on the draft version of the music-theater performance. Feedback and plenary sessions with the two supervisors.

Student Application

Provide information on how to apply e.g. required documents for application (resume, motivation letter etc.) and an email address where student applications should be sent to.

Applicants can send a motivation letter, elaborated project proposal (either fitting in Project 1 or 2 as described above) and an extensive biography to Prof. dr. Marcel Cobussen:

m.a.cobussen@umail.leidenuniv.nl

P.S. Thanks to the “specific situation” of ACPA within Leiden University (our direct connections and collaboration with the University of the Arts in The Hague, and our electives [honors class] on music and society) we already have made a short list of potential and very interesting candidates.