

Format call for proposals lectorate 'Music, Education and Society' 2021

1. Name, role and department, institution, e-mail address and phone number

Aart Strootman
Teacher music theory for sonology -, composition - and classical department
Koninklijk Conservatorium
aartstrootman@gmail.com
0031624190079

2. Research topic/title

Playgrounds: Creative Performer / Performing Creatives

3. Motivation for doing research and choosing your topic

As long as I can remember I played jazz and pop in cafe's and small venues. Trained as a classical guitarist it was a revelation to see what the electric guitar could do in a classical chamber music context. It was however not an unproblematic instrument, especially fusing shaped sounds into a heterogeneous ensemble and verbalizing both the limits and the potential of the instruments to colleagues, conductors and above all composers. 'Making it work' was by default a shared effort, turning the instrument practically into a vehicle for discussions and experimentation.¹

For this reason it was a small step for me to start writing for the instrument, and ensembles containing the instrument. The lack of knowledge of other instruments forced me to work closely together with musicians, continuously asking them how their instruments work, how I should notate ideas and (again) above all searching together for the best result.

Nowadays I build instruments to enhance exactly what I've described above: disrupting the known (the instrument) to explore and create together. Stepping into the unknown. Exploring playing techniques and sonic properties.

This togetherness, including the numerous affordances of co-creation, is something I want to research specifically at het Koninklijk Conservatorium. An institute where composition is in the heart - but where the conservative composer-musician / composing-rehearsing-performing chains are still going strong. Can we build a new praxis, hands-on, where collaboration during the whole process of creation blur the lines of ownership, turn instruments into experimental tools, enhance an in-depth understanding of the new music and contribute to the 'shared voice' of the ensemble?

4. Description of the project (max. 500 words)

Many fantastic groups have their genesis at het Koninklijk Conservatorium. As students they decided to spend time together, searched for new music and grew into professional ensembles. Nowadays however, political demands, opportunistic programming and a ubiquitous pressure for versatility sometimes obscures this artistic fundament. They nevertheless function as role models for the new generation. It is therefore of great importance to stress the importance of the 'playground' again. A safe environment where time can be spend on all-inclusive musicking.²

¹ Magnusson, T. (2019). *Sonic Writing. Technologies of Material, Symbolic and Signal Inscriptions*. London: Bloomsbury.

² SMALL, C. (1998). *Musicking: the meanings of performing and listening*. Hanover: University Press of New England.

I would love to gather open-minded musicians and composers (maybe even sonologists and/or theorists) who are willing to compose and perform. Yes, at first, both. At stake is an epistemic and ontological renewal of the artistic practice, in which the instrument and the score is no longer an inert matter.

Sketches, ideas, grooves, patterns, etc. can give rise to etudes, improvisations, meditations, movements and grow into form and composition. Everyone can bring material in and everyone is part of the performative sonic exploration. This shift implies that participants can no longer be understood under the separated terms of theorist, composer or performer.³

Work in progress, or maybe even better: being in progress. Potential leading to new works and/or a performance but in any case to a renewed understanding of our musical disciplines. Plenary sessions will be recorded and outcomes reviewed and coached towards the next step(s).

5. If applicable: explanation of how the research connects with:

A: any of the current research clusters of the lectorate 'Music, Education and Society'.

My personal fear is that time is one of the most jeopardized factors of artistic inquiry today. Financial pressure reduces rehearsal time. The demanding process of letting new works grow into their full potential is therefore hardly given the necessary time. Is this the future and should we warn the new generation? Or can we/do we have to explore an alternative?

6. If applicable: collaborations

Composition, theory and performance department

7. Work plan and timeline

Playground time (I don't want to use the word rehearsals) on a regular basis. Every two weeks plenary to keep on working on ideas. Smaller meetings with a part of the ensemble or individual musicians in between. Agenda/schedule to be discussed.

8. Outcomes and intended audience

Depending on the process a (set of) (co-)composition(s). Recordings from sessions. Written reports on the creational process.

9. If applicable: links to artistic work and/or research

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z99VIVR_n78&t=2460s

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/arend-strootman#tab-1>

<http://www.docartes.be/nl/personen/aart-strootman-1>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_l2uuV_dJg

³ Diduck, R. (2018) Mad Skills: MIDI and Music Technology in the Twentieth Century. London: Repeater