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TUNING IMAGINED WORLDS

Towards a Method of Speculative Music Making

(Doctoral Dissertation)

Through Shimmering Voices They Speak

(Doctoral Artwork)

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Abstract

The dissertation introduces and defines the term speculative music making for the first time, proposing it as both an artistic practice and an interdisciplinary method for the creation of coherent speculative musics.

It proceeds from the assumption that musics cannot be separated from the worlds they inhabit or create. On this basis, the study outlines four inseparable domains that structure the proposed method: the elaboration of core concepts, the exploration of nonstandard tuning systems, the design of instruments, and the generation of musical ideas.

Drawing on ethnomusicology, anthropology, indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, acoustics, tuning theory, and instrument design, the dissertation explores how speculative music making can be guided by multiversal thinking and hearing, resisting uniformisation and monoculture. Through the reconsideration of concepts, tunings, and instruments, agency is attributed to these domains, and a multiversal framework is proposed, opening imaginative pathways toward musical worldings.

The theoretical discussion is accompanied by the doctoral artwork that exemplifies the first practical application of speculative music making. Ultimately, the dissertation positions speculative music making as an open-ended method and an invitation to listen beyond existing musical paradigms toward possible musics of imagined worlds.

Theses

1. The dissertation presents an introductory method for speculative music creations. The method is called *speculative music making*.
2. The term is introduced here for the first time, and is defined as a complex and creative design task or method, which outlines the necessary steps for creating coherent speculative musics.
3. Speculative music making describes possible design processes that encompasses four well-defined but inseparable domains: the elaboration of core concepts, the exploration of musical tuning systems, the design of instruments, and the generation of musical ideas.
4. No speculative music can be valid and coherent without considering these four issues.
5. It presents an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on fields such as ethnography, ethnomusicology, indigenous philosophies, musicology, zoomusicology, acoustics, instrument design, ontology, tuning design, and speculative design.
6. It fundamentally understands music not as absolute music but as a deeply embedded socio-onto-cosmological practice, insofar as it functions both as an active generator of core concepts and as a performative, meaningful ritual act within a community.
7. The method simultaneously serves the decolonisation of thoughts and the decolonisation of hearing. By considering indigenous concepts, nonstandard tunings and experimental instruments, it is guided by multiversal thinking and hearing, and seeks to avoid the pitfalls of eurocentrism and the global monoculture.
8. Last but not least, it attributes nonhuman agency to the core concepts, musical tunings, and instruments of the respective speculative natureculture, thereby underlining their pivotal role.