

**The Mediterranean Music Study Group of the  
International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance  
is pleased to announce its  
15th Symposium on the theme  
*The Body in Action: Performance, Work, Ritual and Dance*  
hosted by the  
Antonio Pasqualino International Puppet Museum  
in collaboration with the  
The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies  
(ISMEO) in Palermo, Italy - September 23-27, 2024**



Transport of grapes to the millstone Messina, Autumn 2023 (Sergio Bonanzinga)

The next symposium of the MMSTG will highlight the relationships between the body, music, and sound. It will examine the roles bodies play in the sonic and physical dynamics of performances in Mediterranean cultures. We want to consider the body as a site of communication and expression in musical contexts, emphasizing the body's crucial influence on human understanding of the world. We seek to explore how the body is experienced in performance, represented in music and visual images, perceived by self and others, written about and learned from.

Bodies and musical corporeality act as containers and creative vectors for composition, performance and engagement. As a source and producer of lived experience through speaking, singing, dancing, and playing instruments, the body itself is an instrument as well as a phenomenological tool for perception. The body can appear to be open or closed, and its musical expression often draws from their perceived opposition. Early research investigating music and the body focused on rhythmic motion and movement in ancient cultures (Schaffner 1933, Sachs 1943). Later, French semiologist Roland Barthes wrote 'The Grain of the Voice' (1977), an essay on song, in which the voice 'has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no "personality", but which is nevertheless a separate body'. 'The "grain" is the body in the voice as it sings'. Barthes stresses the importance of the materiality of sounds produced through interaction with the body. Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006) separates the sound (phono) from idea (logo), and establishes the voice as the lever of thought, as one of the paramount embodiments of the psychoanalytic object and Nina Sun Eidsheim's work addresses the racialization of timbre (2019). Many have expressed vocal textuality as the pinnacle of embodied relationship with music. Others have also written about the conception of the composer's body present in music, locating within its musical phrases, gestures and tempo changes, signs of the composer's own body beating, indicating movement or the intention to speak (Leppert and Lipsitz 2000). Recent work on embodiment in music reminds that cognition is not exclusively disembodied intellectual perception, but often is most effective when practiced in non-linear and non-textual manners. This elicits questioning on whether one can "practice" cognition, and whether embodied forms of knowledge are always non-linear, placing the discussion around embodiment squarely into a non-dualistic relationship of body-mind symbiosis. Embodied memory—conveyed in gestures, the spoken word, movement, dance, song, and other performances—offers alternative perspectives to those derived from the written archive and is particularly useful to a reconsideration of historical processes of transnational contact (Taylor 2003). Recent research on race, dance, and gesture in this region (Goldberg 2018 2022, Llano 2023) confirm the use of embodiment and music for knowledge-transfer.

Clayton, Dueck & Leante's 2013 volume *Embodiment in Musical Performance* concludes by expressing that music "is also embodied in that we make sense of music through metaphors derived from our general bodily experience of the world as well as through our specific bodily experiences of engaging with music. In the *phenomenological embodiment* category we can therefore discuss a wide range of music-theoretical concepts such as melody, harmony, tonality, rhythm and form that are experienced in relation to embodied image schemas such as *path, cycle, balance, attraction, centre-periphery* and *collection*." This perspective entangles performance, cognition, creation and theory.

Researchers attempted to evaluate the impact of the body to fulfill a spiritual and sacred function (Rouget 1980), for example enticing the spirit through music to

descend into or haunt the body of the devotee (Becker 1994, Kapchan 2007, Jankowsky 2007, Turner 2021). Others maintain the notion of "physiological aesthetics", considering the "manual technique" as an element of mediation between "corporeity" and "conceptuality" (Leroi-Gourhan 1964). Another central issue is that of gender and musical performance (Ciucci 2022, Elbaz 2016 Roving Olsen 1999, Magrini 2003), where groups or individuals try to establish or break down alterities or emphasize biological difference through hierarchical gaze. The body is also a site of cultural resistance or protest (Fanon, 1963), a means of experiencing identity or belonging (Serres 2017), and an expressive vehicle in popular culture (Aistrophe 2020, Kristeva 1980).

We welcome proposals for contributions (papers, organized panels, roundtables, lecture demonstrations, musical performances, or ethnographic films/sound pieces) addressing relevant questions, including (but not limited to) ethnicity, minorities, trance, healing, sexual orientation, or aesthetic authority, as well as macro-cultural themes such as race, gesture and dance, gender, queer and feminist theory, etc.

In particular, we invite proposals that address any of the following topics:

- New approaches, methodologies, and ethics in music embodiment
- The role of the body at times of increasing intolerance, poverty, and hunger
- The body in sacred and spiritual practices
- \* Musical embodiment, cognition, and ergology
- The potential of musical embodiment after human conflict, fear, and violence

PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR COVERING THE COSTS OF THEIR TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION. WE ARE WORKING WITH OUR HOSTS IN PALERMO TO ENSURE THAT COSTS ARE KEPT TO A MINIMUM.

### **Call for paper and panel proposals:**

While English will be the general medium for the symposium, submissions and presentations in Italian and French are also welcome. Although we hope that many participants will be able to attend in person, the Symposium will be hybrid, allowing for prerecorded/online contributions to accommodate greater access.

**Proposals for individual papers must include the following in a .docx attachment:**

**Title and an abstract not exceeding 250 words; full contact information including address, phone and e-mail.**

Please submit abstracts in English to [mms2024symposium@gmail.com](mailto:mms2024symposium@gmail.com)

**Fully formed panel proposals must include the following:**

The Panel: Title and a short abstract not exceeding 250 words; contact information, affiliation, and e-mail for the panel chair.

Individual Papers: Each panel must submit, for each participant, title and an abstract not exceeding 250 words and contact information including affiliation, and e-mail.

Participants may present only one paper but may also serve as a chair on their own and/or another panel.

**Important Dates:**

Deadline submission for all individual papers and organized (i.e., fully formed) panels is **15 December, 2023**.

Notifications of acceptance will be circulated on **15 January, 2024**.

**Program Committee:**

Co-Chaired by Sergio Bonanzinga (University of Palermo, Italy) and

Vanessa Paloma Elbaz (University of Cambridge, UK) (MMS chair)

Nicoletta Demetriou (Cyprus Music Archive, Cyprus)

Richard Jankowsky, (Tufts University, USA)

Kendra Salois (American University, USA)

Nico Staiti (University of Bologna, Italy)

Kawkab Tawfik (CEDEJ-IFAO, Egypt)

**Local Arrangements Committee:**

Salvatore Morra (Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Italy) (MMS vice-chair)

Maria Fasino (Puppet Museum)