



Feminist Theory & Music 17  
University of Michigan @ Ann Arbor  
20-22 June, 2024

Conference Program

## FEMINIST THEORY & MUSIC 17: PROGRAM

Thursday June 20

9:00

### Welcome and opening remarks:

Welcome from the Office of the Dean and the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance

9:30 – 11:00

### Session 1 (Watkins) “Singing Sexuality”

Session Chair: Charles Lwanga (University of Michigan)

AJ Banta (University of Michigan)

Singing "Out": Radicalism and Assimilation in Washtenaw County's Queer Community Choir, Out Loud Chorus

Brandon Magid (Indiana University) \*

Straightforward? Queering High School Show Choir

Ryan D. Whittington (Emory & Henry University; King University)

Singing in My Grandmother's Heels: Queering Southern Gospel Music as Activism

11:30 – 1:00

### Session 2 (Watkins) Embodying Folklore in the Twentieth Century: Women Performers and Latin American Nationalist Projects (PANEL)

Session Chair: Eduardo Sato (Virginia Tech University)

Eduardo Sato (Virginia Tech University)

Performing Brazilianness for the Good Neighbor: Elsie Houston in New York

Hannah Snavely (UC Riverside)

Staging Character: Margot Loyola and the Interpretation of Chilean Folk Music

Amelia López López (Indiana University)

“Yo Soy el Folclor!” Radical *Mestizaje* and Practices of Re-existence in the Work of Delia Zapata Olivella

*Lunch Break*

**2:30 – 4:00**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS (Britton Hall)**

**Nancy Rao (Rutgers University), “Life History of Archives and Objects: On Chinese Opera Actresses and Theaters in the Americas”**

**4:30 – 6:00**

**Session 3a (Watkins) Sex Work in Music Studies: Aesthetic Performances and Aural Cultures of Sex Workers (PANEL)**

Session Chair: Siriana Lundgren (Harvard University)

Siriana Lundgren (Harvard University) \*

The First Ghost in Deadwood: Sonic Staying Power and the Importance of Sex Worker Performance Culture

Eloy F. Ramirez III (Harvard University)

How to be a Sex Goddess, or, Challenging Social Ethics in 101 Easy Steps

Christian Nikitin (Harvard University) \*

*Fūzoka* Queens: Trans Migrant Sex Performers in Tokyo

**Session 3b (Britton) “Gender and Contemporary Pop”**

Session Chair: Lauron Kehrer (Western Michigan University)

Steven Ai (Harvard University)

SOPHIE’s “Faceshopping”: Bonding Play and Listening to the Sonic Trans

Madalyn Pridemore (Western Illinois University)

It’s a Femininomenon: Chappell Roan and the Creation of a Sapphic Genre

Jerika Hayes (Independent Scholar)

Sad Girl Music as Complaint Collective: Joanna Newsom’s Have One on Me and Mitski’s Puberty 2

**Friday, June 21**

**9:00 – 10:30**

**Session 4a (Watkins) “Facing Down Systems of Oppression”**

Session Chair: Corinne Forstot-Burke (University of Michigan)

Kari Lindquist (University of North Carolina)

From Ann Arbor with Love: Women as Cultural Diplomats on the University of Michigan Symphony Band’s Cold War Tour

Hannah Rosa Schiller (Yale University)

“To age is a sin”: Madonna, aging, and pop music’s audible disruptions of heteronormative time

Kimberly Soby (University of Connecticut) and Shannon Rose McAuliffe (Emerson College)

(Do Not) Forget My Fate: Addressing Violence, Trauma, and Oppression in Operatic Texts and their Stagings

**Session 4b (Dance Studio 1) “Narratives of Resistance Across Media”**

Session Chair: Mary Natvig (Bowling Green State University)

Ryan Lambe (Eckerd College)

A Battle Cry for Queer Worlds: Voice, Music, and Sound in Live-Action Roleplay

Per Broman (Bowling Green State University)

Beyond Bloodshed: Unveiling Feminist Narratives Through Music in the Last of Us Part II

Danielle Stoebe (Boston University) \*

Killing the “Bad Guy”: Updating Anti-Patriarchal Contemporary Murder Ballads and Performative Politics of the Otherwise

**11:00 – 12:30**

**Session 5a (Watkins) “Women Crafting Compositions”**

Session Chair: Christian Matijas-Mecca (University of Michigan)

Emily Abrams Ansari (Western University, Canada)

Music as Craftivism: The Feminist Minimalism and Serialism of Ann Southam

Lisa Beebe (Cosumnes River College)

Shaping New Sounds: Women Composers in the Vietnamese Diaspora

Sara Speller (Harvard University)

Privilege in scattered archives: Wealth, labor, and the Black elite in Margaret Bonds’ Diary of a Divorcée

**Session 5b (Dance Studio 1) Queering the Song, Embodying the Story: A Lecture-Recital of Queer Stories and Traditional Songs from India and Writing Letters of Love (PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP)**

Bala Raghavan (UC Santa Cruz)

***Lunch Break***

***Have lunch outside and enjoy a concert at the Lurie Carillon***

**12:30 – 1:45**

Invitation to tour the Lurie Carillon Tower

*Note: Visitors subject to acrophobia are advised to take the elevator to Level 2, only*

**1:00 – 1:30**

Concert by carillon students of Tiffany Ng (University of Michigan) with a program curated by Eric Whitmer (University of Michigan)

*Note: Any visitors entering the bell tower during the concert are encouraged to wear earplugs*

**2:00 – 3:30**

**Session 6a (Watkins) “Interrogating Conservative Ideologies”**

Session Chair: Kim Francis (University of Guelph)

Samuel Dorf (University of Dayton)

A Fascist’s Guide to Music

Matthew Anderson (University of Kansas)

From Opulence to Opposition: Hip Hop’s Dynamic Discourse on Donald Trump

Anneli Loepp Thiessen (University of Ottawa) \*

From Inclusion to Ordination: Constructing an Oral History of Women's Experiences in the Christian Music Industry

**Session 6b (Dance Studio 1) Voicing Trans/Queer Musical Dialogues (PANEL, ends at 4:00)**

Session Chair: Poe Allphin (CUNY Graduate Centre)

Poe Allphin (CUNY Graduate Centre)

“This is your voice on T”: Disabling Notions of the Transmasculine Bodyvoice”

Nicholas Borgia-Tran (CUNY Graduate Centre)

Co-Creation: Proliferating Bodies in Contemporary Music Composition Pedagogy

Dan Arthur Levy (McGill University)

“I Don’t Know What to Do with All This Privilege”: Listening with the Critically Sincere

Trans(masculine) Singer-Songwriter

Alejandrina M. Medina (UC San Diego)

Trans/form : Objectless Critique and the Question of ‘trans’ Music

**4:00 – 5:30**

**Session 7a (Watkins) “Sounding Bodily Autonomy”**

Session Chair: Tiffany Ng (University of Michigan)

Hannah Strong (University of Pittsburgh)

Megan Thee Stallion Weaponizes Birth Control in Support of Bodily Autonomy

Jessica Sipe (Yale University)

Menstruation, Voice, and the Politics of Reproductive Healthcare

Nicol Hammond (UC Santa Cruz)

Justice! Justice! Gone Gone Gone: Music About Rape in South Africa

**Session 7b (Dance Studio 1) “Feminist Politics and Genre”**

Session Chair: Maureen Mahon (New York University)

Lauren Shepherd (Columbia University) \*

Reconceiving Genre: Asian American Women in Post-Millennial Rock

Lori Burns and Patrick Armstrong (University of Ottawa) \*

Gender, Politics, and Urgency in the Work of Female Metal Vocalists

Kelsey Klotz (University of Maryland, College Park)

Snapshot of Jazz Patriarchy: Esperanza Spalding’s “Girl Talk”

**6:30 – 9:00**

**FT&M17 EVENING RECEPTION**

**Vandenberg Room, Michigan League**

Banquet Buffet and Non-Alcoholic Drinks Included with Registration

Cash Bar

**Saturday, June 22**

**9:00 – 10:30**

**Session 8 (Watkins) “The Subversive Potential of Queer Pop”**

Session Chair: Elliott H. Powell (University of Minnesota)

Hiro Cho (University of Chicago)

Queering Race: “Your Best American Girl” and Mitski’s Mimetic Subversion

Dan DiPiero (University of Missouri, Kansas City)

Infinite Worlds: Vagabon’s Queer Black Feminism

Kelly Hoppenjans (University of Michigan)

“Doing Something Unholy:” Mainstreaming Queer Subculture on TikTok

**11:00 – 1:00**

**Session 9 (Dance Studio 1) PANEL: Roots & Branches: Expanding Feminist Approaches to Music Theory**

Session Chair and Moderator: Dean Hubbs (University of Michigan)

Participants: Orit Hilewicz (Indiana University), Rachel Lumsden (Florida State University), Vivian Luong (University of Oklahoma), Maeve Sterbenz (Smith College)

Respondents: Marion Guck (University of Michigan), Marianne Kielian-Gilbert (Indiana University)

***Lunch Break***

**2:00 – 2:45**

**Business Meeting (Britton)**

**3:00 – 4:30**

**CONCERT**

**Walgreen Recital Hall**

**Ellen Rowe Octet, “Momentum : Portraits of Women in Motion”**

Featuring: Melissa Gardner (trombone), Marion Hayden (bass), Nadjé Noordhuis (trumpet), Lisa Parrott (alto), Tina Raymond (drums), Janelle Reichman (clarinet, tenor saxophone), Ellen Rowe (piano), and Kaleigh Wilder (baritone sax).

Virtual participation indicated with asterisk \* after the presenter’s name

The FT&M Programme Committee

Chair: Lauron Kehrer (Western Michigan University)  
Asst. to the Chair: Angelina Gibson (University of Michigan)  
Members: Christopher Cayari (Purdue University)  
Leah Claiborne (University of the District of Columbia)  
Kate Galloway (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute)  
Vivian Luong (University of Oklahoma)

Local Organizing Committee

Chair: Karen Fournier  
Members: Christi-Anne Castro  
Roshanne Etezady  
Dean Hubbs  
Diane Oliva  
Carlos Rodriguez  
Courtney Snyder

The *Feminist Theory & Music* conference was made possible by funding from:  
The University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWG)  
The U-M Office of the VP-Research (OVPR);  
The SMTD Dean's Discretionary Fund; and  
The SMTD Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)





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Abstracts

**THURSDAY, 20 JUNE, 2024**

**Check-in at Brehm Reception area, Moore Building beginning at 8:30am**  
**Events for the day will take place in Watkins Hall and Britton Recital Hall**  
**Lunch items will be available in Room 1374 (just down the hall from our two presentation venues)**

**Papers to be delivered online are identified with asterisks after their titles.**

### **Session 1 (Watkins) Singing Sexuality**

Session Chair: Charles Lwanga (University of Michigan)

AJ Banta (University of Michigan)

Singing "Out": Radicalism and Assimilation in Washtenaw County's Queer Community Choir, Out Loud Chorus

LGBTQ+ community choirs not only facilitate localized amateur musical performance, but also carry on a unique political legacy of community formation and visibility. In this paper, I demonstrate how the LGBTQ+ choir Out Loud Chorus (OLC) in Ann Arbor, Michigan feeds into a vibrant queer community, but limits the radical potential of its work due to its assimilationist politics. My field work consists of participation in the choir and member interviews. Following Thomas Turino's articulation of presentational and participatory performance modes, I demonstrate how OLC breaks down the distinction between these two categories. This kind of group musicking enables community building through the process of choral music making itself. Additionally, music director Saleel Menon's use of popular music and a performatively camp (after Susan Sontag) demeanor make for deeply inclusive pedagogy. Despite these merits, my critique of the choir's stated mission and their recent activism-themed concert juxtaposes the group's current assimilationist politics against their radical potential. Jodie Taylor (2012) argues "Queer as a verb – to queer something – is to unsettle that which is normalized" (Taylor 605). Not only does OLC intentionally seek to normalize queer subjects, but many interviewees who embraced the identity label queer defined it solely as an "umbrella term" for LGBTQ+ subjects. Although Out Loud Chorus successfully uses the communal practice of choral music to build a welcoming space for the queer community that it serves, their assimilationist tendencies beg the question—who is this community space actually built for?

#### References:

Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (1964): 515-530.

Taylor, Jodie. "Taking it in the ear: On musico-sexual synergies and the (queer) possibility that music is sex." *Continuum* 26, no. 4 (2012), 603-614. DOI: 10.1080/10304312.2012.698039.

Turino, Thomas. *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Brandon Magid (Indiana University)\*

Straightforward? Queering High School Show Choir

In music education, Vaugeois (2009) suggests the need to trouble knowledge through continually questioning canonic repertoire and standard interpretations in order help integrate social justice goals into current music-making practices. Heteronormativity is one aspect of knowledge in need of further troubling; it illuminates the dominant role of heterosexuality in society and might also indicate that heterosexuality is normalized to the point of being perceived as "correct" and "normal" (Warner, 1993).

Due to a close relationship to sexuality, heteronormativity may also be used to refer to issues related to gender. Heteronormativity, as an analytical tool, might additionally help to articulate both a body of behavioral norms

and a reproduction of distinct and complementary genders (e.g., man and woman) (Herz & Johansson, 2015). It follows that the term and its implications might provide insight then into how more general gender structures and hierarchies are constructed.

Throughout this philosophical inquiry, I propose a reimagining of high school show choir that might result in a stronger embrace of LGBTQ individuals as well as offer ensembles new possibilities that challenge heteronormative thinking. I begin by problematizing rubric-based artistic aims, which I argue supports the reproduction of heteronormativity as described by Ahmed's (2019) notion of the "well-traversed path" (p. 41). Next, I argue that familiar performance conventions represent Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of striated space, or conception of space as linear and gridded, which might also suggest heteronormative views. Finally, I propose show choirs consider exploring nomadology to disrupt heteronormativity's stronghold, promote social justice aims, and lead to new ways of being musical.

#### References:

- Ahmed, S. (2019). *What's the use?: On the uses of use*. Duke University Press.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Herz, M., and Johansson, T. (2015). The Normativity of the Concept of Heteronormativity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(8), 1009–1020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1021631>
- Vaugeois, L. (2009). Music education as a practice of social justice. In E. Gould, J. Countryman, C. Morton, and L. S. Rose (Eds.), *Exploring social justice: How music education might matter* (pp. 90–104). Canadian Music Educators' Association.
- Warner, M. (1993). *Fear of a queer planet: Queer politics and social theory*. University of Minnesota Press.

Ryan D. Whittington (Emory & Henry University; King University)  
*Singing in My Grandmother's Heels: Queering Southern Gospel Music as Activism*

Growing up gay in a southern Baptist family, I learned to be musical through southern gospel. Some of my earliest musical experiences involved sneaking off to my grandmother's bedroom, putting on her high heels, and imitating Milena Parks, the lead vocalist for the NC-based trio The Greenes from 1995–1997. I wanted Parks's clarion belt to come from my body. I was finding queer joy in my gender identity and musicality to the soundtrack of a musical genre known for its homophobia. In this time of increasing antipathy toward members of the LGBTQ community, listening for queer joy is a form of defiant activism. This paper demonstrates how this can be done in what Douglas Harrison called "the soundtrack to fundamentalist Christianity in America." First, I examine how songs from the southern gospel tradition can become lifelines of inclusion for queer youth, and trigger nostalgia and healing for queer adults. I then turn to specific examples in which southern gospel songs can be heard as describing queer experience and joy with surprising ease. Songs like "I've Come too Far to Look Back" and "I Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now" describe a progression of effort and struggle with joy and pride that I read as coming out anthems. Other quartet hits like "When I Get Carried Away" and "When the Prodigal Comes Home" also imagine queer life experiences in coded terms. One only need listen queerly to uncover them.

## **Session 2 (Watkins) Embodying Folklore in the Twentieth Century: Women Performers and Latin American Nationalist Projects (PANEL)**

Session Chair: Eduardo Sato (Virginia Tech University)

#### Panel Abstract:

Women folklorists and performers have been key figures in the modern representation of nations across Latin America. Yet, their voices have been silenced within dominant masculine narratives. Extending literature that positions women performers as key contributors to cultural representation and welcomes folklore from the margins (Slominski 2020; Otero and Martínez-Rivera 2021), this panel considers the agency of women within nation-building projects to reframe histories of twentieth century folklore through gender and race. Folklore—as

a central practice for imagining and localizing nations—was essential not only for consolidating national identities, but also used as a currency in the development of cooperative international relations within Latin American countries and in other transatlantic and hemispheric perspectives. We argue that women’s solidarities and caring modes of moving within and against nationalisms were essential to these processes, especially as women researched and performed music and dance practices across Latin America. Different from a male-centered perspective of nation-making, “performing the nation” (Askew 2002) in Latin America implies specific understandings of intersectional feminism; it is always imbricated within disputed understandings of *mestizaje*, Indigeneity, and Blackness.

Through the examination of three case studies—Elsie Houston of Brazil, Margot Loyola Palacios of Chile, and Delia Zapata Olivella of Colombia—we discuss how these women auto-didactically pioneered folkloric research as a strategy to pursue their innovative musical careers, beyond established social roles for women musicians. Ultimately, this panel aims to find common threads in their expansive political practices embodied in their musical activities that included performances, publications, and teaching.

Eduardo Sato (Virginia Tech University)

Performing Brazilianness for the Good Neighbor: Elsie Houston in New York

From 1938 to 1943, Brazilian singer, performer and folklorist Elsie Houston set her residence in New York. During these years, Houston established a career on multiple stages as different as the so-called “voodoo” performances in nightclubs and solo performances with symphonic orchestras. During the peak of the Good Neighbor Policy, in which Latin American cultural forms were highlight regarded in the United States, Houston performed on the stage many forms of an embodied Brazilianess: from references to Afro-Brazilian rituals to cosmopolitan modernist styles. Her apparent success on casting Brazil in the United States overshadowed many difficulties she faced as a mixed-race immigrant woman. In reframing the US part of her career with her professional path since the 1920s, I reconfigure her representation of her nation as a virtue and as a burden framed her artistic and personal choices.

Hannah Snavely (UC Riverside)

Staging Character: Margot Loyola and the Interpretation of Chilean Folk Music

Margot Loyola rose as an exceptional interpreter of Chilean folk music in the 1950s and 60s after humbly beginning her solo career in 1950. In this paper, I demonstrate how Margot, as a pioneering woman intellectual, developed her own methods to stage “character,” part of her emotion-laden, embodied approach to interpreting Chilean-ness for elite and international audiences. Building on histories of 20th century Chilean nationalisms (Donoso 2023; Mularski 2014), I explore how institutionalized folkloric investigation in Chile and women’s solidarities enabled the international collaborations in Europe and across Latin America that constructed Margot as the authentic “voice of Chile.” I examine recordings, letters, and newspaper clippings to highlight how she strategically maneuvered highly masculine political and academic spaces and create her artistic figure. Finally, I argue that her interpretations of Indigenous “character” both expanded national understandings of Chilean culture and were imbricated within the complex racial dynamics of the time.

Amelia López López (Indiana University)

“Yo Soy el Folclor!” Radical *Mestizaje* and Practices of Re-existence in the Work of Delia Zapata Olivella

Afro-Colombian dancer, researcher, artist, and activist, Delia Zapata Olivella is known by many in her country for being the first BlackWoman [Lozano] performing at the Teatro Colón in Bogotá. Through the staging of Black and Indigenous dances in the capital city of Colombia, Delia created new spaces for visibility and imagined a new possible world in which all Colombians could be recognized through the staging of a radical mestizaje. Borrowing from Adolfo Alban Achinte and Katherine Walsh, I understand these practices as instances of *re-existence*, as a theoretical lens that understands, redefines, re-signifies, and dignifies Zapata Olivella’s work, challenging the modern/postmodernist gaze of post-colonial subjects as being out of place, extemporaneous, and agent-less. Through the examination of archival recordings, official documents, and oral

histories, I explore the way in which Delia Zapata Olivella carved out spaces for re-existence of Black and Indigenous communities through performance.

### **Session 3a (Watkins) Sex Work in Music Studies: Aesthetic Performances and Aural Cultures of Sex Workers (PANEL)**

Session Chair: Siriana Lundgren (Harvard University)

Panel Abstract:

Sex work as an artistic practice has taken diverse forms throughout history and across the globe, encompassed in its well-known moniker as “the world’s oldest profession.” We all know its environs by many names: the red light district, brothels, strip clubs, glory holes, OnlyFans, PornHub, cam rooms, the list goes on. However, sex work remains grossly understudied in music scholarship with few exceptions (Gordon & Feldman 2006; Morcom 2013; Stallings 2015; Sofer 2022). Even in feminist studies, existing research on sex work often frames discussions on sex work within paternalistic discourses of criminalization and regulation (Brooks 2020), overlooking the everyday cultural production and meaning-making generated by sex workers.

This panel, “Sex Work in Music Studies: Aesthetic Performances and Aural Cultures of Sex Workers,” addresses this lacuna in feminist and music scholarship by exploring the artistic production of sex workers across three distinct time periods - the 1880s, the 1990s, and the contemporary era - and three transgressive spaces: the red light district, the Archive, and the underground dungeon. By examining how the cultural production of sex workers embodies unique erotic subjectivities, our panel offers novel ways of knowing and feeling through the world. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we delve into crucial insights into art, bodies, care, sociality, labor, capitalism, and power. Our panel underscores the multifaceted ways in which sex work and the music collide, considering it as a lived experience and a social phenomenon where performing bodies become a canvas for identity, resistance, and transformation.

Siriana Lundgren (Harvard University)

#### **The First Ghost in Deadwood: Sonic Staying Power and the Importance of Sex Worker Performance Culture**

In 1877, Madam Di Lee, the owner of three properties in Deadwood, was murdered shortly after the city's illegal founding on Lakota land. This incident birthed Deadwood's inaugural ghost story, a tale that fetishistically recounted her violent end and echoed across Western newspapers from Denver to St. Louis. The spectral narrative portrayed her ghost uttering just three words in Taishanese: translated as, 'don't hurt me.'

Ghost stories like this one have shaped popular discourse on sex workers' histories, but refocusing on Di Lee's own sonic records, rather than those that have been ventriloquized, offers new insight into sex workers aural cultures. In this paper, I use property records, newspapers, and district court filings to examine the aural culture Di Lee built in her theater. Exploring Di Lee's work as a manager gives unprecedented insight into the importance of sex workers as drivers of cultural development in the American West.

Eloy F. Ramirez III (Harvard University)

#### **How to be a Sex Goddess, or, Challenging Social Ethics in 101 Easy Steps**

In her monograph *Quantum Listening*, composer Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016) defined Deep Listening as an exploration of connections transcending natural and technological boundaries. While visiting Oliveros's New York Public Library archive, I encountered uncatalogued boxes containing erotic magazines, human hair, decomposing flowers, and, ultimately, correspondence between Oliveros and feminist-pornography producer Annie Sprinkle, commissioning a score for the film “The Sluts & Goddesses Video Workshop” (1992). Her collection's enthusiastic championing of sex work denied the conventional professionalism expected in archival spaces.

Through archival research, self-reflexive analysis, and a study of Sprinkle and Oliveros's collaboration, my paper examines how Oliveros's archives extend her mission to deconstruct societal parameters shaping identity and reflect an artistic approach intended to elucidate the inextricable bonds between the self and the other. Amid escalating LGBTQ+ adversity during the AIDS crisis, the film's representation of lesbian erotic labor repudiates hetero-patriarchal norms, offering an alternative conception of the human experience.

Christina Misaki Nikitin (Harvard University)  
*Fūzoku Queens: Trans\* Migrant Sex Performers*

Sex work in Japanese culture has long intersected with the performing arts, as illustrated by the intricate dualism of the term *fūzoku*. Initially defined as “public morals” through the Confucian canon, *fūzoku* evolved during the Edo period through legal codes that prohibited performances associated with commercial sex, eventually leading to its contemporary colloquialism referring to “sex work” itself. This paper proposes a reinterpretation of *fūzoku* that synthesizes this dialectic, signifying the performative act of disrupting heterosexist norms while enacting new formations of sexuality, desire, and pleasure. Through a critical ethnography centering trans\* migrant sex performers in Tokyo's underground scenes, I explore their use of music, sound, and movement in challenging oppressive regulations surrounding sex while concurrently generating alternative sexual expressions. Amidst Japan's lightening immigration policies and heightened risks for queer and trans\* migrants, the artistic labor of *fūzoku* sex performers becomes a crucial force rectifying these systems of power.

### **Session 3b (Britton) Gender and Contemporary Pop**

Session Chair: Lauron Kehrer (Western Michigan University)

Stephen Tian-You Ai (Harvard University)  
SOPHIE's “Faceshopping”: Bonding Play and Listening to the Sonic Trans

In this paper, I present an analysis of SOPHIE's producorial voice in “Faceshopping” (2018). “Faceshopping” appears to be an industrial track densely populated by the sounds of rapidly morphing materials like glass, rubber, and metal. From this unfamiliar sonic landscape, my analysis considers whether we can hear the sounds of these materials as constitutive of a human voice, including one that is possibly wrought by biomedical procedure. The gender-dysphoric voice is often taken as a point of analytical departure to inflect the lived experiences of trans people in theory (Allphin 2021, Pennington 2018, Krell 2013). Responding to Baitz's (2018) call for a trans method, I document a listening practice that attends to what materials we hear when confronted by unfamiliar sounds. Here, my paper answers Eidsheim's “acousmatic question” (2019)—Who/What is speaking?—by employing Smalley's “spectromorphology” (1997) to develop such a practice. It is through this process that I ultimately argue that SOPHIE's “Faceshopping” animates the categorically non-human sounds of manmade materials and insists on the absolute humanity of each sound SOPHIE employs. SOPHIE's music seizes on the associative slippages of listening to an ostensibly industrial sound, and therefore enjoins us to approach the profusion of human voices in “Faceshopping” regardless of their timbre, especially those that may sound non-human. In the current climate wherein anti-trans legislation continues to be pushed, SOPHIE's provocation becomes all the more urgent. “Faceshopping” becomes a noisy posthumous call to, as Medina (2022) puts it, “listen against [a] necropolitics” that insists on trans death.

Madalyn Pridemore (Western Illinois University)  
It's a Femininomenon: Chappell Roan and the Creation of a Sapphic Genre

Sapphic musicians have created their own space within indie pop, revolutionizing the genre through their amalgamation of mainstream and queer culture while narrating their youthful experimentation with personal identity. One such artist, Chappell Roan, manipulates a series of intertwined personas in *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* while queering traditional pop musical signifiers, continuously altering her construction of a

playfully feminine, campy style, and reflecting a shared sapphic experience through her discovery of personal identity. In this paper, I will examine two songs from Chappell Roan's *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*, "Pink Pony Club" and "Red Wine Supernova," and the personas she creates in each to better understand Chappell's own queer experience as one account of sapphic culture. Chappell Roan's selection of a feminine, drag queen-inspired appearance allows both characters to navigate the liberation of female sexuality and disrupt gender roles through her conscious use of camp and elements of drag. Her characters demonstrate her subversion of gender roles through allowing herself agency as a young woman both as an object of desire and the active pursuant, with one character performing in a typically heteronormative space and the other portraying an unmistakably queer narrative. By exploring these themes and creating personae within each song and video, Chappell Roan opens a space for herself within indie pop, placing herself amongst the creations of other sapphic-identifying artists, further expanding the group and defining a modern sapphic musical culture. Examination of Chappell Roan's artistic and musical practices presents a possible methodology to better understand the methods by which queer women have created a space for themselves within the larger popular music landscape.

Jerika Hayes (Independent Scholar)

Sad Girl Music as Complaint Collective: Joanna Newsom's *Have One on Me* and Mitski's *Puberty 2*

Sad girl music emerged from the online sad girl affective trope that proliferated through social media and visual art, acting as a site to highlight quotidian pain and struggles within women's lives. The sad girl trope contains fraught racial politics, however, including the appropriation from Chicanx creators by white artists, resulting in the sad girl becoming primarily associated with the white feminine experience. The trope's appearance within music became synonymous for a time with women singer-songwriters, and ultimately allowed for a more diverse spectrum of stories and modes of resistance to be uplifted, led primarily by women musicians. I argue that sad girl music, despite its origins in a cultural trope that was co-opted by white creators, continues to offer a site for protest of societal expectations placed on women that speaks to a wide range of demographics and audiences. Drawing on feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed's work, *Complaint!*, and specifically her concept of "complaint collectives" I build a framework to interpret how sad girl music maintains a feeling of community and where complex emotions and social issues can be explored within a cultural space. This project provides a comparative analysis of Newsom and Mitski, attending to their race and gender positionality that demonstrates how this music has acted as a site of inclusivity. I will provide a hermeneutical analysis of music and lyrics of Joanna Newsom's *Have One on Me* (2010) and Mitski's *Puberty 2* (2016), examining several selections from each to demonstrate how complaint collective arises out of sad girl music.

**FRIDAY, 21 JUNE, 2024**

**Events for the day will take place in Watkins Hall, Dance Studio 1 and the Lurie Carillon  
Lunch items will be available in Room 1374**

**Session 4a (Watkins) Facing Down Systems of Oppression**

Session Chair: Corinne Forstot-Burke (University of Michigan)

Kari Lindquist (University of North Carolina)

From Ann Arbor with Love: Women as Cultural Diplomats on the University of Michigan Symphony Band's Cold War Tour

In 1961, the musical culture of Ann Arbor was showcased by the U.S. State Department on a global stage. The University of Michigan Symphony Band, comprised of 94 student musicians, 27 of whom were women, participated in a diplomatic tour throughout the Soviet Union, Middle East, and Eastern Europe. I argue that the women's presence on the Symphony Band tour was diplomatically significant: it led to unanticipated positive interactions with audience members, and it attracted increased media attention from the press who marveled at the women's musical abilities (and outfits), and ultimately, it minimized the militaristic associations of the wind band medium.

Drawing on archival materials from the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, State Department Records from the National Archives, and interviews with band members, I focus on key events on the tour such as an International Women's Day concert in Moscow and how the women musicians' interactions led to its success. Following work on gender in Cold War cultural diplomacy (Croft 2015, Searcy 2020), I situate the tour within broader scholarship on feminist diplomatic history which outlines women's contributions to global politics while acknowledging systemic barriers. Today, in a time of continued geopolitical conflict, it is urgent to examine how the University of Michigan Symphony Band found commonalities through musical diplomacy during the Cold War era.

Hannah Rosa Schiller (Yale University)

"To age is a sin": Madonna, aging, and pop music's audible disruptions of heteronormative time

"Do not age. Because to age is a sin. You will be criticized and vilified and definitely not played on the radio." Madonna has faced relentless age-related criticism throughout her multi-decade career. In popular culture, policing women's age is a proxy for enforcing heteronormative systems more broadly (Lemish and Muhlbauer 2012). This paper considers Madonna's aging, arguing that popular music affords particular opportunities for women's aural disruptions of heteronormative time.

While existing literature has explored Madonna's aging with regards to her appearance and her displays of sexuality, this paper offers a new perspective by centering her voice and musical style across time. I compare musical styles and vocal production on her first album *Madonna* (1983) with those of her 2015 album *Rebel Heart*, considering two angles: first, I discuss the role Madonna's music and voice play in perceptions that she does not "act her age"; and second, I examine how contemporary vocal processing tools serve as aural cosmetic enhancements that have allowed Madonna to keep her "youthful" sound well into adulthood. I then theorize how the maintenance of a musically youthful persona functions as a prolonged adolescence (Halberstam 2005) for women pop stars, disrupting heteronormative time by allowing older women artists to continue to make pop sounds while masking potentially policeable aural traces of their age. These aural disruptions of heteronormative time fuel the public shaming of women pop stars, but also provide new opportunities for them to subvert social conventions of invisibility and inaudibility (Apolloni 2013) as they age.

Kimberly Soby (University of Connecticut) and Shannon Rose McAuliffe (Emerson College)



## (Do Not) Forget My Fate: Addressing Violence, Trauma, and Oppression in Operatic Texts and their Stagings

In the wake of the #MeToo movement and other sociopolitical narratives that have pervaded the collective consciousness, members of the arts community have become increasingly vocal about challenging the realities of violence, femicide, and other forms of trauma that exist within productions of music theatre works. Drawing from the works of Clément, McClary, and Foucault, this paper will discuss libretti spanning Restoration-era works through 20th and 21st century stagings and their historic contexts. We will also juxtapose these historic discourses with current events, using examples of arts organizations that are working to ameliorate wrongdoings committed by individuals and institutions alike. By working to dismantle misogynistic violence in music theatre, it is also imperative that organizations make efforts to create a safe and comfortable working environment for their artists. These case studies will encompass union negotiations to promote pay equality for female-identifying performers, employing intimacy coordinators to prevent assault and harassment, and creating space for critical dialogues surrounding sensitive topics during the staging process. This paper aims to draw on learnings from historical precedents to engender institutional change; to empower performers and producers to take proactive measures toward ensuring the wellbeing of artists; and to be appropriately reactive when violence, exploitation, and traumatic behaviors do occur. In addressing these topics, especially as companies are programming and commissioning increasingly diverse works and contemporizing problematic libretti, this paper encourages intersectional advocacy and allyship to eradicate the perpetuation of gender-based violence in the performing arts world.

### Session 4b (Dance Studio 1) Narratives of Resistance Across Media

Session Chair: Mary Natvig (Bowling Green State University)

Ryan Lambe (Eckerd College)

A Battle Cry for Queer Worlds: Voice, Music, and Sound in Live-Action Roleplay

In August 2022, a transgender woman in red armor shouts, calling for archers—including myself—to volley our foam-tipped arrows at people in imp costumes while she bashes her foam sword against a PVC shield. In an interview, she tells me that playing this game gave her the confidence to speak up and ask for a raise at work, where many transgender women face discrimination.

In this paper, I draw on fieldwork in live-action roleplaying games (LARPs) in California and Florida to examine how LGBTQ players use music, sound, and vocality for queer world-making. Unlike digital roleplaying games (RPGs), LARP players fully embody their characters, dressing in costumes, swinging swords, shooting arrows, using voices, and playing music. I situate LGBTQ LARP performance using ludomusicology, performance studies, and transvocality. Scholars of queer gaming argue that transgender players sometimes use digital RPGs to try out gendered identification and performance before risking their bodies in reality. Similarly, ludomusicologist William Cheng amplifies how queer and trans gamers in massive multiplayer online RPGs risk discrimination when speaking. Where these scholars attend to digital games, I argue that queer and trans LARPers in live games use music and voice to refigure social spaces. However, LGBTQ LARPers also play against a trend in LARP celebrating violent, militant masculinity. In the context of anti-trans legislation targeting queer and trans spaces for elimination, the sonic queer world-making of LGBTQ LARP players becomes more urgent for queer survival.

Per Broman (Bowling Green State University)

Beyond Bloodshed: Unveiling Feminist Narratives Through Music in the Last of Us Part II

The pervasive tropes of young women's violent acts of revenge in the aftermath of an assault are prevalent in popular culture, as exemplified by characters such as Beatrix Kiddo in *Kill Bill*, Lisbet Salander in the *Millennium Trilogy*, and Jennifer in the *I Spit on Your Grave* franchise. These films are alternately described as feminist manifestos—wherein the heroine revolts against the patriarchy—or torture-porn films. They have in

common though that they typically offer limited musical elements in the narrative. However, one violent, controversial, and highly cinematic video game, *The Last of Us Part II*, juxtaposes a violence-dominated narrative set in a post-apocalyptic United States with an intriguing integration of music into the storyline, and with a for a video game unusual inclusion of LGBTQ issues. The game follows two young women, Ellie and Abby, on their revenge quests.

Drawing from the aesthetic theory of Federico García Lorca, this paper analyzes music's function in the game. Early on, Ellie learns to play the guitar, and the instrument becomes an integral part of her journey. Music serves as a trigger for flashbacks and provides Ellie with a means to connect and interact with other characters. Through music, she can internalize her inner narrative of hatred, while also embarking on a quest to find inner peace. In Lorca's theory, a dark force, *duende*, is the key to authentic art, as illustrated by Ellie's guitar performance at the end with her three remaining fingers, following her last violent encounter.

Danielle Stoebe (Boston University)\*

### Killing the "Bad Guy": Updating Anti-Patriarchal Contemporary Murder Ballads and Performative Politics of the Otherwise

Starting around the 1990s, contemporary U.S. artists have been attempting to challenge the violence and misogyny inherent in nineteenth century Appalachian murder ballads by writing new lyrics that subvert the traditional gender dynamics. In these creative attempts, the artists grapple with the ambivalent, and sometimes conflicting relationship, to the possibility of perpetuating patriarchal violence itself as they try to critically "update" murder ballads. How do these artists navigate this tension between the critique of patriarchal violence and the risk of reproducing the patriarchal trope? What are the ways in which we might listen to these updated contemporary murder ballads that elucidate new possibilities beyond this contradiction? In this article, I examine the varying performative choices of two artists who have each written contemporary murder ballads in the last decade: Lula Wiles' "Bad Guy" (2019) and Hurray for the Riff Raff's "The Body Electric" (2014). Through an analysis of lyrical content, musical arrangement and timbral choices, audio-visual analysis of performances and audience reception, and interviews from the artists, I show how they demonstrate not only creative and intentional engagement with the questions of patriarchal violence of the genre, but also new kinds of politics - what I call "performative politics of the otherwise." My research thereby contributes to the existing scholarship on murder ballads by highlighting the non-binary within the analysis of murder ballads, and expanding the scope of what musically counts as "murder ballads," engaging with broader popular music studies scholarship.

## Session 5a (Watkins) Women Crafting Compositions

Session Chair: Christian Matijas-Mecca (University of Michigan)

Emily Abrams Ansari (Western University, Canada)

### Music as Craftivism: The Feminist Minimalism and Serialism of Ann Southam

"Do women have the potential for a unique aesthetic?" So pondered the Canadian composer Ann Southam (1937-2010) in a scribbled, undated note. After building a successful career as a composer of electronic and experimental dance music, in 1975 Southam discovered minimalism and feminism almost simultaneously. They brought her back to the piano, where she conceptualized a "life-sustaining" music that she connected to the history of repetitive "women's work" such as weaving, stitching, and washing. Soon she began integrating a favorite twelve-tone row into her minimalist pianism, "spinning" a "thread of notes" "one additional note at a time."

This paper interprets a selection of Southam's piano works as acts of "craftivism." Craftivism as a term is just 15 years old—a description of knitting, weaving, sewing, and other hobby crafts that subversively reclaim craft's associations with femininity and domesticity as acts of protest. Scholars have recently begun using the term to re-examine the history of activist crafting, including the 1970s craft revival to which Southam was

responding. The term has not been applied to music, yet Southam's works bear much in common with these humble domestic creations, similarly articulating what Fiona Hackney has called a "quiet activism of everyday making." Her music can thus be understood as a feminist artistic parallel to her unprecedented philanthropic support for women's organizations in Canada. Like craftivism, Southam's piano music articulates a "gentle protest" (Corbett, 2017)—a modest and beautiful celebration of women's ordinary achievements, ambivalent to the ambition of the masculine masterwork.

Lisa Beebe (Cosumnes River College)

#### Shaping New Sounds: Women Composers in the Vietnamese Diaspora

Scholars argue that in state-sponsored 20th century Vietnamese music, women were valued as musicians, while men were valued as ensemble leaders and composers. As a female scholar of Vietnamese music (a subfield of predominantly male scholars, researching the work of men), I focus my analysis on the experiences and creative contributions of Vietnamese women, adding to the study of diasporic women of color and the phenomenon of "global fusion" within the context of multiculturalism. I argue that in the Vietnamese diaspora, women use their agency as musicians and composers to create new works to articulate their experiences and navigate the economic realities of being working musicians in their new homeland.

This paper draws on fieldwork with two female Vietnamese musicians and composers: Hoàng Ngọc Bích (Canada) and Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ (United States). Both artists face gendered and racialized expectations of "performing" Vietnamese identity in their respective countries, and they have developed creative strategies to make their work legible within the frameworks of multiculturalism and diversity. In Canada, Hoàng Ngọc Bích built a successful career as half of the duo Khac Chi Bamboo Music, arranging Vietnamese folk songs for educational programming before turning to composing new works for the Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra. Originally from Hanoi, Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ initially faced mistrust from the southern Vietnamese community after immigrating to California. She began to compose music in a global fusion style. Võ now envisions her compositions as a step towards reconciling political divisions within Vietnamese-American diaspora communities.

Sara Speller (Harvard University)

#### Privilege in scattered archives: Wealth, labor, and the Black elite in Margaret Bonds' *Diary of a Divorcée*

American composer Margaret Bonds has an oeuvre which showcases a flexibility that extends past genre, style, and, through lesser-known theatre and vocal pieces, class. While most scholarship focuses on her arrangements of spirituals and her interest in integrating a 'Black folk idiom' with more conventional late-Romantic art style, this paper explores her presumed unfinished jazz song cycle with lyrics by artist Janice Lovoos, *Diary of a Divorcée*, a tour de force that displays her dynamic compositional voice, keen understanding of music theater, and her proximity to racialized wealth and power as the child of Chicago's Black elite. The aptly named piece focuses on a young divorcee's first few experiences as a well-to-do single woman through the form of sung diary entries. Bonds was a young divorcee herself; as such, I present an analysis that puts the piece in dialogue with the relatively privileged upbringing Bonds had as the child of Estelle Bonds, a key socialite in the Chicago Renaissance who hosted salon-style parties of Black artists, musicians, and thinkers from the turn of the twentieth century and into the mid-century.

This paper also features the *Diary of a Divorcée* song cycle in its entirety for the first time, thanks in large part to drafts of the jazz cycle's missing songs I discovered in the Georgetown University Archives. Moreover, I interrogate how the existence – and fragmented archive – of pieces like *Diary* beg pertinent questions related to queerness, class, intersectionality, and institutional memory.

#### **Session 5b (Dance Studio 1) Queering the Song, Embodying the Story: A Lecture-Recital of Queer Stories and Traditional Songs from India and Writing Letters of Love (PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP)**

Session Chair: Danielle Shlomit Sofer (University of Dayton)

Bala Raghavan (UC Santa Cruz), presenter

Titled “*At Odds With Even Love*,” this lecture-recital moves between the gathering and expressing queer stories across the Indian subcontinent, the USA, and South Asia through my performance of reimagined folk, popular, and classical erotic song forms of South Asia. In this performance, I bring together pairs of an erotic poem-song and a contemporary queer story from India that have a similar narrative. I juxtapose the hetero-traditional dynamic of the poem-song with a non-traditional story, a queer one. And yet, the narrative is the same: the lover/beloved dynamic can incorporate multiple identities and positionalities. Through performance, performance making, and a queer re-staging of the sacred-profane song, I negotiate a possible practice to build newer worlds and narratives to create and foster safer spaces of being for queer people of color. I employ Queering as a form of questioning dominant power-knowledge formations that work to construct normative ideas of music, gender, performance, sexuality, and relationships. I play the role of interlocutor, animating queer stories and giving them an alternative voice through re-imagining traditional music for queer futures, for a queer utopia.

Although the Supreme Court of India decriminalized homosexuality in 2018, the queer community continues to face systemic abuse. Projects such as this are important in countries of the Global South, where a history of colonialism often codifies a particularly regressive projection of “traditional” sexuality. As the world around us becomes increasingly chauvinistic, with cultural nationalisms that assert heteronormative, racial, patriarchal, and majoritarian privileges, there is an aggravated tension between queer/marginalized archiving, memory, performance, and the fear of state surveillance.

This project was awarded the Arts Research Institute Grant for the summer of 2023 and the UCSC Arts Deans University of the Future grant for 2022. It has toured across seventeen shows in five Indian cities- Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Pondicherry, and Kathmandu in Nepal, and New York, Los Angeles, and Santa Cruz in the US. This project is ongoing and further invites audiences to contribute personal queer stories, preferably in the form of a letter. It’s a growing transnational archive of letters, desires, queer love, and songs. I have personal narratives in Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, Korean, French, and Spanish. The version I propose for this performance-workshop has a public participation component. The first half is the performance, and in the second half, the audience is invited and led to write letters to their beloveds. These letters would then be incorporated into future renderings of this work, building an archive of letters, an archive of the modalities of love, of love languages, and for performance.

Website: <https://bkrishnanmusic.sites.ucsc.edu/aowel/>

## **Session 6a (Watkins) Interrogating Conservative Ideologies**

Session Chair: Kim Francis (University of Guelph)

Samuel Dorf (University of Dayton)

A Fascist’s Guide to Music

Specific online provocateurs of the alt-right, have developed loyal followings among the alums of the Trump administration. Unapologetically fascist, racist, and sexist, their writings, podcast, and social media draw on Nietzsche urging men to reject liberalism, political correctness, and the “feminization” of culture.

This paper plumbs one of these individual’s philosophical output paying particular attention to the entanglement of the ancient world, “classical” music, and the manosphere in his writings and podcast. I begin with an analysis of his use of ancient Greek culture and “classical music” to promote fascist ideology in publications from 2018 and 2022. This individual offers insights into the manosphere’s fears and fascinations with music through his misogynistic and racist critique of the consumption of classical music. I then pivot to show how some of these

ideas are repackaged on his podcast where he mixes racist and misogynistic tirades with philosophy, humor, and music to appeal to a wider audience.

The paper concludes with an urgent appeal for musicologists to pay closer attention to music in the manosphere, and the ethics of engaging with alt-right readings of music. These individuals and their followers are not just arm-chair philosophers setting Vivaldi to their bad takes on Nietzsche on a podcast: their reach and influence extend far and wide. Lastly, I offer some thoughts on what a constructive musical and musicological response to alt-right musicology might look like.

Matthew Anderson (University of Kansas)

#### From Opulence to Opposition: Hip Hop's Dynamic Discourse on Donald Trump

The relationship between former President Donald Trump and hip-hop music is well documented. Since the 1980s, over one hundred hip-hop songs have incorporated Trump into their lyrics. Originally, the use of his name signified wealth and excess, freedom and power. He was even once considered a friend of the hip-hop community when he endorsed rapper Mac Miller's song "Donald Trump" and opened Mar-a-Lago to hip-hopsters at a time when Black Americans were not allowed in Palm Beach clubs. He became the epitome of American dream in the eyes of hip-hop artists, and their lyrics and music reflect that. However, it was during his controversial presidency (2017-2021) that hip hop artists began incorporating Trump's persona into their lyrics as a means of social commentary and political expression. Hip hop, with its roots in marginalized communities, has historically served as a platform for artists to voice dissent and critique societal issues. Donald Trump's polarizing presidency provided a rich source of material for artists to address issues such as racism, inequality, and political unrest. Artists employed a spectrum of approaches, from scathing critiques to satirical commentary, using Trump as a metaphor for the broader challenges facing their communities.

By looking at this change in attitude towards Trump before and after his political run demonstrates the genre's ability to serve as a cultural mirror, capturing and amplifying the zeitgeist of the times. This paper explores prominent hip hop tracks from artists like Mac Miller, Eminem, Kendrick Lamar, and Kanye West that feature Trump references, analyzing the diverse ways in which artists leverage his image to convey messages about power dynamics, systemic oppression, and the American Dream.

Anneli Loepp Thiessen (University of Ottawa)\*

#### From Inclusion to Ordination: Constructing an Oral History of Women's Experiences in the Christian Music Industry

Since its meteoric rise in the 1960s, contemporary worship music has shaped the sounds of Evangelical worship gatherings (Ingalls, 2018). Today, this music forms the foundation for the Nashville based Christian music industry, an institution whose music reaches millions of people around the world (Mall, 2020). In recent years, historians have traced the origins of contemporary worship music and are re-writing the history to consider global development and historical evolution (Ruth and Lim 2017; Perez 2022). While this emerging history chronicles the stories of key figures and institutions, questions of gender are largely absent from this record.

Using oral histories (MacKay 2015) acquired through semi-structured interviews, this presentation builds upon the work of recent contemporary worship historians (Ruth and Lim 2022) to integrate the accounts of women in the contemporary worship industry over the past 60 years. Through conversations with women who had prominent careers in the industry, this paper addresses previously unexamined factors in women's experiences in the industry, including women's ordination, complementarian gender roles, LTBTQ+ inclusion, and gendered spiritual authority. In a musical context where women face spiritualized limitations and their industry participation is in steep decline (Loepp Thiessen, 2022), stories from the past help contextualize the current reality. By unveiling how women found success in a system that limited their artistic and spiritual authority, these historical accounts offer a key to understanding how women today can not only survive in socially conservative industries, but thrive in their roles.

**Session 6b (Dance Studio 1) Voicing Trans/Queer Musical Dialogues (PANEL, ends at 4:00)**

Session Chair: Poe Allphin (CUNY Graduate Centre)

Panel Abstract:

The four panelists will engage with music by and from trans and queer artists — exploring ideas around critical sincerity in the work of transmasculine singer-songwriters, narratives around the trans voice and body on testosterone, queer compositional pedagogy and collaborative dialogue between composer and performer, and forms of mediated sexual labor by trans Latina popular music artists. This panel considers transness and queerness through multiple meanings of *voice*, whether by queer compositional voices challenging conformist white cis het masculine cultures of the conservatory-academy, in the trans Latina vocal performers who “work sex” in their musical practices, by transmasculine singer-songwriters’ disidentification with normative masculinities, or through narratives around testosterone and the singing voice. While papers in the panel vary in scope, aims, and archival analysis, they retain a similar sense of urgency that trans/queer musicking demand. Always already tied to circulations of power and discourses regarding the body vis-à-vis race/sex/ability, our attention to the multifaceted trans/queer *voice* affords critical feminist strategies towards liberation; such strategies reflect the ever-present utopian project of trans/queer politics amidst the increasing rise of fascism and conservative politics.

Poe Allphin (CUNY Graduate Centre)

“This is your voice on T”: Disabling Notions of the Transmasculine Bodyvoice”

In this paper, I examine narratives, both from within and from outside trans communities, around the impact of testosterone on the trans singing voice. I borrow from disability studies’ use of *bodymind* to propose a *bodyvoice* which acknowledges the often inextricable relationship between the voice and the body. This work is explicitly grounded in the current sociopolitical climate of bills attacking trans health care and trans youth, the implications of which extend into the musical and performing arts realms, and engages with arguments against trans access to healthcare as relating to the trans voice, putting the idea of a “disabled” trans voice or body in conversation with ideas around the “natural body” as unmarkedly white and nondisabled. In this paper, I recognize trans community-building and knowledge sharing as radical processes that work to reclaim the narratives surrounding trans singing voices on testosterone.

Nicholas Borgia-Tran (CUNY Graduate Centre)

Co-Creation: Proliferating Bodies in Contemporary Music Composition Pedagogy

The contemporary new music scene has and continues to be a white, cis, male-dominated space due to colonial composition pedagogic practices. This paper traces how composers are trained to wield power over performers, reinforcing the idea that performers’ gendered and racialized bodies are objects to control. Within a composer’s training, then, I identify the one-on-one composition lesson structure—one that excludes the performer—as the prime site to “creatively destroy” (Schumpeter) the colonial, masculine composition practice and to build, in its place, a composition practice grounded in co-creation. G.D. Shlasko proposes that queer pedagogy allows educators and students to explore what they will “ask of each other” (2005); I propose that this question be applied not between the composition professor and the composition student, but that composition professors must foreground this question between the student composer and performers if they are committed to creating empowered composition practices.

Dan Arthur Levy (McGill University)

“I Don’t Know What to Do with All This Privilege”: Listening with the Critically Sincere Trans(masculine) Singer-Songwriter

This paper explores the performance strategy of “critical sincerity” in the work of singer-songwriters occupying trans masculinities, framed through songs by contemporary North American trans and nonbinary artists Beverly Glenn-Copeland, Quinn Christopherson, and KERA. Rooted in scholarship on queer and critical sincerity, I conceptualize trans[masculine] critical sincerity as a dialogic, community-oriented performance practice that interpellates the listener within an expansive trans “we.” Through earnest communication between performer

and audience, a critically sincere mode of performance allows these trans[masculine] singer-songwriters to disidentify with normative masculinities that rely for their coherence on emotional invulnerability, isolation, and disavowals of feminine and racialized “others.” I approach “singer-songwriter” not as a genre category, but rather as a creative mode that allows us to think across genre. Ultimately, I argue that the project of trans[masculine] critical sincerity to make the insidious, normative backdrop of white/cis/hetero masculinity transparent and unstable.

Alejandrina M. Medina (UC San Diego)

Trans/form: Objectless Critique and the Question of 'trans' Music

In this paper, I examine forms of mediated sexual labor in trans Latina popular music. I engage the term “working sex” (Rodríguez 2023) to highlight the ways in which pleasure, sexual practice, and labor are co-constitutive apart from the scene of prostitution. Working sex provides a framework for understanding the power dynamics between desire, intimacy, the State, and subject-formation as it is afforded by popular music. Artists such as Villano Antillano and Linn da Quebrada (her song “Coytada” quoted in the title) work sex in order to negotiate the terms of agency and pleasure as transfemme performers; musical performance and reception suggest that mediated sexual labor extends past the body and into realms of affect, sense, and transfeminist desires otherwise. I argue that these performers work sex through their musical practice as strategic responses to marginalization and extraction as racialized trans women from the Global South.

## **Session 7a (Watkins) Sounding Bodily Autonomy**

Session Chair: Tiffany Ng (University of Michigan)

Hannah Strong (University of Pittsburgh)

Megan Thee Stallion Weaponizes Birth Control in Support of Bodily Autonomy

Released on the heels of the Dobbs decision, “Plan B” (2022) by Megan Thee Stallion unabashedly brags that she is “Poppin’ Plan B’s ‘cause [she] ain’t planned to be stuck with ya,” weaponizing birth control as a method for maintaining personal and bodily independence. In short succession of the overturning of Roe, a burgeoning group of women rappers used music as a platform for establishing dominance in a male-centered field by invoking “Plan B.” The “morning after pill” is more than contraception, representing freedom of choice in family planning when other methods fail, and with the release of these songs, an individual yet communal response to limited freedom.

This paper will situate “Plan B” in concert with “F.N.F.” by GloRilla, and “Broke Boy Pt. 2” by Gloss Up, providing a lyrical intervention to gender standards within rap. Without an established fanbase to alienate, I argue that this new wave of women rappers are uniquely situated to respond to the Dobbs decision. I will contextualize these songs released in 2022 as part of a sonic microburst of cultural resistance against the Dobbs decision, which I theorize as a subgenre “Slay Rap.” Its tenets rely on self-asserted autonomy, independent of cis-males as was rap’s historical precedent. Imbued with the unabashed resistance of the word “slay,” rooted in the 1970s-80s Ballroom scene in New York, and undergirded by a sense of community as established in Beyoncé’s hit “Formation,” Slay Rap is born of resistance against heteropatriarchal power structures limiting women’s bodily autonomy.

Jessica Sipe (Yale University)

Menstruation, Voice, and the Politics of Reproductive Healthcare

The practice of grace days in European opera houses—effectively menstrual leave policies for singers—dates to at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This practice, predating the field of endocrinology itself, confirms a historical recognition of the link between the menstrual cycle and vocal impairment. In a 1970 interview with *Life* magazine, Dame Joan Sutherland publicly addressed this issue, noting, “Everything affects the voice...And let’s face it at certain times of the month for a woman, a cloudiness, a fuzziness, gets on the voice.” One need only

flip through the *Journal of Voice* in the last 30 years to find detailed accounts of how hormonal changes impact and potentially endanger vocal function (Sataloff 1994; Abitbol and Abitbol 1993, 2006; Oberlander 2010). More recently, medical research has shown that hormonal birth control methods may lessen the laryngeal effects of premenstruation, such as capillary fragility and permeability, muscle tension, and mucosal thickening (Rodney 2016; Banai 2017). These studies suggest that the use of oral contraceptives or long-acting reversible contraceptives alleviates impairment to the quality of phonation and decreases the risk of vocal injury while singing.

This paper outlines political rhetoric and policy regarding reproductive rights in a post-Roe v. Wade America, arguing that the changing political landscape poses a direct threat to opera's workforce. I consider endocrine and otolaryngologic research alongside preliminary ethnographic work with U.S.-based classical singers and vocal pedagogues to demonstrate how access to reproductive healthcare is vital to job performance and safety for opera singers who menstruate.

Nicol Hammond (UC Santa Cruz)

Justice! Justice! Gone Gone Gone: Music About Rape in South Africa

In this paper I examine the musical representation of rape, protest, and communal mourning by South Africans in a context in which the politics of music and noise, and the meaning of violence are overdetermined by race. In particular I consider the role that sonic representations of racial difference play in making meaning for audiences of Karen Zoid's 2015 song "Justice! Justice!", and Zoid and Freshly Ground's 2018 song "Gone Gone Gone (Song for Khwezi)." Both songs have been used as protest anthems by a complex and interconnected network of queer rights and anti gender-based violence organizations. These protests occurred concurrently with protests against an invented white genocide, and conflict over the protesting of the rapes and murders of black lesbians and trans people at Johannesburg Pride. While the New South Africa has a long history of musical protests, the different sounds of these protests marked the different constituents in notable ways. I offer an analysis of both the songs and their reception as a lens into the co-construction of race and gender in contemporary South Africa.

## **Session 7b (Dance Studio 1) Feminist Politics and Genre**

Session Chair: Maureen Mahon (New York University)

Lauren Shepherd (Columbia University)\*

Reconceiving Genre: Asian American Women in Post-Millennial Rock

In a 2023 interview with the *New York Times*, Jann Wenner, the *Rolling Stone* and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame co-founder, promoted his monograph, *The Masters*, which features interviews with seven white male "masters" of rock. In the interview, Wenner defended the exclusion of women from the book, claiming he did not believe they "were as articulate enough on this intellectual level" to be included. Popular music genre theory often relies on charts like the *Billboard* Hot 100 or *Rolling Stone*'s "500 Greatest Songs of All Time" for value judgements of what music should be studied (Brackett 2016, Temperley 2018). This leaves artists like Karen O, the Korean American frontwoman of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, absent from the literature and disregards feminist scholarship that critically examines how gender, race, and power influence popularity (Hisama 1993, 1999; Mahon 2004, 2020).

This paper urgently rethinks rock canonization by imagining a genre of post-millennial rock sparked by Karen O. I argue for a viewing of genre as a flexible construct, following Drott (2013) and Holt (2007). By shifting from chart-toppers to the music of biracial Asian American women, I redefine genre through an intersectional feminist lens, amplifying Mitsuye Yamada's (1981) call to create a "truly communal education" within popular music studies. I then situate examples by Mitski, and Michelle Zauner (Japanese Breakfast) at the heart of this genre to demonstrate how music scholars can work against reinscribing canons of popular music that reinforce the white racial frame proposed by Ewell (2019).



Lori Burns and Patrick Armstrong (University of Ottawa)\*  
Gender, Politics, and Urgency in the Work of Female Metal Vocalists

Scholarship on metal music affirms the genre to be dominated by male performers, with female participation beginning to grow around the turn of the new millennium (Weinstein 2016). Metal scholars point to the preponderance of patriarchal values and hypermasculinity, with the musical, lyrical, and visual content contributing to the aesthetic production of misogyny and sonic power (Jocson-Singh 2019; Overell 2013; Walser 1993). The participation of women in metal scenes is often reduced to tokenism (Schaap and Berkers 2014), whereby female performers are staged for the patriarchal gaze and critiqued according to sexist ideologies.

As crucial actors in the genre, female artists are taking space to declare *urgent* topics. We can interrogate what messages female vocalists deliver within the expressive and cultural constraints of metal music subgenres. In this paper, we argue that their expression simultaneously conforms to but also complicates and transforms the discourse of a particular subgenre. Based on a larger corpus study, we have selected four songs featuring female vocalists:

- “Burning Angel”: Angela Gossow (Arch Enemy, 2001)
- “Anatomy of a Nervous Breakdown”: Floor Jansen (ReVamp, 2013)
- “Strange Fruit”: Cammie Gilbert (Oceans of Slumber, 2020)
- “Bury the Antlers with the Stag”: Margaret Killjoy (Feminazgûl, 2020)

Each artist uses innovative expressive strategies to present an urgent cultural theme: mobilizing the topic of witch burning, Gossow questions “Am I to burn?” in her early years as a harsh vocalist; in the face of mental collapse, Jansen explores a narrative of self-empowerment in a duet with a male vocalist; at a moment of racial crisis in the U.S., Gilbert covers a 1930s protest song demonstrating its relevance in 2020 America; and Killjoy comments on the process of trans womanhood in relation to the strictures of black metal and toxic masculinity. These four songs indeed communicate urgent stories about female experience in the subgenres of metal music and in society at large.

Kelsey Klotz (University of Maryland, College Park)  
Snapshot of Jazz Patriarchy: Esperanza Spalding’s “Girl Talk”

To be a woman in jazz is to, at some point, have been asked to solve the “problem” of women in jazz. This is neither surprising nor new; minoritized populations are frequently recognized as problem solvers in their oppressions. But as Sherrie Tucker has explained, if it were simply a matter of “lost women,” the jazz canon would have been fixed by the 1980s (Tucker 2004). Though the question of what to do about women in jazz has been explored, critiqued, and debated by critics, musicians, and historians across the century (including by scholars like Dahl, Placksin, Davis, Tucker, Rustin, Pellegrinelli, and many, many others), the problem persists, refusing to lose its urgency and relevance while simultaneously refusing a solution. Gender remains separated from the core of jazz history.

In order to bind jazz’s existing gender studies more tightly to jazz studies writ large, I propose to re-center jazz histories on what I call jazz patriarchy: the social and political system that has organized jazz histories, values, and relationships around men and male domination over women and non-binary musicians, agents, partners, leaders, and others. I introduce this framework through a case study focused on Esperanza Spalding’s 2023 versions of the 1960s popular-song-turned-jazz-standard “Girl Talk.” Rewriting over a half century of jazz patriarchal approaches to canon, lineage, language, musical structure, and institutions, Spalding stretches across what Audre Lorde calls “the gap of male ignorance,” revealing jazz’s sound within patriarchy while simultaneously reimagining an anti-patriarchal sound (Lorde 1984).

**SATURDAY, 22 JUNE, 2024**

**Events for the day will take place in Watkins Hall and Dance Studio 1  
Our Business Meeting will take place in Britton Hall, followed by the Jazz Concert in the Arthur  
Miller Theatre (Walgreens Building)  
Lunch items will be available in Room 1374**

**Session 8 (Watkins) The Subversive Potential of Queer Pop**

Session Chair: Elliott H. Powell (University of Minnesota)

Hiro Cho (University of Chicago)

Queering Race: “Your Best American Girl” and Mitski’s Mimetic Subversion

A singer-songwriter Mitski released her early hit “Your Best American Girl” in 2016. The song has steadily garnered its reputation as a classic “Anthem for the Un-American,” and Google searches for “Your Best American Girl” spiked amidst rising hate crimes against Asian-Americans in 2021. Mitski’s song addressed urgent racist aggressions. But why? How the song attained political efficacy is not straightforward. Mitski’s lyrics about her defeat against the cultural and racial difference does not directly empower listeners. Moreover, her musical style aligns with indie rock, a genre represented by white men (Bannister 2006). What gives “Your Best American Girl” its efficacy?

Through queer theory and critical race theory, I argue that it is precisely Mitski’s critical use of signifiers of whiteness that gives the song its subversive potential, and she performs what Judith Butler calls mimesis. An intimate reading of Mitski’s songs, music videos, and interviews uncovers moments in which she mimes signifiers of normative America in various media forms—especially indie rock’s ideology of authenticity based on white maleness—only to confound them. This mimetic subversion of white signifiers drastically challenges the legitimacy of whiteness as the original signifier. Thus, her performances are acts of subversion that, rereading Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology*, I call queering of race. As a mimetic queering of identity, “Your Best American Girl” denies white supremacy. Finally, this talk shows how drastic ineffability of musical performance can empower and address urgent crisis.

Dan DiPiero (University of Missouri, Kansas City)

Infinite Worlds: Vagabon’s Queer Black Feminism

In this past ten years, a continuing indie rock resurgence has seen women and queer musicians not only participating in but also redefining a subgenre long associated with whiteness and masculinity. In contrast to the polemical and overtly political orientation of riot grrrl bands, I have referred to such artists with the term “Big Feelings” (2023) to foreground their indirect, affectively-oriented approach to questions of identity, politics, and community. Primarily performed by young, Gen-Z musicians, the Big Feelings that these artists articulate must also be read in the context of the successive socio-political crises that are not literally referenced in the music, but which, I suggest, nevertheless inform it.

Exemplary of this wave and a key collaborator among its tight-knit communities, Vagabon’s career provides compelling case studies in questions of genre, departing from a quintessential indie rock project towards one more centered in synthesizers and electronics. In this paper, I compare “The Embers” (2017) with “Every Woman” (2019), Reading these key singles alongside affect theory, the Black outdoors, Afrofuturism, and Maureen Mahon’s foundational work on Black rock. A kind of limit case for the idea of Big Feelings, I ultimately suggest that Vagabon’s sophisticated negotiation of space, place, and sound positions her work as both a part of a longer history of indie rock innovators and also separate from a genre space historically overdetermined by associations with whiteness, working instead in a speculative in-between that invites us to consider alternative futures and ways of organizing social life.

Kelly Hoppenjans (University of Michigan)

## “Doing Something Unholy:” Mainstreaming Queer Subculture on TikTok

In the fall of 2022, the sexy, sacrilegious pop-EDM song “Unholy” by queer trans artists Sam Smith and Kim Petras went viral on TikTok, spawning countless thirst traps, transition videos, dances and more. Smith and Petras positioned the song as a “queer banger” on the app, actively centering its expression within queer and trans communities, desires, and practices. Yet “Unholy” circulated freely between siloed TikTok neighborhoods, where straight and queer users alike contributed to its viral success and to the trends and styles associated with its use on the app. Putting Michael Warner’s theory of publics and counterpublics in conversation with the “Unholy” TikTok video archive, I consider how “Unholy” circulated in queer and mainstream spaces on the app, noting the subtle but meaningful differences in style and subtext between the mainstream and subcultural publics. I explore the synechdochal relationship between “Unholy” and TikTok itself, a mainstream app which has encoded queer cultural touchstones into its functionality, as emblematic of the ability of hegemonic cultures to assimilate and erase the specificity of subcultural practices. Nevertheless, Petras and Smith insist upon the song’s queerness even as they exploit the ambiguity in its resonance, allowing it to permeate the porous boundaries between TikTok publics on its way to mainstream yet emphatically queer success. Along with many #queertok video creators, the duo rebuke heteronormative morality policing in their expressions of camp, androgyny, desire, and queer joy.

## **Session 9 (Dance Studio 1) PANEL: Roots & Branches: Expanding Feminist Approaches to Music Theory**

Moderator: Dean Hubbs (University of Michigan)

Participants: Orit Hilewicz (Indiana University), Rachel Lumsden (Florida State University), Vivian Luong (University of Oklahoma), Maeve Sterbenz (Smith College)

Respondents: Marion Guck (University of Michigan), Marianne Kielian-Gilbert (Indiana University)

### Panel Abstract:

This special panel session honors the research, teaching, and mentoring of Marion Guck and Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, two scholars whose work over the past three decades has helped shape feminist theory in music. Professors Guck and Kielian-Gilbert both have close associations with the University of Michigan: they received their PhDs in music theory from Michigan the same year (1981), and Guck recently retired from Michigan after teaching there since 1987. Speakers include colleagues, former students, dissertation advisees, and scholars whose research has been impacted by these two scholars.

The session consists of a brief introduction, two short reflection papers for Marianne Kielian-Gilbert (followed by a response from Marianne), and two short reflection papers for Marion Guck (followed by a response from Marion).