

## **Call for papers: International Conference**

### **Music and Disease**

**19-20 October 2023**

**Paris, IRCAM**

Abstract submission deadline: 1 March

Conference Location: Paris, IRCAM (Institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique)

Dates: 19-20 October 2023

Conference Organizers:

Vincent Barras (Lausanne, Institut des humanités en médecine)

Laurent Feneyrou (Paris, CNRS – STMS)

Céline Frigau Manning (Lyon, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3 – IHRIM)

This international conference in French and English aims to link together the history of medicine and history of music in the Western world, and to question the conditions and methods of their dialogue in the modern age, from the eighteenth to the end of the twentieth centuries. It is not primarily concerned with health, care, or the therapeutic virtues of music, but rather the study of diseases.

Approaches will be based on a range of various sources including general and specialized medical periodicals and treatises, on the history of medicine, diseases, doctors – whether illustrious like Chopin's, or unknown like Schumann's –, on the medical literature devoted to musicians, on their biographies, archives, correspondence, therapeutic or scientific writings (Leopold Mozart's letters, which expose the symptoms of his son and, with a certain degree of knowledge, his own medicinal treatments, are eloquent on this subject), on the iconography related to them, on the testimonies of their contemporaries or spectators centered on a physiology of effects, but also, and above all, on musical works.

Three types of approaches are envisaged:

1. Case studies or pathographies of artists, composers and performers, with the aim of describing the consequences of disease on musicians' biography, practice, and even aesthetics. Indeed, the figure of the composer or performer becomes decisive with the affirmation of the modern subject. In a striking reversal, this composer or interpreter, once a sort of Orpheus, expresses and exposes his pathos, falling more and more seriously ill: Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Puccini, Ravel, Bartók, for example, make it possible to tackle more or less complex clinical pictures, ranging from eye surgery to psychiatric disorders, encompassing the history of hygiene, the hospital or sexuality, pharmacology, or the practice of autopsy... It is no longer a mere matter of establishing a diagnosis, but of writing a pathography. Such a genre implies a renewal of biography and a singular regime of discursiveness that must be precisely interrogated. In this sense, papers should be careful not to produce yet another attempt at medical interpretation that would claim to explain the creativity of musicians or the artistic phenomenon more broadly through the prism of current positivistic medical knowledge. We will aim on the contrary to study the existent pathographies or the very category to which they belong by questioning the temptation

to abstract the medical gaze from its historical determinations, as well as the methods for taking into consideration, from the musical and musicological point of view, the natural body of the artist.

2. Studies by disease – syphilis, tuberculosis, cancer, AIDS, etc., but also, in the psychiatric field, schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychosis or bipolar disorder, to which may be added pathologies construed as being specifically musical, such as amusia, hypermusias, obsessions, “auditory or cerebral worms.” It will be necessary to study the history of these diseases and their medical descriptions through treatises and other historical documents, but also to examine the way in which these diseases are related to musicians, to their works or interpretations, to their speeches as well as musical performances, particularly with regard to opera, in all of its literary and theatrical dimension. How, for example, does Giuseppe Verdi, or more recently Péter Eötvös, represent tuberculosis or AIDS in the operatic genre, or those affected by such diseases?

3. Studies by medical discipline which strive to take into account, for example, the history of obstetrics with regard to the representation of birth in the musical field; the history of pediatrics with regard to the history of childhood, which has been in full development since the nineteenth century, from Schumann to Stockhausen; the history of pneumology, particularly in the case of late romanticism, with regard to the history of breath; or the history of cardiology to that of rhythm, which points to the age-old theme of music and the pulse, known since Herophilos, which François Nicolas Marquet revived in the eighteenth century, with his *Nouvelle Méthode facile et curieuse, pour connoître le pouls par les notes de la musique*, which a composition like Heinz Holliger’s *Cardiophonie* may be associated.

We will thus place ourselves at the crossroads of the history of music, musical aesthetics, and the history and philosophy of medicine, combining monographic, comparative and synthetic approaches. In doing so, our objective will not be to adopt the dynamic fueled by humanists and doctors devoted to “humanizing” the medical sciences by advocating the contribution of the arts, whose main quality would be to develop sensitivity, empathy or universal understanding. On the contrary, we will question such utilitarian approaches and ask how the musician of the modern era becomes an object of study, and more precisely a patient or patient of choice. To explain his or her constitution or pathologies, many interpretative models are called upon in the writings not only of doctors but also of other musicians and spectators. The musician’s body must thus be questioned, as Alain Corbin puts it, in “the tension established between the object of science, labor, the productive body, the experimental body, and the fantasized body.” How may we understand the place given to music and to the musician in medical writings, whether they relate to anatomy, physiology, therapy or even prophylaxis? What can we learn from the interest of artists themselves for the medical sciences? We begin from the conviction that these questions must be taken seriously and not remain at the level of historical curiosities; that there is indeed here, at the frontiers of the history of the body and of medicine, a vast field of study for musicologists, historians of music or medicine, and philosophers of science.

Proposals, in the form of an abstract of approximately 1,500 characters and short biographical note of 5 to 10 lines, must be submitted before March 1 2023 to the following address: [Laurent.Feneyrou@ircam.fr](mailto:Laurent.Feneyrou@ircam.fr).