



**Russian-German online forum for students and young researchers “Memories of acoustic culture. Sound, music and knowledge in Russia and Germany in the context of the avant-garde in the 20th century”.**  
**2021, November, 4-5**

Within current discourses in cultural studies and musicology, the systematic research of sound (sound studies), which includes branches such as music psychology, music therapy and theories of intermediality, plays a fundamental role. This research/these discourses also touche(s) upon the themes of performance, gender, intersectionality and bodily expressions in sound. One might recognize them as a heritage of 20th century avant-garde phenomena. Can we find traces in these discourses of 20th century avant-garde phenomena?

In the beginning of the 20th century, sound, its playback and perception as well as its artistic properties and possibilities, functioned as a laboratory for composers, musicians, artists, theatre performers, radio and film directors, and scientists. Sound came to play a major role in sociocultural processes in Russia and Germany during this period. Different forms of art were mixed and combined. This artistic synthesis disclosed new forms of cognition of the world and in turn prompted a growing interest in its psychophysiological aspects. At the same time, with the emergence of radio transmission and new resources for sound recording and preservation, human beings could rediscover an extraordinary sense, that is, hearing.

In Germany and Russia, the early 1900s experienced a renewal of the acoustic language of theatre, cinema and radio. Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold put forward principles for the insertion of sound in theatrical performance. In Berlin, Ernst Toller created broadcasts and worked with Ervin Piscator on the realization of a proletarian theatre in Berlin. Dziga Vertov (Denis Kaufman) envisioned his so-called ‘laboratory of hearing’ and collaborated with Mikhail Kaufman to realize the sound and visual montage in his films, while, in Berlin, Walter Ruttmann experimented with rhythmical montage in documentary film.

Radio plays resounded on the airwaves, which non-hierarchically included theatrical word, sound, noise and musical design/composition. In this context it is interesting that both in Germany and in Russia, radio was perceived as “a mediator of the future”. Kurt Weil wrote about absolute radio art, while Kurt Westphal contemplated the liberation of musical perception from the visual image. Arseniy Avramov even predicted that “radiomusic” (“electrified” music) could become the main task of musical creation. Many composers shared a curiosity for embedding psychophysiological processes in music perception, which led to concomitant theories and experiments in music composition. Parallel to the ‘laboratory’ of sound and hearing, Nikolai Bernstein’s theories about biomechanics and performance and Evgeniy

Sholpo's experiments with the graphical illustration of sound generated debates about aesthetics, which also drew from the scientific developments in the fields of acoustics and electronics. Electronic instruments — 'machines' such as the termenvox or the rhythmicon — were perceived as liberators of creation. Composers and artists — among which Nikolai Roslavtsev, Mikhail Matiushyn, Nikolai Obukhov, and Ivan Vyshnegradskiy in Russia, and Ferruccio Busoni in Germany — theorized about new sound systems. Ideas about the 'functionality' of music, were expressed in experiments with noise music and noise orchestra's without conductors as well as in music that was especially created for industrial purposes and that supported the biorhythm of workers through its artistic properties.

At the center of our dialogue forum of students and young scientists, are questions about aesthetic ruptures, which prompted new avenues for artistic perception and creation. We will also discuss the importance of the avant-garde as a heritage of contemporary acoustic cultures.

The aim of our dialogue is not only to share research on historical phenomena and the contexts in which they developed in Germany and Russia during the early 20th century, but to discuss contemporary issues as well. To do this, we outlined the following thematic fields:

#### **1. #Personality**

Activity impact studies of German composers, scientists and cultural figures in Russia and Russian figures in Germany, from 1910 to 1930. Especially interesting are women who created during this period, and other personalities who were not included in the traditional canon;

#### **2. #Laboratories of sound**

The (r)evaluation of various theories of sound, theoretical reflections about the connections between biomechanics, psychophysiology and the acoustic

#### **3. #Spaces of sound**

Analysis of the emergence of public organizations, institutions, publications, radio as well as theatre and cinema spaces, that nurtured perception and cognition processes through sound, reflecting the avant-garde interest in the acoustic;

#### **4. #Music and sound practices**

Reflections on the performance of avant-garde ideas in experimental music, art music and theatre music practices as well as reflections on the activation and preservation of these past practices in the present.

We invite bachelor, master and doctoral students from various disciplines, who engage in interdisciplinary research on acoustics, noise music, music theatre, music and musical montage in films and sound poetics in 20th century Russia and Europe.

Languages: English, Russian and German.

During the program, we plan discussions and round tables. To apply for a presentation, please send an abstract (500 words) and a biography (100 words, including your place of study and discipline) to

[soundofavantgarde2021@gmail.com](mailto:soundofavantgarde2021@gmail.com)

and

[info@dvsm-verband.de](mailto:info@dvsm-verband.de),

before **September 27, 2021**. We welcome applications in English, Russian or German. In case of Russian or German submissions, please provide an English translation. The duration of a paper presentation during the conference is 20 minutes, followed by a 20 minutes discussion.

Organisation: Association of Musicology Students (DVSM e.V.), DVSM research group „Music & Intermediality“, Tomsk State University, Institute of Art and Culture studies, Department of Conducting and Vocal Studies, Edison Denisov Pedagogical Centre, Tomsk.

Many thanks for your interest! If you have any question, please contact: [\*\*soundofavantgarde2021@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:soundofavantgarde2021@gmail.com) or [\*\*info@dvsm-verband.de\*\*](mailto:info@dvsm-verband.de)!