

# Annual Conference of the German Society for Popular Music Studies 2023

## Rock Your Body: Bodies in Interaction with Popular Music

September 14-16, 2023

University of Siegen

### I. On This Year's Conference Topic

*"I wanna dance with somebody, I wanna feel the heat with somebody"*  
– sung by Whitney Houston (1987)

Music is bound to bodies. We hear and feel it directly, we move along to it, we watch bodies in music videos and on concert stages, we use our bodies to produce sounds or augment them with instruments. In Popular Music Studies, the body-bound nature of music has been addressed since the inception of the research field. This year's conference would like to continue and update the discussion by exploring bodies in interaction with popular music. For further specification, four focal points are outlined below, which should serve as suggestions or starting points for possible contributions. In addition, the conference is open to further impulses on the topic.

#### *1. Bodies, Subjects and the Popular*

The singing, shouting or rapping voice evokes images of the body in that it is immediately heard as female, Black, old, etc. Such associations, however, need not be identical with the singing subject. Via recording techniques - such as autotune or vocoder - voices, bodies, and thus references of 'authentic' voices can become detached from one another (cf. Weheliye 2002, Jacke 2013, Müller 2018). How does this play out in genres that use such effects? How are body norms and boundaries produced, maintained, torn down, or shifted in popular music performances? To what extent do subjects have control over their bodies as fans, musicians, stars, and more?

Body spectacles shape the styles of many musicians: From Chuck Berry's duckwalk to Pink's artistic performances, popular music combines instrumental playing or singing with spectacular forms of movement. To what extent do physical spectacles act as markers of a cultural high/low distinction? To what extent does such a distinction continue in constructed differences between 'head music' and 'leg music'? And to what extent do connotations of body spectacles shape their attribution to the popular or the non-popular?

#### *2. Interacting Bodies*

Bodily interactions with popular music can take on various forms. Dance, for example, understood as body movement in interaction with music, is a central practice when it comes to the relationship between music and bodies (cf. Wicke 2000). Dance enables both individual interactions with sounds and interactions with other actors through movement: with other dancers, but also with those who perform music - from dance bands to rock bands and DJs to the

holograms of physically absent stars. How do these and other actors and actants interact in dance?

Instruments and MusickingThings (Ismaiel-Wendt 2016) are central elements of interaction in popular music practices. They expand bodily possibilities of sound production and can be differentiated with regard to the degree of musicians' bodily involvement. Which bodies and corporealities shape the interaction with instruments and technologies - and how do such interactions shape the bodies and corporealities of popular music (cf. Just 2022)?

### *3. Connected Bodies*

Not only the coronavirus brought to light that human bodies coexist with other beings, even depend on coexistence and share conditions of bodily existence across species (cf. Latour 2014, Tsing 2015, Haraway 2016). This also applies to music cultures; musical instruments or shellac records, for example, made of so-called natural materials are testimonies to the - not always unanimous - music-cultural relations of humans and animals (cf. Devine 2019). The subject matter of the conference challenges us to question notions of isolated (human) bodies as well as traditional dichotomies between nature and culture or body and mind. Which connections do bodies make in popular music cultures? How can popular music and its bodily practices be understood in relation to nature-culture dichotomies?

### *4. Researching Bodies*

Since Popular Music Studies have long been concerned with bodies (cf. e.g. Middleton 1990, Frith 1996, Whiteley 1997), the conference aims to take a self-reflexive look at the study of bodies. What characterizes the engagement with bodies in academic disciplines that study popular culture and music? What is the reason for the lasting interest in this topic? In addition to historical perspectives on disciplines, we invite reflections on how scholars' bodies and corporealities shape their research (cf. Hirschauer 2008). How can the embodied knowledge of all actors be used productively in the research process?

## **II. Diverse Contributions Wanted**

The conference is supposed to enable as diverse an exchange as possible about the outlined topic. The focus on bodies in particular offers numerous possibilities for workshops and practice-oriented sessions or hybrid contributions that engage in theory as well as practice (e.g. audio papers, film screenings, (lecture-)performances, simulations, dance workshops etc.). We also invite traditional sessions such as individual presentations and panel discussions. As always, members of the GFPM (and those who want to become one) are invited to present their work in free contributions (please include an according remark in the abstract).

Please submit abstracts of proposed contributions (300 words max. + reference list) and a short bio note (150 words max.) as a Word-document until **January 31, 2023** via e-mail to [gfp2023@popularmusikforschung.de](mailto:gfp2023@popularmusikforschung.de). Conference languages will be English and German, timeslots for workshops/practice-oriented sessions are 45 min., individual presentations 30 min. + 15 min. discussion, panels 90 min. The submissions will go through a single blind review by the GFPM board and the local organizers. Replies will be sent to authors by March 15, 2023. The GFPM awards financial travel support to members in their early career phase and/or precarious/non-existent employment to enable attendance at the conference. More information will follow via the GFPM newsletter.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at [pmgs@musik.uni-siegen.de](mailto:pmgs@musik.uni-siegen.de)

### Local Organizers:

Prof. Dr. Florian Heesch, Lea Jung, Dr. Reinhard Kopanski, Theresa Nink, Daniel Suer, Yalda Yazdani

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