The Harvard University Graduate Music Forum presents

2025 Graduate Conference:

TRANS* Media

KEYNOTE

McKenzie Wark

The New School

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Kaleb Goldschmitt

Wellesley College

Julián X. Latshang

MCPHS

Stephan Pennington

Tufts University

VIDEO SCREENING

Nguyễn Tân Hoàng

UC San Diego

CONCERT

Yarn/Wire

Harvard Group for New Music

**FEB 28–
MAR 1**

Harvard University
Department of Music
3 Oxford St, Cambridge, MA

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How does sound move across,

between, and beyond media?

And how does sound move media?



HARVARD
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

GMF 2025

TRANS* Media

TRANS*Media

Graduate Music Forum Conference 2025
Harvard University Department of Music
Cambridge, MA
February 28 to March 1, 2025

Organizers:

Stephen Tian-You Ai
Christina Misaki Nikitin

Special thanks to:

> The Harvard Department of Music and the Open Gate Foundation for their financial support in making this conference a reality;
> The staff of the Department of Music, including Kalan Chang, Kai Crull, Bríd Coogan, Kalan Chang, Eva Kim, Angie McNamara, Beth Mullins, and Nancy Shafman;
> The Managing Director of the Shelemay Sound Lab, John Pax, for sourcing equipment and ensuring the smooth operation of all video and audio throughout the conference;
> Our graphic designer, Sam Huber, for making this ragtag operation look polished and professional;
> Our program committee: Darcy Copeland, Shiva Ramkumar, and Juan Patricio Saenz for reviewing a large number of presentation proposals and arranging our excellent program;
> The past GMF Conference Co-chairs, Elaine Fitz Gibbon and Leo Sarbanes, for their sage advice and guidance during the planning of this conference;
> Our interns from Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall School, Comet Lore, Anastasia Hodge, and Isis Ticona Johnson, for helping us out with photography and conference operations;
> The officers and members of the Graduate Music Forum for not only going all hands on deck to help put on this conference, but also—most importantly—for their dedication, support, and friendship which continue to nourish our wacky, beautiful community in the Department of Music.

As the current chair of the Graduate Music Forum, welcome to the Harvard University Department of Music! Since 1998, the Graduate Music Forum has provided an informal setting for graduate students in the Department of Music to discuss ideas and concerns regarding curricula, teaching, facilities, and social life. We are also able to host a yearly graduate student conference on a theme of our choosing, with recent past themes including "'An Adventurous Undertaking': Reconsidering Music Criticism in the 21st Century" (2024), "Music for a New World: Music and Decoloniality" (2022), and ""To Begin Again: Music, Apocalypse, and Social Change" (2021).

We are excited to present our 2025 conference, "TRANS∗Media," featuring papers, screenings, and performances, each exploring the role of music and sound in relating trans∗ness to experiences of moving across, between, and beyond multiple media forms, technologies, and narratives. We address two principal questions: How does sound and/or music move across, between, and beyond media? And how does sound and/or music move media?

At the heart of our inquiry is a deep concern for the works, practices, experiences, and lives of transgender and transsexual individuals and communities. Since the dissemination of our call for papers, trans people in the United States have faced increasingly mounting attacks on their healthcare access, legal recognition, and existence. Under these oppressive circumstances, our call to critically consider TRANS∗Media—namely, to indulge in the debates of trans-as-method vis-à-vis trans experience—may seem blissfully ivory-towered. However, we believe that it is precisely in these times that we must not only agonistically open such critical conversations and exchange scholarly insights, but also, more importantly perhaps, gather as friends and colleagues—present, past, and future—as we attune our ears towards trans thriving and joy.

The conference will take place between four rooms in the Department of Music. Paper sessions, the roundtable discussion, video screening and keynote will all be held in Room 6 and 9. The Yarn/Wire concert featuring the Harvard Group for New Music will take place in Paine Hall (2F, accessible by elevator). And whenever we're hosting meals, receptions, or coffee breaks, please make yourself at home in the Taft Lounge.

This conference has been the result of a collective commitment over many months. The Graduate Music Forum would like to acknowledge not only the names and organizations listed in the previous page, but also the artists, scholars, and attendees who have come to ask questions and engage in conversation over this important topic. Thank you all for taking part in what promises to be an unforgettable event.

Sincerely,
Stephen Tian-You Ai
On behalf of the Graduate Music Forum

Friday, February 28th

9:00 TAFT LOUNGE

Registration

Light breakfast will be provided

10:00 ROOM 9

Opening Remarks

Welcome from the conference organizers

10:15–11:45 SESSION I / ROOM 9

TRANS*representations

Session chair: Alexander Zahlten (Harvard University)

> Dan Levy (McGill University)
> Sergio De Iudicibus (Yale University)
> Jo Michael Rezes (Tufts University/Emerson College)

11:45

Lunch Break

1:00–2:30 SESSION II / ROOM 6

TRANS*intimacies

Session chair: Tomiko Yoda (Harvard University)

> Hermán Luis Chávez (Independent)
> Morgan Bates (UC Los Angeles)
> Kelsey “Chloë” Sucena (Alfred University)

2:45–4:15 SESSION III / ROOM 9

TRANS*worlding

Session chair: Carolyn Abbate (Harvard University)

> Steve 4. Tu (University of Toronto)
> Fabricio Cavero Farfan (UC Irvine)
> [redacted]

4:30–5:45 ROOM 6

SCREENING* and TALKBACK*
> Looking for Jackie

Nguyễn Tân Hoàng (UC San Diego)
In conversation with Eloy Ramirez (Harvard University)

6:00 TAFT LOUNGE

Dinner and Evening Reception

Catered dinner will be provided

8:00 PAINE HALL

Concert
> Yarn/Wire

Harvard Group for New Music
The Thelma E. Goldberg Concert

Saturday, March 1st

9:00 TAFT LOUNGE

Breakfast

Light breakfast will be provided

9:45–11:15 SESSION IV / ROOM 9

TRANS*synthesis

Session chair: Yvette Janine Jackson (Harvard University)

> Mayank Dutt Kaushik* (Jawaharlal Nehru University)
> Lily Shababi (UC Los Angeles)
> Keaton Ireland and Noah Witke Mele (New York University)

11:30–1:00 SESSION V / ROOM 6

TRANS*gressors

Session chair: Alejandro L. Madrid (Harvard University)

> Vik J. Squires (Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne)
> Alejandrina M. Medina (UC San Diego)
> Euge Helyantus Stumm (University of Miami)

1:00 TAFT LOUNGE

Lunch

Catered lunch will be provided

2:00–3:00 SESSION VI / ROOM 9

TRANS*vocalities

Session chair: Michèle Duguay (Harvard University)

> Dani Heffernan (UC Los Angeles)
> ILĀ x TRANS VOICES (Moth)*

3:45–5:00 ROOM 9

ROUNDTABLE* > On TRANS*Media

Moderator: Suzannah Clark (Harvard University)

Discussants:

> Kaleb Goldschmitt (Wellesley College)
> Julián X. Latshang (MCPHS)
> Stephan Pennington (Tufts University)

In conversation with McKenzie Wark (The New School)

5:15–6:30 ROOM 9

KEYNOTE* > Raving

McKenzie Wark (The New School)

6:30 TAFT LOUNGE

Closing Reception

Light refreshments, canapés, good cheer

7:30 THE MAHARAJA

Celebratory Dinner

For presenters, guest speakers, and conference organizers

Friday, February 28th

Dan Levy (MCGILL UNIVERSITY)

> “On the Other Side of a Television Screen”: The t4t Affective World of “I Saw the TV Glow” (2024)

ABSTRACT

Whether made hypervisible or sublimated through metaphor, trans characters are often written to explain and justify trans existence, particularly to a non-trans public (Morse 2018; Steinbock 2018). In their 2024 film *I Saw the TV Glow*, writer/director Jane Schoenbrun subverts these typical grammars of trans representation (Tourmaline et al., 2017), prioritizing their trans audience’s embodied, affective experience over pandering to a non-trans audience. Schoenbrun also expresses a desire that their film act as a “sad song,” recognizing the transformative, relational potential of negative affect (Malatino 2022). How does Schoenbrun’s film demonstrate a mode of t4t (trans for trans) feeling, mobilizing negative affect to encourage real-world transformation for their trans audience?

In this paper, I argue that Schoenbrun builds a *t4t affective world* through the complex interplay between the film’s narrative and visual world, and its distinctive indie soundtrack, which centers “sad songs” as vehicles of trans relationality. Building on recent work theorizing t4t in literary and media criticism (Awkward-Rich 2020; Dunn 2024; Lundy-Harris 2022), I perform my own t4t close-readings of scenes which foreground the direct relationship between film and audience. Through a multidisciplinary method of musical, narrative, and media analysis, I bring together intra- and extra-filmic worlds. I suggest that bringing t4t care ethics to our artistic and critical practices pulls our attention toward the electrified spaces between bodies (of work, of flesh) that have the potential to repel one another, or to stick like television static.

BIO

Dan Arthur Levy is a PhD student in Musicology and Gender & Feminist Studies at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. He received his bachelor’s degree in Gender & Queer Studies and Creative Writing from the University of Puget Sound. His interdisciplinary research explores aesthetics and processes of trans becoming through relationality, focusing on trans singer-songwriters in contemporary independent music scenes in the U.S. and Canada.

Sergio De Iudicibus (YALE UNIVERSITY)

> Transvocality in Ovid's Narcissus and Netflix's "You"

ABSTRACT

That modern philosophy has entangled itself with complex debates about the Narcissus myth should come as no surprise. That it has privileged Narcissus over Echo—despite Ovid's careful juxtaposition of two—should *also* come as no surprise. Cued by Derrida's suggestions that the myth illustrates a radical transition of self to other, this paper seeks to recuperate what for Narcissus is the catalyst for his bodily metamorphoses: Echo or the disembodied voice. Challenging ontological models for vocal "uniqueness" (Cavarero), "purity," or omnipotence (Chion), the myth calls us to understand Echo and Narcissus—whose gender Ovid himself queers—as subjects of a transvocal system where the phenomenological complexities of hearing make the distinction between selves tenuous if not impossible. Extracting from the *Metamorphoses*, then, a series of theses about and terms for the voice, this paper will then turn to the Netflix show *You* as a contemporary example of Narcissus' state of "narcosis" (McLuhan), where the voice coerces the spectator into blurring existing distinctions between bodies, selves, and places in an immersive system akin to the myth's pond. In what Brian Kane calls the "vocal turn," it is more important than ever to recuperate in Ovid's canonical work the silenced nymph or, in other words, to theorize anew as scholars complicate the acousmatic question: "who is this?" (Eidsheim 2019) and "who is this for?" (Sterne and Sawhney 2022).

BIO

Sergio De Iudicibus is a Ph.D student in the combined program of Italian Studies and Film & Media Studies at Yale University, having earned an A.B. from Princeton University and an M.A. from USC. His dissertation, cued by the perennial question "why is Italian film dubbed?", will likely seek to understand the scission of body and voice in modern Italy. Currently, however, he is interested in such cultural techniques as "switching" or "coupling," from train infrastructure to tango and BDSM. Sergio appreciates transhistorical methodologies, sound studies, German media theory, critical theory, and intellectual history. Fluent in four languages, he has published translations in *The Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* as well as book reviews for *Resonance: The Journal of Sound and Culture*. Sergio spends his summers in Siena where he serves as a pianist and Program Coordinator for the Accademia Musicale Chigiana. You may find his other work on his website: iudicibus.com.

Jo Michael Rezes (TUFTS UNIVERSITY/EMERSON COLLEGE)

> Sharing the Sounds of Vanilla Sex in Viral Loads: Transnational Afterlives of HIV/AIDS in the House of Air (2017)

ABSTRACT

Brendan Maclean's *House of Air* (2017) music video is a campy enfleshment of the structuralist aesthetics of *Gay Semiotics* (1977), Hal Fischer's photography series of sex codes for gay men in San Francisco. In *House of Air*, queer sex is on full display (concocted from foodstuffs): golden showers, fecal smearing, and semen ejaculated onto the nonbinary star performer's face—all set to a bouncy, synth pop beat. Within weeks, the video becomes a meme hoax, shared to trick people into watching explicit content. *House of Air* is forcibly removed by YouTube for its failure to meet community guidelines, but the viral uptake of *House of Air* reveals a continued, public paranoia around contagion as thousands voice their repulsion. Queer audiences claim that they are "too vanilla" to appreciate the music video, while others comment that the performers are destined to live "forever in the House of AIDS." In 2020, Yekaterina Lakhova implores the Russian government to ban an ice cream product called Rainbow for "promoting homosexual behavior." Ukrainian and Russian TikTok creators, mostly Gen-Z, use the song "House of Air" as a viral sound to mock the prohibition of colourful desserts. They kiss, dance, and lick rainbow cones to the rhythm of Maclean's lyrics, "we talk / without a word." Thinking transnationally with virality (as theorized by Jih-Fei Cheng), I argue that *House of Air's* "queer gestures function as viruses," allowing covert forms of communication and survival through humour. Sweet aesthetics and sounds figure uncanny queerness in the world of the music video. As this sound replicates on TikTok, a transnational history of HIV/AIDS can be sensed and downloaded for further use.

BIO

Jo Michael Rezes (they/them/theirs) is a theatremaker and educator in the Greater Boston Area. Their dissertation, "Tastes Like AIDS: Sweet Aesthetics, Bitter Humor, and Viral Performances of HIV/AIDS " centers flavor in the study of HIV/AIDS media. They have published work in Polari Press, Refinery29, and Texas Theatre Journal with forthcoming chapters in *Milestones in Queer US Theatre* (Routledge), *Visual Histories of Humor and Health* (Manchester University Press), and *The Methuen Drama Book* of Trans Plays (vol. 3). Online, Jo is a TED Official Speaker and runs an online cooking show (Jiffy Mae's Sick Kitchen) with a cookbook in development featuring recipes found in queer, chronically ill (and online) food cultures. Rezes has held teaching positions at Boston College, Emerson College, and Harvard University, and is the Curriculum Developer for The Theater Offensive's True Colors programs. A proud Vassar College alum and Ph.D. Candidate in Theatre & Performance at Tufts University. Learn more: JMRezes.com.

Hermán Luis Chávez (INDEPENDENT)

> Sounding the Trans Home

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the political potential of a collage of sonic media in which trans people contend with the home. The home, understood as a spatial and genealogical claim to belonging, is at its best complicated—and at its worst, deadly—for trans subjects. Trans youth are often at the mercy of adult caretakers in the home, while trans adults often must create their own homes and families in contradistinction to cisheteropatriarchal heritage. This paper links various struggles with and reclamations of the trans home. I make these connections across a broad array of sound and media, including indie pop music, poetry & autobiography, contemporary film, South American fiction, and reality television.

In presenting a sonic corpus of the trans critique of the home, I explore how these contentions might operate within political projects whose reformulation of the home is key to building feminist political movement. Decolonial (Mohanty 2003), Black (Okafor 2018; hooks 1990), and Latina (Lugones 2003; Anzaldúa 1987) feminists, among others, have spoken to the pain of queer multiplicity, theorizing that coalition against oppression requires contending with the home as a radical space for transformation. Insofar as the home is a spatial claim of the family, feminist critics (O'Brien 2023; Lewis 2022) of the recent family abolitionist literature have extended that imagining beyond the home is critical for liberationist movements to build communization of care. Following these projects, this paper presents the sonic dimension of the trans struggle with the home as one which opens the space for care-ful political movement.

BIO

Hermán Luis Chávez is an independent scholar concerned with the aesthetics of coloniality, the sensorium of family, and queer/trans sociality. They hold an MSt in Modern Languages from Oxford, an MMus in Musicology and Ethnomusicology from King's College London, and undergraduate degrees in Ethnomusicology and Comparative Literature from UCLA. You can reach them at hermanluischavez@gmail.com.

Morgan Bates (UC LOS ANGELES)

> "The Space In My Mouth": Voicing Queer and Trans Liminality in Angélica Negrón's "The Island We Made" (2021)

ABSTRACT

Approximately one year into the COVID-19 pandemic, composer Angélica Negrón, filmmaker Matthew Placek, and drag performer Sasha Velour brought their creative artistry into conversation through Opera Philadelphia's short film *The Island We Made*. Set in a mid-century house in Staten Island, Placek focuses specifically upon the material components of the house, evoking a familiar sense of "home." The opera's score, however, launches us into a haunting, ethereal realm through electronic drones, harp, and voice. Narratively, we experience an unclear, alinear plot depicted by a character at various stages of life receiving care from an omnipresent, genderqueer drag "mother." By establishing numerous sites of liminality, namely through nontraditional pre-recorded opera cinema, lip-synced vocal performance in drag, and character ambiguity across gender and age categories, audience members are invited to individually reflect and expand upon their own lived, embodied encounters with parental connection and the complexities of home and belonging.

In this paper, I argue that *The Island We Made* mobilizes nostalgia through both material engagement and deconstruction of fixed social categories. Drawing upon works by Sara Ahmed (2004, 2006), J. Jack Halberstam (2005), and Jack David Eller (2024), I assert that the opera portrays a specifically *queer* and *trans* experience of nostalgia through ambiguity of time, unstable physical space and sonic entities, and a queer(ed) parental figure. This emphasis on the material not only heightens the sensorial impact of the opera, but invites audiences to reconsider constructions of stability amid the lasting social and industrial impacts of the global pandemic.

BIO

Morgan Bates (they/them) is a third-year Musicology PhD student and Cota-Robles fellow at UCLA. Morgan's ongoing dissertation research addresses constructions of gender in drag vocal performance across genres. More broadly, their research explores musical sites of resistance and mobilization and confronts racialized and gendered listening practices, especially in consumption of queer and trans popular musics. Outside of their research, Morgan teaches trumpet with the LA Philharmonic's Youth Orchestra Los Angeles program and writes program notes for the Oregon Mozart Players and Tucson Symphony Orchestra. Morgan earned their Bachelor of Arts degree with a religion minor from Dickinson College, as well as their Master of Music in Trumpet Performance, Master of Arts in Musicology, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Graduate Certificate from the University of Oregon.

Kelsey “Chloë” Sucena (ALFRED UNIVERSITY)

> Inverting the Phallus: On Photography, Sontag, and the Transexual Camera

ABSTRACT

My camera is a pussy. In this slideshow presentation I consider analog photography’s relationship to gender, empire, and power to propose a trans* feminist account of its recession and recent recontextualization. With vaginoplasty as an animating metaphor I consider alternative approaches to a variety of contemporary photographic forms, incorporating sound, slides, and performance, which defy Sontag’s condemnation of the medium, challenging her essentializing association between the camera and the phallus.

Analyzing artists like Nan Goldin, Latoya Ruby Frazier, JEB, Mariette Pathy Allen, and Leor Miller as well as my own photographic practice, I ask whether or not photography remains the dominant and masculine media form which Sontag once critiqued, or if it is possible that photography has transitioned with the proliferation of other forms (video, social media, LML image production, ect.) into a new and potentially charged subordinate role.

Through this account I advocate for the analog photographic documentation of trans* lives within the existential crisis through which we are living for the purpose of preserving and extending contemporary trans* cultural forms. Though documentary photography is often condemned for its association with patriarchal domination, here I argue for post-documentary practices which operate in service of a trans* feminine photography centered on practices of care, community building, and the affirmation of life. In inverting the camera as phallus, and in questioning such biological essentializations, we ask whether or not analog photography might serve some role in the defense and preservation of trans* community, while bridging Sontag’s own desire for “an erotics of art” with her critique of photographic erotics.

BIO

Kelsey “Chloë” Sucena (she/her, b.1994) is a trans* girl in a world on fire. Her work rests at the intersection of photography and text, often within the bodies of performative slideshows. Through ephemeral/projected photo essays and auto-theoretical prose, she works to interrogate and represent her own trans* experience in an increasingly hostile American landscape. Her post-documentary approach to photography seeks honest engagement with those central issues impacting almost all of us, as marginalizing subjects within a world increasingly designed to support the rich to the detriment of the rest. As an anarchist, polyamorist, and artist, Kelsey contributes to a radical tradition of separatism, building networks of trans* friends, allies, and lovers with whom to sustain an imperiled world. With the camera in hand, she cultivates meaningful relationships between trans* subjects and the world they occupy, imagining photography through the lens of relational aesthetics as a tool for bringing alienated subjects back into contact with the world and with each other.

Steve 4. Tu (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO)

> Trans* Sound: Listening Across Media, Ecologies, and Identities

ABSTRACT

This paper explores trans* listening as a transformative, embodied practice that moves beyond fixed boundaries, connecting media, ecologies, and identities. Listening is framed as a transductive process that resonates across physiological, technological, and environmental networks. Drawing from Voegelin's concept of transformative listening, Daoist qi-philosophy, and the materiality of sonic environments, I argue that trans* listening challenges fixed categories and promotes relational attunement to fluidity and more-than-human voices.

Listening isn't a neutral act; it's shaped by what we attend to and what we ignore. Human ears are conditioned to prioritize human voices, limiting our perception of the vibrant, multispecies sonic world. This paper questions how we hear the silences of objects or the frequencies beyond human perception, and how the politics of audibility might offer new modes of attunement amidst ecological crisis.

Focusing on two aspects of trans* listening—its ecological and ethical implications, and its resistance to normative frameworks of attention—I consider how listening reconfigures relationships across species and scales. Using examples from trans* media sound art and ecological sound practices, I examine how listening disrupts anthropocentric epistemologies and redefines interspecies connections. Ultimately, trans* listening isn't just a method of engagement but a medium of transformation, where meaning emerges from the potentiality of sound's resonance, challenging fixed ontologies and ecological boundaries.

BIO

Steve 4. Tu (he/him) is a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. His research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Digital Research Alliance of Canada. Steve is also a graduate fellow with the School of Cities, Inlight Mental Health, and DIVERT Mental Health. His research interests include philosophy and theory of higher education, other-than-human stories, trans- and posthumanities, "artificial" intelligence, faculty and student mental health, research-creation, and terror management theory.

Fabricio Cavero Farfan (UC IRVINE)

> The Primeval Poet: A Transmedia Opera based on Andean Symbolism and Diabolism

ABSTRACT

As a doctoral student, I observe the transdisciplinary nature of the design and application of music technology as it synthesizes the intellectual, emotional, and metaphysical dimensions of human culture. I focus on sculpting and performing Precolumbian music technology made of clay combined with modern expressive media, mainly extended voice techniques and electronics (motion sensors, video projection, and sound spatialization). As a carrier of Indigenous heritage and immigrant, I reflect on my ancestral Andean legacy, demonized and persecuted during colonization, and surviving "The Extirpation of Idolatries" by reimagination and adaptation of rituals and symbols. In this context, I connect and contest this "diabolic" historical connotation with the etymological contrast of symbolism and diabolism as unity and division, supported in my approach to the Andean philosophy of "Yanantin" (complementation of opposites) and supporting my approach to transmedia, primarily through this opera, which encompasses my approach to ethno-archaeo-musicology with integrative arts and hermeneutics.

The opera's plot portrays the quest for supreme knowledge, honoring the indigenous intellectuals of the Americas. The protagonist goes through several initiations assisted by the "faculty" of sacred plants as preparation for the encounter with the Primeval Poet, the first Shaman (a word that I avoid for being imposed by Eurocentricism), a creational mythological character that takes care of human and plant interaction as they evolve together and coexist. This plot critiques colonial misconceptions about the absence of an "Academia" in Indigenous civilizations of America and points out the resemblance of human manifestations to the pursuit of knowledge and expression.

BIO

Fabricio, a composer from Cusco, Peru, synthesizes composition, performance, and investigation in his musicianship. He approaches diverse musical languages, from traditional Andean music to popular, experimental, and academic music. He takes inspiration from Andean cosmovision and its convergence with other worldviews in the modern Americas. He studied Viola Performance and Composition in Texas at TCU and SMU (2007-2015) and computer music and precolonial music instruments at UNTREF in Argentina (2020-2022). As a student in the Integrated Composition Improvisation and Technology PhD Program at UCI, he is focused on integrating ancestral/Indigenous and modern/global music technologies to create multimedia performances. His main inspiration is to honor the legacy of Americas' "Indigenous intellectuals" and celebrate our continental diversity.

[redacted]

Nguyễn Tân Hoàng

> LOOKING FOR JACKIE



IN CONVERSATION WITH

ELOY RAMIREZ (HARVARD UNIVERSITY)

Nguyen Tan Hoang is an experimental videomaker and writer based in San Jose, California, USA. Nguyen's videos include Forever Bottom! (1999), PIRATED! (2000), K.I.P. (2002), look_im_azn (2011), I Remember Dancing (2019), and Sad Porn (2024). Their research interests include Asian American visual culture, Southeast Asian cinema, queer cinema, experimental film, race and pornography, and videographic criticism. Nguyen's experimental videos have screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Getty Center in Los Angeles, and the Pompidou Center in Paris. They have programmed film, video, and performance for MIX NYC: New York Queer Experimental Film Festival and the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival. Nguyen is a member of the working group International Videoessay Research Network (IVERN). Nguyen teaches film, media, and cultural studies in the Department of Literature at UC San Diego.

Saturday, March 1st

Mayank Dutt Kaushik (JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY)

> Soundscapes of Coded-Playhouses in Synthetic Generative Worlds

ABSTRACT

This presentation explores the technical and aesthetic intersections of trans* identity, transmedia storytelling, and the emergent paradigm of expanding transgenre cinema within (XR-MR-AR-AI) platforms. Building on Kierkegaard's notion of dread as a catalyst for freedom, transgenre cinema transcends conventional genre blending by merging extreme elements—horror, apocalyptic sci-fi, fascist iconography, and graphic pornography—into singular sequences. These configurations evoke neurobiological intensities that challenge psychological and symbolic frameworks, reshaping the immersive landscape of contemporary storytelling. This study critically examines works like Suneil Sanzgiri's Golden Jubilee (2022), an XR-VR meditation on memory and displacement, and *Apartment: In the Realm of Ripley* (2024), a speculative AI-driven hybrid experience where participants navigate a brain-dead boy's fragmented memories to solve a murder mystery. Employing volumetric capture, multi-lens cinematic pipelines, spatialized audio, and real-time generative soundscapes, these projects create trans-sensorial environments that merge narrative agency with immersive technologies. By situating these XR works within the contexts of Cannes XR, Mumbai Academy of Moving Image (MAMI), Emami Film Festival, and Venice Immersive 2024, I illuminate how trans* creators deploy intermedia strategies and computational frameworks—such as Unreal Engine haptics and machine learning-driven narrative branching—to reconfigure audience engagement and disrupt normative cinematic paradigms. Grounded in trans* methodologies, expanded cinema, and computational media cultures, I argue that these transgenre XR experiences redefine the possibilities of embodiment, activism, and storytelling. They foreground radical epistemologies of trans* subjectivity, offering innovative ways to rethink identity, freedom, and intermedia praxis through generative technologies.

BIO

Mayank Dutt Kaushik is a PhD student in Cinema Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of Arts and Aesthetics. His research explores the intersection of digital media, computational aesthetics, and global cinema, with publications in *FIPRESCI*, *Marg*, *Weird Wave Archive*, *Rhizomes*, and *Theatre Research International*. He has presented at international conferences such as the Society for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image (Canada), After Post-Photography (St. Petersburg), Transformation of Scientific Research Conference (Albania), and the Asian Cinema Studies Society Conference (Hong Kong). With experience across institutions like Instituto Cervantes, Great Eastern Mills, India Art Fair, Media Monks, and the Times Group, Kaushik has developed expertise in creative direction, industry studies, and content production. His creative pursuits extend to theatre direction, curatorial projects, and computational art. His forthcoming book, *Synthetic Narratives: The Algorithmic Aesthetics of Global South Cinema*, examines how emerging technologies shape cinematic expression in developing nations, contributing to the broader discourse on digital cinema and global screen cultures.

Lily Shababi (UC LOS ANGELES)

> Sounding Trans* Creativity through Hyperpop's Music Production Practices

ABSTRACT

Inspired by 100 gecs' viral song "money machine," Spotify created a playlist in 2019 called "hyperpop," which became a categorical translation of a burgeoning electronic music scene in England and the United States. The playlist's curator Lizzy Szabo and ex-Spotify employee Glenn McDonald claim that access to music software and internet-community platforms (Discord, Twitch) ushered in a new generation of musicians and listeners drawn to "ebullient electro-maximalism." Despite the music industry's attempts to codify hyperpop as a genre—and assert it as a broadly LGBTQ+ genre for wider consumption—this paper demonstrates how trans* musicians resist traditional values about gender signification, musical skill, and technological expertise through creative vocal processing practices, layers of distorted sound design, and playful sensibilities.

This paper draws from ethnographic research of queer and trans* electronic music in order to recognize hyperpop's trans* community and their reconfiguration of music production as a tool to express ideas that remain difficult to articulate in their everyday lives. Interviews with musicians Katie Dey, Claire Rousay, and Rex Laurent, as well as autoethnographic field notes from Los Angeles concerts and raves such as Subculture and Heav3n are theoretically situated amongst musicologist Dana Baitz's trans* analytic methods and Stephan Pennington's research on vocality. Through paying serious attention to trans* hyperpop experiences and iterations of the Spotify playlist (2019–2024), I conceptualize hyperpop as a classification tool that does not entirely account for the sociopolitical significance of internet-art aesthetics and experimental music production within trans* music subcultures.

BIO

Lily Shababi is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Musicology at UCLA. Her research examines vocal processing practices that are cultivated by hyperpop musicians. Situating an ethnographic study of queer and trans electronic pop music subcultures amongst trans studies and technology studies frameworks, Lily traces an alternate genealogy of electronic music. Studying the cultural histories and musical practices associated with technologies such as music software, electronic instruments, and artificial intelligence vocal models, she illustrates how technology can be harnessed as a tool for transgressive experiences of gender and selfhood. Lily has presented her work at the American Musicological Society, the Society for Ethnomusicology, Pop Con, and the Pacific Southwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society, where she received the Ingolf Dahl Award in May 2023. Lily is also a Visiting Instructor at Occidental College where she teaches courses in music production.

Keaton Ireland and Noah Witke Mele (NEW YORK UNIVERSITY)

> Prosthetic Pop Stars and Surgical Soundscapes

ABSTRACT

On Friday, October 13th, 2023, Venezuelan experimental musician, Arca, went under the knife on stage during her residency at Manhattan's Park Avenue Armory. Laying supine in a surgical chair being attended to by costumers, make-up artists, and audio technicians, she finally emerged from the procedure bare-chested and adorned with prosthetic double mastectomy scars. Arca's invocation of the medicalized, surgically cut transmasculine body grafted upon her own, medically altered, transfeminine body, offers us a viewpoint that goes beyond the limits of trans legibility, effectively upending normative, cis-centric modes of apprehending transness. In this co-authored presentation, we draw on trans studies, disability studies, performance theory, and sound studies to consider how Arca's prosthetics work to question what medical transition might mean and do while foregrounding the always-already synthetic nature of gender. Pushing against the normalized social and medical narratives of transition, Arca points us toward a spacetime where the processes of un- and re-making sex and gender are iteratively inhabitable, continuously imaginative, and experimentally enacted. These interventions reveal the inherent contradictions of the sex/gender system––contradictions that Arca translates and synthesizes into her music and music-making practices––working to trouble the already unstable human/technology divide. From her grand piano turned arpeggiating synthesizer to her bespoke Matador stilts, Arca's transmediated selves, like her prosthetic top surgery scars, constitute methods of embodiment that use prosthetics as neither wholly metaphor nor pure materiality, but instead stitching them together into a performative that unmakes the difference between the graft and the grafted.

BIO

Keaton Ireland is a PhD student in Media, Culture, and Communication at NYU. Their interests lie in the fruitful intersections of trans studies, surveillance studies, and sound studies. More specifically, his work looks to the role of collaboration within certain acts of trans cultural production across multiple mediums including video games, visual art, and electronic music.

Noah Witke Mele makes and writes about performance. Her work addresses science, fiction, sex/gender, disability, and affixes. Currently, Noah is a dancer for Patricia Hoffbauer and a Master's student at NYU Performance Studies.

Vik J. Squires (MELBOURNE CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE)

> "It Sounds Like Evil and Violence": Transgender Narratives and Musicking within Australian Metal Music Scenes

ABSTRACT

Metal music has long been associated with societal outcasts, providing a community and outlet for individuals disenfranchised by the mainstream. Often considered in terms of cisgender and heterosexual men, metal has notably appropriated queer culture as well as platformed queer performers, including transgender ones. Nevertheless, in metal music studies, trans performers have received minimal acknowledgement and, in instances of their inclusion, only high-profile examples are used to form overarching judgements for all trans experiences within the genre and comment on the genre's acceptance of said performers. These aspects of trans-performed metal eclipse the music created by these performers and therefore minimal discourse engages with their music. In this paper, I draw on an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study of Australia's metal scenes, highlighting two transwomen musicians, to examine transgender musicking and how it intertwines with metal's sonic and visual aesthetics. Additionally, I trace each performer's process of becoming a metal performer and capture each contributors' gender exploration and process of coming out within the metal subculture. Each narrative demonstrates a complex intermingling of one's transness and their metalhead status, as well as the codes underpinning scene construction in Australian metal, resulting in either the facilitating of free expression of transgender performers, or blatant discrimination against them. In presenting these case studies, transgender individuals' relationship with metal is better explored and repositions them away from systems of approval which only function to uphold cisnormativity.

BIO

Vik J. Squires (they/them) is a trans nonbinary musicology PhD candidate at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne. Their doctoral research is centred on reevaluating the presence of women and gender diverse performers in metal music, to counter the mainstream narrative of the genre's cisgender, heterosexual, white male dominance. In addition to this research, Squires provides their lived experience as an autistic individual to critique research practices and framings of autistic people in academia. Squires has been acknowledged for their work, with them most recently receiving the Melbourne Conservatorium Director's Award for Exceptional Doctoral Research in 2024.

Alejandrina M. Medina (UC SAN DIEGO)

> Transfeminine Indolence: On Alienation and the Aesthetics of Getting Ready

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I perform a critical languoring that explores transfeminine pleasure, labor, and forms of making do in vernacular and staged performance. Following the work of Marcos Gonzalez (2024), I take interest in the resistive and revolting capacity of indolence (slothness, laziness, *flojería*) to slow down the productivity of performance, instead taking time for alternative transfemineine dreamscapes. Similarly, I read indolence alongside Michel de Certeau's (1985) formulation of the *perruque*——that is, a worker's own work disguised as that of the employer–to consider transfeminine value and alienation within nightlife economies. I propose that vernacular and staged performances of transfemme indolence, take back the exploitative and voyeuristic listening and viewing practices of white cishetero audiences and patronage. My focus on transfeminine indolence works through recent developments in transmarxism and objectless critique, applying the opulent, campy, and glamorous aesthetics of transfemininity as a method for piecing together material histories of race, sex, and ability. In terms of music and sound, I employ transfemme vernacular and staged performance–found in the video performances of Miss Continental winner Dena Cass and performance artist Mark Aguhar–as improper and "inauthentic" objects (Ramos 2023) that require alternative listening and hearing practices (Medina 2023). I aim to show how transfeminine indolence–that is, taking your sweet time–musically mediates pleasure and desire. The opulent laziness of transfemininity, I suggest, is a way of giving it (back) to the girls.

BIO

Alejandrina M. Medina is a PhD Candidate at the University of California, San Diego. She also co-leads the Black, Indigenous, and Trans of Color Histories Lab, which has recently been awarded a $460,000 higher learning grant from the Mellon Foundation. Alejandrina's dissertation project, "Latina Loudness: Transfeminine Excess in the Americas" mobilizes trans of color critique as a method for performing material and hemispheric histories of race, sex, and ability through the speculative potential of aesthetic inquiry. Her dissertation has been supported by the Tyler Center for Global Studies, International Institute, and Sarah Pettit Fellowship in Lesbian Studies at Yale. Her writing appears or is forthcoming in *Resonance: The Journal of Sound and Culture*, *NACLA: Report on the Americas,* and *Contemporary Music Review*. With Christina Misaki Nikitin and Paul David Flood, she will guest edit the 2027 special issue of *Women and Music* on global queer/trans nightlives.

Euge Helyantus Stumm (UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI)

> Brazilian Funk in Pajubá: How Travesti Funkeiras Utilize Cryptolects for Collective Enunciation

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I analyze how Brazilian travestis and trans women engender the use of Pajubá in the development of a particular genre of travesti Brazilian Funk. Pajubá is a cryptolect originally developed by trans women and travesti sex workers from Brazil—increasing during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985)— to protect themselves from violence and persecution The borrowing of lexicon from Yoruba, French, Italian, and English to compose this set of secret codes forges into their very language the historical experience of migrant sex workers and Afro-Brazilian roots. My analysis focuses on songs and popular media expressions produced by five Brazilian travestis: Leona Vingativa, MC Xuxu, Mulher Pepita, Tertuliana Lustosa, and Danny Bond. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature framework, I suggest these funkeiras engender a deterritorialization of language through Pajubá, challenging hegemonic Portuguese and converting experiences of migrant sex work and gender non-conformity into sources for linguistic resistance. Furthermore, their songs dealing with themes like sex work, HIV, and transgression emphasize the political immediacy of their discourse, linking their living conditions to political struggle. Finally, I argue that rather than merely talking about individual stories, travesti Brazilian Funk reflects a collective assemblage of enunciation encompassing, in solidarity, experiences common to other travestis and trans women.

BIO

Euge Stumm (they/them) is a Dean's Fellow and Ph.D. student in Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Studies in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Miami. Their research examines how gender and sexual dissidents in Latin America construct language to express their experiences. Their research corpus focuses on cultural productions utilizing inclusive language and non-binary Spanish in Argentina, and Pajubá, a cryptolect originally developed by travesti sex workers, in Brazil. Currently, they are developing an open-access Pajubá Digital Archive, gathering multiple resources, dictionaries, and scholarly works on the cryptolect. This project is expected to be launched in the summer of 2025.

Dani Heffernan (UC LOS ANGELES)

> Vocal Dysphoria as Sonic Atmosphere in Sarah Hennies' "Contralto"

ABSTRACT

My research explores processes of voice feminization pursued by some transfeminine speakers, asking how such processes engage with and potentially transform multiple, historically specific, and contradictory ideals of gendered linguistic practice and embodiment. While research in the field of speech-language pathology approaches voice feminization therapy most often through acoustic analyses and perceptual experiments, the process is rarely examined as an interaction where meaning is intersubjectively constructed. I explore this latter context through an analysis of *Contralto* (2017), an experimental multimedia work by composer Sarah Hennies which, through live performance, devises an immersive encounter with transfeminine voices. The camera-facing gazes and manifold vocalizations of seven transfeminine speakers, ranging from monosyllabic exercises to recited "vocal hygiene" guidance, implicate the audience as witnesses to, and addressees in, the practice of voice modification. The string and percussion accompaniment contribute an additional voice within the piece, forming what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as "double-voicing" within discourse. Shifts in musical style and intensity occur alongside shifts in interactional dynamics as the speakers animate multiple voices that obfuscate clarity of authorship and address (see Goffman 1979). Drawing on scholarship in linguistic anthropology and voice studies more broadly, my paper will consider how *Contralto* mobilizes the sonic materiality of the voice (Weidman 2006; Harkness 2014; Eisenlohr 2023) in ways that transpose vocal dysphoria from an individualized concern to an affective atmosphere.

BIO

Dani Heffernan is a Ph.D. candidate in linguistic anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include language and identity, pedagogical and medical/health communication, and semiotics. Her dissertation will focus on engagement with voice modification practices across multiple modalities by speech therapists, voice teachers, and trans speakers in the United States. Currently, she is also helping coordinate a public health research project on the healthcare experiences of LGBTQ+ people and medical providers in the Eastern Sierras region of California.

ILĀ x TRANS VOICES (Moth)

> RECURSE

ABSTRACT

A live solo choral performance by ILĀ with Trans Voices and Moth, blending voice, machine, and the quantum unknown. Using the pioneering quantum sequencer tool Sphinx, an *infinite radio* unfolds—a composition by ILĀ that iterates endlessly, resists fixity, and refuses to be resolved.

In a fragmented world where trans communities are both hypervisible and erased, an infinite axiom emerges: people who step outside conventional gender norms have always existed, will always exist. Through quantum reservoir computing—a system mirroring the complexity of living organisms—this piece explores trans recursion and the fundamental unreality of singular truth. Bound neither by the limits of the trans body nor by the mechanics of time, this *infinite radio* piece affirms that for as long as humankind endures, so too will the trans voice—echoing across quantum space, shaping new realities.

Interacting live with Neutone's machine-learning-powered real-time tone morphing models—trained on bespoke Trans Voices recording sessions—ILĀ's improvisatory performance blurs the boundary between human and machine, dissolving the distinction between voice and signal.

BIO

Multifaceted artist and producer, **ILĀ's** work combines innovative quantum technology, philosophy and vocal practice centred around breaking binaries and showcasing diverse voices. ILĀ and **Coda Nicolaeff** co-founded Trans Voices - the UK's first professional trans+ choir, debuting in February 2022 with 'Reclaim', a documentary on Guardian Films. ILĀ x Trans Voices x MONOM's holographic sound installation 'UN/BOUND' opens as part of The Barbican's global touring exhibition 'Feel The Sound' in May 2025. As co-founder and director of the prolific London Contemporary Voices choir, ILĀ has worked with over 20 Grammy winning artists as well as three BBC Proms.

Following her acclaimed debut album Mesonoxian, ILĀ's short film/soundtrack EP *Murmur* establishes 'Quantum Computer Music' as a new genre and includes collaborations with Imogen Heap, Guy Sigsworth and Ai-Da - the world's first humanoid robot artist. Collaborating with MOTH - the creators of the world's first quantum synth, ILĀ has presented work at Oxford University's QISS, Berlin University of the Arts, Technische Universität Munich, Puzzle X (Barcelona) and Silencio (Paris).

> ON TRANS*Media

Kaleb E. Goldschmitt (WELLESLEY COLLEGE)

Julián X. Latshang (MCPHS)

Stephan Pennington (TUFTS UNIVERSITY)

IN CONVERSATION WITH

McKenzie Wark (THE NEW SCHOOL)

MODERATED BY

Suzannah Clark (HARVARD UNIVERSITY)



Kaleb E. Goldschmitt is associate professor and chair of the Music Department at Wellesley College. Their publications range from studies of streaming music, music and film, and the global music industry. Goldschmitt co-edited two special journal issues (in *American Music* and *Twentieth-Century Music*) on music and digital culture. From 2021-2024, they were the co-editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. Their monograph, *Bossa Mundo: Brazilian Music in Transnational Media Industries* (Oxford University Press 2020), was a finalist for the Woody Guthrie Prize for Best Popular Music Monograph.



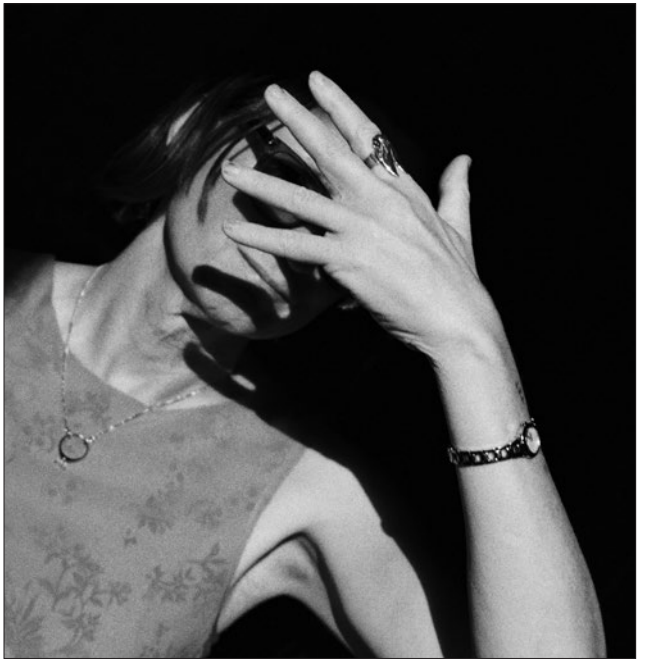
Julián X. Latshang (they/them) is an innovative leader, community advocate, scholar-activist, and educator currently serving as the Associate Dean of Students in Student Affairs at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Boston. Julián has played a pivotal role in creating pathways for professionals of color in student affairs to take on leadership roles in higher education.

They are passionate about developing policies and designing engaging workshops focused on leadership, social justice, and storytelling. Julián's commitment to self-reflection, racial equity, and honoring intersectionality drives their work within the community.

As a consultant, Julián aims to foster healing spaces for marginalized students and implement implicit bias training at colleges and institutions globally. They are a doctoral candidate at UMass Boston, exploring the concept of Secondary Racial Battle Fatigue and strategies to mitigate compassion fatigue and job burnout. Recently, Julián was recognized as one of the top 100 Latine leaders in Massachusetts and featured in the Boston Globe for the Amplify Latinx ALX100 of 2024.



Stephan Pennington is an Associate Professor of Music at Tufts University. His research interests are concerned with the politics of the performance of identity and he has presented on a wide range of topics from the rumba craze in 1930s Germany to appropriation as an historical process. He has published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, *Women & Music*, and the 2023 Philip Brett Award Winning edited collection, *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Queerness*. A pioneering scholar on Transgender Studies in Music, he has been sought out for a number of public intellectual projects, including the documentary *No Ordinary Man* about trans masculine jazz musician Billy Tipton, and a forthcoming documentary on Black Queer music history, *Hiding in Plain Sight*. He is currently working on two book projects, one on transgender vocality and the second on the persistence of enlightenment white supremacy in current musicological culture.



McKenzie Wark (THE NEW SCHOOL)

> RAVING

BIO

McKenzie Wark is best known for a series of books of twenty-first century critical theory, including *A Hacker Manifesto*, *Gamer Theory*, and *Capital is Dead*. She has also written works that contribute to an alternate history of Marxism, including *Leaving the Twentieth Century* and *Molecular Red*. Her survey books on contemporary theory and problems in collaborative knowledge production are *General Intellects* and *Sensoria*. She also writes in an autotheoretical style in books such as *Dispositions*, *Philosophy for Spiders*, *Raving* and *Love and Money, Sex and Death*. She is a professor of media and cultural studies at a university in New York.