Call for Papers

The Musical Humanism of the Renaissance and its Legacy

A University of Warwick Conference
held at Warwick’s Palazzo Papafava, Venice
2-4 June 2016

in collaboration with the
Royal Musical Association Music and Philosophy Study Group

In modern Western culture, music is often defined as the art of feeling or the language of the soul. This conception of music has its origins in the musical humanism of the Renaissance, whose influence on musical thought was as enduring as it was widespread. Even though Renaissance humanism had no concrete link to the musical practice of antiquity, humanistic concerns were pivotal for the development of contemporary music and musical thought. Ancient and medieval stories about musical ethos, in particular about the power of music to move the passions, were of special interest to Renaissance scholars. This conference will investigate these Renaissance conceptions of the connection between music and mind, their origins, and how they were ultimately developed into our modern notion of music as an expressive art. In particular, it will probe how Latin translations of ancient Greek musical sources and vernacular translations of these Latin texts promoted a new kind of musical humanism. In light of recently published work on the topic, it will examine the influence of Marsilio Ficino, whose translations and commentaries of Plato and of Neoplatonic literature shaped and conditioned many sixteenth and seventeenth-century theories about musical ethos throughout Europe. Moreover, the conference will examine how a renewed interest in Aristotelian poetics advanced the notion that by means of imitation music could move human affections. In short, the conference will study how Renaissance musical humanists extended the accessibility of classical literature on music, reshaped the ways in which this literature was understood, and, ultimately, radically transformed classical conceptions of the power of music.

The purpose of this conference is twofold:

(1) To offer new perspectives on the musical humanism of the Renaissance and its legacy from the disciplines of musicology, philosophy, history of science, classics and literary studies. More specifically, the conference aims to do this by tracking and interrogating the nature, revival, and eventual radical transformation of classical conceptions of the power of music.

(2) To offer opportunities for scholars from different disciplines both to find common ground and to explore constructive differences in order to develop conceptual frameworks, research methods and future directions in the field.
Though grounded in the disciplines of musicology, philosophy, history of science, classics and literary studies the symposium hopes to foster dialogue among scholars from across the humanities. **Possible topics** may include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- Renaissance conceptions of the power of music, their ancient and medieval background, and changes in their reception from the mid-seventeenth century onwards
- The reception of classical myths and biblical stories concerning music
- Musical models of the soul
- Health as a harmony
- Theories and practices of musical healing (including criticism and debate about their status)
- Music, love, lovesickness, melancholy, nostalgia and death
- Music and the pursuit of happiness
- Musical imagination, dreams and ecstasy
- Music, the supernatural, demons and spirits
- Music, language and rhetoric
- Music’s role in humanist education

Please submit titles (along with an abstract of no more than 300 words) for 20-minute papers to the conference convener, Jacomien Prins ([j.w.prins@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:j.w.prins@warwick.ac.uk)), by **15 December 2015**.

For further information, please visit:  
[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/about_us/centrestaff/researchfellows/prins/musicalrenaissanceconf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/about_us/centrestaff/researchfellows/prins/musicalrenaissanceconf)