



Call for candidates for a Research Assistantship on the ACTOR project
<http://actorproject.org>

Objective: Interviewing, filming, and documenting activities in a graduate seminar entitled *Composer-performer Orchestration Research Ensembles*, co-taught by conductor Guillaume Bourgogne and music psychologist Stephen McAdams. The two-semester course will involve four performers and three composers. A description of the course objectives and content are included below for reference.

Tasks: The RA will periodically conduct audio and video interviews with the professors and students to track the evolution of conceptions about orchestration over the course of the seminar. Interviews will be transcribed to text files and audio and video files will be edited for subsequent use in the analysis of the process and to create a documentary around the course communicating its aims, process, and accomplishments, finishing with a video recording of the final concert.

Requisite skills: The successful candidate will have demonstrated experience interviewing musicians, working with video documentaries, video and audio editing, and (ideally) conducting research on the social dynamics of collaboration among musicians. The candidate should have an engaging manner to easily solicit conversation with the participants. Being able to conduct interviews in English and French would be a strong asset.

Pay: A casual research assistant contract for 120 hours over the course of the two-semester seminar at a rate of \$29.33/hour plus statutory holiday and vacation indemnities will be established. This position falls under the AMURE collective agreement.

Work schedule: Flexible according to the needs of the project and availability of the participants. Some video and audio recording will take place during course times (notably during rehearsals and group discussions at key points), but much of the interviewing will also take place at other times through arrangement with the relevant participants.

Course schedule: Mondays, 11:30am-1:00pm (September 9, 2019 – April 15, 2020, C-310).
Concerts: McGill, April 9, 2020; UMontréal, April 15, 2020.

Application: Please send a CV and a letter of motivation outlining your interest in the position and the skills you possess that are needed to effectively realize the required tasks to actor-project.music@mcgill.ca.

Application deadline: 15 August 2019. Interviews will take place in the second half of August.



Course Objectives and Content

Course Objectives: Over the course of this seminar, composers and performers will work together collaboratively and interactively to conceive of and solve orchestration-related problems for the specified acoustic ensemble of violin, bass clarinet, trombone, vibraphone and small percussion (no electroacoustics). Orchestration is taken in its broadest sense of the selection, combination and juxtaposition of sounds to achieve a specific sonic goal. The first main aim is to draw from each other's imaginations and expertise to create and perform one musical étude for each composer. There are no restrictions on style. The second main aim is to learn something about perceptual principles underlying orchestration practice and its realization in performance. An interactive inquiry-based learning approach is adopted in this course: students are expected to be proactive and to discover, create, and communicate knowledge on their own to the benefit of the whole class.

Content: The course will be organized in four phases.

- The Introductory Phase will introduce the ACTOR project (Analysis, Creation, and Teaching of Orchestration) and will cover the perception of timbre and the role of perceptual organization in successfully realizing specific orchestration aims. Specific issues in the performance and composition of music for the specified ensemble will also be raised.
- In the Exploration Phase composers and performers will present seed ideas for artistic projects and a series of interactive workshops will allow for interactive experimentation to refine the ideas and begin developing musical ideas and appropriate notations.
- In the interactive workshops of the Problem-solving Phase, composers will work directly with sections of their pieces and receive feedback from the performers and other composers.
- The Realization Phase will involve refinement and rehearsal of the full pieces, which are expected to be about 8-10 minutes in duration.
- The structure of each interactive workshop session in the Exploration and Problem-solving phases is to be decided on collectively by performers and composers.
- Video recordings of the workshops and video interviews with the participants will allow for subsequent analysis in the ACTOR project.
- The final output of the course is a concert of the étude and a short, written paper of 5-10 pages double spaced on each person's experience of the whole process.

Additional considerations: The perceptual results of orchestration are highly dependent on how musicians interpret and realize them, the spatial positioning of instruments and the acoustics of the space in which they are heard. Musicians adjust relative levels, intonation, timing, and the timbre of their instruments to achieve or avoid blending together, to enhance or minimize distinction between different musical lines, or to reinforce or diminish contrasts, depending on the musical context. Performance studies thus need to be at the heart of the study of orchestration practice. The goals of the ACTOR project include studying composers' and performers' use of timbre in music performance as a means of musical expression, as well as characterizing how orchestration effects related to perceptual grouping are represented in scores, conceived and

communicated to performers by conductors, and then achieved by performers and music producers through rehearsal and mixing. The intellectual and artistic contribution of both performers and composers are essential to improving the research work that is currently being done on orchestration, and through this course you can add to new knowledge and practice. Given the timbral differences among these instruments, the kinds of issues that might be addressed include (but are certainly not limited to, let your imagination go wild):

- What sounds produced by these instruments (particular registers, dynamics, extended techniques) can be made to blend together into new sonorities?
- What sounds provide seamless transitions from one instrument to the next in timbral sequences?
- How might one move from clear perceptual separation of some of the instruments to their coalescing into an interesting texture?
- How do different voicings of combinations of these instruments in a particular vertical sonority affect things like harmonic tension?
- What sounds by one instrument could serve as an extended timbral resonance of another?