

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE IN MUSIC THEORY

The Embodiment of Piano Phase: de Keersmaecker's Choreography

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Thursday, October 10th, 2019

5:15pm

419 Music Practice Building

Free and open to the public.

BIO

Gretchen Horlacher is Professor of Music and Assistant to the Dean for Research and Administration at Indiana University-Bloomington, where she has been teaching since 1995. She previously held positions at the University of California at Santa Barbara and the University of California at Riverside. Her research interests include the music of Stravinsky, theories of rhythm and meter, musical minimalism, and music and dance. She is author of *Building Blocks: Repetition and Continuity in the Music of Igor Stravinsky* (Oxford University Press, 2011) and co-editor of *The Rite of Spring at 100* (Indiana University Press, 2017), for which she received the Ruth A. Solie award from AMS. Her articles have appeared in *Music Theory Spectrum*, *Music Theory Online*, the *Journal of Music Theory*, *Intégral*, and *Mitteilungen der Paul Sacher Stiftung*. She is the incoming Vice President of the Society for Music Theory.

ABSTRACT:

Playing Steve Reich's *Piano Phase* is a virtuosic act: two pianists must collaborate precisely, both as they play a long continuous stream of eighth notes in exact synchrony, and also - during the actual phasing - as they create and withstand extreme asynchrony. Both players participate in this amazing act of temporal counterpoint, for as one player speeds up ever so slowly, the other must maintain the original sixteenth-note pulsations, letting go of the urge to match the emerging stream of the other. Listening to these processes is extremely engaging, but watching the players execute this miracle of microtiming is not especially dramatic, especially since the pianists' hands remain fixed in a central position of the keyboard.



What might a visual representation of this music look like, and how can it reveal aspects of temporality not immediately evident in the music? I will consider how music and dance relate via the 1980 landmark choreography *Fase* by Belgian contemporary dancer Anna Teresa de Keersmaecker. Originally trained as a flautist, de Keersmaecker's works often feature the repetition and variation of simple movements like walking and turning across long spans of time. Drawing from videos and notebooks the choreographer published about *Fase*, I will focus on how music and dance together manipulate our sensations of accent and flow.

