Micha Hamel – composer, poet, researcher

*Exploring listening* – Three sessions

**feb 4 2020 – Lecture: Listening**

Listening is a complicated activity that alternates and layers passive and active modalities, crosses over the senses, as well as operates in physical, perceptual, cognitive, psychological and social dimensions. In this lecture, Micha Hamel will give an overview of different theories of listening, mainly from a philosophical perspective, focussing on Eric Clarke and François Bonnet. Naturally, different theories come with paradoxes and contradictions, and without being forced those to resolve, students are asked to reflect on these theories, and contribute to the existing body of knowledge with their own experiences and thoughts. Responding to the lecture, students are invited to look for (epistemological) voids and gaps, resulting in an creative process that maps the problematics of the topic itself, to be taken to the next session.

**feb 11 2020 – Workshop: Musical listening**

In this workshop we will listen to music and with the help of hybrid research tools like drawing, mapping and structured discussion, actively explore different listening modi and dispositions, adding empirical knowledge to the theoretical playing field as outlined in the first session. Also, we will check if and how the theories from te previous session can or cannot be applied to and practised in the embodied experience, and how we may use the body as a learning tool for new or newly nuanced experiences, insights and theories. A musician will be present in this class to play beautiful music. Students are urged to actively participate, which also means that bringing a musical instrument is encouraged.

**feb 18 2020 – Debate: Societal listening**

How could listening function as a skill to mobilize in striving for a healthy democracy? This session will build on insights that students acquired in the previous sessions, now shifting the focus from musical listening towards societal listening. A few texts by Marcel Cobussen, John T. Hamilton and Lucia Farinati/Claudia Firth will be given to the students in advance to read and prepare. Through concepts like ‘active listening’, ‘therapeutical listening’ and ‘listening as a political force’ we will in an active debate then address the question if and how society could benefit from different forms and modes of listening. Extending these thoughts while theorizing collaboratively, we aim to also touch the question whether the ethical appears in the aesthetical, and how music does, could or should feed society’s discourse. In other words, we will question if music is not only fun to listen to, but also something that while constituting and deepening the relation with others could be of importance for society.

version 16-12-2019
Micha Hamel (Amsterdam, 1970) is one of the most versatile artists of the Netherlands. He composes for amateurs, professionals, choirs, ensembles and orchestras as well as for theatre companies. He published five collections of poetry and works also as a performer, artistic leader, poet and researcher.

Micha Hamel graduated in 1994 in composition and conducting at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. Soon after, he composed for two contemporary dance companies in London, and was commissioned to compose a piece for the National Ballet of the Netherlands. In 1994, he was awarded the Encouragement Prize for Composition by the City of Amsterdam.

His concert music was performed by many orchestras and ensembles in the Netherlands: the Residentie Orchestra, the Rotterdam Philharmonic (Valery Gergiev conducting), the Radio Philharmonic, the Schoenberg Ensemble (Reinbert de Leeuw conducting), the Ives Ensemble and Percussion Group The Hague. He also composed songs, incidental and electronic music for many theatre productions for children.

In October 2000, Micha Hamel was the resident artist on the festival De Branding, during which many of his main works were performed. In 2008, his tragic operetta Snow White drew nationwide attention because of its exuberant character. In the Holland Festival edition of 2012, Hamel was appointed 'composer in focus' and composed two large scale works: a Requiem, and an interdisciplinary performance called The Red Kimono that combined film, music, mime, live video and a painting. In 2014, he composed the melodrama A Pure Formality that reached a large audience throughout the Netherlands. In 2019 his second opera Caruso a Cuba was performed by the Dutch National Opera.

As a conductor, Micha Hamel performed mainly contemporary music in the Netherlands, and conducted classical music with orchestras in Italy, Russia, Luxembourg, Austria and the UK. From 2008 to 2009, he was the artistic director of the Netherlands Music Days, and from 2012 to 2014 he was the principal conductor of Magogo Chamber Orchestra, that, specializing in cross-over and new forms of presentation, was known for its adventurous concert events. Since his activities as a poet/writer and composer had begun to occupy all of his time, Hamel decided in 2016 to quit conducting. However, he regularly acts on stage as a performing poet. Also, he founded a production unit for small scale music theatre, 'Ensemble Michamix', for which he composes, writes and directs his own productions, like Kus de Regen (2017), that was a poetical fabric of speech, acting, amplified and acoustical sounds.

Regarding poetry, Hamel debuted in literary magazines in 2003. Five collections have been issued so far at publishing house Atlas/Contact, that were awarded a number of nominations and prizes. In his literary activity Micha is keen on new forms. In collaboration with Studio Apvis, Breda, he develops so-called 'poetic experiences' in which poetry and 3D visuals are combined. Such Virtual Reality-installations tour various festivals, drawing a diverse and young audience.

As an artistic researcher, Hamel since 2010 holds a professorship 'Performance Practice' at Codarts University for the Arts (Rotterdam). He there is occupied with researching the future of western classical music. The book he wrote about this topic is called Speelruimte voor klassieke muziek in de 21ste eeuw (2016) and contains research reports and philosophical essays. From 2017 onwards, Hamel will conduct a new interdisciplinary research called GAMPSISS. The abbreviation GAMPSISS stands for Gameful Music Performances for Smart, Inclusive, and Sustainable Societies. It is an interdisciplinary research project, initiated by the Rotterdam Arts and Sciences Lab (RASL), in which a team of researchers investigates the integration of games and gamification in classical music concerts, so that its audiences may engage themselves in meaningful modes of listening, eventually resulting in a listening culture from which citizens and society could benefit.

Teaching activities include incidental guest lessons, master classes and lectures. From 2016–2017, Micha Hamel was a visiting teacher at Utrecht University. Since January 2015, he is a member of the Royal Academy of the Arts.