Research Presentations

Re-Sounding the Bekan Horn
Transcultural Dialogues Between Ancient Irish and Amazonian Long-Reed Instruments

This research presentation emerges from a practice-based investigation into the reconstruction and artistic performance of ancient aerophones. The central research question orbits on how the artistic re-sounding of the Bekan Horn – an Early Medieval Irish double-reed instrument – illuminate the process of cultural heritage, material agency, and transcultural exchange in contemporary musical practice.

It discusses this question through a transdisciplinary process that combines musical practices, ethnomusicology, and archaeology, examining how reconstructed ancient instruments can act as bridges between past and present, connecting cultures and epistemologies. Through the reconstruction of the Bekan Horn, and its dialogue with the Brazilian *Uruá/Atangá* (an aerophone played by the Kamaiurá and Kuikuro peoples during rituals in the Xingu National Park), the project examines how sound, material culture and performance can serve as sources of knowledge production within transcultural and transtraditional contexts. In this way, the project connects two distinct sonic cosmologies: the European archaeological past and a living Indigenous tradition.

The presentation integrates a live demonstration on a reconstructed Bekan Horn, and a reflection on the process of instrument construction, fieldwork among the Kuikuro and Kamaiurá peoples, compositional methods with artificial intelligence (AI), and consequently, performance, assisted by images and video reproductions. This format embodies the methodological foundation of the research, that engages arts-based and phenomenological approaches, with fieldwork, comparative organology, and technology. It engages transdisciplinary, transcultural and transtraditional concerns by merging archaeological reconstruction, Indigenous sound practices, and computational creativity. Artificial Intelligence was used in the compositional process to generate and transform sonic textures, in combination with recording of the sound and musical notes produced by the Bekan Horn. These AI-generated materials extend the compositional possibilities with the instrument, intertwining ancient and contemporary timbres.

The work positions the performance as both method and outcome, and the performer's body as a site of critical inquiry, in an embodied process where knowledge emerges through sound, gesture and reflection. Ultimately, "Re-Sounding the Bekan Horn" reanimates silent artefacts and demonstrates how artistic research can transform ancient musical instruments into resonant voices in a globally interconnected sound world.

Research Presentations

Brenda Suyanne Barbosa, M.A.
Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt (Weimar, Germany)
brendasuyanne@yahoo.com.br

Brenda Suyanne Barbosa is a Brazilian performer, ethnomusicologist, music-archaeologist, and music educator. Currently, she is a Research Assistant at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar-Jena, where she is also pursuing her doctoral studies. Her work bridges historical investigation, ethnographic studies and artistic creation, focusing on ancient instruments and transcultural sound dialogues. Drawing on fieldwork with indigenous musicians in Brazil and studies of historical instruments along the European Atlantic coast, she explores how musical reconstruction and performance can reanimate ancient soundscapes and create new artistic languages connecting the past and present.