The Poetics of Closure  Session Chair: Nicolas Ryan

As the foundations of classical form in occidental music, harmony and counterpoint have been unavoidable references in musical theory and education. The layering, repetition, transposition and transformation of musical themes are well known means of creating musical form. Less widely recognized are the tectonic effects of sound patterns and the spatial attributes inherent in music and in the way it is performed. In a similar way, repetition and changes to modular structures and patterns, variations in scale, proportion or spatial definition, regulating lines and other compositional devices were used in some of the most inspiring works of art and architecture.

As we move from one place to another, our senses register new boundaries and changes in spatial, acoustic and material environment. A space that is not designed for performance is nevertheless responsive to the physics of light and sound. Sounds of various frequencies are captured, reflected or diffused according to the acoustic signature of that space. As music unravels in time, light and sound travel in space and engage in real relationships with the boundaries that make architecture.

Architecture and music meet on the technical grounds of acoustics and on the poetic grounds of formal, physical and spatial closure. Have we, as architects, artists or engineers, fully explored and practiced those common grounds? Most of the places we inhabit, like musical instruments, comprise some kind of inner chamber – a space of resonance – as well as a breach or opening for sound to escape. What and where is architecture’s space of resonance? In the translation from music to architecture, at what point is music “lost in translation”? What are, in essence, the Poetics of Closure?

Discussions of built work or work with a strong scenographic, musical, experiential or spatial rationale are encouraged in this session. Abstracts should explain how the presenter proposes to engage the theme of the session and include relevant illustrations.

Nicolas Ryan, AIA

Nicolas Ryan is a senior architect and an Associate at Grimshaw’s New York office. Nicolas joined Grimshaw in 2003, as the project manager for the Fulton Street Transit Center and is the associate in charge of the Queens Museum of Art expansion. Nicolas also worked several years for Rafael Vinoly Architects in New York and Massimiliano Fuksas in Rome on institutional and higher education projects. He studied at McGill University, earning his Bachelor of Architecture with Distinction in 1992, and graduated from Columbia University with a Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Design. Trained as a classical pianist, Nicolas is an accomplished musician, fluent in four languages, and an active member of the architectural community in New York. He is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Architecture at the New York Institute of Technology where he teaches architectural design, and has been a guest critic at NYIT, Parsons School of Design, and Columbia University.

Other session briefs are available on the conference website. For any additional information on this session, you may contact the session chair at ryanic1@yahoo.com. Abstracts are due on or before October 31, 2005 and can be sent directly to the session chair or to the conference organizers at amaconf@ryerson.ca