Ludomusicology Study Group Inaugural Meeting

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Neil Lerner (Davidson College)
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Roger Moseley (Cornell University)

This first convening of the AMS Ludomusicology Study Group welcomes all conference attendees to explore music, games, and play in historical, cultural, theoretical, and ethnographic perspectives. The session consists of an organizational meeting followed by three papers.

In "Garry Schyman's Music for *Destroy All Humans!* (2005) and the Hybridity of Cinema and Video Game Scoring," Neil Lerner focuses on Garry Schyman, a leading composer of video game music in the early twenty-first century. His first major game score, *Destroy All Humans!*, contains satirical reworkings of several tropes of 1950s science fiction cinema. Schyman modeled parts of his score on Herrmann's music for *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)—the score that introduced the uncanny timbre of the theremin to the genre. Comparing these scores reveals the ways that Schyman utilized elements of Herrmann's distinctive style while also showing how the particular requirements of a dynamic video game score led him to different strategies.

Dana Plank-Blasko's paper "Paging Dr. Mario: Physical Impairment, Illness, and Disability in the Video Game Soundscape" lends an ear to the sonic signifiers of disability in video game soundscapes. The medium's immediacy and invasiveness render game sound well positioned to influence players' personal identification and immersion within the narrative. In games, the soundscape becomes a vital arbiter of meaning and action. Players respond to these aural triggers by seeking a "cure" and by reading disabilities as temporary setbacks in performance (cues to restore the avatar to "normal"). Plank-Blasko argues that game sounds can reinforce ableist paradigms, promoting an unrealistic view of the idealized normative body and mind as achievable constants and reflecting deep cultural anxieties about the implications of disability.

In "Play and Display: Representations of Musical Recreation," Roger Moseley examines how thinking of the screen primarily as a medium of musical representation challenges conventional categories and distinctions established by discourse on sound and image. Representational strategies of digital games, along with players' ludic and musical performances, articulate the epistemological foundations, the cultural contingencies, and the immanent historicity of such relations. After tracing the media-genealogical lineages of various digital games and genres from this perspective, Moseley proposes that "recreation" can be set alongside other modes and technologies of sonic reproduction as a means of accounting for the generation, retrieval, depiction, performance, and reimagining of musical information and its onscreen display.