



**Thursday,
March 14, 2013
3:15-5 p.m. in U73**

Guest lecture in the seminar series
**Topics in the Aesthetics of
Music and Sound**

- arranged by **The Aesthetics of Music and Sound** – www.soundmusicresearch.org – **Cross-Disciplinary Interplay between the Humanities, Technology and Musical Practice**; Institute for the Study of Culture, University of Southern Denmark -

<http://www.soundmusicresearch.org/seminarsspring2013.html>

Dwelling “In-Between”: The Ineffability of Musical Meaning as an Asubjective Phenomenon

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(Via Skype)



Abstract: There have been various efforts towards fixing the meaning of musical structures or motifs in, for example, semiotics and cultural musicology. However, such attempts have resulted in theories that are relevant only in certain cultural, historical or aesthetic contexts. As overall phenomena, both the interminable search for musical meaning and the failed attempts at stabilizing it give evidence of the inescapable slippage of musical symbols. The fact that music never quite “makes it” with regard to symbolic meaning can be taken as a clue when seeking the reasons for its ineffability. With only momentarily fixed meaning, music hovers between the states of structural (symbolic) meaning and completely idiosyncratic (ineffable) experience without collapsing into either of them. The general nature of this “in-betweenness” can be illustrated by the phenomenon of atmosphere as an immediate and all-encompassing affective space that is quasi-objective (intersubjective, not willed) and quasi-subjective (not really “my” emotion).

This kind of atmospheric “in-betweenness” can also be consciously aspired to, as exemplified by the thought and music of the composer John Luther Adams. Due to its characteristic strive for atmospheric effects and its singular compositional techniques, Adams’s music prominently manifests the ways in which the in-betweenness of musical meaning can be upheld and the collapse into the extremes avoided. This applies also to the deliberately ecological undertone of Adams’s music: the relational nature of musical meaning can attune the experiencing subject with the (auditive) world and environment in a way that embodies the core principle of ecology, the mutual interconnectedness of all beings.

ALL ARE WELCOME! 

Audience participation via Skype is also welcome.