April 20, 2020, saw the launch of the online survey of “Music in the Time of Corona,” an international research project that evokes more than just the title of Gabriel García Márquez’s classic novel “Love in the Time of Cholera”. In the current coronavirus pandemic, love also manifests itself as compassion and solidarity. Music gives expression to love, as in Italy, where people sing from their windows to comfort each other and to make being alone more bearable, or in Berlin, where many clubs have streamed their DJ sets online so that people can dance at home in quarantine. In so many places, creative ways are being found to fill the gaps left by the closure of concert halls, opera houses, and clubs – in other words, to cope with the absence of live performance. People are finding new channels for connecting with each other through music despite social distancing and lockdowns.

Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, Lauren Fink (both Frankfurt/Main), Niels Chr. Hansen (Aarhus), Lindsay Warrenburg (Boston), Claire Howlin (Dublin), and Will Randall (Jyväskylä) aim to document and evaluate these developments, which are now being observed worldwide. Inspired by videos with hashtags such as #coronasongs, #quarantunes, or #covidance, which have circulated widely on social media platforms, the researchers conceived an online study that inquires into personal music-making and listening before and after the crisis. In detail, the study deals with the technical formats used to listen to music, forms of making music alone and with others, situations in which one listens to music, and the reasons and motivations for listening and making music. Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, summarizes:

“With our research, we hope to find out how exactly and under which circumstances music can help people to cope better with a crisis like the current one especially with the psychological consequences of contact bans, fear of infection, and economic insecurity.”

The online survey is available in German, English, with French and Italian versions forthcoming, and invites people worldwide to document their personal experiences with music in the Time of Corona.

In addition, project initiators, Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann and Niels Chr. Hansen, have started to build a worldwide interdisciplinary network of researchers conducting similar studies. Because the research should be conducted with the same international solidarity and cooperation needed to overcome this global crisis.

The study is a collaboration between the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Aarhus University and the Irish Research Council.
#coronasongs, #quarantunes, #covidance – the creative exchange of music currently seems to be limitless

Image: MPI for Empirical Aesthetics