*The Mellon Workshop on Affect, Technics, and Ethics*

presents a conversation on phenomenology and technics with

# Chris Chafe
## Stanford University, and Director, CCRMA

### "Another Now"

Very different concepts of "now" appear in network design and in human time perception, resulting in apparent paradoxes when we engage in temporally fine-grained actions such as playing music together over digital networks. What we expect to happen isn't always what we get, and the experimental data and qualitative experiences we are seeing in our work prompt introspection on the nature of time and hearing. What if we were to engineer a scheduler, or create artificial "music agents," using aspects of individual and ensemble temporal experience? Drawing on early work in time perception, and thinking forward towards advanced languages for media computing, this talk will present intersections between phenomenological approaches to time and hearing and some recent online experiences in distributed music performance.

# Joerg Sternagel
## Potsdam University (Berlin)

### "Active Relational Pairs: Technics and Media Embodied"

For Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenological account of experience always draws from the self's knowledge of the world, before any analysis of "mine." As he notes in the preface of *Phenomenology of Perception*, "the world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions." Accordingly, a phenomenological understanding of technics and media emphasizes how they affect us, following the conviction that we understand them as objects having some *active* relation *to* us – rather than as objects having no relation to us, or as merely objects in themselves. Human beings bring living bodies, as players or spectators, to the experience of a digital game or the digital cinema; we experience forms of being on the screen or through headsets or speakers. In this talk, I introduce key insights from Merleau-Ponty and apply them to contemporary works of time-based digital media. We interact with the avatar Mario in Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros.* series (from 1985), regarding his behavior as a model of make-believe; we make sense with the actors in Richard Linklater's digital animation of *A Scanner Darkly* (2006), recognizing the protagonists' struggles as an irritation of perception.

### Wednesday May 21, 2007
### HMNSS 1500
### 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

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