

Colloquium February 21, 2025
Táhirih Motazedian (Vassar College)

Title: “A Taxonomy of Humor in Film Music and Sound”

Abstract:

From a lifetime of watching movies and television, we all instinctively know that music plays an important role in filmic humor—but what is the precise nature of that role? By what means can music and sound create humor in film? This talk presents the first systematic taxonomy for describing and categorizing all forms of sonic-based humor in film/television.

Bio: **Táhirih Motazedian** is an Associate Professor of Music at Vassar College. Her book, *Key Constellations: Interpreting Tonality in Film* (University of California Press, 2023) explores how key and pitch relationships in film soundtracks tell a story, and was awarded the Society for Music Theory’s Emerging Scholar Book Award. She has published articles and chapters on Sergei Eisenstein’s production of *Die Walküre*, the “heartstring schema” in film and nineteenth-century music, Holst’s *Planets*, Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* in the film *Black Swan*, Shostakovich’s second violin concerto, and a forthcoming chapter on plagal half cadences in pop music. She earned her PhD in music theory from Yale University, and she currently serves as Associate Editor of the *SMTV* journal. Before her career in music theory, Táhirih was a planetary scientist at NASA.