

University of Arts in Belgrade
Faculty of Music
Department of Musicology

Music in Socio-Cultural Turmoil

October 29–31, 2025

Faculty of Music, University of Arts, Belgrade, Serbia

How does music correspond with social processes? How do participants in the musical "ecosystem" respond to the pulse of the times? Beyond reflecting or depicting historical "shifts", can music also anticipate major social turmoil? For example, did the breakdown of tonality in the early 20th century, followed by the emergence of atonal expressionism, foreshadow the catastrophe of World War I? And have paradigm shifts in music history (almost) always corresponded with societal changes?

A significant number of musicians have actively contributed to social movements and historical changes, "singing" about revolutionary ideas, war conflicts, national uprisings, collective traumas, or ideological struggles. While music can serve as a reflection or mimesis of such events, it also functions as a platform and means of artistic subversion, political protest, and social activism aimed at critiquing artistic and broader social circumstances and responding to the "status quo" (Groys).

Throughout music history, various musical movements, phenomena, and works have carried different forms of artistic (and political) subversion. For instance, the internal musical and poetic "subversiveness" of Debussy's music anticipated the end of the *fin de siècle*, whereas the subversiveness of the Fluxus movement (active during the 1960s) was explicitly activist and politically leftist.

Additionally, popular music genres and media-driven musical practices in both analog and digital contexts hold significant potential in this realm. Their mass appeal, broad audience, and the fact that popular music almost always includes lyrics have allowed for more direct and far-reaching artistic engagement during periods of upheaval: *Folk and rock could claim to contribute to social change in a way that classical music could not* (Bolter).

Moreover, musical performance itself reflects and/or participates in social turmoil, adapting to contemporary socio-political moments or hinting at shifts in social discourse and a new *Zeitgeist*. A striking example is the collective online musical performances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having in mind many socially driven changes in musical paradigms throughout history, as well as the complexity of the times in which we live, we invite colleagues to submit proposals that contribute to a deeper understanding of these thought-provoking themes and offer insights into some of the questions they raise. We encourage papers exploring a wide range of topics, including but not limited to:

- The role of music in shaping public consciousness before/during/after historical turning points (e.g., revolutions, major political protests, wars).

- Music as a means of constructing political identities during periods of turmoil.
- The impact of major historical shifts on the emergence of new musical forms or genres.
- Music and ideology.
- Music and collective memory.
- Music as a representation/reflection/expression of surrounding reality in times of social turmoil.
- Popular music in socio-political turmoil.
- Understanding social change/turmoil *through* (pivotal) musical works.
- Performance as a key element of music's social/cultural identity.

The conference will be held in person, with an option for online participation if necessary (please indicate this in your application).

Conference language

The official language of the conference is **English**. It is possible to deliver papers also in German, French and Serbian, but the authors are kindly requested to provide a Power-Point presentation in English or the translation of their papers in English. The time limit for the presentation and discussion of your paper is set at **30 minutes** in total. Selected papers presented at the conference will be published in the proceedings.

Keynote lecturers

➤ Professor **Georgina Born**, Ph.D.

Department of Anthropology, University College London, Great Britain

➤ Professor **Paul Craenen**, Ph.D.

Royal Conservatoire in The Hague; Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA), Leiden University, Netherlands

➤ Professor **Juha Ojala**, Ph.D.

DocMus doctoral school, Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland

➤ Professor **Dario Martinelli**, Ph.D.

Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

Programme committee

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Submissions

The **submission deadline** is **June 2, 2025**.

Please, send your proposals by email to musicinturmoil@fmu.bg.ac.rs with subject line: **MSCT2025 - Submission**.

Please submit your proposal as a Word document, and name your file using the following format: MSCT_Surname_Name_Title.docx

In your submission document, please include the following information:

1. Full name(s) of the author(s)
2. Academic title(s) of the author(s)
3. Full institutional affiliation(s)
4. Title and topic of the paper (including the thematic area, as listed in the Call for Papers)
5. Abstract (maximum 250 words)
6. Short biography/biographies (maximum 150 words per author)
7. E-mail address(es)
8. Any audiovisual requirements for the presentation
9. Indication of online participation, if applicable

The programme committee will review all submissions and inform the participants no later than **June 16th, 2025**.

Conference fee

- € 100 for affiliated scholars and independent researchers (early bird € 80);
- € 50 for PhD students (early bird € 30),
- € 60 for online participants

The fee can be paid on the spot or with PayPal. Selected participants will be notified about PayPal payment instructions. Early bird deadline: September 1 2025.

Both participation at the Conference and the publication of a text whose topic has been accepted by the Programme Committee are conditional upon the payment of the participation fee. The travel expenses, per diem expenses and hotel accommodation are to be covered by the participants. The organizer offers cold and warm drinks and meals for all participants during the breaks.