

CfP: Popular Brass Music in the 21st Century

University of Innsbruck (Austria), Department of Music

October 20–21, 2023

Haus der Musik, Universitätsstrasse 1, 6020 Innsbruck

This conference takes the increasing popularity of brass music in German-speaking regions as a departure point to explore the contemporary aesthetic, stylistic, sociocultural, economic, and political facets of music that gravitates around brass instruments. Hereby, the conference aims to initiate the conceptualization of a newly emerging and adapting musical field from an international perspective.

At a foundational level, the conference asks how the current popularity of brass music in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (Steinbrecher and Achhorner 2020), as demonstrated by bands such as Fäaschtbänkler, Moop Mama, Viera Blech, LaBrassBanda, or Querbeat, and festivals like Woodstock der Blasmusik and Brass Wiesn Festival, can be grasped and compared to recent developments in other countries. Are there similar trends of increasing popularity, especially among young audiences? And, if so, what are the parallels, resonances, and differences between them?

Related questions arise from a definitional perspective, i.e., regarding whether contemporary, “popular brass music” can be categorized as a distinct genre, style, or phenomenon, or in terms of a particular instrumentation. What are the implications of different definitions for our understanding of this music?

In particular, the call for papers invites scholars who are interested in the entanglements between brass music and popular music, including genres such as pop, rock, rap, and EDM, as well as in related intersections with folk/folkloristic and classical music. In this context, the conference’s goal is to shed light on the repertoire of contemporary brass bands and how they create their original music and/or employ the established canons and recent hits, for example, in their arrangements. How do generational differences affect the current shapings of brass music and its popularity? Are brass bands achieving chart success?

Moreover, the conference aims to address the role of social, cultural, economic, and political factors in the popularization of brass music. To what extent do educational conditions, institutional structures, and identity formations of gender, class, or ethnicity, shape the practices and experiences of the communities in which brass music is performed and listened to today? Are there even distinctive communities or scenes at all? Papers could explore the role that traditional media, social media, and streaming platforms play in promoting and discursivizing brass music, or discuss brass music as a part of political activism.

Eventually, the conference aims to highlight the wide spectrum of methodological pathways through which popular brass music can be explored in current or future research. We are interested in the ways in which both qualitative and quantitative methods, discourse analysis, hermeneutical readings, and other perspectives can help us capture the various dimensions of the phenomenon(s).

We welcome papers that engage with the CfP’s and related questions from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, including musicology, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, economics, and other fields.

- Conference language is English. The conference will be held in-person.
- Presentation format: individual 20-minute paper followed by 10-minute discussion. Proposals can also be made for panels on a special topic (60 minutes).
- Please include the title, an abstract of 250 words, five keywords, name(s), academic affiliation(s), a short biographical note, contact information, and technical requirements.
- Please email your abstract to bernhard.achhorner@gmail.com by **April 30, 2023**. You will be informed about the results of the selection process by May 31, 2023.
- Organizing committee: Bernhard Steinbrecher, Bernhard Achhorner (University of Innsbruck, Department of Music)