7th International Conference of the Word and Music Association Forum

“Discipline and Freedom in Music and Literature”

University of Cologne, 4 – 6 December 2024

CALL FOR PAPERS

The 7th Biennial Conference of the Word and Music Association Forum (WMAF) will be hosted this year by the University of Cologne and its Slavic Institute. The mission of the WMA Forum is to provide a friendly and open space where emerging scholars interested in this domain of interdisciplinary study can meet, cooperate, and learn together with more experienced scholars. We warmly invite papers on the following topic:

“Discipline and Freedom in Music and Literature”

Music, according to its Romantic myth, has been understood as the realm of true spiritual freedom and absence of all sorts of constraints. In music the heart can speak freely, emotions and finest states of mind can find expression, where words alone fail. Poetry at times resorted to music to free itself from semantic burdens. Inner freedom, according to an ancient philosophical tradition, can be reached by self-governance, akin to musical harmony. And yet there is no other art so formalized and governed by all sorts of theoretical rules and accompanying societal and institutional conventions as music. Many styles and instruments require from their adept absolute devotion, years of disciplined exercises, perseverance and self-denial. Even improvisation, the apparently freest domain of music (and poetry, cf. the 19th C. phenomenon of poetic improvisation) is a practice necessarily based on conventions, rules, and constraints. Choral and orchestral music raise the idea of plurality in unity, enabling or suppressing individual expression and artistry within collective performative bodies.
A means of propaganda, music had the power to move the masses and induce enthusiasm (cf. the Stalin-songs sung in the kolkhoz), become an element of terror or of inner liberation (cf. music in concentration camps) or even an instrument of torture. Music has always accompanied organized labour and military effort, was a constitutive part of codified religious and secular rites, linked to the cosmic order by philosophers and theologians, used and abused by all political regimes. It ruled the rhythms of life and prayer in the monastic life. It disciplined enslaved people to enact physical and mental control, simultaneously creating space for liberating subversion. It also heralded freedom, as in protest and revolutionary songs, as in the use of parody and contrafactum and other means to outsmart censorship and divulgate forbidden ideas.

Literature can be, too, seen as an art or a semiotic system where any creative freedom exists against the coordinates and within the boundaries of codified genres and canons. This is particularly visible in the highly formalised genres such as the sonnet or the rondeau. Artistic use of language can be envisaged as a game following rules of grammar, logic, rhetoric, and, once again, literary traditions.

Music and literature happen in spaces co-determined by society, architecture, institutions and the market, which produce paradoxes of commodification, where highest expressions of freedom become products subjugated to economic principles. In their “purest” form, they can be scrutinized critically as a celebration of societal constraints and conservation of hierarchies. All these points can be addressed through the literary lens, through philosophical investigation, as well as through music-education-oriented practical approaches.

We invite contributions coming from across the humanities (and beyond), including, but not limited to:

- Literatures (including children’s literature) and Cultures
- Music and Musicology
- Philosophy
- History
- Social Sciences
- Education

We hope for an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary conversation on words and music through this prism, potentially invigorating for our own discipline(s) of study and promoting intellectual freedom in our communities.
We invite papers and concert-lectures proposals. Please fill out the application form (including an abstract of max. 350 words and a short bio-bibliographical note) at the link bellow by **31 July 2024.** https://forms.gle/Rqw6VBgciLHtNfpq9 Notification of acceptance will be sent by **31 August 2024.**

Accepted papers will have a presentation length of 20 minutes (followed by 10-minute discussion). Concert-lectures proposals should include individual timing, but not exceeding 45 min, and specify technical support needed for realisation.

The working language of the Conference is English.

**Confirmed Keynote Speaker:**

**Prof. Axel Englund**

*University of Stockholm, President of the Word and Music Association*

For any queries you can write to the conference hosts Dr. Jan Czarnecki and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivana Trajanoska at wmaf.conference-2024@uacs.edu.mk

There is no conference fee. Travel and accommodation costs should be covered by the individual participants.

For the Conference Committee:

Jan Czarnecki and Ivana Trajanoska