

Conference Report: **Popular Brass Music in the 21st Century**

The international conference took place from October 21st to 22nd at the Department of Music of the University of Innsbruck.

The kick-off event was on Friday 20th in the evening at the House of Music. It was an informal “pizza, beer, and screening” get-together, where the international conference attendees were audio-visually introduced to the various facets of contemporary popular brass music in the German-speaking D-A-CH area.



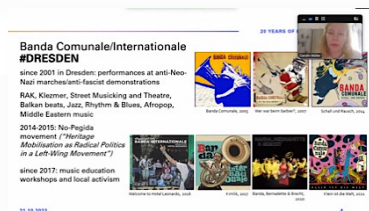
On the following two main conference days, the presenters covered a wide range of topics related to brass music's development, challenges, and cultural significance in today's society.

The conference's keynote speaker, Matt Sakakeeny from Tulane University in New Orleans, gave an illuminative talk about the global influence of brass bands from New Orleans. In his talk, Mr. Sakakeeny was able to frame and bound together the conference topic(s) by breaking down and retracing the different pathways and entanglements of the New Orleans “Brass Band Renaissance,” which echoed throughout the Americas, West Africa, Japan, Europe, and beyond.



Presentations also delved into subjects such as gender equality in brass music and the experiences of female brass musicians (a collaborative, eye-opening panel from Sarah Schmalenberger and Patricia Maddox) or the role of brass music in political and social movements.

The latter topic was addressed with a specific focus on Chile, with in-depth insights from Chris Westover-Muñoz and Ricardo Alvarez, as well as in connection with protest in Germany (Carolin Müller from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem shared with us her detailed analysis of Dresden's Banda Comunal).





Moreover, the presenters provided a comprehensive, multi-perspectival overview of the broad landscape of contemporary brass bands, discussing the fusion of modern and more conventional brass music with diverse (popular-)musical genres (Bethany Amundson) and the impact of recorded sounds (Kyle DeCoste) as well as the popularity and unpopularity of the manifold

phenomena in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Benedikt Weiß, David Gasche, Yves Chapuis).

Also, the conference presentations provided important spotlights on the oscillation between notions of authenticity, tradition, and popularity in brass music, considering various regions and cultural contexts, such as in Serbia (Jelena Joković), Moravia (Barbora Turčanová), and the Czech Republic (Jakub Machek).



Altogether, the conference proved to be a great exchange and networking spot for like-minded scholars worldwide, many of whom hadn't met each other before or even attended a brass music conference for the first time.

To consolidate the outcome and further conceptualize the research field, which was a major point of discussion during the conference days and nights, a special issue in an international, peer-reviewed (popular music) journal is planned soon.

Not least, the conference was able to bring popular brass music to the streets of Innsbruck and the broad public audience, as on Saturday, a New Orleans-style Jazz band took the participants from the House of Music through the inner city to the dinner restaurant.



With many thanks to:

