

## Call for Papers

### **„Music, Violence, Memory in Auschwitz-Birkenau” A conference in Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum 26–28 November 2025**

The research on the connection between music, violence and memory in the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp is both complex and highly important. Public awareness of the Shoah in 2025 is low,<sup>1</sup> worsened by the growing generation gap between Holocaust survivors and today’s youth. As the survivors pass away, a significant part of the living memory of the camps, particularly death camps like Auschwitz, is disappearing. Therefore, continued research into the Shoah is crucial, though not without its challenges. On one hand, Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum provides a rich source of material for exploring the connection between music and violence. On the other hand, reflecting on this connection is difficult due to the generally positive connotations associated with music. The situation is further complicated by the prevalence of Nazi propaganda materials (such as those related to the art in the Theresienstadt ghetto), which continue to distort the understanding of how music was instrumentalized in the camps.

To explore this issue further, the Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań (with prof. dr hab. Krzysztof Kozłowski, Professor at the Institute of Film, Media and Audiovisual Arts) and the University of Bayreuth (with Prof. Dr. Anno Mungen, Chair for Music Theatre Studies) are organizing a conference together with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (with Dr. Jacek Lachendro). The conference will investigate how music, violence and memory are connected and related to each other, especially through performative practices in the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz in the years 1940–1945. The programme of the conference is planned in four thematical panels: 1. General Approaches, 2. The Arts and the Shoah, 3. Space, Sound and Music and 4. Performing Music. Theoretical and methodological approaches on different aspects can serve as a framework for examining the connection between music, violence, and memory, while panels *The Arts and the Shoah* and *Space, Sound, and Music* should serve as an attempt to characterize and reflect on the context, including the role of art in violence practices, as well as to highlight the connection between space and sound in the camp. Through this approach, we hope to create a fruitful context for the subsequent analysis of music performances in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, including an emphasis on the memory of these events.

The aim of the conference is to bring together latest research approaches and results, including from fields other than music, such as the visual arts, film, theatre and history. One of the central aspects, apart from historiographical research on the events that took place in concentration camps, is the reflection on the current state and problems of the memory culture surrounding these fields, as well as the general connection between arts, particularly music, and violence. One particular focus of this conference,

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<sup>1</sup> Press release by ADL from January 14, 2025 <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/46-adults-worldwide-hold-significant-antisemitic-beliefs-adl-poll-finds> (Access January 17, 2025)

80 years after the liberation of the camp, will be to ask about the importance of individual memory to the wider culture of remembrance. This is why the conference is meant to include different generations in the discussion on the topic, including students and young academics from different countries such as Poland and Germany.

There is a wide variety of research questions still unanswered within the field, relating to the key issues of memory, space, and violence. As Primo Levi wrote, survivors and their memories make up only a very small part of those who were in the camps. What can therefore be said about musicians who perished in Auschwitz, but who have thus also disappeared from the perception of music historiography because they were killed there? How can one imagine the music practice of the camp bands in concrete spatial terms and how far did the sound of the music penetrate into the camp and beyond? Another focus will be placed on the topic of music as torture. The question here: In what ways was music used as torture by the perpetrators? Generally speaking, music can be understood as a paradigm of how to deal with memory within the scope of the terrible violence in German death camps.

According to the goal of the conference, papers on the following topics are invited for participation:

- Theoretical approaches to the connection between the arts – particularly music – and violence
- Methodological approaches to working with the various sources that emerged from the camp (witnesses, Nazi propaganda)
- Music and violence in death camps from the perspectives of both survivors and perpetrators
- The functions of music performances within the camp
- Nazi propaganda during the Second World War (especially in the final years of the war) outside the camps
- Information extended unintentionally beyond the camp (in media, the press, or through performances for the public within the camps)
- Repertoires emerged from the camp
- Logistics and 'management' of the music performances within the camps (e.g. managing the music instruments and scores etc.)
- Connection of performance practices in camps with their spatiality
- Interdisciplinary approach, including e.g. sound, space, gender and ethnicity aspects, to the music performances and violence in concentration camps
- Addressing the issue of memory culture in relation to the connection of music and violence during the Holocaust

Two formats are planned for the conference program: paper presentations (30-minute presentation and 20-minute discussion) and poster presentations (5-minute presentation and 7-minute discussion). The conference languages are English and Polish. To participate, please send us a brief description of your paper or poster (maximum 300 words) and a short biography (maximum 150 words) by **April 14, 2025**, to the email address [Lidiia.Krier@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:Lidiia.Krier@uni-bayreuth.de). We kindly invite participants from all levels of academic research, including young scholars and students.