



**Universität  
Zürich**<sup>UZH</sup>

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT  
ZU BERLIN



Humboldt University (Berlin) and University of Zurich

International Conference

**Transnational Perspectives on Music, Sound and (War) Propaganda (1914–1945)**

**21–23 October 2021 (Virtual conference)**

Convened by Diego Alonso (Humboldt University, Berlin), Christian Koller (Swiss Social Archives and University of Zurich) and Steffen Just (University of Potsdam)

**Keynote speakers:**

Anne C. Shreffler (Harvard University)

Jens Gerrit Papenburg (University of Bonn)

The three decades between the beginning of World War I and the end of World War II are pivotal in the history of sound propaganda from both the political and the technological perspective. Those years saw the emergence of international fascism, communism and totalitarian states, strong nationalist currents as well as the institutionalisation of propaganda in the Americas, Europe and elsewhere. The period also witnessed the development of electric transmission media for acoustic and optical data in the form of radio, sound cinema, public address systems and television. Music and sound took on a fundamental role in the processes of political persuasion and psychological warfare as well as nationalism during this period.

Much of the research done in this field has focused on different uses of pre-existent and newly composed music for propagandistic purposes in national (and nationalistic) contexts, particularly in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. In contrast, little attention has been paid to the practices, networks, discourses and strategies that were part of sound and music propaganda at a supranational level in the interwar period. We lack a full picture of the ways in which sound was used transnationally to deliver political messages to a targeted audience. A special case of obscurity is the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), one of the first armed conflicts in which sound – broadcast on the radio and in public spaces over huge sound systems – played a central role in terms of war propaganda and psychological warfare. The international networks of fascist / antifascist actors working in musical propaganda and the development of sound technologies in this war and the ensuing Second World War, as well as the extent to which the Spanish conflict was understood as the testing ground for the Second World War in the field of music / sound propaganda, are yet to be explored in detail.

This conference, convened by musicologists Diego Alonso and Steffen Just and historian Christian Koller, aims to examine the interwar soundscapes of political and ideological propaganda from a joint musicological and historiographical perspective. The conference seeks

to address this topic also from critical perspectives with a focus on post-colonial, feminist, queer or class-sensitive analysis. Suggested themes include, but are not restricted to:

- Transnational performance practices and contexts
- Supranational musical repertoires (anthems and songs)
- Ideological discourses surrounding sound propaganda
- Aestheticization of sonic propaganda
- Political rituals and regional, national and transnational contexts of creation and reception
- Transatlantic transfers in the field of music and sonic propaganda
- Past and current theories of sonic warfare and sound propaganda.
- Role of sound technology in transnational propaganda: gramophone recordings, radio, loudspeakers and sound systems, television

The official language of the conference is English. Accepted formats for presentations include but are not limited to:

- Individual papers (20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of discussion time)
- Themed sessions of 3 papers (20 minutes each, with 10 minutes per paper for discussion + 15 minutes afterwards)

Each proposal should include:

- \* The author's name and affiliation
- \* Email address
- \* An abstract of no more than 250 words
- \* A short biography (no more than 100 words)

Please submit proposals to [music.sound.propaganda@gmail.com](mailto:music.sound.propaganda@gmail.com) by the deadline of June 15. The programme will be announced by July 1.

### **Programme Committee**

Esteban Buch (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris)

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