

Interpretation and Reinterpretation in Jazz, Rock and Pop Music - International Scientific Conference

Abstracts

Yvetta Kajanová, Maciej Smółka, Stefano Marino, Marcus Zagorski, Jouni Järvinen, Julijana Zhabeva Papazova, Aleš Opekar, Jan Blüml, Peter Michalovič

Abstract: The contemporary character of composition is influenced by performance techniques, since the composers of the new millennium are often the performers of their compositions, too. On the other hand, jazz musicians, traditionally focusing more on performance, enhance the compositional aspects in their performance. Although performance and textual critical interpretation (criticism) investigate the same object of composition, the result is different, depending on competence and non-traditional sound environments. Listeners and the environment directly participate in the performance. This project examines the contemporary and the past critical performance of jazz and art music, the extent of listeners' participation (participatory sense-making, the ear worm phenomenon), the intensity of experience (peak experience), and soundscape studies in contemporary composition in terms of climatic changes and the philosophy of deep ecology. It will confront the discovered facts with its own analytical findings.

Key words: interpretation, jazz, rock, pop music, European music, music criticism, soundscape

Maciej Smółka: Staging the Minneapolis Sound: Reinterpreting Musical Heritage across Theater, Ballpark, and Block Party

Abstract: Popular music heritage is made and remade through performance and its movement across urban spaces. Each return to established repertoire selects artists, redistributes importance, and proposes relationships among music, place, and community (Cohen 2013; Bennett and Rogers 2016). This paper compares three events from Prince Celebration Week 2026: Revelation – A Retrospective of the Minneapolis Sound at Chanhassen Dinner Theatres on 2 June, Prince Night at Target Field on 4 June, and the Prince Block Party & Sing-Along in Minneapolis on 6 June. Drawing on participant observation, repertoire analysis, and event framing, the paper examines how institutions and formats reinterpreted the Minneapolis Sound.

Revelation reconstructed it as a tradition. Repertoire from The Time, Jesse Johnson, Vanity 6, Wendy & Lisa, Alexander O’Neal, and others situated Prince within a network, making the scene audible (Smółka 2023). Prince Night relocated this heritage into professional baseball. Through Prince/Twins co-branding, stadium music and imagery, themed merchandise, and the rituals of the game, Target Field presented Prince as a civic emblem and connected popular music memory with sporting identity (Graakjær 2026). The block party produced a contrasting commemoration. Organized by Paisley Park and the City of Minneapolis near Prince’s mural, it moved from a participatory mass-choir sing-along to multigenerational performances and unannounced appearances by New Power Generation musicians, The Twinz, and Sheila E. Combining participatory and presentational music-making (Turino 2008), it transformed Prince’s repertoire into collective civic memory.

The paper argues that one musical legacy can be organized through three spatial and institutional frames: a musicians’ genealogy and expansive scene, a civic brand embedded in sporting spectacle, and participatory urban heritage centered on a star. Together, the events reveal heritage as mobile and context-dependent, continually reshaping who represents the city and how audiences encounter its musical past (van der Hoeven and Hitters 2020).

Key words: Minneapolis Sound, Prince, popular music heritage, cultural memory, urban space

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Maciej Smółka holds a PhD in Studies on Culture and Religions from Jagiellonian University (2021) and specializes in the study of popular music and popular culture. Since 2024, he has served as Secretary General of IASPM's Central, Eastern and Southeastern European branch (IASPM CESE) and Vice-Director for Educational Affairs at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, Jagiellonian University. He coordinates the Popular Music Research Group, the first research group in Poland devoted specifically to popular music. A music researcher, critic, and enthusiast, he works on the history of American popular music, the contemporary music industry, local music scenes, and the specificity of contemporary popular culture. He promotes scholarly approaches to popular music beyond academia and runs the Instagram project *Fajne Płyty* (@fajneplyty). He is the author of *Say Yes! To Michigan* (AT, 2017), *The Sound of a City: A Study of the Phenomenon* (Peter Lang, 2023), and *The Minneapolis Sound: The City, Music, and Identity* (Intellect, 2026).

Contact: Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, ul. Władysława Reymonta 4, 30-059 Kraków, Poland, email: maciek.smolka@uj.edu.pl

Stefano Marino: “Push Me and I Will Resist”: Aesthetic and Social Dimensions of the Grunge Musical Subculture

Abstract: “Push me and I will resist” is a famous verse from the 1994 song “Corduroy” by the American rock band Pearl Jam, one of the main bands (together with Nirvana, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, Melvins, Mother Love Bone, Mudhoney, Screaming Trees, and many others) of the important musical scene usually associated to the city of Seattle and its cultural milieu and to the notion of “grunge”, coined in the late 1980s / early 1990s to define this particular variant of rock music. A verse like “Push me and I will resist” is particularly impressive and fitting, from my perspective, because it masterfully exemplifies and embodies various features of what we may freely call the “philosophy” presented in several songs of Pearl Jam and, more in general, various aspects of the “philosophy” that characterized the grunge movement in its entirety. After more than three decades since the time when those rock bands (and, above all, Nirvana and Pearl Jam) achieved in a few years an enormous commercial and artistic success – thus ascending in an extremely rapid way from the status of cult bands in the niche of so-called “underground”, “alternative” or “independent” rock to the level of global recognition and fame in the so-called mainstream scene, with hit songs constantly aired on the radio, videos constantly broadcasted on MTV and other TV programs, etc. – what we may call the grunge musical subculture still represents an important and intriguing case study which allows to investigate the overlapping and the intertwinement between aesthetic and social dimensions that often characterize the phenomena belonging to musical subcultures. In my contribution to the International Scientific Conference in Bratislava “Interpretation and reinterpretation in jazz, rock and pop music” I will focus on the example of the “grunge” scene of the 1990s to analyze and highlight some conflicts and paradoxes of grunge aesthetics in its fascinatingly contradictory status between punk-rock and pop.

Keywords: rock music, punk vs. pop, Seattle “grunge” style, aesthetics, subcultures

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Stefano Marino is Associate Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Bologna. Since 2021 he has been the Director of the Bachelor's Degree Program in "Fashion Cultures and Practices" at the University of Bologna (Rimini Campus). In 2021 he obtained the Italian National Scientific Qualification as Full Professor. In 2025 he won the "Somaesthetics Research Prize" of the American Society for Aesthetics. His main research fields include critical theory of society, phenomenology and hermeneutics, philosophical anthropology, neopragmatism and somaesthetics, the aesthetics of fashion, the philosophy of music.

Institutional website: <https://www.unibo.it/sitoweb/stefano.marino4/en>

Contact: Università di Bologna, Dipartimento delle Arti Corso D'Augusto 237, Rimini, stefano.marino4@unibo.it

Marcus Zagorski: Phonognosis: sound and silence beyond anthropocentrism

Abstract: For a diversity of authors, and across a variety of texts, the sounds and silence of the non-human world have been associated with moments of profound ontological awareness. Such awareness opens itself to the signs of a reality transcending ordinary experience, and it engenders a kind of knowledge (gnosis) gained, in part, through sound (phono-). The term “phonognosis” is meant to identify this ontological awareness that is concomitant with the conscious aural perception of the natural world, and this paper outlines a theory for understanding it. My theory is presented in five parts. First, I begin with a number of examples in which authors noted the sounds or silence that accompanied moments of profound ontological awareness. Second, I survey some existing vocabularies and explanations of sound and silence and consider their applicability to the idea of phonognosis. My third and fourth parts examine aspects of anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric views of the world, respectively, and corresponding ideas about sound and silence. The fifth and final part presents my conclusions and argues that phonognosis is both a way to understand past texts that suggest views beyond anthropocentrism, and it offers a path we can follow today.

Keywords: soundscape, silence, ecocriticism, anthropocentrism, ontology

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Marcus Zagorski is a musicologist and composer based in Bratislava, where he is Associate Professor of Musicology at Comenius University. He studied composition and music theory at Michigan State University, composition at McGill University, and received his PhD in Musicology from Stanford University in 2006. His research has focused extensively on postwar compositional theory, musical aesthetics, serialism, and the thought of Theodor W. Adorno. His current work explores non-urban soundscapes and environmental approaches to listening, bringing together perspectives from musicology, comparative literature, philosophy, religious studies, and acoustic ecology. He is particularly interested in mountain environments and collaborates with alpine ecologists based in Central Europe. He is the author of *Adorno and the Aesthetics of Postwar Serial Music* (Wolke, 2020) and *Kapitoly z estetiky seriálnej hudby* [Elements of Serial Aesthetics] (NM Code, 2017). His major scholarly publications include "Carl Dahlhaus and the Aesthetics of the Experiment" (*Acta Musicologica*, 2015), "The Role of Technology in the Aesthetics of Postwar Serial Music" (*Musicologica Brunensia*, 2017), "The Aesthetics of Serialism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Serialism* (Cambridge University Press), and "The Sacred Soundscapes of Mountain Wilderness" (*Religions*, 2023), published as part of the special issue *Soundscapes of Religion* (edited by Yveta Kajanová). The latter reflects his more recent turn toward acoustic ecology and examines mountain soundscapes as catalysts for sacred experience through an interdisciplinary combination of philosophy, religious studies, and soundscape ecology.

Contact: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marcus Zagorski, Ph.D., Dpt. of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovakia, marcus.zagorski@uniba.sk

Jouni Järvinen: Awaken Your Ears: Sound, Empathy, and Political Possibility

Abstract: We are all familiar with how affective experience of listening to a favorite song, familiar sounds, or sonic memories can be. Music and sound have the capacity to alter our thinking and can even facilitate a political change, the Baltic Singing Revolution being a notable example. In this paper, I discuss the political potential of sound, sonic encounters, and affective auditory learning and empathetic listening in natural environments.

Scholarship in sound studies, ecoacoustics, and sensory ethnography has pointed to the complex ways in which listening is shaped by context, memory, attention, and imagination. Attentive and relational listening fosters the formation of novel sonic relations and opens a compelling pathway toward the discovery of previously unrecognized experiential "sonic possible worlds," as argued by Salomé Voegelin (2014). Given that listening, especially attentive listening, is an embodied and affective practice, it holds the potential to profoundly shape one's worldview and foster meaningful connections with the more-than-human world.

As philosopher Don Ihde (2007) has noted, sound envelops rather than distances; it immerses the listener. In natural environments, such as forests, this immersive quality is amplified, enabling the listener to experience spatial and temporal relationships in deeply embodied ways. In this sense, soundscape engagement and empathetic listening together constitute an auditory learning process that may serve as a catalyst for transforming attitudes toward the natural environment, ultimately nurturing a heightened sense of appreciation, ethical responsibility, and ecological care.

Keywords: Listening, empathetic listening, ecoacoustics, politics of listening

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- Jouni Järvinen is a University Lecturer at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, Finland. He holds a Doctor of Social Sciences degree from the University of Helsinki. His research interests include cultural studies, sound studies, sensory methodologies, Central and Eastern European studies, political history, and musical resistance. His recent work explores listening as an embodied and affective practice, sonic environments, and relationships between human and more-than-human actors. He teaches and supervises students in area and cultural studies as well as political, societal, and regional change. His publications address sound, culture, politics, auditory experience, and the social meanings of listening. His selected publications include: Järvinen, J., & Whitney, E. *Sonic Forest Bathing: A Practice-Based Methodology for Embodied Listening* (forthcoming); Järvinen, J., & Whitney, E. (2024). "Listening to a Tram: Sonic Assemblages and Auditory Horizons on Helsinki Public Transportation." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*; Järvinen, J. (2024). "Musiikillista vastavirtaa tšekkiundergroundista" (Musical Resistance of the Czech Underground). *Idäntutkimus*; Järvinen, J. (2018). "1989 – A Revolution or the End of a Revolution?" *Aleksanteri Insight*; Järvinen, J. (2018). "Kansalaisyhteiskunta: demokratian ytimessä vai periferiassa?" (Civil Society: In the Core or Periphery of Democracy). In *Demokratian karikot*. Gaudeamus.

Contact: University of Helsinki, Faculty of Humanities, Aleksanteri Institute, P.O 24 (Unioninkatu 40), 00014 Helsinki, Finland, jouni.jarvinen@helsinki.fi



Julijana Zhabeva Papazova: The Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices and Lisa Gerrard – reinterpretation of the relationship between West and East experiences

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to explore and analyze the collaborations between folk and popular music scenes and experiences. Those collaborations are in the relation of East West societies and their multileveled aspects of correlations and experiences throughout the history. The central aspect of the analysis is the release of the album *BooCheeMish* (2018, Prophecy Productions) by the Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices choir and Lisa Gerrard, with a purpose to reinterpret previously mentioned comparison of West East cultures or between etic and emic musicological/ethnomusicological analysis of the choir and its collaborations with western artists. Etic and emic approaches are used in different disciplines to handle a range of different epistemological and methodological issues, such as the relationship between researcher and research subject (Mostowlansky and Rota, 2020). With use of ethnographic research this paper argues that etic approach has changed in the last couple of years. For example, analysis done by etic researchers about western and local experiences of the music created by the Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices.

Key words: Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices choir, Lisa Gerrard, etic, emic, ethnography.

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- Julijana Papazova, received her PhD degree in musicology at the Institute of Art Studies-Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia. Main areas of research are: popular music studies, alternative rock in Central and Southeast Europe. Papazova was awarded with scholarships from Visegrad fund and SAIA for her postdoctoral research stay at the Comenius University in Bratislava. Her papers are published for: Bloomsbury, Routledge, *Studia Musicologica-Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, *Popular music* (Cambridge University Press), *Journal of Creative Communications-SAGE*, Rowman & Littlefield-Maryland, Hollitzer Verlag-Vienna, *Arti Musices-Zagreb*, etc. She is the editor of the international journal *Balkan Hip Hop Studies - BHHS*.
- Contact: Julijana Papazova, PhD, DMBUC Ilija Nikolovski-Luj, Skopje, North Macedonia jzabeva@yahoo.com

Aleš Opekar: Old Reviews, New Sources: A Reinterpretation of the Second Czechoslovak Beat Festival Through the Lens of Contemporary Press and Newly Discovered Archival Documents

Abstract: In December 1968, the second Czechoslovak Beat Festival took place at Prague's Lucerna hall, marking the culmination of the domestic rock scene's development to that point. Despite the Iron Curtain, the scene had evolved in a way that was not isolated from Western European and American influences. Following the onset of so-called normalization after August 1968, the scene disintegrated as a result of government restrictions, and the promising tradition could not continue.

This paper examines how contemporary journalism documented the phenomenon at the time of the event and how it was evaluated in later reflections. Our current perspective is more comprehensive today thanks to the ongoing digitization of magazines and books. The targeted interviews and analysis of unique documents—discovered only recently, particularly the estate of one of the main organizers, Jiří Chlíbač, and a collection of recordings made and subsequently deleted by Czechoslovak Radio—will provide the necessary context and connections to refine our interpretation of the old press from today's perspective.

Key words: rock, beat, festival, journalism, recordings

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Aleš Opekar studied Czech and music at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University (PhDr. 1987, PhD. 1993). Between 1990 and 1998, he worked as a researcher at the Institute of Musicology, CAS and from 1999 to 2018 as program director for jazz and popular music on Czech Radio's Vltava station where he created a number of specialized music programs. As an expert adviser and scriptwriter, he collaborated with Czech Television on various documentary series, such as Bigbít (1999) and PopStory (2016 and 2020). Since 2006, he has been teaching popular music and world music at the Department of Musicology at the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno and since 2016, he has also been teaching at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. In 1998, he founded the civic organization Museum and Archive of Popular Music (now Popmuseum, z. s.), of which he is the chairman. In 2019, he began to work at the IAH CAS as a researcher focusing on theory and history of popular music. He is the Chair of the newly established Central, Eastern and Southeastern European branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM CESE).

Contact: PhDr. Aleš Opekar, CSc., Institute of Art History, Department of musicology, Czech Academy of Sciences, +420 603 419 198, opekar@udu.cas.cz, www.udu.cas.cz

Jan Blüml: Music Criticism under State Socialism: The Case of the Czech Popular Music Magazine Melodie

Abstract: This contribution examines the functioning and content of the official Czech popular music magazine Melodie, which served as a central platform for discussion of popular music from the 1960s to the 1980s. Specifically, it examines the cultural-political and music-historical circumstances that shaped its operation as well as its conceptualisations of popular music. The contribution places Melodie in the context of analogous media in neighbouring socialist countries, such as the East German Melodie und Rhythmus and the Polish Jazz (later renamed Magazyn Muzyczny). In this regard, it offers an insight into popular music culture behind the Iron Curtain, demonstrating the diversity of individual national scenes while also addressing the history of East-Central European popular music media, which remains largely unexplored in English-language scholarship.

Keywords: popular music criticism, journalism, Melodie, Eastern Bloc, state socialism

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- Jan Blüml has been working at the Department of Musicology, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic since 2014. His main academic interest lies in the history of popular music in East Central Europe with special emphasis on music in the former Czechoslovakia. He is co-editor of the monograph Popular Music in Communist and Post-Communist Europe (Peter Lang, 2019) and co-author of the book Popular Music Research behind the Iron Curtain: Czech Musicology in the Context of Central European Culture and Politics (Peter Lang, 2025; co-author Aleš Opekar). Contact: Assoc. Prof. Jan Blüml, PhD, Palacký University Olomouc, jan.bluml@upol.cz

Peter Michalovič: Zvonky, zvoňte [Bells, Ring] – A Musical Event

Abstract: The research paper “Zvonky, zvoňte” attempts to define the status of a musical event—a singularity—by drawing on the oppositions between the social logic of generality and the social logic of particularity, as well as the aesthetics of identity and the aesthetics of contrast. This definition serves as a methodological tool that makes it possible to interpret why the band Průdy’s [Jets] album “Zvonky, zvoňte” can be considered, in the context of Czechoslovak rock music and popular artistic culture in general, a musical event par excellence. To support this hypothesis with sufficiently convincing arguments, it was necessary to clarify the context that enabled the emergence of this event, how the album’s aesthetics and poetics differ from contemporary productions, and how it influenced the development of subsequent trends, particularly in Slovak rock music.

Keywords: musical event, musical logic of singularity, musical logic of universality, aesthetics of contrast

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- Peter Michalovič (b. 1960), holds a degree in Philosophy and Aesthetics from the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, where he has been a staff member since 1987. His research interests include aesthetic theory, structuralism, post-structuralism, and narrative theory. He is the author of numerous monographs, including *Az idióma keresése* (The Search for Idiom) (1997), *Introduction to Structuralism and Post-Structuralism* (with Pavel Minár, 1997), *Orbis terrarum est speculum ludi* (1999), *Brief Reflections on Visuality and Cinema* (2000), *From Sign to End* (2003), *Omnibus in omnibus* (2004), *De disciplina et arte* (2005), *Juraj Jakubisko* (with Vlastimil Zúsko, 2005), *Interpretatio. Fila - Klimt* (2007), *Signs, Images and Shadows of Words* (with Vlastimil Zúsko, 2009), *Ivan Csudai. Vita brevis, ars longa* (2010), *Debate on the Western* (with Vlastimil Zúsko, 2014, second edition 2015), *Rudolf Fila* (with Ľudovít Holosek, 2016), *Rudolf Fila. Imagology* (with Martin Kaňuch, 2018), *Vita circulus est* (2020), *Film Worlds of Miloslav Luther* (with Petr Dubecký, 2021), and *Debate on the Western* (with Vlastimil Zúsko, 2021). He has published over four hundred essays and scientific articles. He is also an active curator, having organized over one hundred exhibitions in Slovakia and abroad, primarily in Rome, Prague, Budapest, and Moscow.
- Contact: peter.michalovic@uniba.sk, Dpt. of Aesthetics, Faculty of Arts, Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovakia

Yvetta Kajanová: Holistic approach to pop music: A Comparative and Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Pop Music Legends

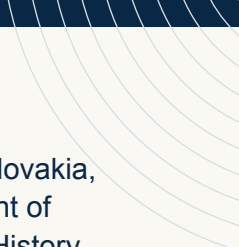
Abstract: The study looks at various historical approaches to the evaluation and interpretation of popular music stars. While old methodologies examined pop music songs more from a statistical perspective in terms of quantitative reach (number of albums sold, financial contribution to the music industry, success in terms of domestic, regional, or global reach), newer research has focused on musical analysis in terms of genre and style, thus expanding the strategy of musicology derived from classical music. It was only the scope of cultural studies that acknowledged that a pop music song also has a semiotic and semantic character for the listener; it does not progress from the simple to the complex, but maintains the status of a construction of simplicity and an explicit, masterful statement. The awareness of the artist's originality led to the formulation of interpretative variations in the use of sound, the singer's vocal techniques, and instrumental uniqueness. A pop music song is often tied by its originality to a subculture from which it draws specific elements, or rather, plunders them, thereby shifting the interpretation of pop music from its original scope of cultural studies into the sociological realm. It can therefore be said that the interpretative frameworks of pop music have expanded from their original economic-financial boundaries to include the musical analysis of the song and lyrics, the interpretative-analytical abilities of the artists, critical-stylistic identification, as well as sociological and managerial aspects of pop music interpretation. Placing it into historical contexts and examining the sources of pop music brings additional interpretative limits, pointing out that the only correct interpretation of pop music is contained within a holistic approach. The comparison between sound recordings and live performances offers a new methodological perspective on how different soundscapes can be created for pop songs. The author shows different theoretical interpretations of pop music through legendary pop stars such as Karel Gott, Oliver Dragojević, and Jožo Ráž, the singer of the band Elán.

Key words: statistic interpretation of pop music, managerial interpretation of pop music, critical-stylistic interpretation of pop music, semiotic interpretation of pop music, soundscape of pop music, Karel Gott, Oliver Dragojević, Jožo Ráž, Elán

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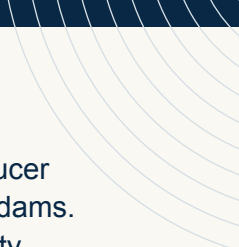
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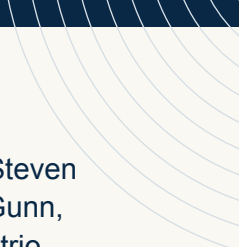


Yvetta Kajanová (b.1964) is a Professor of musicology at Comenius University in Bratislava-Slovakia, where she gives lectures in jazz and rock history, musical criticism, sociology and management of music. In 2014 she published through Peter Lang academic publishers the monograph, "The History of Rock Music". Kajanová participated in international conferences in Vienna, Prague, Regensburg, Berlin, Budapest, Warsaw, Krakow, London, Porto, Graz, Milano, Marburg and Thessaloniki. Prof. Kajanová was a member of the International Research Team, Jazz in the Eastern Block, in Freie Universität Berlin between 2008 – 2010. She is the author of ten monographs on aesthetics and sociology of music, jazz, rock, pop music and gospel music. Some of her latest monographs include "Gospel Music in Slovakia" (Bratislava: Coolart – Lux 2009), "Postmodernism in Music, Minimal Music, Rock, Pop and Jazz" (Bratislava: VUK 2010), "On the History of Jazz" (Bratislava: CoolArt 2010), "On the History of Rock" (Bratislava: CoolArt 2010, Peter Lang 2014), "Slovak Jazz – Contexts and Relationships" (Bratislava: UK, 2014), Yvetta Kajanová & Gertrud Pickhan & Rüdiger Ritter (eds.): "Jazz from Socialist Realism to Postmodernism", vol. 5, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang 2016), Jan Blüml & Yvetta Kajanová & Rüdiger Ritter (eds.): "Popular Music in Communist and Post-Communist Europe", vol. 6 (Berlin, Peter Lang 2019), Yvetta Kajanová (ed.): „Ubuntu Fusion Music“, 11 (Lausanne, Peter Lang 2024). Her book, "Musica rock: suono, ritmo, affetto; e l'invenzione della chitarra elettrica", was published in Italy in 2022. She was guest editor of a special issue of the journal Religion entitled Soundscapes of Religions (2024), co-editor of the volume "Critica musicale" together with Stefano Lombardi Vallauri (Milano: Mimesis, 2026). Her book "Concert and Festival Attendance in Slovakia in the Period 2007–2024" (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského 2026) analyses the contemporary situation from a managerial perspective.

Contact: yvetta.kajanova@uniba.sk, Dpt. of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, Gondova 2, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovakia



Gary Carner (b. 1955, New York) is an American jazz historian, researcher, author, and producer whose work focuses primarily on the life, music, and legacy of baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams. He studied at Macalester College and later pursued graduate studies in English and jazz at City College of New York and at Tufts University. Throughout his academic career, he has worked with prominent jazz scholars and musicians, including Lewis Porter, John Lewis, and Ron Carter. He has taught jazz history at several American institutions, including Mannes College of Music, Longy School of Music, the New School, and Assumption College. Carner is internationally recognized as an authority on the life and music of Pepper Adams. From 1984 until Adams's death in 1986, he worked directly with the saxophonist on his memoirs, a collaboration that became the starting point for a research project spanning approximately four decades. His *Pepper Adams' Joy Road: An Annotated Discography* (Scarecrow Press, 2012) provides comprehensive documentation of Adams's recording career, supplemented by interviews and previously unpublished materials. He later published the extensive biography *Reflectory: The Life and Music of Pepper Adams* (Lulu Press, 2022), abridged as *Pepper Adams: Saxophone Trailblazer* (State University of New York Press, 2023). Carner is also the author of *Jazz Performers* and editor of *The Miles Davis Companion*. In addition to his work as a jazz historian and biographer, he is active as a record producer and has contributed significantly to preserving and promoting Pepper Adams's compositional legacy, including the production of recordings devoted to his music. Carner's publications represent an important contribution to jazz historiography.



David Kollar has collaborated with numerous internationally acclaimed musicians, including Steven Wilson, Erik Truffaz, Arve Henriksen, Christian Fennesz, Eivind Aarset, Pat Mastelotto, Trey Gunn, Tim Bowness, Marco Minnemann, and Lukas Ligeti. In 2015, he co-founded the experimental trio KOMARA with Pat Mastelotto of King Crimson and trumpeter Paolo Raineri. As a guitarist and sound designer, he has contributed to several projects by Steven Wilson, including *To the Bone* (2017), *No-Man's Love You to Bits* (2019), *The Harmony Codex* (2023), and *Harmonic Divergence* (2024). His extensive discography documents an ongoing exploration of the possibilities of the electric guitar, electronics, improvisation, and sound. Alongside his solo work, his collaborations with musicians such as Arve Henriksen and Erik Truffaz have further established his position within the European experimental and contemporary music scene. His recent work continues to move between experimental composition, rock, fusion, electronic music, film music, and interdisciplinary artistic practice. Kollar has received numerous awards and nominations for his recordings and film music. These include the Radio_Head Award for Contribution to Slovak Music (2018) and an award from the Slovak Film and Television Academy for Best Film Score (2019). His work has also received international recognition from specialist music publications and has appeared in selections of notable experimental and progressive recordings. In addition to music, Kollar works in visual art, particularly charcoal drawing and mixed media, extending his interest in improvisation, texture, and abstraction into the visual field.