

Conferences of the IMS Study Group Music and Media: Fifteen (and Counting)

A Personal Account

Emile Wennekes

Holland, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Canada, France, Austria, Norway, Japan, Spain, Sweden, the United States, Greece, the United Kingdom, Ireland, ... The origin of this themed issue of the *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung* is not just the 2024 joint Munich conference of the Kieler Gesellschaft and the IMS Study Group MaM, but in fact dates back some twenty years ago, to 2008 to be precise. That year, Prof. Tilman Seebas, in his capacity as President of the International Musicological Society, initiated a multi-day meet up with me in Amsterdam.

But before I continue this anecdotal encounter that marked the dawn of MaM, a disclaimer may be called for. Or better perhaps: *a captatio benevolentiae*. Usually, I am not fond of using first-person perspectives, however this account of the bygone days of the Study Group MaM makes that, in my view, unavoidable, given my personal involvement.

That being out of the way, Seebas had shrewdly accepted an invitation by Amsterdam Promotion Marketing that advertises the possibilities of hosting large international gatherings in the Netherlands, similar to the quinquennial conferences. Since there were already plans for an IMS meeting, in co-organization with the International Association of Music Libraries (IAML) for 2009, and no similar initiative was to take place in the near future, we discussed other matters while together. Specifically, Seebas encouraged me to reflect on topics that were, at the time, underrepresented within the IMS. Subsequently, one of the topics I brought to the table was the challenging interplay between music and (other) media. Despite the numerous fields already being explored by the New Musicology movement, many historically oriented scholars, including those within the IMS, were still remaining faithful to their more conventional topics, methods, and relevant theories.

Then, at point blank, Seebas asked me: why don't you start a Study Group (SG), in which members share »a common interest in an interdisciplinary theme of international scope«,

to quote the IMS site.¹ He firmly believed that SGs would be essential to the future of the organization, perhaps even to the sustainability of such professional societies. The first SGs had been launched in the second half of the 1980s (Cantus Planus, 1982; Digital Musicology, 1987), yet only a handful had followed their example at the time of our encounter. Growing ever since, at present, MaM is one of no less than 25 IMS SGs.

It was in 2009 that MaM stepped out into the open in Amsterdam. The SG-to-be was introduced by arguing that »Music plays an important role in media, both in old and certainly in new media: commercials, games, films, ring tones and the like. The other way around, media play an increasing role in music. They have changed the compositional process and characteristics of style; media severely influences performances, composing techniques, the way of recording and visualizing music.« In other words, MaM »seeks to examine and explore diverse aspects relevant to the theme of ›mediatizing music‹«. Questions were raised such as: »What are the theoretical and philosophical consequences of mediatized music? What are the economics behind these processes of mediatization? What role does the process of ›remediation‹ (Bolter & Grusin 2000), from LP to MP3 and 4, play? How has mediatization influenced performance practice; what was the ›phonograph effect‹ (Katz 1999). What do processes of mediatizing music mean in terms of ›liveness‹ (Auslander 1999), ›animated liveness‹ (Wennekes 2009) and/or ›immersion‹ (Grau 2003).«²

One-and-a-half decades later, some of these departure points may seem dated, if not downright naive, but let's not forget that, at the time, filmmusicology was still dominated by most notably American scholars, studying hardly anything outside of the Hollywood mainstream repertoire, whereas studies on game music were nothing short of a *rara avis*. Over the years, MaM has indeed explored many of the topics mentioned above, yet augmented its scope with many others, while conference topics have also widened the perspective to the more societal and/or political embedding of music and media issues. The question has even been raised whether or not it still makes sense to recognize a distinction between music and media. But that's another discussion.

¹ www.musicology.org/networks/study-groups/ (25.08.2025).

² <https://studygroupmam.com> (25.08.2025).

The statements and questions cited above formed the theoretical framework of the inaugural MaM meeting, a two-day conference which took place in the ›Orgelpark‹ in Amsterdam, on July 4 and 5, 2009.³ Prof. Hans Fidom of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam was an active co-host. After an internationally distributed, open call for papers that did not define a more specific theme other than merely ›Music and Media / Mediatizing Music‹, eighteen scholars from eight different countries presented papers at this meeting, among them diverse colleagues who would, in the years to come, proceed to co-host MaM meetings themselves, present keynote talks, and/or remain profoundly loyal to the SG as ›MaM-bers‹. President Seebas himself coordinated the election of a chair person at the constituent meeting, and after a few subsequent steps, the SG was officially approved by the IMS Directorium. I was indeed elected as SG chair and would thereafter function as the liaison officer to the Directorium.

Since its launch, an important ambition of MaM in line with the IMS credo has been to bring scholars from different countries and cultures together, and to stimulate the exchange of ideas, addressing a broad variety of subjects, methodologies, and perspectives. Tobias Plebuch, also present in Amsterdam and at the time still affiliated with the Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, swiftly took up the gauntlet and offered to co-host the second MaM meeting in Germany at his Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Medienwissenschaft. That three-day meeting presented no less than three keynote lectures (Helga de la Motte, Philip Auslander, and Michael Saffle), as well as 23 other papers. Keynote speakers are still a consistent in MaM's line-up, however, there have never again been so many at a single event. One keynote talk (MaM meetings numbers 4, 5, 6, 11) or two (numbers 3, 12, 14) has become more common. There were also get-togethers without a key note scheduled (1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16), especially when MaM occurred as a part of a bigger event, such as those under the auspices of the IMS Directorium (see overview in Table 1).

For the 2010 Berlin convention, papers were grouped into themed sections indicative of the topics MaM embraced at the time: Virtual Worlds, Performance and Technology, Politics, Film and Radio. The presentations included work by three national research

³ www.orgelpark.nl/en/about-the-orgelpark (25.08.2025).

groups, from Belgium, Italy and Germany respectively, and fourteen participants attended the workshop ›Multimedia Art and Performance‹. Speakers came from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, England and the United States. There were sixty registered participants at the conference which was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the European Network for Musicological Research, and the Humboldt-Universitäts-Gesellschaft.

Commencing with this second edition of MaM, it became the *modus operandi* to annually alter destinations and to team-up with ›local‹ scholars and institutions for a two- to three-day encounter (for an overview see Table 1). Special attention has been paid to countries where English may not be the most obvious language to share insights. This implies that MaM conferences oftentimes turn out to be multilingual gatherings, German and English in Berlin, then Portugese and English in Lisbon at the third MaM conference, which took place at the Universidade Nova, FCSH-UNL (in close collaboration with Manuel Deniz Silva and with key note presentations by Anahid Kassabian and James Deaville). An additional *modus operandi* of MaM is that we always formulate international, open calls for papers, in order to not only reach out to IMS members, but to the scholarly community at large, with the aim of creating inspiring events (while hopefully in turn encouraging attendees to themselves become a member of the IMS). For every conference we establish a new program committee formed by delegates from the hosting organization(s), joined by (a) MaM representative(s) and, when relevant, the keynote speaker(s).

Table 1: Overview MaM Conferences

Number	Year	Place	Date(s)	Co-host(s)
1	2009	Amsterdam, Orgelpark	July 4–5	Hans Fidom
2	2010	Berlin, Humboldt Universität	June 25–27	Tobias Plebuch
3	2011	Lisbon, Universidade Nova	June 10–12	Manuel Deniz Silva
4	2012	Turin, Università di Torino	June 28–29	Luisa Zanoncelli
5	2013	Ottawa, Carleton University	July 11–13	James Deaville
6	2014	Dijon, Université de Bourgogne	July 1–2	Laurence Le Diagon-Jacquin
7	2015	Vienna, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien	November 25–28	Cornelia Szabó-Knotik
8	2016	Stavanger, University of Stavanger	July 2	<i>Part of an IMS conference</i>

9	2017	Tokyo, University of the Arts	March 21	<i>Part of an IMS conference</i>
10	2018	Salamanca, Universidad de Salamanca	June 13–16	Matilde Olarte Martínez / Simposio Internacional la creación musical en la banda sonora
11	2019	Växjö, Linnæus University	June 7–9	Martin Knust
—	2020	<i>Canceled</i>	<i>PM Covid-19</i>	—
12	2021	Cleveland, Cleveland State University; Rock and Roll Hall of Fame	June 10–11	Michael Baumgartner; Ewelina Boczkowska
13	2022	Athens, Music Library of Greece Lilian Voudouri	August 23	<i>Part of an IMS conference</i>
14	2023	Paris, Université d'Évry Paris-Saclay; École Supérieure d'Études Cinématographiques	June 19–21	Chloé Huvet; Jérémy Michot; Grégoire Tosser
15	2024	Munich, Hochschule für Musik und Musiktheater	June 6–8	Julin Lee / Kieler Gesellschaft für Filmmusikforschung
16	2025	York, York St John University	June 9–10	Helen Julia Minors; Steve Rawle; Sarah-Jane Gibson
17	2026	Dublin, University College Dublin	June 11–12	Conor Power

MaM IV (2012) was unique in so far as we kept a keen eye on the quinquennial IMS conference which would take place that year in Rome. Partnering with Luisa Zanoncelli, we organized a MaM edition in Turin (further from Rome than I assumed, but that's another matter ...), and was featured as a pre-conference to the quinquennial event. We selected the proposals of 32 scholars from Europe, North America, and Asia, a number of presentations which has since become the standard (more or less). Turin was loosely themed around the twenty-fifth anniversary of Claudia Gorbman's groundbreaking study on narrative film music, *Unheard Melodies* (1987). Gorbman herself delivered the keynote address. When organizing MaM conferences, we also look for opportunities for fringe programs which might prove to be interesting to participants. The leisurely finale in Turin consisted of a guided tour through the fascinating Museo Nazionale del Cinema.

The fifth annual conference of 2013 was MaM's first little jubilee. We fruitfully colluded with James Deaville of Carleton University, Ottawa (Canada) for the SG's first gathering in North America. The focus of the three-day conference was on ›Music on Small Screens‹. Over the course of the last three decades, the dominance of the large cinematic screen has gradually eroded in favor of smaller formats for the consumption of screen

media. The jubilee edition was programmed in recognition of this development, specified through subthemes of (Popular) Television Music; Music in Children's Television; Television Musicals; Video Game Music; YouTube Music; Classical Music in Screen Media; Video Games and Opera; Theories of Television Music; Performance in Video; Creating Digital Media; Music for Television Series; Small-Screen Musical Paratexts. Karen Collins gave the keynote speech (see Table 2 for details on conferences' themes and keynote talks).

The following year, the first Francophone/English conference took place in Dijon; Laurence Le Diagon-Jacquín was our local host. This meeting aimed the spotlight on French cinema. A second Francophone/English conference would take place nearly ten years later, in 2023, at that time concentrating especially on Francophone film, co-organized with, most notably, Chloé Huvet from Université d'Évry Paris-Saclay. The tenth MaM gathering (2018) incorporated papers in Spanish, and was mainly focused on Spanish national cinema. Looking for an opportunity to reach out to Spanish colleagues, co-host Matilde Olarte Martínez featured MaM as part of the University of Salamanca's eight-hundred-year celebration, liaising as well with the national research group which organizes the yearly *La Creación Musical en la Banda Sonora* symposium.

Generally, the get-togethers of MaM take place in June or early July, when the academic year for many scholars is (about to be) over. The first time we deviated from this principle was in 2015 when the MaM meeting was organized in November, at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien (working with Cornelia Szabó-Knotik). The theme that year also deviated somewhat from earlier editions. Less media specific, the presentations featured more political topics: War of Media – Media of War: The Importance of Music and Media for Propaganda in Times of Change. Two other MaM conferences also digressed from the June/July timeslot, both when we organized our SG during IMS quinquennial conferences: March 2017 with a panel in Tokyo, and August 2022 in Athens. The first addressed musical TV programs in the USA during the 1950s, and the second was a peer group discussion on some theoretical principles presented in the *Palgrave Handbook of Music in Comedy Cinema* (2023; being compiled at that time). Before these two massive IMS meetings, MaM presented a panel in Stavanger (2016) which fell under

the direct auspices of the IMS too. We discussed various future lines of research there. These three gatherings were notable exceptions to the two- to three-day conference format.

The propagandistic (mis)use of music and media was once again featured in our meeting in Sweden (2019, Linnæus University Växjö; co-host Martin Knust; keynote Emilio Audissino): we concentrated on ›Music in Journalism and Propaganda‹. This was the year before the world came to a standstill due to the pandemic. All of a sudden, we also had to rethink MaM relevant to at least two immediate consequences: the twelfth annual meeting (on the relatively new topic of pre-existing music in screen-media) was necessarily postponed. Consequentially, no gathering took place in 2020, and with no end of Covid-19 in sight at that time, we decided from the start to schedule the 2021 conference as a virtual one. The meeting was hosted from two venues in Cleveland: Cleveland State University and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, with Michael Baumgartner and Ewelina Boczowska as organizers *in situ*. MaM's debut in the United States was, ergo, launched online. With the immensely rapid, worldwide adoption of Zoom meetings, MaM likewise embraced the possibility of hosting its meetings in a hybrid form. A year later, in Athens, more than half of the presentations were beamed in from Canada, the USA, and Sweden.

In 2023, the Paris-Évry conference returned to a modest use of video presentations, while the aforementioned Munich meeting of 2024 – MaM's fifteenth – programmed together with the Kieler Gesellschaft für Filmmusikforschung, and Julin Lee in particular, made ample use of online options. The theme embraced ›Music, Media, and Narrative in the Streaming Age‹. New here was a program of parallel sessions, due to the large number of accepted papers: nearly fifty scholars presented their work at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München. Also new to this conference was announcing beforehand that a small selection of papers would be published; the current issue of the *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung* features a (first) harvest of this rich research.

The most recent MaM conference took place this year (2025) at York St John University and was programmed jointly with Helen Julia Minors, Steve Rawle, and Sarah-Jane Gibson. The topic was ›Music, Media and Global Messages‹; we welcomed speakers

from no less than fourteen countries and six continents. Statistics like these may indicate that, after more than a decade and a half, interest in MaM continues to flourish.

Taking stock now, MaM has manifested itself in a large number of countries. Many more remain on the wish list, to enable us to dive into specific media and musical cultures, national cinemas, unique narratives, et cetera. MaM has not yet organized exchanges with Eastern-European countries, for example, or whole continents like Africa (only spot-lighting film: Nollywood!), Asia (Bollywood!), Oceania or South America. The 2026 MaM gathering will take place at University College Dublin. During this meeting, we will propose to elect the co-editor of this *kbzf* themed issue as incoming chair of MaM, first as co-chair, and subsequently as general chair. Julin Lee represents a new generation of high-potential music and media scholars, and with her already impressively broad profile, she may be the ideal individual to establish bridges to Asia and other parts of the world. I am delighted to continue working with her in this new capacity, while anticipating meeting new IMS ›MaM-bers‹ from around the world.

Table 2: MaM Themes

Number	Year	Theme(s)	Key Note Speaker(s)	Key Note Title(s)
1	2009	Mediatizing Music	—	—
2	2010	Virtual Worlds, Performance and Technology, Politics, Film and Radio	1) Helga de la Motte 2) Philip Auslander 3) Michael Saffle	1) Multi – Intermedialität: Veränderungen des Musikbegriffs 2) Jazz Improvisation as a Social Arrangement 3) Lisztomania: The Real Musical(ized) Story
3	2011	Listening to moving images	1) James Deaville 2) Anahid Kassabian	1) Television Music Studies: Past, Present and Future 2) Smartphone Apps and the Environments of the Future
4	2012	25 years <i>Unheard Melodies</i>	Claudia Gorbman	Music and Character
5	2013	Music on Small Screens	Karen Collins	To Fidelity and Beyond: Consuming Media in a Mobile World
6	2014	Rewriting music for film; French cinema; Jazz as soundtrack; Methodologies for the study of film soundtracks	Philippe Gonin	Jazz et cinéma ou les représentations de noirs et du jazz dans les films promotionnels et les cartoons des années 1930. Points et contrepoints

7	2015	War of Media – Media of War: the Importance of Music and Media for Propaganda in Times of Change	—	—
8	2016	Music, Media and Play: some future lines of research	—	—
9	2017	From classical conductors to Cuban bandleaders: Music on 1950s American Television	—	—
10	2018	2009-2018: a decade of studying the interaction between music and media; music and documentary film; streaming media soundtracks; new methodologies	—	—
11	2019	Sounds of Mass Media: music in Journalism and Propaganda	Emilio Audissino	Sound-logos, Olympics, Presidents, and Other Celebrations. When John Williams Scores for Mass Media
12	2021	Pre-existing Music in Screen-Media: problems, questions, challenges	1) James Buhler 2) Carol Vernallis	1) Composing for the Films in the Age of Digital Media 2) Music Video and the Multi-sensory
13	2022	Music in Comedy Cinema: towards a new Handbook	—	—
14	2023	Musique et son dans les médias audiovisuels francophones	1) James Deaville 2) Dominique Nasta	1) Crippling the Soundtrack: Music/Sound/Silence and the Institutionalization of Madness in Francophone Cinema 2) Entendez-vous cette voix ? La chanson, bastion identitaire d'un monde audio-visuel globalisé
15	2024	Music, Media, and Narrative in the Streaming Age	—	—
16	2025	Music, Media and Global Messages	—	—
17	2026	Directions and Aesthetics of the Digital Era	t.b.a.	t.b.a.

Bibliography

- Audissino, Emilio/Wennekes, Emile (eds.) (2023): *The Palgrave Handbook of Music in Comedy Cinema*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Auslander, Philip (1999): *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York (NY): Routledge.
- Bolter, Jay David/Grusin, Richard (2000): *Remediating: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- Grau, Oliver (2003): *Virtual art: From Illusion to Immersion*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- Katz, Mark (1999): *The Phonograph Effect: The Influence of Recording on Listener, Performer, Composer, 1900-1940*. PhD Thesis University of Michigan.
- Wennekes, Emile (2009): Brief encounters of a third kind: First Life live concerts in Second Life concert venues. In: Brejzek, Thea/Greisenegger, Wolfgang/Wallen, Lawrence (eds.), *Monitoring Scenography 2: Space and Truth / Raum und Wahrheit*. Institute for Design and Technology. Zurich: Zurich University of the Arts, pp. 48–57.

Empfohlene Zitierweise

Wennekes, Emile: Conferences of the IMS Study Group Music and Media: Fifteen (and Counting). A Personal Account. In: *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung* 19 (2025), S. 7–16, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59056/kbzf.2025.19.p7-16>.

Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung (ISSN 1866-4768)

Die Inhalte dieses Werks werden unter der Lizenz CC BY 4.0 Creative Commons Namensnennung 4.0 zur Verfügung gestellt. Hiervon ausgenommen ist das Bildmaterial, das abweichenden, in den Bildlegenden spezifizierten Bestimmungen unterliegt.