

The Landscape of Memory and Resistance Through Music and Performance

ICOM 27th General Conference, Dubai, UAE

Call for Papers

ICOM Dubai 2025 provides an excellent opportunity for multiple International Committees and Regional Alliances to share their expertise across different disciplines. The Chairs of IC MEMOHRI and IC MUSIC will be holding joint conference sessions (11–13 November 2025) under the general theme of *The Landscape of Memory and Resistance Through Music in Museums*.

Linking the work of the International Committees supports the ICOM Strategic Plan values and priorities through strengthening our internal partnerships, building the global import of the museum sector, and establishing trust among the International Committees by collaboratively sharing our research, diversifying our platforms through giving larger voices to smaller committees, and actively seeking contributions from across the globe. Our International Committees and partners consciously strive to foster accessibility, inclusivity, diversity, and sustainability.

Thematic ideas often cross over International Committee boundaries. Music, while often thought of as intangible heritage, is also reflected in the material culture found in many types of museum collections. The ubiquity of music in cultural life, the myriad ways in which it delights and moves people, and its rich scope for cultural significance at many levels, make music and its tangible heritage important fields of inquiry and collaborative research. Musical instruments may be viewed at the heart of such investigations, yet when placed within historical and contemporary contexts, musical practices may be intertwined with other artefacts, such as costumes, which also embody and express cultural identity, social, political, and spiritual ideas and values. Best practices in museum work allow for new ways for society to see, hear, access and engage with tangible and intangible heritage, and learn about the histories, artistry, craft, and techniques. The importance and fragility of such work is directly impacted by current wars and conflicts, suppressing and destroying material and immaterial cultural heritage.

Proposals may include:

- Music and Memory – How can museums understand instruments by unknown makers or those not recognized as historically prized canonical makers? The violin, a widely recognized instrument and highly prized historical instruments made by well-known instrument makers have established artistic, canonical, and market values. Yet what is the importance of an instrument of unknown or mass-produced manufacture? Such anonymous instruments, for example, gain

significance when placed within historical and cultural context, such as specific events, or identifiable social groups, especially when evoking emotions, memory, loss, and resilience.

- **Stories Costumes Tell** – How are costumes used for social or spiritual communication, especially during musical performances or ceremonies? Shortly after WWII, there were musical groups dressed in camp uniforms, identifying the performers as survivors. What other examples can be found of a costume used to convey personal histories and political contexts? And what examples can be discussed where the costume itself is a musical instrument?
- **Displaced and Transported Instruments** – What are the complex stories behind a musical instrument? The British Museum holds a West African ‘apentemma’ (single-headed drum) that was in Virginia before 1760 and brought to England as part of the collection of Sir Hans Sloane. What can we glean from the biography of this object having been brought from Ghana to America, probably on a slave ship, and later transported to a different country? What does it impart about the importance of drumming that continued among enslaved persons and still influences African-American music today? How does this highlight the need for further research in the decolonization of collections?
- **Diverse Heritage and Practices** – Historical and contemporary practices may be difficult to interpret and understand when taken out of their original cultural context. How can museums conserve, interpret, and exhibit complex and layered meanings of diverse heritages, including involving stakeholders in documentation and interpretation? Wayang Kulit, Indonesian shadow puppetry, include elements of lighting, color, costume, gesture, artistry, oral traditions of storytelling, and the vocal and musical instrument ensemble of the ‘gamelan’, all of which create a complex whole while other traditions may seem simpler. Some musical instruments are made from found or repurposed objects. Everyday objects might be used to accompany work. Some practices maintain formal training, while others entail self-training.
- **Music and Animation on the Digital Stage** – How has the digital stage allowed for more cross-cultural influences, creative collaborations, and rapid dissemination of information, including messaging of human rights violations and political unrest and dissent? Imagery, motion, and sound are married with advances in the digital world to tell stories. How has the digital world affected storytelling in and beyond the museum and what are the roles, impacts and possibilities of AI?
- **Museums as a Space for Cultural Action, Resistance, Peace, and Human Rights** – With often rapid changes in governments and political landscapes, how do museums, memorials, and sites of memory continue to educate the public about difficult histories and consider human rights? How do exhibitions effectively include music, song, and the spoken word to carry important messages about the past, the present, and the future? What are the traditional means that indigenous peoples, immigrants, and their descendants have used to maintain memory, activate their unique histories, and reinforce their civic and human rights and cultural knowledge?

The committee will accept a variety of proposed contributions, including but not limited to papers, posters, roundtables, and panels.

Please send a proposal title, abstract of no more than 300 words, and a short biographical statement of no more than 150 words including the following information:

- Full name:
- Museum/Organization:
- Position:
- Email:
- Please confirm if you are an ICOM member: Yes (provide ICOM number) / No

The call is inclusive of all geographies, museological issues, and viewpoints, topics. IC MEMOHRI and IC MUSIC encourage a variety of consideration of underrepresented areas, as well as novel approaches, rethinking, and expanded knowledge of commonly covered topics.

Proposals must be sent to marie.martens@natmus.dk by midnight (23:59 Central Time UTC - 6) **15 April 2025**; late entries will not be considered. Accepted formats are Microsoft Word (.docx) and PDF. Submissions may be edited by the Scientific Committee for the program booklet.

Submissions and presentations for the meeting may be in any of the three official ICOM languages, English, Spanish, and French, with the possibility of simultaneous translation. It is desirable that you join us in-person at the meeting, but virtual contributions will also be accepted.

Conference Publication

Proceedings of the conference may be jointly published by ICOM MUSIC and MEMOHRI, following the conference, in digital format. Further information is forthcoming.

Jane Klinger, Chair ICMEMOHRI

Christina Linsenmeyer, Chair ICOM MUSIC