**Call for Proposals: IASPM-US and Canada 2016 Annual Conference**

**Call for Proposals (Abstracts due December 1, 2015)**  
**International Association for the Study of Popular Music, US and Canada Branches**  
**2016 Annual Conference**  
**Calgary, Alberta (Canada) May 28-30, 2016**

[L’Appel en français](http://iaspm.ca/2015/10/call-for-proposals-iaspm-canada-and-us-2016-annual-conference/)

**Wanna Be Startin’ Something: Popular Music and Agency**

Making and listening to music are agentive processes, involving a network of actions and transactions: acts of expression, acts of faith, acts of sound and silence, acts of rebellion. Through musical choices we act and impact our world, each other and our environment, shaping our individual and communal experiences. As we create and consume music, we respond to, reinforce, and reconfigure the social structures that frame our lives.

Our theme encourages participants to explore the difficult, delicate negotiations of power within which music is situated, and which in turn permeate the popular music industries of the twenty-first century. Who is in charge in the production and consumption of music? What role does music play in the social revolutions of disenfranchised communities? How do music and its technologies inform our responses to injustice? How do we censor and empower bodies through music?

The 2016 IASPM-US Annual Conference and IASPM-Canada Annual Conference will take place from May 28-30, 2016 at the University of Calgary, Canada, as part of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Papers related to Canadian themes are especially welcome.

Papers may address one of the following subthemes, other issues regarding music and agency, or – as always – any other topic in the study of popular music.

**1) Who Runs the (Music) World?**

The dynamics of production and consumption remains a central theme of popular music studies. It is also vital to the new music industries of the twenty-first century, in which a multimediated sense of consumer choice and participation has become a marketing mainstay. Recent pop processes—streaming services, reality competitions, the rise of YouTube stars, the burgeoning Internet fan community—have been characterized as democratizing, providing increased access, choice, and interaction between listeners, artists, and producers. But as musical consumers find new forms of empowerment, the emergence of neoliberal corporate policies and development of the 360° deal may perpetuate the dominant power structures of the music industry. So whose voices are heard? And who listens?

How are new musics and new technologies reshaping ideas about musical agency among fans? How do musicians work to retain or reclaim agency in the popular music industry’s current political economy? In what generative or productive ways do individual and communal agencies intersect?

**2) Music and Social Justice**

Recent years have seen the emergence of new and renewed discourses critiquing the continued impact of poverty and structural racism in the lives, and deaths, of North Americans. Occupy Wall Street and its offshoots protesting economic inequality have counted musicians among their most vocal proponents, and music has become integral to the progress of the movement. Beginning in the U.S. and spreading to Canada, the Black Lives Matter movement has sparked new, charged conversations about injustice. Among the voices of protest, those of musicians have persistently driven the conversation. With new songs and revivals of familiar ones, Black artists have called listeners to attention, called them out, and called for action. They have echoed the mantras shouted by marchers in the streets, and in turn their own words have become rallying cries there. The current moment perhaps marks the most vital presence of protest music in American public culture since the beginning of the Iraq war.

In both the U.S. and Canada, indigenous peoples continue to fight against racial violence, disenfranchisement, discrimination, and misrepresentation. Discourse about Native/First Nations/aboriginal cultural appropriations has entered a broader public forum in the past few years, recently explicitly acknowledged in the banning of faux “Native American headdresses” at several music festivals in North America and Europe. In Canada, music has helped to fuel the grassroots movement Idle No More, which not only critiques renewed challenges to indigenous sovereignty, but also contributes leading voices to the fight for environmental protection.

These movements have also provoked reexaminations of the intersectionalities that permeate marginalized experiences in the U.S. and Canada, where people of color in particular face gendered, classed, religious, and ableist discrimination and violence.

In these and other contexts, we ask: How does music empower individuals and communities in the face of injustice? How do music and social media intersect in responses to oppression?

**3) Music and Dis/Ability**

Studying music and agency in Western frameworks inherently means studying ability, examining intersecting ideas and ideologies about extraordinary bodies and minds, about how they are allowed to act. Both musical bodies and disabled ones are inscribed with intertwined notions of difference and supernatural interventions, and positioned outside the statistical realm of the “normal.” The stories of our most idolized popular musicians are entangled in public mythologies of mental illness and addiction; disabled bodies are celebrated only when they also inhabit discourses of genius. The music industry operates with the assumption that consumers experience music in the same ways, though the sensory processing of music works diversely among many individuals and even communities.

How do discourses of ability and disability support and silence musicians?

How does musical ability impact a musician’s agency? How is the dis/abled body inscribed in popular song? Following the 25th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, how accessible is popular music? And how do accessibility practices shape the experiences of fans and artists?

We welcome proposals on these and other themes. Please submit proposals via a single Word document [labeled with last name\_first name.docx] to [iaspmus2016@gmail.com](mailto:iaspmus2016@gmail.com) by December 1, 2015. Individual presenters should submit a paper title, 250-word abstract, and author information including full name, institutional affiliation, email address, and a 50-word bio. Panel proposals, specifying either 90 minutes (three presenters) or 120 (four), should include both 125-word overview and 250-word individual proposals (plus author information), or 250-word overview and 50-word bios (plus names, affiliations, and email addresses) for roundtable discussions. Please indicate any audio, visual, or other needs for the presentation; each room will have sound, projector, and an RGB hookup. We also welcome unorthodox proposals that do not meet the above criteria, including ideas for workshops, film screenings, and other non-traditional formats. For more information about the conference, send email inquiries to Katherine Meizel, program committee chair, at [kmeizel@gmail.com](mailto:kmeizel@gmail.com). You will receive an email confirming receipt of your submission.

2016 program committee:

Chair: Katherine Meizel (Bowling Green State University),

Committee: David Blake (University of Akron), Kimberly Mack (University of Toledo), Andrew Mall (Northeastern University), Owen Chapman (Concordia University), Brian Fauteux (University of Alberta), Charity Marsh (University of Regina).