

CFP: Third International Symposium on Musical Topics and Topic Theory
May 27-29, 2027
University of Northern Colorado Campus
Frasier Hall, 1710 9th Ave,
Greeley, Colorado, USA

We are pleased to announce the Call for Papers for the Third International Symposium on Musical Topics and Topic Theory for May 2027. Please note that the website URL has changed since the 2025 conference:

[New International Symposium on Musical Topics and Topic Theory URL](#)

From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of characteristic figures, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as topics—subjects for musical discourse.
—Leonard G. Ratner (1980)

The University of Northern Colorado is proud to once again host this conference dedicated to exploring and celebrating scholarship devoted to musical topics and topic theory. We encourage submissions from scholars, scholar-performers, and students in the areas of topic theory (in its broadest sense) and its many potential applications: music analysis, music and meaning, and performance as applied to a diversity of musics including, but not limited to, Western art music, music and film, popular music, video-game music, etc. Performance-based scholarly presentations are welcome.

The conference will be in person, enabling delegates to engage fully in idea exchanges, networking, and social interactions. Virtual presentations may be considered under special circumstances; however, fully virtual attendance will not be a possibility.

Melanie Lowe, the selection committee chair, agreed to hold onto last year's submissions and we will be reaching out to everyone who submitted to see if they want to include their submissions for consideration for this year's program. Since the conference was canceled before the program committee saw last year's submissions, they are not automatically accepted but will be passed onto the committee as is unless the submitter requests otherwise.

Submission due dates have been moved up considerably this year to allow a longer planning period for those traveling long distances to allow for sufficient time to request travel visas if necessary. It is hoped that this will facilitate international travel.

Individual Paper Presentations

To submit an individual paper, please submit an abstract with a maximum of 350 words. Undergraduate students must also submit a letter of support from their primary research

advisor. Paper presentations will be 20 minutes long, followed by a 10-minute question and answer session. Abstracts should include the title of the paper but omit author details. In the body of the email, please include author details (including whether author is a professional or a student and, if a student, level of study), institutional affiliation (where relevant), email address, paper title, and any technological requirements, including PowerPoint or Keynote projection, piano or keyboard.

Individual Lecture Recitals

To submit an individual lecture recital, please send an abstract with a maximum of 350 words and a link to an audio sample to demonstrate the proficiency of the performer. The duration of this recording should be a minimum of 2 minutes and no longer than 5 minutes. Preference will be given to submissions that include a recording of the proposer performing works from their presentation. When this is not possible, the submitted example must be of a comparable style, genre, or historical period. Undergraduate students must also submit a letter of support from their primary research advisor. Lecture recitals may range in length from 30-45 minutes and should offer an appropriate balance of lecture and performance elements as well as time for Q&A. Various constraints limit the number of lecture recitals that may be programmed. Applicant should specify the length of the presentation in their abstracts. Abstracts should include the title of the paper but omit author details. In the body of the email, please include author details (including whether author is a professional or student and, if a student, level of study), institutional affiliation (where relevant), email address, paper title, and any technological requirements, including PowerPoint or Keynote projection, piano or keyboard.

Submission materials should be sent to Dr. Melanie Lowe (m.lowe@vanderbilt.edu) no later than November 23, 2026 (U.S., Eastern Standard Time Zone). Please specify "International Symposium on Musical Topics and Topic Theory submission" in the email subject. Dr. Lowe will be chairing this year's program committee as we are committed to sharing the selection process rather than performing it in-house. Once the program selection has been made, presenters will be notified as to where to send additional inquiries.

Submissions will be evaluated anonymously according to three criteria: the relevance of the author's central arguments to existing scholarship, the extent to which the paper offers an original contribution to the scholarly community, and the clarity and coherence in which the argument is presented. All submissions must be connected to topic theory in its broadest sense.

Deadline for submissions: November 23, 2026

Notifications of acceptance will be sent to presenters on or about December 14, 2026

Preliminary program will be available by mid-April 2026.

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