

BioSphere & TechnoSphere 2 – Emotion and Affect in Musics Beyond the Human

Interdisciplinary & International Conference

November 05—06, 2026, Nuremberg University of Music

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Call for Papers

Contemporary musics are increasingly situated within what has been termed the *TechnoSphere*: digitalization—and artificial intelligence in particular—is profoundly reshaping the production, distribution, and reception of music. These developments raise pressing critical questions, including issues of copyright, the ethics of appropriation, and the implications of de- and recontextualizing musical materials.

At the same time, musics in the Anthropocene cannot be understood as belonging exclusively to the *TechnoSphere*. The ecological crises of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—notably climate change and biodiversity loss—have underscored the need to reconceive the *TechnoSphere* and *BioSphere* as deeply entangled rather than separate domains (Haraway 2016; Latour 2017).

Acknowledging these entanglements calls for new political practices, reconfigured power relations, and ethical frameworks that challenge anthropocentric assumptions. Approaches that foreground actors beyond the human no longer treat the *BioSphere* and *TechnoSphere* as categorically distinct; instead, they emphasize forms of co-creativity in music and sound that extend to nonhuman species as well as technological actors.

Following the conference *BioSphere & TechnoSphere 1* (Salzburg 2025), this year's meeting places particular emphasis on emotion and the history of emotions. A conceptual distinction is often drawn between emotion and affect: emotions are typically understood as cognitive, intentional, communicative, and socially constituted practices, and thus as historically variable; affects, by contrast, are

often framed as preconscious, embodied, and instinctive responses. This distinction invites interdisciplinary investigation from neuroscientific as well as cultural(-historical) perspectives (Herzfeld-Schild 2020). In musicology, concepts such as “emotional communities”, “emotional practices”, and “emotional regimes” are increasingly mobilized as analytical tools and sources.

Within the TechnoSphere, both AI-generated music and music collections can be examined as emotional practice and as part of a history of emotions. Unlike human-made music, AI-generated works may lack a perceivable subject for listeners, potentially limiting identification with creators, their intentions, or biographies. This raises the question of whether new forms of emotional practice emerge when music alone is expected to generate emotions, for example in the absence of social interaction in live performance contexts. Conversely, carefully constructed musical personas with AI-generated avatars beg complex questions regarding dynamics of emotional bonding and emotionalizing staging strategies within the TechnoSphere. More broadly, these developments prompt renewed reflection on music’s role as a cultural practice and technique.

Closely related are the functions of streaming platforms and their AI-driven recommendation systems. These systems invite inquiry into how modes of listening—often organized around mood and occasion—may shift from emotion to affect and vice versa.

Research on animal vocalizations (e.g., birdsong and whale song), soundscape ecologies, and the sonification of biodata likewise intersects with interdisciplinary studies of emotion, while also drawing on long-standing histories of emotional engagement with nature. In this sense, the conference seeks to contribute to a history of emotions of the sounding BioSphere.

Recent research employing bioacoustic analysis and, in part, deep-learning methods to interpret the emotional and affective dimensions of nonhuman sound production further highlights methodological intersections between BioSphere and TechnoSphere. The conference explicitly welcomes contributions engaging with such approaches.

Finally, the entanglement of musical BioSphere and TechnoSphere raises fundamental conceptual questions: To what extent can not only humans, but also technologies and animals, be understood as emotional and affective agents? Does the BioSphere correspond to (instinctive) affect and the

TechnoSphere to (cognitive) emotion—or can such dichotomous distinctions be productively rethought in favor of a more entangled understanding? Through these and related questions, the conference aims to explore more-than-human notions of musical emotion and affect.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Musical entanglements between technology and the organic world
- Histories of emotion in musical production and listening across BioSphere and Techno-Sphere
- Staging of emotions/affects and emotionalizing/affective staging strategies across BioSphere and TechnoSphere
- Emotional and affective dimensions of nonhuman sound production and methods for their analysis
- The role of sonic emotional practices in shaping, reinforcing, or challenging power relations
- The significance of emotion and affect for social relations across BioSphere and TechnoSphere
- The role of emotion/affect in platform logics and recommendation systems
- More-than-human approaches to musical emotion and affect

We welcome submissions from all areas of musicology, as well as from related disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, including (but not limited to) Human-Animal Studies, Critical Animal Studies, Critical Plant Studies, Multispecies Ethnography, and AI Music Studies. Also, artistic research contributions on the conference topic are likewise encouraged.

No conference fee will be charged. Please note, however, that the organizers are unable to provide financial support for travel or accommodation. Due to major trade fairs in Nuremberg, early booking of accommodation is strongly recommended.

Presentation formats: Paper presentations or performance lectures (30 min + 15 min Q&A or 20 min + 10 min Q&A). Please indicate your preferred format and required time.

Conference languages: English/German

Submission details: Deadline: July 17, 2026

- Abstract: max. 300 words
- CV: max. 200 words
- Submit to: Yvonne Wasserloos (yvonne.wasserloos@moz.ac.at), Martin Ullrich (martin.ullrich@hfm-nuernberg.de) & Daniel Suer (daniel.suer@hfm-nuernberg.de)
- Notification of acceptance: July 31, 2026

We are planning to publish an edited volume (English/German, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) and ask for submission of finished manuscripts by February 15, 2027.

We look forward to receiving numerous inspiring submissions!

Yvonne Wasserloos, Martin Ullrich, and Daniel Suer

Bibliography

Haraway, Donna (2016): *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Herzfeld-Schild, Marie Louise (Hg.) (2020): *Musik und Emotionen: Kulturhistorische Perspektiven*, Berlin: Metzler.

Latour, Bruno (2017): *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, Cambridge: Polity.