

Popular Music as History

Call for papers (abstracts) for the Danish history journal *Temp* no. 26 (spring 2023)

From broadside ballads and music hall to jazz, rock and electropop, popular music has summarized its time in notes and beats, expressing and changing history. As a consequence, popular music must be taken seriously as an integral part of social and cultural history – and in all its aspects: not only as text and discourse, but also as socio-cultural sounds, movements, sensualities, emotional expressions, protests, mobilizations etc. The purpose of this special issue of *Temp* is to contribute to the historicization of popular music and to musicalize the study of socio-cultural history.

Popular music is understood here primarily as the modern, capitalist forms of commodified music appealing to, and used by, larger audiences. In some respects, receptions and uses of such commodified music can carry on older traditions of non-elite music culture, too. However, the boundaries of ‘the popular’ are inherently dynamic and contested, in the history of society as well as in scholarly studies.

Popular music is often dismissed as mere culture industry, and its commercial and ideologically affirmative functions are often obvious indeed. But time and again, popular music has rallied social movements of resistance, offering new identities and active memories, revealing and contesting implicit social norms and power relations. Thus, popular music has contributed to renegotiations of social and cultural boundaries between and within societies, crossing borders between nations and continents.

Historiographies of popular music have mainly proceeded from within the conceptual framework of the music environments themselves, as histories of specific musical styles, genres or artists, often reproducing pre-established effective histories. Scholarly studies of music culture, music anthropology, the sociology of music, *sound studies* and sensual history have moved in other directions, often resulting in important contributions to the social and cultural history of music.

However, these multi-faceted studies of the meanings of music are still mainly confined to highly specialized academic environments. As the historian Jürgen Müller emphasized in 2012 (“The sound of history and acoustic memory: Where psychology and history converge”, *Culture & Psychology* 18:4), historians are traditionally diligent readers, and gradually they have integrated the study visual culture as more than a mere illustrations of purely textual contents, but they have largely refrained from using their ears.

It is true that sub-disciplines of the history of senses and experience, and the history of sound and hearing in particular, have made historians more attentive to the sounds of the past, but studies within such fields are still mainly confined to background sounds: church bells, the chirping of the birds, traffic etc. The organized, widely disseminated signal sounds of popular music still tend to play a very small role in conceptions of social and cultural history, mostly used merely as

illustration or a stylistic means of setting a certain mood. Historians still need to open their ears wider.

Thus, with this special issue of *Temp* we want to situate popular music as a core element of the historical study of culture and society at large. We are looking for contributions from historians as well as scholars from other disciplines, clarifying the social and cultural meanings of mass produced and mass consumed music throughout modern history (or even before) and throughout the globe. Individual contributions may be empirical or more methodological or theoretical studies of the relationship between popular music and, e.g., social movements, power relations, or identities (class, gender, sexuality, race, age), technologies and materiality, concepts, emotions, cultural geographies, historiography, aesthetics, politics, medialization, ideology, economy, relations between music idols and their fans – or other related fields of study.

Contributions can be in English or any of the Scandinavian languages. Native-speakers of the Scandinavian languages are required to submit abstracts and articles in their own language.

Deadlines:

- Abstracts (½ page or more): 15 October 2021
- Writers' seminar: May 2022 (with a deadline for papers on month prior)
- Full articles: August 2022

Contributions – or questions – should be sent to temphist@cas.au.dk

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