

First call for papers
ICMS 16
2–6 June 2026 • Helsinki, Finland

Music as a Meaningful Art

The 16th International Congress on Musical Signification will be held at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, 2–6 June, 2026. Twenty-five years after ICMS 7 and forty years after the first edition in Imatra, the ICMS returns to Finland. Since 1986, the ICMS congress has been organised every 2–4 years to gather together scholars of musical signification, signs in music, and musical meaning – recent developments and future trends in musical semiotics and related fields of research.

Under the ICMS 16 title, **Music as a Meaningful Art**, the congress themes include:

- analytical and historical approaches to evolving and persisting meaning(s) in music
- topics, narratives and gestures as meaningful phenomena in music
- embodiment of and in musical meanings
- mechanisms and processes of music, mind, and meaning
- semiotic and philosophical approaches to the ontology of music and its meaning(s)
- synthesis of cognitive and cultural approaches to the study of meaning(s) in and of music
- locality and globality of music as a meaningful art
- relationship of musical meaning with learning and growth
- relationship of musical meaning with therapy and wellbeing
- music as a meaningful art in the era of technological explosion
- sustainability and music as a meaningful art
- relationship of societal phenomena, structures and policies with music as a meaningful art

We invite proposals for presentations on topics relating to the conference themes above along with those addressing broader notions of musical signification, meaning in music, and semiotics of music. In addition, we welcome proposals that approach these topics from interdisciplinary relations between semiotics and other disciplines. The duration of paper presentations will be 20 + 10 minutes.

We also invite proposals for roundtables, workshops, and lecture recitals. In your proposal abstract, please indicate the suggested duration and format of your proposal as well as key participants.

Please send the abstract of your proposal and a short biographical note by email to icms2026helsinki@uniarts.fi on 31 January, 2026, at the latest. The maximum length for the abstract is 400 words (not counting list of references). For the bionote, the maximum length is 150 words. Please use Microsoft Word file format (.docx or .doc) as attachment, with your last name as file name. In the email heading, please use "ICMS 2016 proposal", and in your message, make sure to include your first name, last name, institutional affiliation, and the title of the proposal. The main language of the conference is English.

The congress is one of the platforms of the Musical Signification Project, launched in Paris in 1984, and directed now for more than 40 years by prof. Eero Tarasti of the University of Helsinki. The International Musical Signification Project has also served as a pedagogical tool educating doctoral researchers in the field.

Selected presentations at ICMS 16 will be offered for publication in the open access book series of the Sibelius Academy, Uniarts Helsinki. The options will be the peer-reviewed series [DocMus Research Publications](#) and the non-peer-reviewed series [Sibelius Academy Publications](#).

The congress venue is the traditional building of the [Sibelius Academy](#), located at the heart of the [city of Helsinki](#), at [Pohjoinen Rautatiekatu 9](#). The venue is situated in the vicinity of e.g. [Helsinki Music Centre](#), [Helsinki Central Library Oodi](#), and the [Helsinki Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma](#). The area is abundant in options for hotels and restaurants, and is readily accessible by [public transportation](#) e.g. [from the Helsinki-Vantaa airport](#).

For more information and updates, please visit the website at <https://www.uniarts.fi/tapahtumat/icms-16-music-as-a-meaningful-art/>

Contact email: icms16helsinki@uniarts.fi

Director and founder of the project: Eero Tarasti, professor emeritus of musicology, University of Helsinki, Honorary President of the IASS (International Association for Semiotic Studies).

Organizing committee: professors Juha Ojala (chair), Anne Kauppala and Markus Mantere, and university lecturer Laura Wahlfors from the Sibelius Academy, and researchers Paul Forsell, Aleksi Haukka, and Mikko Metsälampi.

Scientific committee: TBC

Keynotes: TBA

Deadline for proposals: Saturday, 31 January, 2026

