

## Call for Papers: Symposium of the Women's and Gender Studies Section of the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung

### Singing courtesans and other peripheral figures of music-historical practices and projections

Annual Conference of the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, HfMT Cologne and University of Cologne, 11-14 September 2024, exact date to be announced.

Chair: Prof. Dr. Sabine Meine, HfMT Cologne, Dr. Anna Ricke, University of Paderborn/HfM Detmold

It is transgressions of social and artistic norms that make singing courtesans peripheral figures in music history. Since ancient warnings against the female seductive power of music, courtesans have been entrusted with artistic skills and roles that particularly stimulate the senses and the mind and thus challenge both worship and stigmatisation. Over the centuries, there are numerous examples of singers who were both idealised and marginalised in their musical practices; due to their business with love, socially marginal figures and often existentially dependent on a patron, they were also able to challenge themselves musically to peripheral experiences.

The fact that “the courtesan’s arts”(Feldman/Gordon 2006) were oriented towards the respective social norms is made clear by the historical development of the term courtesan from that of “cortigiana” (or “courtesane”/“courtesan”) for the lady-in-waiting whom she could imitate as well as caricature. Her musical practice was thus oriented towards the social elite culture of courtly and high bourgeois society, but not limited to it. Comparable peripheral figures and cultural practices are also to be included, such as Japanese geishas, Korean giaseng (Feldman/Gordon 2006) and Chinese sing-song girls outside Europe. In Europe’s modernism around 1900, almost militant counter-images of bourgeois values and ideals of femininity were performed in “Dirnenliedern” (Stein 2007). In (music) theatre, certain stage spaces or roles were associated with courtesans and their characteristics were transferred to female stage performers (Grotjahn 2002). Pop cultures are just as rich in projections.

The conference invites to discuss the singing courtesan and other peripheral figures in their various manifestations and projections across time, place and context, and to develop perspectives for the research field, which has only been explored in rudimentary form, and to concretise desiderata.

Interested scholars are invited to submit a proposal for a 20-minute presentation (~250-300 words). Please send all applications together with a short biography (max. 100 words) under the keyword “Singing Courtesans” to [musikwissenschaft@hfmt-koeln.de](mailto:musikwissenschaft@hfmt-koeln.de) by **30 November 2023**. Early career scholars are strongly encouraged to apply. A decision on the submitted contributions will be made by 15 December 2023 at the latest. A keynote address by the organisers and 6-8 papers are planned.

Conference languages and languages of abstracts are German and English. Subject to successful funding, travel and accommodation expenses will be reimbursed. A book publication of selected papers is planned.

Cited literature: Feldman, Martha and Gordon, Bonnie (eds.): *The Courtesan’s Arts. Cross-cultural perspectives*, Oxford 2006; Grotjahn, Rebecca: “Diva, Hure, Nachtigall. Sängerinnen im 19. Jahrhundert”. In: Rode-Breyman, Susanne (ed.): *Frauen in der Musikgeschichte. Dokumentation der Ringvorlesung im Sommersemester 2001*, Cologne [2002], pp. 41-55, 124-127; Stein, Roger: *Das deutsche Dirnenlied. Literarisches Kabarett von Bruant bis Brecht*, 2nd edition, Cologne et al. 2007.