

The musical world of Fairgrounds in Europe (Fribourg, 22–24 Apr 26)

University of Fribourg, Switzerland, Apr 22–24, 2026

Deadline: Oct 15, 2025

Nicholas Rogers

CFP: International conference 'The musical world of Fairgrounds in Europe, 19th-21st centuries',

Music has always been an integral part of the fairground experience, whether as live performance, or, since the early nineteenth century, through the medium of mechanical instruments. This indissociable sonic aspect, which accompanies most forms of performances, attractions and fairground rides, is often overlooked in scholarly attempts to write the histories of fairground and showpeople culture. Our SNF Starting Grant project (2024-2029) aims at reconstructing musical practices in Swiss fairgrounds between 1830 and 1950. Crossing the disciplines of musicology and ethnomusicology with art history, using approaches developed in the fields of performance, sound and material culture studies, we seek to document the material and immaterial legacy of a living tradition.

The international conference, 'The musical world of fairgrounds in Europe, 19th-21st centuries', will take place on 22-24 April 2026 at the University of Fribourg, Music Department, and gather showpeople, scholars and experts to explore all aspects of European fairground culture. In addition to our three keynotes speakers Zeev Gourarier (former scientific director of MUCEM), Nele Wynants (University of Antwerp, leader of ERC SciFair project) and Philippe Crasse (Musical automata expert, Toulouse), invited speakers include Erkki Huhtamo (University of California LA), Cornelia Müller and Peter Baer (Showpeople, Müllheim), Agnès Curel (Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3), Joseph Garncarz (University of Cologne), Marco Ladd (King's College London), Raphael Lüthi (Seewen Museum of Music Automats), and Margit Ramus (Showwoman and art historian, Cologne).

Proposals appertaining to the following disciplines will be particularly welcome: (ethno)musicology, art history, art mechanics, cinema studies, and heritage studies.

This Call for Papers aims to reach potential contributors from all stages of their academic career; PhD candidates and early career scholars are especially encouraged to submit proposals.

Submission deadline: Please send a 250-word abstract in French, German or English, to fairgrounds@unifr.ch by October 15, 2025, 11:59 pm CET.

Format: 30-minute paper + 15-minute discussion. For the papers given in French or German, the visual support accompanying the paper (such as Powerpoint) should be written in English.

Organisers: Anna Stoll Knecht, Nicolas Rogers and Achille Kienholz (University of Fribourg, SNF

Starting grant project)

Notifications will be sent in November 2025.

Accommodation, lunches and conference dinner will be provided to all speakers. Travel funding is also available.

For more information, see:
<https://www.unifr.ch/musicologie/fr/actualites/evenements/33412/the-musical-world-of-fairgrounds-in-europe-19th-21st-centuries>

Reference:

CFP: The musical world of Fairgrounds in Europe (Fribourg, 22-24 Apr 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 12, 2025
(accessed Sep 12, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50549>>.