Keynote Address

“Doing Music History Where We Are”

Olivia Bloechl (University of Pittsburgh)

Lately I’ve been writing and speaking on topics related to global music history, and, paradoxically, that has me thinking about musical pasts of places close to home. Global approaches don’t necessarily address musical pasts worldwide or on a grand scale: in fact, the most meaningful work sometimes starts with local pasts and demonstrates their connection with larger-scale processes, often across long distances. I’m drawn to these approaches for their ability to deepen our understanding of local musical and sonic pasts that affect each of us—whether we are scholars, performers, composers, or interested members of the public. As importantly, though, I value their power to belie, persuasively and repeatedly, the still-dominant imaginary of "American music history" as essentially European, literate, and white. I’ll offer examples from my efforts to research and teach IBPOC's, women's, and settlers’ entangled musical pasts in the Jö:deogë’/Pittsburgh region, where I live, and in the discussion I’ll invite audience members to offer their thoughts on the music and sonic pasts where they are.
Olivia Bloechl is Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh, with research interests in the early modern Atlantic world, French Baroque opera, postcolonialism, feminist ethics, and global music history. She is the author of Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music (2008) and Opera and the Political Imaginary in Old Regime France (2017), and co-editor of Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship (with M. Lowe and J. Kallberg, 2015). A longtime advocate of postcolonial and global approaches to music history, she is a founding convener of the Global Music History Study Group of the AMS.