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Wojciech GURGUL

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0113-998X>

Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, Poland

e-mail: wojciechkgurgul@gmail.com

1st International Conference “Fusion & Influence: Classical and Popular Music Interactions”, Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 20–21 June 2025

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Abstract

On 20–21 June 2025, the 1st International Conference “Fusion & Influence: Classical and Popular Music Interactions” was held at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, co-organised by the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa and the Polish Institute in Bratislava. The event combined scholarly and artistic dimensions, featuring four academic panels and two concerts in Nitra and Bratislava performed by Polish artists. The papers addressed topics situated between classical and popular music, including issues of crossover, intertextuality, stylistic hybridity, cultural influences, and the reception of music in philosophical and literary contexts. The contributions reflected an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together musicological, compositional, philosophical, and cultural perspectives. Piano and chamber concerts presenting both classical repertoire and contemporary works, including new arrangements of the music of the Marek & Wacek duo, were an integral part of the conference. It provided an important platform for ex-

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change, integrating academic communities from Poland and Slovakia, and offering multifaceted perspectives on the relationships between classical and popular music.

Keywords: classical music, popular music, crossover, musical interactions, intertextuality, stylistic hybridity, academic-artistic conference, Nitra, Bratislava.

On 20–21 June 2025,¹ the 1st International Conference “*Fusion & Influence: Classical and Popular Music Interactions*” was held in Slovakia. The event was organised by the Department of Music of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and the Department of Art of Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, with the Polish Institute in Bratislava acting as co-organiser. The conference was initiated by Dr hab. Barbara Karaśkiewicz (Associate Professor Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa), Head of the Department of Music at Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, while Marek Štrbák took on the role of coordinator on behalf of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.

The conference consisted of two parts – academic and artistic. The lecture panels took place on 20 June in the Department of Music building at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. The day concluded with a concert at the Synagogue in Nitra, while the final concert was held on 21 June at the Dvorana Concert Hall of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava.

The conference was formally opened by Barbara Karaśkiewicz, followed by a keynote lecture delivered by music journalist Robert Kamyk, a lecturer at the Grażyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź. In his address, *Crossover and its Role in the Classical Music Industry*, he discussed the phenomenon of crossover music using examples of prominent artists such as Luciano Pavarotti and Sting, who chose to merge classical and popular music traditions in their artistic practice.

The academic part of the conference was divided into four thematic panels.

Panel I, moderated by Dr Sebastian Gałęcki, began with a paper by Dr Marzena Fornal (Department of Philosophy, Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa). Her presentation, *How the Brain Listens Across Genres: A Predictive Coding Approach to Crossover Music*, explored EEG and fNIRS research on the brain’s responses to unexpected harmonic changes, which are frequently present in works that blend classical and popular idioms.

In their paper, *A Dialogue Between Classical and Popular Music – Classical Hits of the Piano Duo Marek and Wacek and Their Arrangements for a Larger Ensemble by Michał Grotecki*, Dr Anna Stachura-Bogusławska and Marek Kunicki

¹ In the promotional materials, the conference was originally announced to begin on 19 June; however, the scheduled events – referred to as the “Slovak Day” of the conference – were postponed to a later date; see <https://instytutpolski.pl/bratislava/2025/06/04/fusion-influence-classical-and-popular-music-interactions/> [accessed 4 July 2025].

(Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa) discussed the history of the renowned piano duo and a recent project (2023–2024) dedicated to newly arranged versions of their repertoire by Michał Grotecki.

The next paper, *“Music Lesson” – Crossover in Practice*, presented by Barbara Karaśkiewicz, Prof. Adam Regiewicz (Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa) and Prof. Cezary Sanecki (Academy of Music in Łódź), outlined the premise of the theatrical-musical project *Music Lesson* (premiered on 12 March 2025 at Jan Długosz University). The performance depicted a conflict between a piano professor – representing the academic attachment to the classical canon – and his rebellious student seeking to explore music in its full stylistic diversity.

The first panel concluded with the presentation *East Meets West in Harmony: The Madras Musical Association Choir and the Confluence of Western Choral Traditions with Indian Musical Heritage* by Dr hab. Przemysław Jeziorowski (Associate Professor Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa), who examined the methods used by the Madras Musical Association Choir in blending Western choral traditions with elements of Indian music.

Panel II, moderated by Mikołaj Ferenc, opened with a presentation by Dr Marta Mołodyńska-Wheeler, a composer and pianist affiliated with the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków. In her paper *All Music is One: The Stylistic Hybrid in the Works of Marta Mołodyńska-Wheeler*, she performed an auto-analysis of her musical language, focusing on the interaction between classical, jazz and world-music idioms as manifested in her published compositions.

The topic of her compositional output was continued by Ludmiła Kosteretska (Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa) in her paper *Triptych for Six Hands by Marta Mołodyńska-Wheeler*. The panel concluded with a presentation by Dr Aleksandra Ferenc (Karol Lipiński Academy of Music in Wrocław), *Quotation in Rafał Augustyn’s Music*, which examined the composer’s use of musical quotation and the juxtaposition of borrowed material with original content.

Panel III, moderated by Dr Jakub Brawata, comprised five papers, four of which were delivered by scholars from Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. In *Musical Works by Andrzej Hundziak*, Dr Olga Wowkotrub focused on the stage music of the Łódź-based composer, discussing the themes explored in his compositions.

In the paper *Inspirations and Aesthetic Dimensions of Michael Garrett’s Piano Compositions*, Mikołaj Ferenc examined the artistic path, inspirations and aesthetic principles shaping the piano works of the British composer Michael Garrett.

Dr Jan Mroczek’s presentation *From High Art to Sport Games – Municipal Pipe Organs of the 20th Century in North American City Auditoriums*, discussed the phenomenon of pipe organs installed in shopping centres and sports arenas across the United States, illustrating a distinctive form of American gigantomania.

In *Power on Nylon: The Crossover of Electric Guitar Techniques into Classical Guitar – The Case of Marek Pasieczny*, Wojciech Gurgul offered insight into the

life and work of the composer-guitarist Marek Pasieczny. Drawing on selected compositions – including *Two Stories about Patrick*, *American Suite*, *Desejo*, *Sequenza* and *Ex nihilo* – he analysed techniques characteristic of various types of electric guitar and their adaptation in Pasieczny's works.

The final paper of this session, delivered by Mariusz Adamczak (Kawai Poland), provided a concise overview of the company's history and the recent technical innovations developed by its engineers.

Panel IV, devoted to intertextuality in the arts, brought together literary scholars and philosophers from Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. The first paper, *"For Millions of Years We've Been Ejecting Our Spores". Collaboration and Cross-contamination of Popular Music and Posthumanism*, was presented by Dr Michał Kisiel, who explored the relationships between popular music and posthumanism, demonstrating how contemporary musical works engage with and advance posthumanist ideas.

This was followed by Sebastian Gałęcki's paper *Canon, Identity and Liquid Modernity*, which analysed the interplay between the concept of the musical canon and identity formation within the framework of Zygmunt Bauman's theory of liquid modernity.

Prof. Anna Wypych-Gawrońska's lecture *Connections Between Classical and Popular Music in Polish Contemporary Theatre (Selected Examples)* discussed the ways in which elements of classical and popular music are combined in modern Polish theatre, illustrating the phenomenon with selected stage productions.

The concluding lecture, *Let the Word Guide Your Hand. Musical Improvisation as a Writing Practice. Music and Literature Experience*, was delivered by Prof. Adam Regiewicz, who explored the parallels between musical improvisation and literary creativity, showing how improvisational strategies can foster creative writing processes.

The academic programme culminated – and the artistic section began – with a concert at the Nitra Synagogue. The performers were primarily pianists appearing in various ensemble configurations: Mariusz Adamczak, Jakub Brawata, Mikołaj Ferenc, Robert Gawroński, Barbara Karaśkiewicz, Ludmiła Kosteretska, Marta Mołodyńska-Wheeler and Cezary Sanecki, joined by the "Kla-sch" Vocal Quartet of Jan Długosz University Department of Music and Adam Regiewicz on percussion.

The programme featured works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Witold Lutosławski, Marta Mołodyńska-Wheeler, Bronisław Kazimierz Przybylski, as well as arrangements of the *Marek & Wacek* repertoire by Michał Grotecki. The same artists performed at the subsequent concert in Bratislava on 21 June, which included compositions by Bach and Mołodyńska-Wheeler, alongside pieces by Philippe Buttal, George Gershwin and Ola Gjeilo. The Bratislava concert marked the official conclusion of the conference.

The two-day event *“Fusion & Influence: Classical and Popular Music Interactions”* proved to be an important academic and artistic undertaking, fostering integration between scholarly communities from Poland and Slovakia while offering a multifaceted reflection on the interrelations between classical and popular music. The thematic diversity of the papers, the interdisciplinary perspectives of the speakers, and the high artistic level of the concerts underscored both the relevance and significance of the subject. Particularly noteworthy was the breadth of the research perspective, which brought together practising musicians, music theorists, literary scholars and philosophers, enabling an in-depth exploration of the issues discussed from multiple vantage points. The success of this inaugural edition bodes well for the continuation of the conference in the years to come.

References

Source: <https://instytutpolski.pl/bratislava/2025/06/04/fusion-influence-classical-and-popular-music-interactions/> [accessed 4 July 2025].

1st International Conference “Fusion & Influence: Classical and Popular Music Interactions”, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, 20–21 czerwca 2025 roku

Streszczenie

W dniach 20–21 czerwca 2025 roku na Uniwersytecie Konstantego Filozofa w Nitrze odbyła się I Międzynarodowa Konferencja „Fusion & Influence: Classical and Popular Music Interactions”, współorganizowana przez Uniwersytet Jana Długosza w Częstochowie i Instytut Polski w Bratysławie. Wydarzenie miało charakter naukowo-artystyczny i obejmowało cztery panele wykładowe oraz dwa koncerty – w Nitrze i Bratysławie – z udziałem polskich artystów. W referatach poruszano zagadnienia z pogranicza muzyki klasycznej i popularnej, m.in. problematykę crossoveru, intertekstualności, stylistycznych hybryd, wpływów kulturowych czy recepcji muzyki w perspektywie filozoficznej i literaturoznawczej. Wystąpienia miały interdyscyplinarny charakter, prezentując badania muzykologiczne, kompozytorskie, filozoficzne oraz kulturoznawcze. Integralną częścią konferencji były koncerty pianistyczne i kameralne, w których zaprezentowano zarówno repertuar klasyczny, jak i utwory współczesne, w tym aranżacje muzyki duetu Marek & Wacek. Konferencja stała się istotnym forum wymiany doświadczeń, integrując środowiska akademickie z Polski i Słowacji oraz ukazując różnorodne perspektywy badawcze i artystyczne dotyczące relacji muzyki klasycznej i popularnej.

Słowa kluczowe: muzyka klasyczna, muzyka popularna, crossover, interakcje muzyczne, intertekstualność, hybrydyzacja stylistyczna, konferencja naukowo-artystyczna, Nitra, Bratysława.