



Registration Form
International Conference of PhD Candidates and Researchers in Music
MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES IN MUSIC RESEARCH
University of Oradea
April 12, 2025

The registration form will be sent by April 5, 2025 to the following email address:
conferintamuzica.uo24@yahoo.com

Name, surname	Serena Allegra
The title of the scientific communication	Mussorgsky's Sensory Journey: <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> as a kinaesthetic Musical Ekphrasis
Affiliation (institution, town, country)	Università degli Studi di Milano
Contact details (e-mail/ telephone number)	serena.alleggra@unimi.it
ORCID code	https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7074-1854

Serena Allegra is a tenured teacher of Humanities subjects at the public secondary school. She is a PhD student in *Image, Language, Figure: Forms and Modes of Mediation* (National Doctoral Programme) at the University of Milan (assigned location: University of Messina; curriculum *Philosophy of Languages*). After graduating in Classics, she obtained Master's degrees in Classical Tradition, Pedagogy, Cognitive Sciences, Performing Arts, Theory of Communication (University of Messina), Musicology (Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna) and Classical Singing (F. Cilea Conservatory of Music of Reggio Calabria). Her research interests include the application of cognitive sciences and neurosciences to musicology.



Abstract (maximum 350 words) and 5 Keywords

Ekphrasis is a rhetorical figure that, in some instances, has evolved into a literary genre focused on elegantly describing a work of art. In the context of music, ekphrasis explores how music can evoke emotions, atmospheres, or narratives without directly representing them as visual art does. Unlike visual arts, music suggests imagery without denoting it explicitly. A prime example of musical ekphrasis is Modest Mussorgskij's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, where the music not only evokes Viktor Hartmann's paintings but also conveys the sensory experience of walking through the exhibition itself. This piece allows listeners to engage with the art not only through auditory perception but also through the embodied experience of the exhibition.

The study of musical ekphrasis in this context integrates cognitive sciences to deepen the understanding of musical phenomena, in the light of a renewed humanism, advocating for an approach that connects the works of human intellect with perception and cognitive processes. This shift moves the focus from viewing musical works solely as historical documents to appreciating them as expressions of cognitive, emotional, and social processes. Music, in this context, becomes a tool for understanding the societies, bodies, and minds that produced it. To explore musical ekphrasis, the concept of "affordance" in music is introduced, based on Gibson's original theory. Affordance refers to how an environment offers possibilities for interaction, not as intrinsic properties but as features that emerge through the subject's engagement with the object. While Gibson originally applied affordance to the visual domain, it can also be extended to music, where it refers to sensorimotor responses elicited by sound, distinct from responses to other types of noise.

Moreover, music activates not just auditory but also motor and sensory areas of the brain. Musical listening stimulates not only the auditory sense but also motor responses, even without explicit physical movement. The concept of mental imagery is crucial for understanding this interaction, particularly kinaesthetic imagery, which involves the internal sensory experience of movement, such as changes in heart rate or breathing, triggered by music. This multidimensional engagement of senses makes music an embodied medium for experiencing art.

Keywords: Affordances; Ekphrasis; Imagery; Musorgskij; Hartmann.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH- ROMANIA

UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA/Doctoral School of Interdisciplinary Studies/Music

C.P. 114, Postal Office 1, nr. 1, University str., 410087, Oradea, Bihor

phone. +40.259.408281; website: www.uoradea.ro

