

CALL FOR PAPERS

International Conference

Bandura Beyond Frontiers: Tradition, Transmission, and Cultural Diplomacy

11 September 2026 | Conference hosted by Unity Hub Berlin

Organised by

- Berlin Bandur Fest
- Humboldt University of Berlin, Institute of Musicology
- Ukrainian Free University Munich
- M. T. Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore and Ethnology (NAS of Ukraine)
- Estonian Literary Museum

The bandura tradition is one of the most distinctive expressions of Ukraine's intangible cultural heritage. Emerging from the historical kobzar tradition and rooted in centuries of oral musical practice, historical memory, craftsmanship, and community life, it has continuously evolved in response to changing historical, social, and cultural contexts. As Ukrainian ethnomusicologist Sofiia Hrytsa observes, professional bandura performance "developed into an independent branch of concert performance" (Hrytsa 2007: 15), illustrating that the modern bandura tradition represents not a rupture with the kobzar heritage but its creative continuation under new historical and cultural conditions. Rather than treating the diatonic, or *starosvitska*, bandura and the chromatic bandura as opposing models of authenticity and modernity, the conference invites discussion of their historical intersections, aesthetic differences, and shared role in the broader continuity of bandura culture.

Today, the bandura tradition is entering a new stage of development. Alongside the revival of traditional practices associated with the diatonic (*starosvitska*) bandura, contemporary performers, composers, educators, instrument makers, and researchers continue to expand the artistic possibilities and cultural significance of the chromatic bandura. At the same time, Ukrainian performers, instrument makers, educators, and cultural institutions in the diaspora played a crucial role in preserving and developing repertoires, performance practices, and instrument-building traditions that were restricted or unable to develop freely under Soviet cultural policies in Ukraine.

Together, these historical trajectories demonstrate the vitality, adaptability, and creative continuity of the bandura tradition today. The bandura serves simultaneously as a bearer of historical memory, a medium of artistic expression, and an important instrument of Ukraine's cultural diplomacy in the international arena. The conference approaches the bandura as a living tradition whose historical, artistic, and cultural trajectories continue to intersect in the twenty-first century.

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has heightened the need to clearly articulate our own cultural position: who we are, and through which instruments we speak of ourselves. In this context, the bandura requires clarity both in understanding its historical heritage and in recognising its contemporary potential.

The Conference invites participants to reconsider the bandura beyond a purely national-symbolic frame: as a living cultural practice shaped by historical rupture, institutional transformation, diaspora

transmission, gendered forms of pedagogy and performance, decolonial reassessment, and contemporary artistic innovation.

The Conference brings together interdisciplinary scholars from Ukraine, the United States, Canada, and Europe for a focused international exchange around the bandura tradition beyond national and disciplinary boundaries. Researchers working across musicology, ethnomusicology, cultural studies, and diaspora studies will share findings, challenge assumptions, and build dialogue around the instrument's history and its evolving meanings in our time.

Topics include, but are not limited to, the following

- Historical development of the bandura and kobzar tradition
- Intangible cultural heritage and historical memory
- The diatonic (*starosvitska*) and chromatic bandura: continuity, transformation, and dialogue
- Soviet cultural policies and the transformation of the bandura tradition
- Traditional and contemporary performance practices
- Repertoire, composition, improvisation, and cross-genre collaborations
- Women in bandura performance, pedagogy, and cultural transmission
- The Ukrainian diaspora and transnational transmission
- Bandura and cultural diplomacy
- Decolonisation of Ukrainian musical heritage
- Bandura in times of war, migration, resilience, and cultural identity

Format: Hybrid Conference (Onsite & Online)

Conference Language: English

Submission Guidelines:

Presentations will be limited to 15–20 minutes, followed by discussion.

Proposals, including an abstract (250–300 words), 3–5 keywords, and a short biographical note, should be submitted via the online registration form.

Registration form [BerlinBandurFest 2026 – CONFERENCE REGISTRATION](#).

A confirmation of receipt will be sent to all applicants after submission.

No conference fee is required.

Key Dates:

Submission deadline: 31 July 2026

Notification of acceptance: 5 August 2026

Conference date: 11 September 2026

In Cooperation With:

- Europa-Universität Viadrina
- State Institute for Music Research (Berlin)
- Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University
- LNMA named after M.V.Lysenko, Department of Folk Instruments

Organising Team

Iryna Voloshyna, Inna Lisniak, Margareta Storonińska, Khrystyna Petrynka, Anastasiya Voytyuk

Venue

Unity Hub Berlin, Jägerstraße 54, 10117 Berlin, Germany

References

Hrytsa, Sofiia 2007. *Ukrainski narodni dumy* [Ukrainian Folk Dumas]. Kyiv: M. T. Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore and Ethnology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2007.

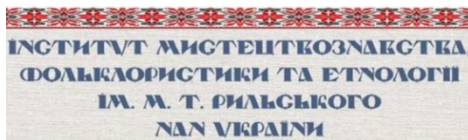
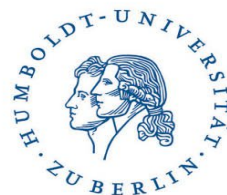
About Berlin Bandur Fest

Berlin Bandur Fest (11-13 Sep) is an international platform connecting scholars, performers, educators, and cultural institutions through research, artistic collaboration, and public engagement. The festival presents the bandura not only as a symbol of Ukrainian cultural heritage, but also as an active participant in the wider European and global musical landscape.

We warmly welcome contributions from established scholars, early-career researchers, independent researchers, and cultural practitioners.

Link to Webpage: <https://bandura.berlin/bandurfest>

For any questions or further information, please contact khrystynapetrynka@gmail.com



Estonian Literary Museum



**Staatliches Institut für
Musikforschung**
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

