

Call for papers

Vladimír Karbusický (1925–2002): An Academic at the Crossroads of Disciplines and Ideologies

The year 2025 marks the centennial of the birth of Czech musicologist and ethnologist Vladimír Karbusický (1925–2002). Karbusický's active and prolific career spanned several decades and reflected the changing landscape and the paradoxes of Czechoslovak socialist-era social sciences and humanities. In the 1950s, Karbusický began as a folklorist in the newly established Academy of Sciences and participated in a large ideologically influenced research project focused on the mining region around Kladno. The Khrushchev thaw allowed him to seek inspiration in trends outside the Eastern Block, and Karbusický began to establish himself in international scholarly networks. His interests ranged from musicology to aesthetics, folklore, semiotics, history, sociology, and philosophy. This period ended with the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the publication of his iconoclastic book on Lenin's theory of reflection. The situation made Karbusický emigrate to West Germany where he was appointed a professor at the University of Hamburg. After the fall of socialism in 1989, he regularly returned to his home country and established collaborations with Czech institutions.

Following Karbusický's career footsteps and using him as an example, we invite scholars to join us in exploring some of the pertinent issues of the twentieth-century social sciences and humanities in Central Europe. We would like to focus on the following themes:

- 1) Karbusický, his life and work;
- 2) Interdisciplinarity between musicology, ethnology, and beyond;
- 3) Clashes between individual ambitions and the socialist institutions;
- 4) The many guises of politics in socialist-era scholarship;
- 5) The crossing of the Iron Curtain and the growing internationalization in the social sciences after the 1950s; and
- 6) Émigré scholars and their relationships to their home countries.

Conference dates: November 7–8, 2025

Conference venue: Musicological Library of the Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Puškinovo náměstí 9, 160 00 Prague

Submission guidelines: Please send your abstract of max. 1800 characters/250 words to Matěj Kratochvíl (kratochvil@eu.cas.cz) and Václav Kapsa (kapsa@udu.cas.cz) by May 30, 2025. You will be notified about the selection of submissions in June 2025. We expect the final papers to be 20 minutes long. The language of the conference will be English.

The conference is organized by the Institute of Ethnology and the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences.