**please note that since this proposal came in late, it is placed last in line in the Doodle poll**

Kelly Elaine

**Orchestras versus the State: Institutions, Power, and Foreign Policy in the early Germany Democratic Republic**

In 1949 the Dresden Philharmonic embarked on its first post-war tour to the west with a series of concerts in West Germany. The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra followed suit two years later under the baton of Franz Konwitschny, and by the mid-1950s the top East German orchestras and opera companies included venues in western Europe and further afield in their annual performing schedules as a matter of course. From the perspective of the East German government, such tours were both an asset and a challenge. They generated much-needed western currency and, perhaps more importantly, they functioned as a form of *ersatz* diplomacy. Denied access to the west through the usual diplomatic routes, the GDR’s ruling party, the SED, became increasingly reliant on elite performing ensembles to represent and shape the image of the state abroad. At the same time, the power that these ensembles amassed as a result of their success on the international stage threatened to undermine the authority of those political institutions charged with the oversight of culture in the GDR. Notably, in striking contrast to the Soviet Union, GDR officials exerted only limited control over the international activities of orchestras such as the Gewandhaus. This reflected in part the GDR’s struggle to attract and retain elite conductors; those who opted to work in the state enjoyed considerable freedom as a result. It was also the case that elite ensembles were better positioned to negotiate high-profile and lucrative foreign engagements than the inexperienced bureaucrats who populated the upper levels of East German officialdom in the early years of the state.

Drawing on a range of archival sources, this paper will explore the uneasy relationship that developed between East German political and performing institutions in the context of international tours. It will piece together the mechanics of how foreign tours were organised, subsidised, and controlled, and will explore the tensions that they exposed between the GDR’s established cultural bastions and new political power bases. Finally, the paper will examine how these institutional relationships played out in the west.

Elaine Kelly is Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Edinburgh. Her research focuses on the intersections between music, culture, politics, and intellectual history in nineteenth and twentieth-century Germany with a particular focus on the German Democratic Republic. She is the author of *Composing the Canon in the German Democratic Republic: Narratives of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford University Press, 2014), editor, together with Amy Wlodarski of *Art Outside the Lines: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture* (Rodopi, 2011), and has had her work published in journals such as the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*,*Opera Quarterly*, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, *Music & Letters*, and *Kritika*.