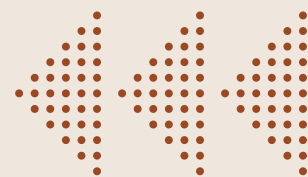




BACHELOR OF ARTS
MASTER OF ARTS

World Music

with focus on Transtraditional
Creative Musicking



Traditional Music Encounters in Berlin

Application Guide

Curriculum Overview

Career Pathways



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WHO IS THIS STUDY FOR?

Are you a performer rooted in Arabic traditions — playing the qanun, the oud, the nay or the kawala?

Are you a guzheng performer, or a passionate interpreter of the West African kora?

Do you play the oud, the European lute, or perhaps both the pipa and other Asian plucked instruments?

Are you inspired by the richness of Arabic maqam, the fullness of the Chinese zheng, and the elegance of the Japanese koto, yet still feel a deep connection to the subtle sound world of the guqin?

If you are a traditional music performer seeking a global stage and an audience as passionate as that of pianists or violinists —this study is designed for you. At SRH University, the World Music study offers a dedicated academic environment for performers and creators of traditional music from around the world.

As the world's first academic program with a core focus on transtraditional performance, it goes beyond intercultural dialogue. Here, learning begins with exchange — but leads to discovery. By engaging with diverse musical traditions and performance styles, students are encouraged to develop their own artistic language and find a path that is uniquely their own. This study creates the space, resources, and community for that journey —a platform for traditional musicians to step confidently into the global artistic arena.

IS BERLIN THE NEW HOME OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC?

Berlin is a global metropolis where cultures from all over the world intersect. With its open and inclusive cultural atmosphere, progressive cultural policies—both governmental and grassroots—and a discerning audience that embraces diverse traditions, the city offers a uniquely fertile ground for traditional music studies. This city is home to numerous world-class classical ensembles, yet it is also a vibrant gathering place for traditional musicians from the Americas, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and the Arab world. These artists come together in Berlin, engaging in a living exchange of traditions, performing side by side, and shaping new forms of musical expression.

Here, no culture is considered superior or inferior. Musicians engage in dialogue, explore new artistic languages, and experiment with innovative performance practices. Supported by generous cultural funding from both German and EU institutions, traditional musicians in Berlin not only gain vital resources, but also benefit from increased visibility and recognition on the international cultural stage.



Design your Future - SRH University

srh



European Classical Music — A Form of Traditional Music?

As a performer, have you ever considered that European classical music, with its own long-standing traditions and aesthetics, can also be viewed as one of the world's many forms of traditional music?

It, too, has a unique historical development and distinct expressive techniques—much like the traditional music of other cultures.

But what about the musical traditions of other regions and countries?

What common threads link their traditional aesthetics?

Where do their values and approaches differ?

And how do their ways of making music contrast with those of the European classical tradition?

World Music

with focus on Transtraditional Creative Musicking



All of these questions lie at the heart of the World Music study at the SRH University.

As the first music department in the world to bring together all musical traditions on equal footing, this study is built on the principle that no culture is superior or inferior—every tradition has its place in an open, respectful dialogue.

Only through such an inclusive and globally minded approach to music-making and learning can we truly meet the cultural understanding and creative demands of our time.

It is this vision that prepares musicians to engage with a world shaped by diversity, exchange, and global transformation.



NEW WAYS OF PERFORMING TRADITIONAL MUSIC — IN BIMA

Aesthetic Dialogue and Mutual Inspiration

- The breathing techniques of the sheng have inspired composers to reimagine the symphony orchestra as a vast resonating body that responds and interacts with the instrument. In this context, the sheng shines in a concerto setting—its sonic identity expanded through dialogue with the full orchestral palette.



The Improvisation Lab

- West African griot chanting meets Chinese pipa finger rolls in a polyphonic narrative shaped by free jazz aesthetics—counterpoint emerges between the kora's flowing string patterns and pipa-based melodic rhythms.
- Balinese gamelan percussion engages in a timbral dialogue with the prepared piano, improvising across traditions, textures, and temporalities.

Acoustic Installation

- The strings of the guqin resonate within an architectural soundscape, creating a dynamic sonic environment titled “Garden”.

Electronic Music Composition

- The Arabic nay flute, processed through real-time audio software, creates an immersive sonic landscape beneath the dome of the Berlin Philharmonie.



IN BERLIN, TRADITIONAL MUSIC HAS LONG EMBRACED DIVERSITY IN PERFORMANCE

Transcultural and Transhistorical Reconstruction

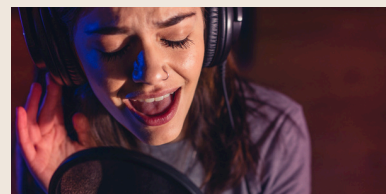
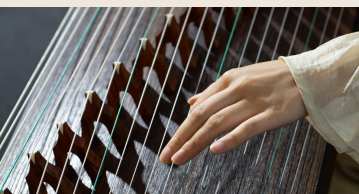
A Chinese guzheng and a European harpsichord perform a Baroque “chaconne”, exploring microtonal techniques to bridge distinct tuning systems from East and West. An Arabic oud joins a Japanese gagaku ensemble, interpreting ancient court music through the maqam system—reviving the musical spirit of the Silk Road.

AI-Based Improvisation System: Bridging Tuning Systems (2025–26 Academic Year Project)

This project trains an artificial intelligence system to recognize tuning system differences among traditional instruments from various cultures.

By analyzing audio in real time, the system dynamically adjusts the pitch parameters of digital synthesizers, acting as a real-time “tuning translator.”

This allows instruments from different musical traditions to engage in pitch-based dialogue without discrepancy, enabling smoother and more natural collaborative performance.



This Is How Traditional Music Can Be Studied in BIMA

Beyond Technique

Students do more than refine their instrumental performance skills—they engage with musical philosophies, aesthetics, and expressive techniques from around the world, transforming them into sources of creative inspiration.

There is the freedom of Indian raga improvisation, the mystique of the Arabic maqam scale, the subtle emptiness of Japanese ma aesthetics, and the poetic spirit and landscape of the Chinese guqin.

All of these open up infinite sonic possibilities—inviting students to explore not only how to play, but how to feel, imagine, and create.

Module Category	Study Focus	Examples
Instrumental Training Module*		
Instrument (Major)	Mastery of performance techniques on one’s primary traditional instrument (e.g. pipa, guzheng, sitar)	Performances at regional and international festivals and concerts
Transtraditional Instrument Study	Learn the fundamentals of at least one traditional instrument outside of one’s native culture	
Instrument Construction & History	Study the acoustics, craftsmanship, and cultural evolution of various instruments	Analyzing the harmonic resonance of Indonesian gamelan bronze keys; studying string design in Persian santur
Ensemble Practice	Transtraditional ensemble collaboration and performance training	Improvised duets between guzheng and sitar; complex polyrhythmic ensemble with pipa, kora, and tabla
Theoretical Module		
World Music History	Comparative studies of musical development across continents	Musical interactions along the Silk Road; the contribution of African musical traditions to the emergence of the blues
Music Aesthetics / Philosophy	Analysis of aesthetic and philosophical approaches to music across cultures	The time philosophy of Indian raga; the aesthetics of ma in Japanese traditional arts

Module Category	Study Focus	Examples
Ethnomusicology & Folklore	Exploration of music in ritual, festivals, and social structures	Religious symbolism in Indonesian wayang kulit accompaniment; social roles of Irish folk dance music
Musician Health & Stage Training		
Injury Prevention	Performing physiology; psychological stress management	Therapy for hand strain; breathing techniques for instrumentalists
Stage Experience & Practice	Spontaneous response, audience interaction, multimedia setup skills	Emergency simulation during performances; VR-based stage spatial awareness training
Multimedia & Creative Practice Module*		
Improvisation & Composition	Cross-stylistic composition techniques (e.g. applying raga structures to electronic music)	Role shifts between performer and composer; integration of innovation and practice
Electronic Music Production	Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) techniques; multichannel spatial audio design	
Digital Tools Module*		
Music & Artificial Intelligence	AI-assisted composition; algorithmic music generation	Understanding and training AI music learning models
Musicology & Field Research		
Ethnographic Research Methods	Oral history interviews; documentation of ritual music	Example: digital archiving of wedding music from the Caucasus region of Eastern Europe



WHAT MAKES WORLD MUSIC STUDY UNIQUE?

- Modular Progression

A structured, step-by-step learning path takes students from fundamental instrumental training to advanced explorations in AI-assisted music and interdisciplinary creation.

- Case-Based Learning

All theoretical modules are grounded in real-world cultural contexts, drawing on Berlin's and Europe's vibrant multicultural music scenes.

- Career-Oriented Approach

The program integrates hands-on collaboration with Berlin-based orchestras, producers, artist managers, and record labels, preparing students for real-world careers in music.

- Exchange Semester

Students have the opportunity to spend a semester abroad at a partner university, focusing on local traditional music through performance and research.

- Master's Pathways

Graduate students may specialize in one of three tracks: Performance & Research, Music Education, or Cultural Management—each with a tailored curriculum aligned to their focus.

- English-Taught Program

No German language skills are required; the entire curriculum is delivered in English.





THE VISION BEHIND THE WORLD MUSIC STUDY

“We advocate for the diversity of world civilizations and uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness among cultures. We believe that cultural exchange should transcend isolation, mutual learning should replace conflict, and inclusiveness should prevail over notions of cultural superiority.”

In today’s world, the call for perspective-shifting, mutual respect, and equal cultural dialogue is emerging not from external critique, but increasingly from within the Western world itself—through new voices, movements, and schools of thought that challenge dominant narratives.

The transtraditional Music Performance study in Berlin responds to this historical moment. It aims to foster true East–West dialogue by encouraging a transformation of mindset through both theoretical inquiry and artistic practice.

By inviting students to rethink culture from multiple perspectives, the program contributes to a deeper form of innovation—one rooted in empathy, exchange, and shared creative space.

This vision has resonated with forward-thinking scholars, artists, and cultural leaders across disciplines who see cultural understanding not as an ideal, but as a necessity for the future.

Q&A

Are you a traditional instrumentalist who has trained in folk or classical music since childhood?

Are you a composer or electronic music producer curious about musical traditions from around the world? Are you a Western classical musician drawn to music production, experimental sound, or Transtraditional performance? Are you a traditional vocalist who dreams of becoming a multi-talented artist—someone who can create, produce, and manage music in today's global market?

If any of these sound like you, then the World Music program at SRH University might be the perfect fit. It's a dynamic and forward-thinking study that can turn your musical passion into a professional reality.

Q: I'm trained in traditional Chinese pipa. Will I continue studying pipa in Germany? Is that my main focus in the program?

A: Yes—but not entirely.

Students are expected to have proficiency in at least one instrument upon admission. During the program, they receive four semesters of instruction on their primary instrument and two semesters on a secondary instrument. However, the focus is not simply on becoming a professional performer on a single instrument. Take the pipa, for example. Though often associated with Chinese music, it is historically an imported instrument whose expressive style was shaped by Chinese musical traditions. Related plucked instruments exist across Europe and the Middle East, each representing a different cultural heritage and serving as a musical medium within its own context.

In this sense, an instrument is not just a tool—it is a vessel for transmitting a musical worldview.

In the World Music study, students are encouraged to deeply explore at least one other musical tradition (for example, Western classical guitar) and to study its performance practices and cultural aesthetics. Through comparison, collaboration, and transtraditional dialogue, musicians are invited to spark new creativity and contribute to the evolution of music as a global art form.

Q: My undergraduate degree is in Western classical music (e.g., flute, piano). Can I apply for the World Music master's program?

A: Absolutely.

Western classical music is itself a rich musical tradition. If you're interested in engaging with other musical cultures—and you feel that traditional classical performance no longer fully satisfies your creative energy or curiosity—then transitioning into World Music for your master's studies is an excellent choice.

This program welcomes musicians who wish to go beyond stylistic boundaries and explore new possibilities through cultural dialogue, experimentation, and innovation.

Q: My undergraduate training is in instrumental performance, but for my master's degree, I would like to focus on music education or arts management to better prepare for my career. Is that possible?

A: Absolutely. The Master's program in World Music at SRH University of Applied Sciences Berlin is designed with flexible academic pathways to support your future goals.

Upon entering the program, students can choose from three main focus areas:

Performance & Composition

Music Education

Arts & Cultural Management

These directions are supported through specialized electives and project-based modules, allowing students to shape their studies according to their interests and career aspirations. The flexibility of the curriculum ensures that graduates are well-prepared for diverse career paths and can begin building their professional profiles while still in the program.

Q: My major is composition or music production. Can I apply to this program? Will there be composition courses?

A: Yes, students with a background in composition or music production are welcome to apply. (see below)

Q: What kind of training and courses will students receive during the program?

A: Instrumental performance is a central form of musical expression, and every musical tradition around the world approaches it differently. For example, Indian music features highly complex rhythmic structures and a strong emphasis on improvisation. Jazz and Baroque music each have their own forms of improvisational practice. In many cultures, musicians collaborate without written scores, relying entirely on listening and interaction.

All of these approaches are essential to understanding global musical practices—and are taught systematically in our World Music program.

Q: What courses are offered to support future career development?

A: Today's professional musicians in Europe—and worldwide—are expected to master much more than performance alone. Skills such as arranging, music production, arts management, and even legal knowledge related to copyright and the music industry are increasingly essential. In addition, as technology continues to evolve, musicians must also understand how to operate within digital and social media platforms, use multimedia and digital tools, and explore emerging fields such as artificial intelligence in music.

All of these areas are systematically integrated into the World Music curriculum, ensuring that students are prepared for the creative industries of the future.

Q: As a World Music student, how many opportunities will I have for artistic practice? What kinds of courses are offered?

A: In addition to fieldwork and ethnographic research that is part of the academic curriculum, students benefit from a wide range of artistic practice opportunities—both in-class and on stage.

There are many chances to collaborate with musicians from around the world through ensemble courses, experimental workshops, artistic curating and project planning, multimedia performance modules, and participation in student concerts and festivals held across Europe. Artistic practice is not just encouraged—it's built into the structure of the program.



Q&A

However, it's important to note that the World Music program is not a conventional composition or production degree. Rather, it is a performance-centered program with a strong emphasis on creativity and artistic exchange. In this context, composition is always connected to performance, and students are encouraged to explore musical creation through active collaboration, experimentation, and improvisation.

In fact, composition today is already one of the most transtraditional disciplines in music. Studying in this program offers composers something rare—first-hand access to traditional performers from around the world. This opens up opportunities to expand compositional language through direct interaction with diverse musical aesthetics, instruments, and techniques—something that purely composition-based programs often cannot provide.

Our faculty includes internationally active performers, composers, and conductors rooted in traditional music practices. Composition and music production courses are an integral part of the curriculum, offering creative students both inspiration and practical tools. Through frequent collaboration with performers, real-time experimentation, and regular opportunities to present original work, students are supported in developing a creative voice grounded in both tradition and innovation.

At its core, this program sees every performer as a creator—and every creator as a performer. There is no boundary between composition and performance.

Q: How should composition and music production students apply?

A:

Details regarding the online audition process can be found on the official website of the university.

For information about in-person auditions, please refer to the detailed examination guidelines provided below.



APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All applications can be submitted online.

- Completed online application form (with a passport-style photo)
- Scanned copy of a valid passport
- Highest academic diploma and transcript (with official notarized translations in original Languages and English)
- Curriculum vitae in table format
- Personal statement (up to 500 words), outlining your artistic vision and career goals
- Proof of English proficiency: minimum CEFR B2 level or IELTS score of 6.0 or above

directly apply



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www.thebima.de



SRH-Music-Study

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Bachelor's Degree Applicants

1. Performance Audition

- Present a instrumental performance or vocal piece of your choice, and either: a second piece adapted from a different musical tradition, or a performance on a second instrument. (Total performance time: minimum 15 minutes)

2. For composition applicants without a performance background only:

- Submit a written essay (minimum 500 words) discussing your understanding and perspective on music history and various musical traditions.
- Submit a composition (video or score) that demonstrates transtraditional creative ideas.

Master's Degree Applicants

1. Live Performance Audition (in person or via live-stream):

- Perform at least three pieces or excerpts from two or more different musical traditions, including one original composition or improvisation. (Total performance time: minimum 20 minutes)

2. Supplementary Portfolio:

- Submit a digital presentation or documentation of creative work from a different artistic field—such as visual arts, literature, performing arts, or new media (e.g., multimedia projects, fine art, literary work, or other forms of artistic creation).

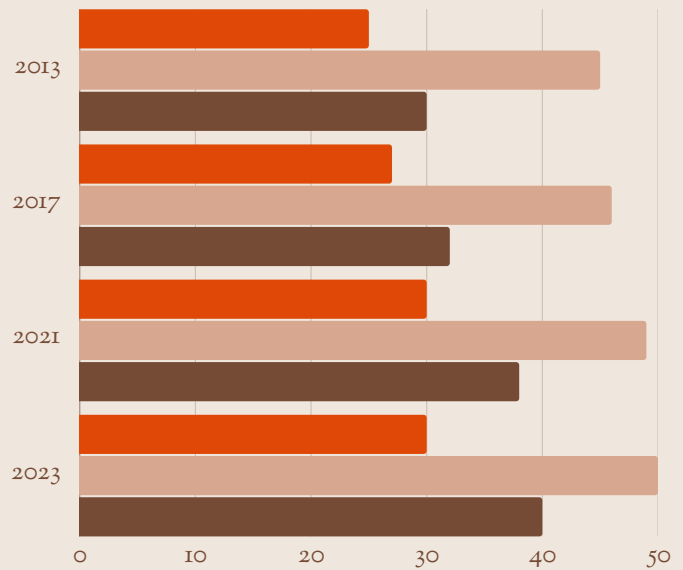
3. Interview:

- A 20-minute interview will be conducted to evaluate your creativity, personality, motivation, and future plans.

Career Pathways

For musicians working in trans-traditional and classical music fields, Europe offers a uniquely vibrant and supportive professional environment. Across the continent, numerous renowned cross-cultural ensembles—such as the AsianArt Ensemble, Ensemble Atlas, and Trickster Orchestra—exemplify the creative potential and societal resonance of transcultural performance. These groups illustrate how tradition-based music can thrive through dialogue with global artistic practices.

From orchestras and music universities to research institutes and cultural platforms, Europe hosts a wide spectrum of professional opportunities. Whether in concert halls, classrooms, artist residencies, or interdisciplinary festivals, graduates can find fertile ground to develop and share their artistic voice within a continually evolving musical landscape.



*The chart above illustrates the employment trend of music graduates in Germany from 2013 to 2023 across three major career paths: artistic performance, education & research, and arts management. It shows that positions in education and research have maintained steady growth, while employment in arts management has increased significantly—driven by the expansion of the cultural and creative industries.

more
examples



Festival



Wei Wu



Trickster Orchestra

1. Professional Music Performers: Soloist

Chamber Musician
Opera House / Symphony Orchestra
PerformerMedia & Music Technology:
Music Producer/ Sound Designer
Composer for Film, Television, and
Interactive Entertainment

Cultural projects in Berlin are supported by government funding, cultural foundations, or EU-specific grants.

2. Cultural Management & Arts Administration Career Paths

Cultural Project Manager / Arts Event
Organizer
Festival Director / Artist Manager / Cultural
Performance Coordinator

3. Music Education Career Paths

Music Education Researcher / Instrument
Instructor
Music Theory or Ethnomusicology Lecturer
University Lecturer or Professor / Research
Institute Positions

Music schools and institutions across Europe regularly seek qualified instructors.

As pioneers and practitioners of trans-cultural music traditions, our graduates bring fresh perspectives to music education—teaching music not only as technique, but as a medium of cultural exchange and dialogue.

This approach is increasingly welcomed by primary and secondary schools, as well as universities in Germany, where there is growing demand for inclusive, globally-minded music educators.

Sources:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Employment_rates_of_recent_graduates)

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<https://www.studying-in-germany.org/higher-education-in-germany-key-trends-statistics>