Call for Proposals:

“It’s Still Rock and Roll to Me”: The Music and Lyrics of Billy Joel
A Public Musicology Conference at Colorado College
October 7-8, 2016
https://www.coloradocollege.edu/billyjoel

The dynamic career of Billy Joel (b. 1949, New York) spans nearly five decades, from his work with The Hassles in the late-1960s, to his string of top-40 hits in the last quarter of the twentieth century, to his current monthly concert engagement at Madison Square Garden. The consummate singer-songwriter, Joel’s music translates larger cultural concerns into musical narratives: he gives voice to the concerns of working-class America (“Allentown” and “Uptown Girl”), humanizes political conflict (“Goodnight Saigon” and “Leningrad”) and offers a soundtrack to his home state and town (“New York State of Mind” and “Scenes From An Italian Restaurant”). His musical ability and accessibility has translated to substantial commercial success. Joel is the third highest-selling solo musician in the United States and a majority of his more than thirty studio, live, or compilation albums have been certified multi-platinum. But the popularity of Joel’s music and live performance has been accompanied by a somewhat uneasy relationship with critics, while scholarship on his extensive output remains scant.

In the spirit of Billy Joel’s music, this “public musicology” conference aims to share academically oriented insights on this popular figure and his output in an accessible and approachable manner. Hosted by Colorado College and co-sponsored by the American Musicological Society, we invite scholars from musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, history, comparative literature, and related fields to reassess and reconsider the music and lyrics of Billy Joel. We welcome a range of methodological and theoretical approaches to the sonic, narrative, visual, and cultural worlds of Joel’s music, including but not limited to expressions of American geography, representations of Cold War anxiety, and the classical and popular styles in which he finds inspiration. All projects should be geared towards an interdisciplinary and intellectually curious audience of faculty, students, and staff from Colorado College, members of the greater Colorado Springs community, and other conference presenters.

Proposals are now being accepted for 20-minute presentations of research on any aspect of Joel’s artistic oeuvre. We also welcome proposals for presentation formats beyond the traditional conference paper, such as a poster, exhibit, installation, or video. Abstracts should comprise (a) a statement of the aims, methods, and conclusions of the research while also specifying: (b) the broader academic considerations or implications of the research and (c) how the presenter plans to make their work publicly accessible within their respective format. Proposals must not exceed 350 words and should be submitted through the conference website by April 8, 2016. Notifications will be returned by the end of May.

Conference Chairs:
Ryan Bañagale, Colorado College
Joshua S. Duchan, Wayne State University

**Program Committee:**
Ryan Bañagale, Colorado College
Joshua S. Duchan, Wayne State University
Eric Hung, Rider University
Katherine Meizel, Bowling Green State University
Albin Zak, University at Albany