University of Prince Edward Island

Program & Schedule

Faculties of Arts, Education, Science, and Business

MUSIC AND THE MIND

access to music education

MARITIMES

Music and the Mind–Maritimes: Access to Music Education

A Summer Conference

Presented by the UPEI Music Cognition & Auditory Perception Research and Training Laboratory

Time: 1:30- 4:30 PM   Andrew Hall, Room 142, UPEI

Director's Welcome
Annabel Cohen

Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, UPEI

It is a pleasure to welcome you to **Music and Mind – Maritimes: Access to Music Education**, hosted by members of the UPEI Department of Psychology Music Cognition and Auditory Perception Research and Training Laboratory (Music Cognition Lab, for short). The goals of the lab are:

- to obtain knowledge about how the mind processes music and how music can improve individual and societal well-being
- to provide students with opportunities to apply knowledge learned in their classes and to acquire research and life skills that are applicable to future careers, post-graduate education, and social and societal roles.

Research students working on problems related to music cognition, auditory perception, or singing are often building on the work of previous students, and in this way, knowledge accumulates. This new knowledge takes on value through dissemination in publications and conferences as well as through applications.

The program today offers a wealth of presentations from student and seasoned researchers, educators and musicians of a wide range of experience and whose disciplinary perspectives shed much light on music, the mind, implicit and explicit education, and wellbeing.

I wish you a fulfilling experience at this conference. Your participation directs our research to real-world problems where music can play a role in benefitting society. Your input, feedback and ideas are welcome regarding what issues associated with music are important and how we can work together addressing them.

Sincerely,
Annabel Cohen, Ph. D., A.R.C.T.
Director, UPEI Music Cognition and Auditory Perception Research and Training Laboratory
Chair and Professor of Department of Psychology

Annabel J. Cohen (B.A. McGill, M.A. Ph.D. Queen's) is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Prince Edward Island. Her research on music cognition has led to leadership of several interdisciplinary initiatives including Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing (AIRS) a SSHRC-supported major collaborative initiative culminating in a 3-volume book series "Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing: I. Development, II Education, and III Well-being". She is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Canadian Psychological Association, and the Canadian Society for Brain, Behavior and Cognitive Science. She established the UPEI Music Cognition and Auditory Perception Research and Training Laboratory funded by NSERC for studies on musical grammar acquisition and by SSHRC for studies on film music perception. She holds an Associateship of the Royal Conservatory of Music (ARCT) in voice performance. She is the Principal Investigator of the AMusE (Access to Music Education) interdisciplinary project supported by the New Frontiers in Research Fund involving multiple colleagues and students at UPEI and several other institutions.

Land Acknowledgement & Gathering Song

Lenox Evans

Mi'kmaq Language Consultant and Lead Singer, incoming engineering undergrad student, University of Waterloo

Lenox is Polish on his mother's side and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) heritage on his father's side. Lenox has volunteered for (Native Council of Prince Edward Island) NCPEI for a variety of activities, including indigenous knowledge and education, language revitalization, and drumming. Additionally, he greatly enjoys swimming, being a long-time competitive swimmer for the Charlottetown Bluephins and representing Epekwitk (PEI) at the NAIG (North American Indigenous Games) in 2023.

Liz Pan B.Mus, Grad DipMT

Lab Administrative Assistant, Psychology Dept., UPEI

Liz Pan is a registered music therapist (MTA) with a Graduate Diploma in Music Therapy from Concordia University and a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Western University. She currently works as an administrative assistant for the AMusE project. Liz also teaches English to students in China and finds joy in providing music therapy to children. She is passionate about music therapy, education, and helping others.

The Gathering Song

Wejkwita'jik nikikma'k wula tet nike'a
Wej-gwee-da-jeeg neegigga-mahk woo-la ded ne-gay-ah
Our people are coming, right here, right now

Mawi'omi weskowa'sit, weltasualtulteek ah way
Mah-wee-oh-me wes-go-ah-seed, wel-da-swal-dul-deeg ah way
A gathering is happening, we are all happy to see each other

Wejkwita'jik nisamijk wula tet nike'a
Wej-gwee-dah-jeeg nees-gah-meej woo-la ded nee-gay-ah
The spirits are coming right here, right now

Nenmitij tan telta'jik, pektaqte'ji'jk wtowtiwow
Nena-mee-deej dahn del-dah-jeeg, beg-dah-day-jeej-guh wdowdi-woah
They know where they are going, the road is straight

Wejkwitajik no'kmaq wula tet nike'a
Wej-gwee-dah-jeeg no-guh mah woo-la ded nee-gay-ah
Our relations are coming right here, right now

Pepkwijete' ma'tijik newtitpa'q
Beb-gwee-ja-day mah-deejgh now-deed-bah
They will drum all night

Way ha ya yo way

Ah way ha, way ha, way ha yah
Way ha way ha ya
Way ha ya yo way x2

Mapping Emotion Communication in Music and Speech: The Structure of Emotions

This study investigates the cognitive structure of auditory perceived emotions in auditory stimuli—emotion expressions conveyed through song and speech. It also examines how acoustic features relate to perceived emotions. Many studies utilize conceptual frameworks such as models of basic emotions or dimensional models of affect to study emotion perception. These models assume that cognitive organization represents the actual world. The models facilitate scholarly discourse but research has highlighted the variability of emotional phenomena, pointing towards a variety of ways in which emotions could be organized in perception and cognition. To investigate this, multidimensional scaling (MDS) was performed on participants' dissimilarity ratings of perceived emotions, thereby reducing linguistic influences on the resulting structure. Models with four dimensions were found to adequately explain the structure of emotions in Song and Speech. The first two dimensions for both song and speech correspond to the dimensions of arousal and valence. Emotion information can be communicated by acoustic characteristics. To identify the cues that contribute to the communication of emotion content, acoustic analyses were carried out on the auditory stimuli and interpretable machine learning techniques utilized. Several low-level acoustic features contribute to arousal perception, but less to valence. It is likely that a large amount of auditory information for communicating aspects of emotion can be found in dynamic time-varying changes. Other elements such as speech prosody, musical phrasing, rhythm, and accents could also contribute substantially to emotion communication.

Lena Heng
BSocSci, BMus, MA, PhD
Post doctoral researcher, Department of Psychology , UPEI

Lena is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the psychology department at the University of Prince Edward Island. They graduated with an interdisciplinary PhD from McGill University Canada. Their research interests center around timbre perception and emotion communication. Lena's doctoral research examined how timbre functions in the communication of affective intentions, and how listeners with different musical backgrounds respond differently in music listening. In their postdoctoral work, they are extending their previous work by studying the perception of emotions in music and speech. They are also exploring narrative creation in music listening, the semantics of timbre, and analyses of music, focusing predominantly on aural analyses and on performer and listener's interpretations of music. With several large scale projects involving singing and music acquisition at UPEI, Lena is also researching the analysis of singing data, expanding the uses of singing as an assessment tool. Lena is passionate about encouraging an openness to different ways of listening and greatly enjoys talking and writing about music. They hope that this will spark curiosity, and new ways of thinking about and listening to music.

Adolescence as a Critical Period for Acquiring Musical and Social Information

My honours thesis research rests on a foundation laid by previous UPEI honours students who have aimed to understand if adolescents can recognize and retain popular music from past decades (1961-2025). Adolescents from 13-18 years old carry out an online test of popular music retention, an online singing test and an in-person interview with the hope of integrating these findings and determining the extent to which they can be related to social influence and sociocultural processes unique to adolescence. This honours project aims to understand further how popular music reflects the sensitive periods of the adolescent brain development while also looking at the plethora of ways social influence can play a part.

Drew Laybolt
Undergrad. Honours student, Psychology UPEI

Hello everyone. My name is Drew Laybolt, and I am a fourth-year Honours student at UPEI. Dr. Cohen is currently supervising me for my honours thesis, which is focused on Adolescence as a Critical Period for Acquiring Musical Information. Since middle school, I have had a deep passion for psychology, and my dreams of becoming a clinical therapist are getting closer daily. My dream position is to work in the therapy profession in Ottawa, Ontario, specializing in children and adolescent clients. I am a dedicated worker with sound experience in crisis management and intervention, and relevant experience working with adolescents with disabilities and those in the PEI Addictions and group home system.

Adapting Private Music Lessons for Autistic Students: Three Case Studies

Much of the existing literature on music education for autistic students focuses on those considered high-functioning or diagnosed with level 1 autism. Potential students with higher support needs are often referred to music therapy rather than music education, even though the two disciplines take a very different approach to music making. This is due in part to traditional viewpoints of what constitutes music education, as well as a lack of awareness of the ways in which autistic students with high support needs can be taught through an adaptive music education approach. In this presentation, we challenge these perceptions by discussing case studies representing three distinct profiles of autistic students: a non-verbal student with level 3 autism and profound intellectual disability; a student with level 3 autism with low verbal abilities and exceptional music perception, including perfect pitch; and a student with level 2 autism who experiences high anxiety. While these profiles are frequently seen when teaching students across the autism spectrum, their particular needs and the pedagogical approaches required to meet those needs are poorly understood. We will present on our own experiences teaching private music lessons to students with these profiles, the ways in which they presented in music lessons, the approaches taken and the reasons for those approaches, and the outcomes.

Jeffrey Sabo PhD Candidate, University of Ottawa

Jeff has been a music lover for his whole life, and he began playing piano at age 5. He received his Bachelor's degree in Music Composition and Theory from Ithaca College. In addition to music, Jeff is also passionate about helping people with their mental and physical wellness. He received Post-Baccalaureate Degree in Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University and then worked for over a year as a community mental health counselor. He has also trained in the Taubman Approach to healthy piano technique. For his graduate studies, Jeff came to the University of Ottawa to pursue his love of both music and science and to improve his skills as a teacher. He received a Graduate Diploma and a Master's Degree in Piano Pedagogy Research, and is now pursuing a PhD in Health Sciences. Jeff has worked with students of many different ages and abilities. He loves playing and teaching many different styles of music, such as classical, rock, and pop. His goal as a teacher is to combine his passion for music and wellness and to adapt his approach to each individual student, so that anyone can enjoy making music in their own way. Jeff is the Professional Development Coordinator, Piano, for the Lotus Centre for Special Music Education that operates in Ottawa.
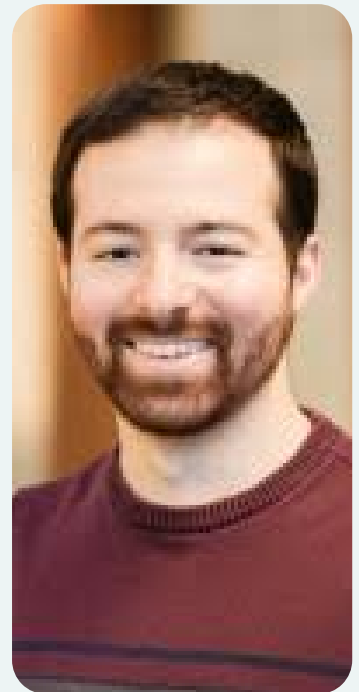
The Impacts of Weekly Online Group Singing on Persons Living with Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative condition characterized by motor and non-motor symptoms. While music-based interventions have shown promise in symptom management, little is known about the long-term effects of online singing interventions for individuals with PD. This study examined the impacts of weekly online group singing on vocal accuracy, mood, socialization, and quality of life among three female participants living with PD (ages 68–77), while also examining singing accuracy as a potential biomarker of PD progression. Participants engaged in community-based virtual choirs and, over several weeks, completed a battery of biopsychosocial tests, including the Music Acquisition Singing Test (MAST-21), Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS), and Parkinson's Disease Questionnaire-8 (PDQ-8). The singing accuracy and speech measures of one participant living with PD were also tracked longitudinally over four years.

Margaret Orford
BSc Honours Psychology, UPEI

Margaret Orford completed their B. Sc. Honours in Psychology, with a minor in music performance, in the 2025 Winter semester, working on the topic of singing in Parkinson's Disease as not only a marker of the disease progression but also for the psychological benefits of the activity. They have expertise in the analysis of vocal pitch using the Praat program, and their work provides the standard against which the pYIN automated computer analysis is compared. Margaret has also worked as a teaching assistant for several courses, as an English Language Teaching Assistant in Quebec, and has recently returned from working in a psychology lab at the University of Oldenburg in Germany through the SingWell Summer Internship Program.

Newcastle Lullaby Singing Activity

Join us as we sing a traditional lullaby from Newcastle together, using a simple and fun way called a "round." In a round, everyone starts the same song at different times, creating beautiful overlapping harmonies. This gentle lullaby has been shared for generations and is known for its calming, soothing effect. Singing in a round is easy to learn and a wonderful way to connect with others through music.

Brennan McDuffee
Undergraduate student, Communications, UPEI

Brennan is a performer, artist, writer, and singer/songwriter in recreational productions, and he is currently the welcoming face at the Confederation Centre Arts Gallery, which showcases leading Canadian artists and their unique perspectives free of charge. He is able to bring his passions and skills to his community both on a very practical level as a visual and performance art instructor and indirectly by applying creative, energetic, and engaging elements to any project with which he is involved.

Welcome Back

Sharon Myers MA, PhD
Dean, Faculty of Arts UPEI

Dr. Sharon Myers is the Dean of Arts at the University of Prince Edward Island, a member of the Department of History and former Coordinator of the Canadian Studies Program at UPEI. She studies the relationships among the state, women, and children in the late 19th- and early 20th-century Maritimes, and is especially interested in histories of law and social welfare.

Her most recent project focuses on the New Brunswick Child Welfare Survey, 1927-1933, and considers the dynamics among the family, civil society, and the state. Sharon has taught courses in modern Canadian history, including courses in women's, social, and cultural history.

Songs about Nursing

Kevin will perform a selection of his original songs that explore themes of health, healing, and the everyday realities of nursing. These songs, sometimes poignant, sometimes humorous, always honest, offer a powerful glimpse into the world of caregiving through a musical lens. With each piece, Kevin invites us to reflect on the emotional depth of the nursing experience and to appreciate the dedication of those who care for others.

Kevin Ryan

BScN, BA, RN, CPMHN(C) Clinical Nursing Instructor
Faculty of Nursing, UPEI

Kevin Ryan is a Canadian singer-songwriter with over 30 years of experience, three original albums, and recognition in national contests and awards. He is also a Registered Nurse who has worked in Emergency, Home Care, and Mental Health, prioritizing compassionate, patient-centered care. Currently, he teaches as a Clinical Nursing Instructor at UPEI, where he emphasizes communication and empathy alongside clinical skills. Kevin's music often reflects his life and nursing journey, bridging both passions in his performances and teaching.

3:35 P.M.

Creativity/Music: the Importance to Business, and the Indigenous Community

Gary L. Evans DipCS, BA, Hons, BComm, MBA, PhD
Mi'kmaq Language Consultant and Singing Consultant,
Professor, Faulty of Business, UPEI

Dr. Evans prior to embarking on an academic career was Senior Partner and CEO for KPMG Consulting for Central Eastern Europe and before that appointment was Partner in Charge of Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals and Energy for the London, U.K. office of KPMG for tax, audit and consulting. As a partner in a professional firm, Dr. Evans spent substantial amount of time with corporate boards and the executive management of major international corporations.

A Survey of Access to Music Education in PEI: Students, Parents, Educators, Administrators

As part of the interdisciplinary research project: Access to Music Education (AMusE), a survey was developed to determine what might be barriers to music education in public schools across Canada, but with a focus on PEI. Prior research by the team had examined three previous surveys or data bases of the Coalition of Music Educators, the Health Behaviour of School Children, and MusiCounts. While much was learned from these investigations, there remained many gaps in knowledge. Three online surveys were developed to target school children, parents, teachers, and school administrators. The presentation will provide a preliminary report of results, with a focus on data from school children. Evidence will be reported of the importance of music in the lives of students, as well as possible barriers to participation in music education programs, including the variable of gender.

Linyuan Guo-Brennan MEd, PhD

Professor, Faculty of Education, UPEI

Dr. Linyuan Guo-Brennan is a Professor of International/Global Education at UPEI. Her research and teaching focus on teacher education, international and comparative education, global citizenship and global leadership education, culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, immigration issues in education, and higher education. She is an elected Education Sectoral Commission member of Canadian Commission of UNESCO to provide consultancy on issues related to education for all, global citizenship education, and Indigenous education. She provides scholarly leadership in equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenization issues related to research design, research implementation, data collection/analysis/reporting, culturally relevant teacher preparation/curriculum/pedagogy, and research assistant supervision.

Unfortunately, Nicole and Amy's performance had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

Wide Load (2024)
by Mark Mellits
Bass Clarinet and Baritone Saxophone Duet

American composer Mark Mellits' unique compositional style is an eclectic combination of driving rhythms, soaring lyricism, and colorful orchestrations that all combine to communicate directly with the listener. His music is often described as being visceral, making a deep connection with the audience. The work Wide Load was composed in 2024 and highlights the resonant qualities of two low reed instruments.

Baritone Saxophone

Nicole Strum DMA, DPPM (Bordeaux)
Assistant Prof. (Music Theory & Saxophone), Department of Music, UPEI

Nicole Strum is a multifaceted musician and educator with interests in the fields of performance, music theory pedagogy, ensemble direction, and performance psychology. She has held visiting appointments at Kwantlen University and Mount Allison University and has been on faculty in the Department of Music at UPEI since 2017, where she has taught woodwinds, aural skills, and developed a new course in performance psychology. She is a certified public school teacher, has taught elementary and secondary school music on PEI, and was granted PEI ArtsSmarts funding for a collaborative music laboratory project at Colonel Gray High School in 2020.

Bass Clarinet

Amy Simon   BA, BMus, MMus, PhD.
Sessional Instructor, Department of Music UPEI

Amy Simon is a clarinetist, woodwind specialist and music scholar. As an orchestral clarinetist, she toured throughout Europe and North America for several years, performing approximately 100 shows per year in renowned theatres and opera houses. She performs regularly with the PEI Symphony Orchestra on clarinet and bass clarinet and has performed with the Charlottetown Festival. She acted as producer for the 2022 CD release of Solitary Clarinet by Dr. Karem J. Simon.
At UPEI, Amy has taught Applied Clarinet and Music & Culture courses. She has also worked with Dr. Annabel Cohen as Research Associate in the Music Cognition laboratory. Her research interests include clarinet performance practice, extended techniques on woodwind instruments, East Asian wind performance techniques, and the Japanese shakuhachi flute and gagaku orchestra. She has published articles on Japanese wind music and clarinet repertoire in the journals Asian Music, Analytical Approaches to World Music, and The Clarinet. Her doctoral research at York University was funded by the Provost Dissertation Scholarship.

Acknowledgements

Annabel J. Cohen