



The Society of Graduate Students in Music
Presents

The 26th Annual
Western University Graduate Symposium on Music

August 22-23, 2025

Keynote: Dr. Christa Cole
Oberlin College and Conservatory
Welcome to WUGSOM 2025!

For this year's conference, we wanted to highlight contributions from graduate musicians in all areas of diversity. Our conference is dedicated to exploring how music, as a universal language, can serve as a powerful catalyst for building equality and fostering community within the academic sphere and beyond.

Thank you so much for attending and I hope you enjoy your time at our 26th WUGSOM!

Ran Jiang, Chair of SOGSIM
McKenna Sheeley-Jennings, Co-Chair, WUGSOM Coordinator

WUGSOM 2025 is generously supported by:



**Western
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A Special Thank You To...

Dr. Christa Cole for graciously accepting our keynote invitation!

The Society of Graduate Students

The Don Wright Faculty of Music

Audrey Yardley-Jones (Graduate Program Assistant) & Rachel Condie (Communications and Marketing Manager) for their time, assistance, and guidance

Dr. Kevin Mooney (Associate Dean, Graduate Studies) for his enthusiasm, time, and support.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS), whose generous financial contribution helped make this conference possible. Their funding played a vital role in supporting key aspects of the event, including the honorarium for our keynote speaker. We thank them for their ongoing commitment to fostering graduate research and scholarly community.

Friday, August 22, 2025

Music Building 254, Don Wright Faculty of Music

AND

[Zoom](#)

8:45 - 9:00

Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

9:00 - 10:30 Session 1

Session Chair: Xi Li

Bohan (Jason) Li (University of Alberta), Symbols and Melodies: Cultural Metaphors and Identity Construction in Popular Music

Ava (Xuanting) Hou, (Western University) The Possible Sources of Trauma and Violence in Peking Opera: Training, Text, and Audience

Chao Tian (Boston University), Unheard Sounds: The Chinese Dulcimer as a Site of Sonic Imagination

10:30 - 10:45 Break

10:45 - 12:15 Session 2

Session Chair: Ran Jiang

Melissa Spraggs (Western University), Overcoming Barriers: Accessible Kodály Inspired Sight-Singing Strategies in University Choral Settings

Selin Uctu Atiseri (Western University), Theoretical Foundations of Colour-Based Methods in Music Education for Students with Dyslexia

Jonathan Sang-Joon Lee (Boston University), Informal Popular Music Education in Formal School Music Education

12:15 - 1:15 Lunch Break

1:15 - 2:45 Session 3

Session Chair: McKenna Sheeley-Jennings

Melissa Spraggs (Western University), Hormonal Effects on the Adult Female Singing Voice: Applications in the Voice Studio and Choral Rehearsal

André Lorenz B. Feria (Memorial University), "Break Free": Drag Performance and the Queer Politics of Music-Making in the Philippines

Zack Ferns (Indiana University), "Bodies as Drama": Integrating Embodied and Narrative Musical Analyses

2:45 - 3:00 Break

3:00 - 4:00 Session 4

Session Chair: McKenna Sheeley-Jennings

Ryan Baxter (Western University), **Lecture-Recital:** Schumann's *Waldszenen* (Forest Scenes), Op. 82

Saturday, August 23, 2025

(All times are in EST)

8:45 - 9:00

Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

Music Building 254, Don Wright Faculty of Music

AND

[Zoom](#)

9:00 - 10:30 Session 1

Session Chair: McKenna Sheeley-Jennings

D.J. Cleavinger (Boston University), Intent or Interpretation:

A Musico-Numerical Analysis of Bach's Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, WTC I, BWV 849

Joshua Brooks (University of Victoria), A Tune by Any Other Name: Melodic Primacy in Jazz Ontology as a Reaction to Copyright Law

Arlysse Quiring (University of Regina), The War and the War In Your Head:

A Comparative Musical Analysis of Dolores O'Riordan's *Zombie* (1994 & 2018)

10:30 - 10:45 Break

10:45 - 12:15 Session 2

Session Chair: Xi Li

Io Maeda (Dalhousie University), Yamada Kosaku's Symphony in F "Triumph and Peace"

Ryan Baxter (Western University), Posthumanism and Musical Instruments: The Aura of the Organ in the Age of Digital Reproduction

Forest Muran (Western University), The Composer Between Two Worlds: Hoffmann, Mysticism, and the Composer as a Mediator of the Transcendent

12:15 - 1:15 Lunch Break

1:15 - 2:15 Keynote

Session Chair: Ran Jiang

Dr. Christa Cole (Oberlin College and Conservatory), Effort as Structure in Musical Performance

2:15 - 2:30 Break

2:30 - 3:30 Session 3

Session Chair: McKenna Sheeley-Jennings

Mohammad Tonkaboni (Western University), Exploring Transformational Theory and Iranian Musical Traditions: A Cultural and Analytical Dialogue in Composition

Yilin Wang (Western University), Crafting Emotion in 'The Echo': Compositional Approaches to Arousal and Aesthetic Experience

3:30 - 3:45 Break

3:45 - 4:45 Session 4

Session Chair: McKenna Sheeley-Jennings

Justin Daly (Boston University), The Role of Competition in Music Education: Impact on Directors, Students, and The Future Of Instrumental Ensembles

Cheryl Ockrant (York University), Workshop: The Interactive Experience; interrupting performance anxiety with Play(ing)

Abstracts & Presenter Biographies

Symbols and Melodies:

Cultural Metaphors and Identity Construction in Popular Music

This paper uses Taiwanese singer 罗大佑 Lo Ta-yu's seminal work *Orphan of Asia* as a point of entry, guiding readers through the song and positioning music as a critical lens for understanding the evolution of identity in Taiwan and, more broadly, across Asia. By analyzing the song's lyrics and musical arrangement in conjunction with its historical context, this article uncovers Taiwan's struggle with identity amidst political isolation and social transformation during the Martial Law era of the 1980s. Through a postcolonial theoretical framework, the paper further dissects the layered symbolic metaphors embedded within the song, mapping out Taiwan's complex cultural identity shaped by colonial history, Cold War geopolitics, and post-war societal upheavals.

The significance of this song extends beyond its musical composition, serving as a profound reflection on history and emerging as a pivotal cultural symbol for interpreting Taiwan's collective memory and identity crises within shifting temporal contexts. *Orphan of Asia* not only embodies Taiwan's historical traumas, but also offers a distinctive perspective on issues of identity, belonging, and resistance in postcolonial societies. This paper emphasizes how popular music transcends its role as mere entertainment, functioning instead as a cultural text that shapes, reflects, and challenges national identity formation.

Bohan Li is a Ph.D. student in Popular Music and Media Studies at the University of Alberta. He serves as a Teaching and Research Assistant in the Music Department and sits on the editorial board of *Intonations* journal. His research focuses on media infrastructure and indie music within urban ethnomusicology, exploring cultural production and the music industry in contemporary China. With a background in classical saxophone (B.A., M.Mus), Bohan bridges performance and research in his work.

The Possible Sources of Trauma and Violence in Peking Opera: Training, Text, and Audience

Peking Opera, a traditional Chinese theatrical art form with a history spanning over two centuries, blends performance, vocal technique, and stylized movement into a singular aesthetic tradition. In late 19th- and early 20th-century China, it occupied a cultural position comparable to that of opera in 19th-century Europe—reflecting popular ideologies, engaging with contemporary social issues, and articulating a sense of national identity. Yet its controversial training methods, static ancient scripts, and certain aspects of audience culture—such as the enduring practice of booing—deserve broader public discussion. This research includes anonymous interviews with ten individuals in the Peking Opera industry of various ages, genders, and roles.

To this day, severe corporal punishment continues to be used as the primary method of training. Interviewees reported that many educators still view corporal punishment as necessary for discipline. Furthermore, students often abandon general education after entering secondary-level training. This long-standing training system requires critical reevaluation in the present day.

Unlike Western theatrical traditions, most Peking Opera scripts have remained unchanged for over two centuries. Many of these texts arguably contain entrenched gender-based violence, rigid hierarchies, and ideological content that has historically been used to serve political purposes. In contrast, reinterpretations of canonical Western operas have become widely accepted as meaningful forms of social critique. However, criticism of Peking Opera's narratives is often seen as disrespectful to traditional artists, and only a small number of performers and scholars have begun reflecting on or revising these scripts.

As a form of mass-oriented performance, Peking Opera also reflects some harmful aspects of audience culture. One notable example is the practice of “booing” when performers make visible mistakes on stage. Although still widely tolerated, this behavior is rarely questioned. While booing was also common in 19th-century Europe, it is now generally regarded as impolite. This study takes Peking Opera as an example and aims to introduce and critically reflect on traditions within non-Western musical practices in Western academic discourse. It focuses on the question of whether such traditions should be preserved as they are, or whether it is time to reevaluate and adapt them.

Ava Hou is an undergraduate student majoring in Popular Music Studies at Western University. She is passionate about exploring the dynamic relationship between music and social phenomena—investigating how social issues are reflected in the music industry, and how the industry, in turn, shapes and amplifies those issues. As both a scholar and a practitioner, Ava is dedicated to using her research and community work to improve the quality of life for others. As a member of the 2SLGBTQA+ community, she focuses on promoting the welfare of marginalized groups. In her spare time, she enjoys the company of her cats.

Unheard Sounds: The Chinese Dulcimer as a Site of Sonic Imagination

This research explores the generative potential of sound in artistic inquiry—how it functions not only as a felt experience but also as a mode of making meaning. Through structured extemporization and prepared instrumental technique, my research emerges from sustained engagement with cross-cultural music-making and experimental encounters with the Chinese dulcimer. I examine how sound formed through cultural memory, instrumental transformation, and performative embodiment not only expresses experience but also plays a role in shaping it.

By intervening in the traditional structure and expected timbre of the Chinese dulcimer, prepared techniques unsettle the instrument's established sonic identity. This process reorients the dulcimer from a symbol of regional folk culture to a site for exploratory sound-making. It opens up new capacities for interpretation, responsiveness, and creative formulation. Through performance frameworks, improvisation, and sonic documentation, I examine how musical gestures transform inner affect into shareable form, while also revealing the tensions between sensing and articulating experience.

Theoretically, I approach sound not merely as a vehicle for emotion or content, but as a mode of thinking embedded in bodily experience, cultural entanglement, and spatial positionality. This form of *sonic thinking* emphasizes listening as a practice of attention and embodied understanding. Within structured extemporization, performers are not confined by frameworks but activate them as dynamic constraints, inviting friction, surprise, and multiplicity. Such an approach brings to the surface the hidden architectures of sonic performance, while illuminating how musicians continually negotiate presence, meaning, and voice in the act of making sound.

This research bridges sound studies, embodied performance, and improvisation theory, offering a practice-based model for reconsidering how non-Western instruments can be activated within contemporary contexts. By positioning structured extemporization as both method and metaphor, the project argues that sonic practice is not only aesthetic but also epistemic, capable of reconfiguring how knowledge, identity, and relationality are produced and perceived. In doing so, it reclaims the expressive potential of marginalized instruments and listening positions, challenging inherited hierarchies of musical value and authorship.

Chao Tian is a Ph.D. student in ethnomusicology at Boston University. Her research focuses on musical improvisation, intercultural musical collaboration, and cultural diplomacy. A former member of China's renowned 12 Girls Band, Chao has performed in over 30 countries and regions worldwide. She is an alumna of the Artist in Residence program at the Strathmore Music Center, Art Omi: Music, and a NextLOOK artist at the University of Maryland. Chao's research project, *Unheard Sounds*, examines the transformation of artistic language in the intercultural collaboration of immigrant artists. Her project, *From China to Appalachia*, is dedicated to exploring the artistic commonalities between Chinese and American musical traditions.

Overcoming Barriers:

Accessible Kodály Inspired Sight-Singing Strategies in University Choral Settings

This session will explore the experiences of a Doctoral Choral Conducting Student, working with students entering university music programs, all of whom have a broad range of musical experiences. We will investigate how Kodály inspired sight-singing principles were implemented in rehearsals of two university choirs while serving a variety of backgrounds, skill levels, and lived experiences. Additionally, we will discuss the barriers faced and how challenges were addressed and overcome. Skills varied, with students who have learned to sight-sing on numbers, neutral syllables, or differing solfège systems. Do-based minor and la-based minor are two differing ways in which students may have learned to read minor scales. While providing insight to post-secondary educators, the strategies and reflections shared will relate to any educator needing to adapt their instruction to learners with differing skill levels and lived experiences.

Melissa Spraggs is a Manitoban music educator pursuing her DMA in Choral Conducting at Western University. In 2020, she obtained her Master of Music (Education) Degree from Brandon University, where her research explored strategies for engaging grade 3 boys in singing. Her research has been published in the *Canadian Music Educator* (63.3) and she has presented in Canada and abroad. Her teaching experience includes K-12 Music/Choir in Manitoba Public Schools, as well as Music Education and Choir courses at Brandon University. Her research interests include: Kodály-inspired musicianship in choral rehearsals, voice changes throughout the lifetime, and creating positive singing environments.

Theoretical Foundations of Colour-Based Methods in Music Education for Students with Dyslexia

Music educators have recommended the use of coloured notation strategies—ranging from coloured note heads to coloured music staves—to ease the music reading process for students with dyslexia. While colour-based methods are popular among music educators, recent technological improvements have also enabled the use of innovative strategies, such as Figurenotes and SpectrumPlay, which provide coloured placements for black and white traditional notation. Previous literature widely focuses on colour as a multisensory learning strategy for individuals with learning disabilities. Even though the literature presents a wide range of coloured strategies in music education as multisensory support, none of them clearly identifies the main objective of these methods on a theoretical basis. Building on the related literature, this paper examines the question: “Why do music educators use coloured strategies in music education for students with dyslexia?”

Empirical research shows the benefit of colour in easing the reading process in both text and notation reading for individuals with dyslexia. On the other hand, Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) has not been specifically identified as the main reason for implementing coloured methods by music educators and researchers. Nonetheless, there is thematic convergence suggesting that the effects of colour may go beyond multisensory strategies and provide cognitive support for dyslexic students based on CLT. When the core principles of CLT and the aim of colour use in music education are considered together, CLT highlights reduced cognitive load and schema acquisition for more effective learning experiences. The findings of this literature review indicate that there could be a connection between CLT and the use of coloured notation to support the music learning experiences of students with dyslexia. Understanding the role of coloured notation in the cognitive processes of individuals offers valuable insights for teaching strategies supporting dyslexic students, aligning with CLT to optimize learning and minimize the cognitive load.

Selin Uctu Atiseri is a PhD student at the Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University. She holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in violin performance from Dokuz Eylul University (Türkiye), and a master's degree in music education from Western University (2023). She formerly performed as a tutti violinist with the Bursa Regional State Symphony Orchestra and served as a full-time faculty member and second violin leader in the Dokuz Eylul University Symphony Orchestra. Her research focuses on dyslexia and social justice in music education. Selin also actively teaches and engages in community music education in London, Ontario.

Informal Popular Music Education in Formal School Music Education

Due to the development of digital media, today's adolescents listen to various styles of music on their handheld devices (Fuentes et al., 2019). However, music education researchers like Froehlich and Smith (2017) and Hess (2015) argued that formal school music was predominantly centered on Western classical music with a heavy emphasis on music literacy, skill mastery, and a top-down style of teacher-dominated music learning. Such narrowly focused music learning content and context may not accommodate the diverse music learning needs and interests of students in current schools. Williams (2012) argued that less than 20 percent of secondary students enrolled in school music education due to the misalignment between students' musical interests and school music learning content and context. Abrahams (2014) and Green (2008) argued that school music educators needed to implement informal popular music learning content and context in class to benefit more students in school music education.

The purpose of this research was to examine how school music teachers might effectively implement informal popular music education in formal school music education contexts. The three questions guided the study: (a) In what ways, if any, could informal popular music education benefit adolescent music students in formal school music settings? (b) What might be potential challenges in implementing informal popular music learning content and context in school music settings? (c) What are potential ways to increase the benefits and reduce the challenges of informal popular music education in formal school contexts?

The author argues that informal popular music learning can lead to students increasing their motivation for music learning (Abrahams, 2014; Frith, 2013) and enhancing collaborative skills (Green, 2008), self-regulated music learning skills (Green, 2008), and aural music learning (Abrahams, 2014). However, some students may feel isolated due to a heavy emphasis on Western pop music and aural music learning (Bowman, 2004; Hess, 2019). In addition, school music educators may encounter some potential challenges in classroom management, political tensions with school administrators and parents, and evaluating student learning progress. The author concluded that informal popular music education would benefit students in multiple ways; however, school music educators might need to consider a good balance and blend between informal and formal music learning approaches to best benefit their students in school music. Practical implications and further potential research studies will also be discussed in the presentation.

Jonathan Sang-Joon Lee (Jon Lee) is a K-12 music educator in Vancouver, Canada and a doctoral candidate in music education at Boston University. His research interests include cultural diversity, popular music education, and music education in special education. He has provided clinical sessions and research presentations at numerous conferences across North America. As a musician with a focus on pop, rock, and jazz, he has performed music at various venues in Canada, USA, Argentina, and his motherland South Korea. He has previously released two records as a band leader.

Hormonal Effects on the Adult Female Singing Voice: Applications in the Voice Studio and Choral Rehearsal

Hormones can have a significant impact on the bodies and voices of female singers throughout the course of their reproductive lives. It is therefore important for voice studio teachers and choral directors to have knowledge, tools, and strategies to support singers experiencing challenges due to hormonal fluctuations and changes. This session will discuss the nature of hormones and symptoms of their activity, providing practical ideas for ways voice studio teachers and choral directors can support and accommodate these challenges.

Melissa Spraggs is a Manitoban music educator pursuing her DMA in Choral Conducting at Western University. In 2020, she obtained her Master of Music (Education) Degree from Brandon University, where her research explored strategies for engaging grade 3 boys in singing. Her research has been published in the *Canadian Music Educator* (63.3) and she has presented in Canada and abroad. Her teaching experience includes K-12 Music/Choir in Manitoba Public Schools, as well as Music Education and Choir courses at Brandon University. Her research interests include: Kodály-inspired musicianship in choral rehearsals, voice changes throughout the lifetime, and creating positive singing environments.

“Break Free”:

Drag Performance and the Queer Politics of Music-Making in the Philippines

This paper challenges traditional notions of music-making by centering Filipino drag performance as a vital, embodied, and political musical practice. Focusing on the 2022 #PasigLaban rally in Metro Manila—where drag queen Minty Fresh performed Ariana Grande’s “Break Free” in front of 180,000 people—I argue that drag, through its rhythmic precision, visual choreography, and affective power, constitutes a form of collective musical expression. While lipsyncing is often dismissed as mimicry or spectacle, I contend that it demands a rethinking of how we understand performance, musical authorship, and embodied sound.

Drawing from Susan McClary’s work on music and embodiment, Jeremy Gilbert’s theory of rhythmic entrainment, and Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity, this study frames drag not as ancillary to music but as music-making itself—one that operates through gesture, affect, and the body’s relationship to rhythm. Robin James and Sara Ahmed further help theorize how genre, timbre, and orientation shape the political force of sonic performance.

Through case studies including televised platforms (Drag Race PH, Drag Den PH) and viral social media content by Filipino queens like NAIA and Eva Le Queen, I explore how drag reclaims pop music as a space for queer world-building, anti-authoritarian critique, and grassroots activism. These performances—often overlooked by academic musicology—destabilize rigid boundaries between artist and audience, “live” and mediated sound, and challenge whose musical practices are deemed legitimate.

Ultimately, this paper calls for a reorientation in music studies: one that recognizes drag performance as a form of sonic labor and political resistance. By centering queer, Filipino drag artists as music-makers, I argue for an expanded understanding of what music can be, who gets to make it, and how rhythm, sound, and spectacle can reshape public life.

André Lorenz Feria is a Filipino ethnomusicologist and music educator currently based in Toronto whose work focuses on gender, diaspora, and sonic activism. He holds an MA in Ethnomusicology from Memorial University of Newfoundland and degrees in Music Education and Creative Musical Arts from the University of the Philippines Diliman. His research explores how queer and diasporic identities are negotiated through music and performance, with particular attention to Filipino drag culture. He has presented at international conferences and is committed to decolonizing music education and performance studies by centering marginalized voices and embodied forms of resistance in both academic and community-based contexts.

“Bodies as Drama”:

Integrating Embodied and Narrative Musical Analyses

Theories of embodiment and musical narrative represent two approaches to musical analysis which move beyond more traditional, structural ones, and prioritize considerations of human experiences of creating and consuming music. Scholars of musical embodiment have theorized about how bodies are implied in notated musical works and how their actions are implicitly “heard” in musical performance. On the narrative side, Fred Maus, in his 1988 article, “Music as Drama,” demonstrated how interpreting musical structure in narrative terms approaches musical analysis in a way that is closer to how humans experience music. Despite the quality scholarship in both of these areas, they remain largely unconnected.

The work of the musical embodiment scholars featured in this paper does not incorporate ideas of musical narrative, while Maus’s methodology is largely drawn from his interpretation of musical scores, and not performance. This paper thus proposes an analytical approach which integrates these areas of scholarship while also drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s subject-object ontology from his late philosophy and Jonathan De Souza’s discussion of human-instrument relationships (following Martin Heidegger and James J. Gibson). Bringing all of these ideas together, I ultimately propose that analysis of the physical aspects of musical performance in terms of the tight network of relationships between performers, their bodies, instruments, and musical works can expand existing understandings of musical narratives.

This paper will analyze excerpts from two works, an Etude-Tableau by Sergei Rachmaninoff, and a piece for piano-four-hands by John Corigliano. In the case of the Rachmaninoff, the analysis will demonstrate how the performer’s physical actions in combination with the musical context can determine important plot events in Maus’s model of musical narratives. In the case of the Corigliano, consideration of the changing relationships between the players’ bodies and how this is aligned with the aural signaling of these relationships will supplement analysis of the characteristic and narrative elements of the overture. Ultimately, this paper aims to serve both analysts and performers in demonstrating how the combination of these fields of musical study can widen analytical and interpretive possibilities.

Zack Ferns is currently pursuing a Master of Music in Music Theory at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music, and received a Bachelor of Music in Composition from Western University’s Don Wright Faculty of Music. His developing research interests include the study of musical meaning and relationships between analysis and performance, and he enjoys considering these ideas in a wide variety of musical styles and contexts. At Indiana, he has been an associate instructor for courses in written theory and aural skills. Outside of the music-academic sphere, Zack most enjoys playing the piano and choral singing.

Lecture-Recital:

Schumann's *Waldszenen* (Forest Scenes), Op. 82

Schumann's *Waldszenen* (Forest Scenes), Op. 82, provide a picturesque, romantic, and somewhat melancholic vision of Germany's forests in the mid-nineteenth century. These nine short pieces provide fertile ground for reinterpreting how environment-themed music is received today. With movements such as "Lonely Flowers," "Friendly Landscape," and "The Bird as Prophet," *Waldszenen*'s programmatic and emotional meaning has changed dramatically since its composition. Accompanied by slide visuals that provoke reinterpretation of these Forest Scenes in an era of environmental degradation and climate crisis, this lecture-recital encourages listeners to reflect on how music connected with place and environment – whether old or new – can take on new meanings.

Schumann's late piano works were regarded with suspicion in his time due to his declining mental health, and *Waldszenen* remains rarely performed today. This lecture-recital includes an introduction to the music and discussion of scholarship which speaks to the reinterpretation of old music through new environmental lenses. The music is approximately twenty minutes, allowing time for group discussion and questions.

Waldszenen (Forest Scenes), Op. 82 (1848-49), by Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

1. *Eintritt* (Entry)
2. *Jäger auf der Lauer* (Hunter on the Lookout)
3. *Einsame Blumen* (Lonely Flowers)
4. *Verrufene Stelle* (Haunted Place)
5. *Freundliche Landschaft* (Friendly Landscape)
6. *Herberge* (Wayside Inn)
7. *Vogel als Prophet* (The Bird as Prophet)
8. *Jagdlied* (Hunting Song)
9. *Abschied* (Farewell)

Ryan Baxter is a candidate in the Doctor of Musical Arts program at Western University, studying solo piano performance. He also takes courses in Indigenous studies through the university's Memegwaan Indigenous Learning Honour program. His interests include organ performance and literature, keyboard pedagogy, instructional design, and ecomusicology. Beyond academic life, Ryan is Music Director and Organist at Rowntree Memorial United Church. He has worked as a teaching assistant, collaborative pianist, piano and theory instructor, festival adjudicator, in-classroom mathematics tutor, course facilitator, English teacher in Thailand, and in various other education-related positions.

Intent or Interpretation:

A Musico-Numerical Analysis of Bach's Fugue in C-Sharp Minor, WTC I, BWV 849

Since its publication over three hundred years ago, Johann Sebastian Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier has become a cornerstone of keyboard performance, its diverse preludes and fugues in a historic publication of all major and minor keys. The fourth fugue in C-sharp minor from Book I, contains a deep mysticism of theological hypotheticals as the musical material illuminates its numerical secrets.

Different symbols of three, five and seven are interwoven, each with musical and Biblical significance. Three is the most common example: the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the three years of Jesus' ministry, and the three days he laid in the tomb. Five can be found both in Old and New Testaments: the first five books of the Bible, known as the Law in Christianity and as the Torah or Pentateuch in Judaism, the five Messianic psalms where Christ speaks in the first person, and the five bleeding wounds of Jesus during his crucifixion. Seven is observed in the seven days of creation in Genesis, the seven miracles Jesus performs in revealing his divinity, and his seven last words spoken from the cross. Music theorists and analysts tend to regard the same numbers as the building blocks of Western harmony, that is, as intervals: thirds, fifths, and sevenths, with the true fundamental being thirds. As major and minor thirds are stacked in their permutations, all possible chord qualities result – major, minor, diminished, augmented, and all their sevenths.

The result is a palpably sacred enigma, somewhere near the junction of harmony and theology. An average listener could certainly feel there is something hypnotic and monumental as the work unfolds. Yet performers, analysts, and historians will wrestle with the question: could this single, succinct work be the peak of Bach's intentional synthesis of his music and his faith? This question is explored in the presentation alongside the musico-numerical findings of BWV 849 as a representation of Christ's crucifixion. After a brief contextualization of Bach's life at the time, focus will lie in the symbolic nature of this music and the corresponding Biblical scriptures. The complete prelude and fugue will be performed in summation.

Born and raised near Cincinnati, OH, USA, **D.J. Cleavinger** grew up exploring many facets of the arts such as musical theatre in the community and high school, and studio art, earning three gold medals in the National Scholastic Competition. He completed his Bachelor of Music at Miami University in 2021, and is a 2025 Master of Music graduate of Boston University, where he studied with Pavel Nersessian. D.J. has performed in recitals and summer intensives in Austria, Germany, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Puerto Rico, and Spain; he has studied with esteemed artists such as Dror Biran, Kenneth Griffiths, Jihye Chang, Frank Huang, Siok Lian Tan, and Asiya Korepanova.

A Tune by Any Other Name:

Melodic Primacy in Jazz Ontology as a Reaction to Copyright Law

The ontological status of jazz standards has been the subject of significant scholarly interest. Musicologists and philosophers have attempted to understand how work identity operates within the ontologically loose practices found in jazz. Jazz standards are underspecified according to Western art music expectations, with their discrete formal features often being reducible to a 32-bar melody (the head) alongside a suggested harmonic foundation. The high level of indeterminacy attendant in the realization of jazz standards has led to conflicting views on their ontological status. Brian Kane's 2024 book *Hearing Double: Jazz, Ontology, Auditory Culture* proposes an ontological model constructed specifically to understand jazz. According to Kane, the features of jazz standards do not result from top-down authorial diktat, but emerge from networks of replication (whereby jazz standards are preformed) and nomination (whereby jazz standards are identified with each other via a common name).

This paper builds on Kane's model by highlighting an ontologically relevant feature of jazz which is underemphasized by Kane, and proposing an etiology for this feature. I argue that work identity in jazz is attached most strongly to melody compared to other musical features, and that this melodic primacy developed in part as a reaction to American copyright law. To evidence melodic primacy in jazz ontology, I cite contrafacts (which are jazz standards that develop when a new melody is written over the harmonic foundation of another standard, resulting in a new work identity), the permissive use of reharmonization (which allows for a high degree of harmonic flexibility without disrupting work identity), and the formal use of pre-written melody (performances in jazz often begin and end with a statement of the head, further emphasizing the importance of melody to work identity).

Building on the historical and legal research of Barry Kernfeld and Joseph Fishman, I argue that melodic primacy resulted in part from copyright law, as melody is the primary musical feature considered in infringement cases, forcing its special ontological consideration. Under standard judicial practice, harmonic progressions do not enjoy copyrightable status, allowing for multiple discrete work identities with the same harmony, but not the same melody.

Joshua Brooks just completed a Master's degree in Musicology at the University of Victoria and is beginning a PhD in Musicology at UVic next month. His research interests include jazz and popular music, the intersection of philosophy and music, as well as musical notation and its relationship to performance practice.

The War and the War In Your Head:

A Comparative Musical Analysis of Dolores O’Riordan’s *Zombie* (1994 & 2018)

Taking an interdisciplinary approach to popular music analysis, in this paper Dolores O’Riordan’s *Zombie*, both the original 1994 piece and the 2018 cover by Bad Wolves, is discussed in a multi-faceted capacity. A complex piece that has become both an anti-war protest song and a signal for dialogues about mental health, the Bad Wolves cover is particularly significant as a post-humous commentary on the legacy of the piece and Dolores O’Riordan’s musical and sociocultural impact with The Cranberries. The critical analysis demonstrates the piece as an important work in the study of how we communicate trauma in music, and the narrative of mental health challenges in society.

Initially contextualizing *Zombie* in both versions of the piece, the changes to key, instrumentation, and performance genre are compared and analyzed. Further discussion situates the original piece in terms of the history of violent conflict in Ireland, leading to instigating events that inspired the writing of an anti-war song, and what continues to be a protest anthem today. The 2018 Bad Wolves cover is similarly situated in production after Dolores O’Riordan’s tragic death. A brief analysis of the changes made to the score leads to a deeper discussion of the importance of lyrics in popular music, both in the poetry of the original song and the subtle changes made within the cover. The importance of visual elements in the music video productions of these two versions reveals significant imagery in both Belfast footage and soundstage work. The conclusion and summary reveals the importance of musical and lyrical creativity in the communication of trauma and mental health challenges in music.

Please note that this presentation includes discussion of topics that may trigger readers/listeners, including war and violence, the harm and death of children, drug use, self-harm and death. Please proceed with caution and prioritize personal well-being.

Arlysse Quiring (BMus Performance, LA Diploma) is an MFA student in Media and Artistic Research at the University of Regina. Her interdisciplinary research examines the relationship between music performance and trauma communication, within a health humanities lens. As a bassoonist she has been performing and instructing professionally for more than 20 years. In autumn 2024 Arlysse was honoured to receive a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master’s. Beyond creative endeavors and academic research, she works in reference and instruction at the University of Regina Library. Arlysse also enjoys reading, alt rock and heavy metal, herb gardening, cookery, and watching horror movies with her spouse and cats.

Yamada Kosaku's Symphony in F "Triumph and Peace"

This paper explores the significance of Yamada Kōsaku's *Symphony in F "Triumph and Peace"* (1912), the first symphony composed by a Japanese musician, as a landmark in the development of Western classical music in Japan. Set against the backdrop of the Meiji period's rapid modernization and cultural transformation, the paper traces the socio-political factors that facilitated the introduction and adoption of Western music, particularly its role in education and military reform. Born in 1886, Yamada came of age in a Japan already deeply influenced by Western culture. His early exposure to church hymns, military bands, and Western education laid the foundation for his musical career. With the support of a wealthy patron Koyata Iwasaki, Yamada studied abroad in Berlin, where he composed the symphony as his graduation project, blending European symphonic form with his Japanese identity.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section discusses Yamada's biography, emphasizing how his upbringing and education shaped his musical path. The next section contextualizes the dissemination of Western music during the Meiji Restoration, highlighting why traditional Japanese music was not suited for public education and how Western music's theoretical systems made it preferable for mass instruction. The last section discusses a detailed musicological and theoretical analysis of the first movement of the symphony revealing structural parallels with Western classical forms such as the sonata, but also shows how Yamada may have subtly incorporated a melodic motif reminiscent of the Japanese national anthem *Kimigayo*, possibly influenced by Gagaku traditions. This blending of styles suggests a conscious effort to assert a Japanese identity within a Western framework.

Ultimately, the paper argues that Yamada's *Symphony in F* exemplifies the successful synthesis of Japanese and Western musical elements, challenging Eurocentric notions of classical music composition. Yamada not only demonstrated that a Japanese composer could master the symphonic form but also contributed significantly to establishing a Western classical tradition in Japan. His legacy, often overshadowed by his work in children's songs, deserves greater recognition as a pioneering figure who helped redefine Japan's musical identity in the 20th century.

Io Maeda is from Osaka, Japan, and is earning a Master of Arts in Musicology at Dalhousie University. He graduated from Wabash College (IN, USA) with a double major in English and Music, and a minor in German. He has 2 years of experience working as a journalist for the campus newspaper and a local newspaper. He worked as a librarian for 3 years at Wabash College. While studying abroad at Harlaxton College in Grantham, U.K., he worked at the music library of The Parish Church of St. Wulfram. He is an active violist (retired violinist) who has joined in various music ensembles.

Posthumanism and Musical Instruments:

The Aura of the Organ in the Age of Digital Reproduction

Posthumanist philosophy challenges traditional human-centered views and categories, and has found relevance in several areas of music scholarship, including organology. This paper engages the pipe organ with posthumanist theories of agency and Walter Benjamin's concept of 'aura.'

The organ developed a unique aura as a musical instrument through its ritualistic function in the Christian church, symbolic relationship with divine order, status as a complex technological and artistic object, and integration with architecture. Benjamin's assertion that reproduction diminishes an artwork's aura is interrogated through the organ's transformation over time, especially in response to industrialization, secularization, and digital technologies.

Related to aura is agency – the organ's agency is conceptualized not solely as a human-activated instrument, but as a distributed network involving human and nonhuman actors. This posthumanist perspective helps trace the organ's transition from a sacred, auratic object to a secularized, commodified instrument, culminating in the advent of digital technologies like Hauptwerk. This software enables near-perfect simulations of historic organs, challenging traditional notions of authenticity, materiality, and embodiment.

While Benjamin lamented the loss of aura through reproduction, this paper argues that reproduction redistributes rather than destroys the organ's aura. Hauptwerk exemplifies a posthumanist re-networking of the organ's agency and aura, integrating the instrument into new social and technological contexts. The organ reveals itself as a posthuman instrument, continually shaped by technological and cultural changes.

Ryan Baxter is a candidate in the Doctor of Musical Arts program at Western University, studying solo piano performance. He also takes courses in Indigenous studies through the university's Memegwaanh Indigenous Learning Honour program. His interests include organ performance and literature, keyboard pedagogy, instructional design, and ecomusicology. Beyond academic life, Ryan is Music Director and Organist at Rowntree Memorial United Church. He has worked as a teaching assistant, collaborative pianist, piano and theory instructor, festival adjudicator, in-classroom mathematics tutor, course facilitator, English teacher in Thailand, and in various other education-related positions.

The Composer Between Two Worlds:

Hoffmann, Mysticism, and the Composer as a Mediator of the Transcendent

Musicology has a blind spot when it comes to the transcendent in music. Since the 1980s, with the growing influence of scholars associated with the new musicology movement, including musicologists such as Rose Subotnik and Richard Taruskin, musical scholarship has come to distrust the transcendent, with Taruskin claiming that the transcendent “tacitly supports the repressive status quo” under the lofty guise of mystical detachment. This twentieth-century Adornoian perspective, whose influence nevertheless persists in the academy today, has limited scholarly understanding of Romantic musical thought. In an article discussing E. T. A. Hoffmann’s use of the term “Romantic”, for example, Robert Mollenauer neglects to explore the influence of the transcendent and eighteenth-century Christian mysticism on Hoffmann’s music criticism. This absence leaves a conspicuous gap in our ability to accurately interpret Hoffmann in the context of his time, rendering some statements of his difficult to decipher, including his reference to Mozart’s music as a guide into the “*Geisterreich*” – the “spirit realm”.

By illuminating some of the often-neglected complexities involved in the nineteenth-century understanding of the mystical and the transcendent, and by revealing the broader context of the legacy of mystical thought within which Hoffmann developed his understanding of the relationship between music and the Romantic, this presentation aims to provide nuance to the musicological discussion surrounding the transcendent in Hoffmann’s early music criticism. This presentation asks – what did Hoffmann mean by a “*Geisterreich*”? What were the sources of his understanding of music as a mediator between worlds, so rare in the previous century? This presentation investigates the intellectual influences of Christian mystics such as Emanuel Swedenborg and Jakob Böhme, in addition to the burgeoning fascination with dreams and drug-induced altered states of the age, as found in the writings of G. H. Schubert as well as in Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, to address these questions. This presentation ultimately argues that *contra* glosses by such scholars as Wye Allanbrook and Richard Taruskin, we limit our understanding of Romantic musical thought when we fail to take seriously the category of the transcendent as a legitimate mode of musical experience.

Forest Muran is a doctoral candidate at the University of Western Ontario. His dissertation focuses on the influences of mysticism and transcendent thought on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music, particularly in reference to the influence of Christian mystics such as Emanuel Swedenborg, the contemporary interest in dreams and other altered states of consciousness, and the archetypal dimensions of nineteenth-century musical Orientalism. Forest’s research focuses on music, politics, religion, and the transcendent, and he has written on topics as diverse as musical censorship in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the ayahuasca rituals of the Brazilian church of Santo Daime.

Effort as Structure in Musical Performance

This talk has two aims: 1) to theorize effort in musical performance; and 2) to introduce an analytical methodology that shows how effort shapes musical structure. When a cellist quickly shifts her left hand up the fingerboard, a flutist carefully regulates their breath on a soft sustained note, or ensemble members coordinate their movements to cue an entrance, each performer invests a certain degree and kind of effort to undertake that musical action. I propose an expansive notion of effort that emerges from the interaction of gesture (both physical and musical), instrumental affordances, and performativity. I especially highlight the qualitative dimensions of these elements. As effort changes in intensity and quality throughout a performance, it impacts phrasing, narrative, and affect at multiple temporal levels.

I illuminate effort's individual elements and its structuring potential through analyses of several post-1900 works. I analyze instrumental gestures in Sofia Gubaidulina's *Sonata for Double Bass and Piano* (1975) and expressive gestures in Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Rituals* for string quartet (2023) to show how effort intertwines physical and musical gesture and dramatizes affective trajectories. I then compare arrangements of Arnold Schoenberg's *Klavierstück*, Op. 19, No. 4 (1911) for guitar solo and duo to show how instrumental affordances enable different loci of peak effort intensity. Finally, I analyze recordings of Shulamit Ran's *East Wind* for solo flute (1988) to examine how other elements essential to performance—such as facial expressions—convey gradations of effort, which may or may not align with the performer's experience of technical or interpretive difficulty.

To conclude, I introduce a question-guided methodology for analyzing effort's relationship to musical structure, broadly conceived. The questions themselves are simple: What is the performer doing? How are they doing it? Why do those moments stand out? And what is the effect? As I demonstrate through close analysis of two performances of Elisabeth Lutyens's *The Valley of Hatsuse*, Op. 62 (1965), these questions highlight specific *effort qualities*—such as precarity, emphasis, and release—that emerge from unique combinations of gesture, instrumental affordances, and performativity. As these effort qualities change and interact within and across instruments, they create structural connections and developments at local and large-scale levels. My hope is that attendees may apply this flexible methodology to a variety of musical contexts and, in so doing, delineate and characterize additional effort qualities.

Christa Cole (she/her) is a music theorist who studies effort in performance, especially in post-1900 classical repertoires. She has presented work on effort and gesture at various regional, national, and international conferences, and she has published on performance

technique and interpretation in J.S. Bach's solo violin writing in *Music Theory Online*. In her role as Assistant Professor of Music Theory at Oberlin College and Conservatory, Cole draws on her experience as a violinist, pianist, singer, and mandolin player to help students connect classroom topics to their musical lives. Cole also currently serves as co-chair of the Society for Music Theory's Performance and Analysis Interest Group.

Exploring Transformational Theory and Iranian Musical Traditions: A Cultural and Analytical Dialogue in Composition

This presentation explores the integration of Western transformational theory with traditional Iranian musical elements in a contemporary composition. The work draws upon the *Chahargah* mode—an Iranian scale related to the double harmonic scale—and rhythmic structures rooted in classical Persian poetry and the *Radif* repertoire. By employing pitch-class and beat-class set theory, the project reimagines modal and metric elements within a modern compositional framework.

Central to the piece is the interval of the augmented second, characteristic of *Chahargah*, which shapes both harmonic progressions and melodic designs. This interval is developed through transformational operations that connect traditional trichord and tetrachord forms to modern harmonic language. In parallel, rhythmic patterns inspired by Persian poetic meters—such as those found in *Ghazal*, *Dobeyti*, and *Basteh Negar*—are subjected to metric transformation and variation, revealing their expressive and structural potential in new contexts.

The composition evolves through cyclical repetition and transformation, metaphorically engaging with the poetic structures of Persian verse. Its rhythmic and modal vocabulary is embedded in a post-tonal idiom, creating a unique cultural dialogue that merges inherited musical frameworks with contemporary analytical and aesthetic strategies.

A live video demonstration will accompany the presentation, offering a practical illustration of the interaction between theory, tradition, and creativity. This paper contributes to ongoing inquiries into the relationship between music and meaning by questioning how inherited musical structures can function in atonal environments while still communicating cultural identity.

Ultimately, this presentation reflects on how compositional practice can serve as a site of both analytical experimentation and cultural expression. It offers a model for how composers might engage with diverse musical traditions—not as fixed systems, but as dynamic sources for creative reinterpretation and transformation.

Mohammad Tonkaboni, also known as Seyed Mohammad Tonkaboni, is an Iranian composer, Santour player, and educator. His work encompasses various genres, including electro-acoustic music, orchestral composition, Iranian classical music, and film scoring. Tonkaboni is known for integrating elements of Iranian classical music into his compositions, seamlessly blending traditional styles with Western techniques. His compositions have been commissioned by renowned ensembles such as KNM Berlin. After a call for scores from the Tehran Symphonic Orchestra (2021), he was one of the composers chosen by the jury. Tonkaboni holds a Master of Arts in Music Composition from the Iran

University of Art and is currently a PhD candidate in composition at the University of Western Ontario, where he also works as a teaching assistant. In addition to his compositional work, Tonkaboni has taught at prominent universities in Iran and directed the Bass Art Company. He has held leadership positions within Iran's music community, including serving as a judge, music director, and head of the National Music Association at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (KPF). He is also a board member of the Composers Association of the Iran Music House.

Crafting Emotion in 'The Echo':

Compositional Approaches to Arousal and Aesthetic Experience

This essay explores how compositional strategies can be designed to shape emotional response and aesthetic experience, using *The Echo*, my compositional work for piano quintet, inspired by the myth of Echo and Narcissus, as a case study. It addresses how harmony, rhythm, dynamics, and timbre can be structured to engage emotional mechanisms such as expectancy, entrainment, and aesthetic judgment. Through post-compositional analysis grounded in music cognition theories by Juslin, Meyer, Fales, and Wallmark, the study finds that specific techniques, such as the Möbius Tone System, layered micro-dynamics, rhythmic decay patterns, and timbral manipulation, can evoke emotional states of fragility, reflection, and distance.

This topic is essential because it expands the possibilities for emotional communication in contemporary composition, offering new pathways beyond traditional frameworks. By connecting cognitive theory to compositional practice, the research highlights how carefully structured musical elements can enhance listener engagement. This study invites composers and researchers alike to reconsider the role of emotion in new music and supports future listener-focused research that deepens our understanding of aesthetic experience.

Yilin Wang is a composer, pianist, and sound designer who blends Chinese aesthetics with Western techniques. She is a master's student in composition at Western University, specializing in music cognition. At the Graduate Association Conference, she presents her essay on *The Echo*, a piano quintet that explores emotions using the Möbius Tone System and extended techniques. Her works, including *Lunar Prism* and *The Tiny Dream of the Sea*, have been performed at festivals like LunArt and Tuckamore. Previously, she was a senior audio engineer at Hunan Broadcasting, leading over 300 projects and winning 25 national awards. Yilin also creates immersive soundscapes with Ambisonics and Max/MSP.

The Role of Competition In Music Education:

Impact On Directors, Students, and The Future Of Instrumental Ensembles

Competition is engrained in music education in schools for many decades. Because of this, the line between whether it is necessary or not is blurred. Competition can motivate students, highlight and recognize band programs, advocacy, and more. However, is it essential? How many directors would agree if given the chance to entirely forgo competitive music-making without losing all the benefits? How many would enjoy the opportunity to devote more time away from their job? Students certainly can enjoy competitions, but how many would be interested in entirely different opportunities? With competitive music-making being widely different across the United States but still present and often felt as necessary, combined with national teacher shortages and dwindling mentor programs for young teachers, there must be a better way. Depending on whom and where you ask them, you may receive varying opinions on whether competition benefits our students and music education. This point of tension is an issue this paper explores.

Therefore, this paper aims to review the available literature on competition in instrumental ensembles to understand better how it affects those participating, how they are structured, and how competition may change. I primarily include available literature in music and music education journals in this review. Search terms included band competitions, adjudication festivals, marching band, school music competitions, and music contests. Although there is an adequate amount of literature on this topic, the purpose of prior research often included examinations of contest literature, adjudication rubrics, experiences of students and teachers, benefits of music competition, and negative impacts of music competition.

Justin Daly is an active music educator, clinician, and adjudicator from Connecticut, USA. He currently serves as the Director of Bands at East Lyme High School, where he directs the marching, concert, and jazz bands. He earned bachelor's degrees in music education and music, as well as a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a focus in music education from the University of Connecticut. Justin is currently pursuing his doctorate in music education from Boston University.

Workshop:

The Interactive Experience; interrupting performance anxiety with Play(ing)

This colloquium presentation will begin by outlining the interplay of trauma, body memory, vulnerability, and shame in the context of performing arts, by outlining Polyvagal Theory and its relevance to safety and creativity. Polyvagal Theory describes the evolution of how our nervous system adapts to challenges by providing an organizing principle of identifying neural circuits and defensive strategies; identifying these principles and their hierarchy can explain and ultimately predict performance anxiety. In competitive or other vulnerable situations, isolation from peers can cause shame, and while familiarity with the fight/flight/freeze nervous system reactivity continues to grow, less has been acknowledged toward the social connections through free play that can bring inclusion and creative growth.

The goal of the workshop/recital is to foster new ideas to anxiety solutions while on stage, while also renewing the creative spirit in Play(ing). The presentation will discuss how we, as performers, presenters, and human beings, can find our way beyond extreme anxiety to a place of acceptance, so that we can begin to work *with* our nervous system, rather than against it as has often been the traditional model of therapeutic approach to performance anxiety. This approach is a bottom-up method, meaning the body memory dictates the 'story' to the brain. By understanding the central nervous system, we can interrupt the anxiety ladder using free play. Simple and accessible exercises will be explained in detail and demonstrated. A social engagement demonstration using free play/free improvisation with myself on cello and Casey Sokol at the piano will end the lecture portion.

The integration of Polyvagal Theory and free improvisation is a key part of the creative re-engagement process while addressing anxiety, and can help foster resilience, safety, and the rediscovery of creative expansiveness. By blending trauma recovery with the innate human need for connection, we underscore the importance of connectedness, co-regulation, and social engagement in nurturing mental and physical well-being.

Toronto cellist **Cheryl O** is a dedicated multi-media collaborator blending her improvisations with live theatre, dance, film, circus arts, text, poetry, painting and electronica. She co-creates with CCMC, for Contact Dance, CoExistDance, Hercinia Arts and abstract painters and filmmakers, exploring the deep relationships between sound, space and energy. Since the onset of the pandemic, Cheryl has turned her focus toward her coaching practice in performance anxieties and body memory trauma, combining aspects of Free Improvisation through a Polyvagal Theory lens to create new social and neural connections. She reveres in collaborating with others in story-telling in all forms.