NEURODIVERGENT MUSIC STUDIES CONFERENCE 2026

JULY 1ST
ASYNCHRONOUS
PROGRAM

UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council

CHASE
Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-East England

Conference Day 2 : Contents

This is the programme for the second day of the conference, ***July 1st, 2026****.*

Welcome (page 3)

How Does This Asynchronous Day Work? (page 4)

Presentations Menu

- Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research (page 5)
- Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences (page 5)
- Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices (page 6)
- Theme 4: Pedagogy and Practice (pages 6 to 7)
  - Music Education
  - Higher Education

How to get Support (page 8)

Abstracts & Presenter Bios

- Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research (pages 9 to 13)
- Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences (pages 14 to 20)
- Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices (pages 21 to 28)
- Theme 4: Pedagogy and Practice (pages 29 to 40)
  - Music Education
  - Higher Education

Our Team (page 41)

- About the Neurodivergent Music Network
- Our Volunteers
- Our Committee

Welcome

We are excited to welcome you to the first ever, inaugural **Neurodivergent Music Studies Conference**! This international conference aims to challenge current perspectives of music studies in relation to neurodivergence through centering many neurodivergent perspectives.

The existing literature centers neurotypical perspectives that traditionally attempt to use music to change, alter or "cure" neurodivergent people. The Neurodivergent Music Studies Conference defies these neuronormative constructs by sharing and uplifting work by neurodivergent music researchers, showcasing neurodivergent voices and contributions, and reflecting neurodivergent lived experiences of music.

We are guided by Dr. Nick Walker's vision of a "neurocosmopolitan future", a world where no single mind is considered "normal" or desirable. We ask: **what does a neurocosmopolitan future look like in music research?** By imagining it, and by actively centering neurodivergent voices, we move away from pathologising neurodivergence and towards a model of collective knowledge creation.

Our approach is interdisciplinary, and we welcome researchers from a wide range of fields, including but not limited to: performance practice, auraldiversity, Mad studies, disability studies, ethno- and ludomusicology, music psychology, music education, music therapy, cognitive neuroscience, music theory and composition, architecture, acoustics, and more!

The **Neurodivergent Music Network** is committed to providing an accessible, equitable, and neurodivergent-led space that is safe, comfortable, and welcoming to all neurotypes. As part of this commitment, our conference will not tolerate ableist language and promotions of "cure culture", the behavioural modification of innate neurodivergent traits, or the use of ABA therapy.

We warmly welcome you to the first ever Neurodivergent Music Studies Conference!

Sincerely,
The Conference Organising Committee:

Tara Allen (she/her)

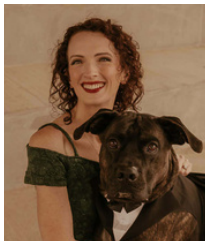
Nina Danon (she/they)

Niamh Gallagher (she/her)

Calanthe Milton (she/her)

Carmen Rosas-Pérez

Jess Walls (she/her)



How does this asynchronous day work?

Because live digital spaces can cause social and processing fatigue, the second half of our conference takes place entirely at your own pace.

On July 1st, you will be able to log into a password protected page on our website, where you will gain access to a series of video presentations and posters.

You will also have the possibility to **ask questions to the authors** in a dedicated space on our conference Discord server, **between 10:10am EDT / 15:10pm BST** and **14:00 EDT/ 19:00 BST**.

Presentations and discussions on the day will be organised thematically (see Presentations Menu on the next page!). You can mix and match the virtual posters and video presentations you wish to watch. They will remain available until the end of August (but you will only be able to ask questions to the authors in our Discord Q&As on July 1st).

All those who have registered for the conference will receive a link and password to enter the private page on our website to view the presentations. You can register for the conference at the following link:
https://www.neurodivergentmusicnetwork.com/2026-virtual-summer-conference.html

Presentations Menu

Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research

The Impact of Mixed Methodology on Research Involving Autistic Individuals (video) by Jess Walls

"What is Autistic Music?" Frameworks for Analysing and Mapping the Creative Process (video) by Nina Danon

Designing Accessible Research Materials: From Recruitment to Data Collection (poster) by Erin Hopkins and Janel Long

Accessibility in Music Archives for Neurodivergent Users: Findings from a DUR study (poster) by Elizabeth A. Pineo

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences

Who owns listening? (video) by Merve Erez

"The Bees are too loud": ADHD'ers Sound Preferences as an Aid during Daily Task Completion (video) by Tara Allen

Drums keep pounding a rhythm to the neurodivergent brain: the impacts of music in everyday environments (poster) by Carmen Rosas Pérez

Neurodivergence and Clinical Uncertainty: Rethinking Medical Professionalism Through Music (poster) by Ryan Weber

Music, art and facial expression: To what extent do autistic traits influence emotional recognition? (poster) by Sophie Homatas and Adam Lonsdale

Presentations Menu continued

Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices

Beyond the Deficit Narrative: A Systematic Review of Self-Representation and Creative Agency Among Neurodivergent Musicians (2015–2025) (video) by Uriel Nutifafa Lotsu & Theophilus Adu Achido

Dromos/Autos: The Autistic Ontology as Performance (video) by Matt Rogerson

Neurodivergent Aesthetics as a Creative Framework in Music and Multimedia Arts (poster) by Jay Afrisando

How Music Creation Impacts Emotional Dysregulation in Students with ADHD: A Practice-Research Reflection (poster) by Delaney Keene

Embodied Listening: Neurodivergent Sensitivities and Composition in Relationship with Outdoor Spaces (poster) by Shanna Sordahl

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice

Music Education:

Rhythm, Identity, and Access: My Neurodivergent Journey Into Hip Hop Education (video) by Andrew Wang

Access in Playtime: Reframing and Restructuring Toys for Aurally Diverse Children Through Imagination, Symbolic Language & Conviviality (video) by Marc Perez

Finding Your Voice - How to Use Free Improvisation to Empower Students (video) by Timothy Simmons

Reflections on a values-based approach to nurturing musical cultures in Autism Resource Bases for neurodivergent pupils (poster) by Beth Pickard and Alex Lupo

Presentations Menu continued

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice continued

Higher Education:

A Two-Pronged Approach to Increasing the Accessibility of Collegiate Music Education (video) by Rhoda Bernard

The autistic inclusivity of music conservatoires: the wellbeing experiences of autistic students in high level musical learning environments (video) by Georgia Dawson

Neurodivergence at Music Conservatoires – Potential barriers from the students' perspective (poster) by Stefanie Dzjubak

Confronting the Stereotype of the Operatic "Mad Woman" through Tabletop Roleplaying Games: A Case Study for Gaetano Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor (1835) (poster) by Elizabeth McLain and Christopher Campo-Bowen

Exploring the entwinement of artistic processes and neurodivergent lived experience: Creating greater equity and access for neurodivergent university arts students (poster) by Timothy Smith

How to get support

Support

If you need support at any point, you can contact our organising committee and volunteer team in the following ways:

On Discord:

- Open a support ticket in **#support-requests**. This will create a channel that only you and the team can see, where someone will then pop in to help you. We will aim to respond to all requests ASAP, but please bear in mind that we are a multiply-neurodivergent, multiply-disabled team across timezones who are running things on a volunteer basis.

- You can also tag the moderators via @Moderator if you need public help in a channel.

By Email:

- You can email neurodivergentmusicnetwork@gmail.com for support. We will be checking this email address regularly during the event, but please note that replies may not be immediate.

For urgent matters, please reach out on **Discord.**

Abstracts & Presenter Bios

Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research

The Impact of Mixed Methodology on Research Involving Autistic Individuals

Jess Walls; Dallas College, The Neurodivergent Music Network

Autism does not fit neatly inside a box. It does not check specific boxes every time, and the neurodiversity spectrum frequently presents differently than the Autistic individual's lived experience. Due to this disparate phenomenon, it is critical to gather not only generalizable statistical data, but also to obtain individual stories from those on the spectrum to help the numbers make sense within the context. As an autistic researcher exploring mental health who has used both quantitative and qualitative data in my research, I would like to make a case for the critical importance of mixed methodological research in any studies where participants may be on the spectrum, to fully explore the breadth, depth, and intertwining complexities of the neurodivergent experience.

Bio: Dr. Jess Walls (she/her) is an interdisciplinary music education researcher whose work explores the intersections of music, mental health, and neurodivergence in educational settings. She holds a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Texas at Arlington, a Master of Music Education from Texas Woman's University, and a PhD in Music Education from Auburn University. With over a decade of experience as a K–12 music educator, Dr. Walls brings a practitioner-informed perspective to her research, focusing on how music classrooms (particularly choral ensembles) can serve as spaces for emotional awareness, regulation, and student wellbeing. Her work integrates evidence-informed strategies drawn from psychology into music education contexts, with an emphasis on practical application for educators. Her positionality as a late diagnosed autistic woman with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, along with experience overcoming significant mental health challenges, make this work both personally and professionally significant. Dr. Walls has presented her research at state and national conferences and has led professional development for K–12 educators, accompanied by her cardiac alert service dog, Phantom. She is currently preparing multiple manuscripts for publication based on her recent studies. Her ongoing and future research includes interdisciplinary collaborations and a proposed NIH-funded postdoctoral project focused on music, mental health, and support for neurodivergent learners. She is also a Mental Health First Aid–certified trainer, supporting educators in fostering responsive and inclusive learning environments.

Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research continued

"What is Autistic Music?": Frameworks for Analysing and Mapping the Creative Process

Nina Danon; Goldsmiths, University of London, The Neurodivergent Music Network

"What is Autistic music?" Ask ten different autistic musicians, and you will likely get ten different answers. Is it any music that is made by autistic creators? Is it music that resonates with Autistic culture? Or something else entirely?

To study autistic music effectively, we must first clarify its definition and examine how our conceptual frameworks shape our research methodologies. This talk introduces three distinct frameworks for conceptualising Autistic music, discussing their applications across practice research, musicology, autoethnography, and Neurodivergent Music Studies.

Using a combination of all three frameworks, I will present preliminary findings from an analysis of the creative processes of autistic musicians. We will examine the key characteristics of these approaches, ranging from full-bodied perceptions of music to shared monotropic flow, and reflect on how they uniquely shape our relationship to music-making.

Bio: Nina Danon (she/they) is a disabled and multiply-neurodivergent composer, researcher, and co-founder of the Neurodivergent Music Network. She is developing a musical neuroqueering practice for her AHRC CHASE-funded PhD at Goldsmiths. She is dedicated to establishing Neurodivergent Music Studies as a cross-disciplinary field to investigate how neurodivergence interconnects with the creation, performance, and reception of music. Nina draws constant inspiration from her special interests: whether immersing herself in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien, dissecting the works of Stephen Sondheim, or exploring her fascination with whales, these passions fuel her academic and musical life.

More information: https://linktr.ee/ncdanon

Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research continued

Designing Accessible Research Materials: From Recruitment to Data Collection

Erin Hopkins; Augustana College in Rock Island
Janel Long; The University of Memphis and The Mississippi State University

In this poster, we will showcase strategies for maximizing accessibility when designing and adapting research materials at every stage of the research process from recruitment through data collection. Designing for accessibility is essential when working with research participants with disabilities to ensure that they are able to fully understand and engage with the research process (e.g. Nicholas et al., 2019; Nicolaidis et al., 2019; Sharpe et al., 2022). However, it is also an important consideration for all music education researchers because unintentional barriers may introduce sample bias through exclusion of certain participants (Feldman et al., 2012; Goegan et al., 2018; Meyers & Andresen, 2000), and because improved accessibility may benefit participants regardless of disability status (Schmutz et al., 2016). We will share examples of accessible recruitment, consent, and data collection materials that we have designed for two currently ongoing studies with different participant populations and methodologies: a participatory action research project about inclusive music education involving community partners with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, and an online quantitative study investigating perceptual expertise for music notation, dyslexia-risk, and musical experience involving participants with and without dyslexia and/or a specific reading disability. We will share the theoretical, technical, and lived experience-based resources that informed our iterative design processes.

Bio: Dr. Erin Hopkins is an Assistant Professor of Music Education at Augustana College in Rock Island, Il. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of Michigan, a Master of Education in Mind, Brain, & Education from Harvard University, and PhD in Music Education from Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Hopkins has over ten years of experience as a PK-12 music educator, the majority of which she spent teaching elementary general music in Title 1 public schools. Her research work is interdisciplinary, focusing on intersections between neurodiversity studies, music cognition research, and music education praxis.

Bios continue onto the next page

Janel Long is a PhD Candidate in Music Education at the University of Memphis and Instructor of Music Education (Elementary) at Mississippi State University. Previously, Ms. Long taught elementary general music for 12 1/2 years an early childhood music for 4 years in the Mid-South. Ms. Long holds a Master of Music in Music Education from the University of Memphis and a Bachelor of Music in Music Theory from the University of Georgia. Her research interests include emergent music literacy, dyslexia and music learning, the use of language in research and teaching, and motivation in music settings.

Theme 1: Conducting Neurodivergent Music Research continued

Accessibility in Music Archives for Neurodivergent Users: Findings from a DUR study

Elizabeth A. Pineo; The University of Maryland, College Park

Music archives are where our musical knowledge is preserved and made available for use. Archival music scores are often made available as image-based files, like PDFs, PNGs, or TIFFs. This does two things. First, it presumes that every user can use an image-base file when they are not compatible with many assistive technologies. Second, it privileges a visual understanding of music that is not always the predominant way neurodivergent users interact with music. Staff notation encodes a specific visual cognitive parsing system, it requires translation into sound, and it excludes people who process sound directly or differently.

Drawing on previous work on music archive accessibility, I applied the discoverability, usability, and readability (DUR) framework to a set of 5 music archives. Findings from that study suggest that contemporary music archives privilege neuronormative ways of navigating archival materials. Moreover, scores in editable file formats, modified stave notation (MSN), and audio formats would likely help alleviate these archival accessibility issues, but they are not widely available. Other findings from the DUR analysis included: high numbers of color contrast issues on pages, particularly important because many neurodivergent individuals have light or color contrast problems, and material generally searchable from major search engines, which is useful for reducing cognitive load.

As of April 2026, revisions to Title II of the ADA make digital accessibility a legal requirement for most archives. Artificial intelligence-infused music notation tools are also widely available. The AI notation tools can help create each of the aforementioned file types; making them available alongside the original inaccessible scores meets the Title II requirements. MSN scores and audio files will be particularly transformative here because many neurodivergent individuals have reading-related disabilities or challenges. Ultimately, making alternative score types available on music archive websites will help create more accessible music archives for all users.

Bio: Elizabeth Pineo (she/her) is a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Maryland's College of Information. Her research explores the intersections of disability, music, and archives. She holds an M.L.I.S. from the University of Maryland, College Park and a B.A. in Music from Dickinson College. For more information, visit www.elizabethpineo.com.

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences

Who owns listening?
Merve Erez; Independent Composer and sound artist

Who owns the listening? The space, the composer, the audience — this is the question my practice keeps returning to. We have inherited a Cartesian split that separates the body from knowing, and the concert situation reproduces it: fixed seats, one intended listening position, a composer who has already decided where the meaning lives. But each body that enters a space produces its own epistemic knowledge; what it hears, how it becomes, what it can and cannot bear. That is not a subjective footnote to the real listening experience. It is the listening experience.

My work is built around this. It comes from my neurodivergent listening experiences — sensory sensitivity, auditory processing differences, and ADHD-related attention patterns — both as a composer and as a curious audience: knowing what it costs when a situation offers no exit, no relief, no choice. Embodied listening is not a softer or more personal mode. It is how knowledge about sound actually forms. A field where the listener can find their own threshold is not a comfort measure. It is an epistemological proposition.

This idea started with experimenting with artificial spaces — installations where the listener could move, pause, and determine their own proximity to sound. That work opened the question rather than answered it. Since then I have been tracing it across live performance and spatial audio contexts, each one a different way of testing what compositional means can actually do: how a score can distribute agency, how a room can be designed to hold more than one mode of attention, how the exit can be built into the form itself. The neurodivergent body is not an edge case in this work. It is the starting point.

Bio: Merve Erez is a composer and sound artist whose work is built around layered, mundane sonic structures, interruption, and discontinuity. Working with foley recordings, sampled sources, modular hardware, and acoustic writing closer to musique concrète instrumentale, she draws from a personal sonic pool that resists smooth continuity. Her current focus is on accessible interactive formats for multichannel and spatial audio, situated between installation practice and virtual sound spaces. She holds an MFA in composition from the University of Gothenburg, Academy of Music and Drama. Her works have been performed by Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, Musica Vitae, Mixtur Festival, and others.

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences continued

"The Bees are too loud": ADHD'ers Sound Preferences as an Aid during Daily Task Completion

Tara Allen; The Berklee College of Music, The Neurodivergent Music Network

ADHD'ers commonly use their preferred sounds to aid with executive function differences. ADHD is classified as a neurodevelopmental disability that creates forms of individualized disablement. Specific differences in working memory, distractibility, task completion and planning, sensory input processing, time perception, and emotional regulation are explained by hypoactive dopamine systems (Sikstrom & Soderlund., 2007; Ribases et al., 2012; Posner et al., 2020). Environmental audio, visual, and physical stimuli are necessary to help cope with disablement (Zentall & Zentall, 1983, as stated by Kallweit et al., 2021). Essentially, this means the ADHD brain harbors differences in regulating dopamine. To cover up the struggles they face, neuromasking, a method of camouflaging to mimic neurotypical behavior, has been found necessary to cope with exterior pressures to perform. Many find this exhausting and try to find other self-aids. For instance, if they struggle to focus in a social setting during task completion, they may choose sound as an aid. Existing research suggests white noise as an aid, but the present study found white noise an unrealistic preference when applied to real life situations because it causes under stimulation. The present study found the hypothesis of ADHD'ers using their preferred noise as a self-aid true. Reasons of social pressure, womanhood, task completion, identify affirmation, and lack of access to ADHD healthcare as common themes for music being used as an aid. Findings of the present study could recommend using the present data to help ADHD'ers cope before and after the diagnostic process. Recommendations towards possibly implicating soundscape based, neurodiversity affirming supports for pre-diagnosed ADHD'ers were also apparent.

Comment: It is important to note this research was undertaken as Tara's Masters in Psychology of Music thesis in 2022.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Tara Allen (she/her) is an American punk, queer, multi-neurodivergent, and disabled music psychologist, independent researcher and bass clarinetist. She is based in Boston, MA — currently serving as the Neurodiversity Program Manager of the MIND Program at Berklee College of Music. Where she works as a neurodiversity specialist and music psychologist. She holds an MA in Psychology of Music from the University of Sheffield (22') and a BMus in Music Education with concentrations in Instrumental Wind Band and Bass Clarinet from the Crane School of Music (21'). Her research areas of interest are: neurodivergence and music perception/cognition, learning, processing, behavior (especially subconscious), and accessible music education.

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences continued

Drums keep pounding a rhythm to the neurodivergent brain: the impacts of music in everyday environments.

Carmen Rosas-Pérez; Independent researcher, acoustics consultant, The Neurodivergent Music Network

This paper presents findings related to music from two studies looking into the experiences of neurodivergent and auraldivergent people with sound in everyday environments and situations. The studies consisted of semi-structured interviews with 12 autistic people and a survey with 311 noise-sensitive respondents, of whom 183 (59%) identified as neurodivergent. Key themes explored included the use of music as a "motivator" and "differentiator" for various activities, the capacity to attend to multiple sound sources within a soundscape, and both the positive and negative aspects of this capacity (e.g., easily identifying different instruments and melodies, or difficulties to ignore background music in shops, restaurants, at home, or at work). Many participants also mentioned the strong restorative effect that music can have for them, alongside its disabling impact when it is imposed or uncontrolled. The discussion of the findings includes literature on the higher prevalence of auditory skills such as absolute pitch among autistic people, similarities found in the needs of many neurodivergent people and people with hearing differences, and an overview of the role of sensory and acoustical normativity in shaping the experiences reported in the studies. This work seeks to amplify the accounts of people with enhanced perceptual capacity and other sensory differences who frequently experience negative impacts in daily-life acoustic environments, highlighting also that these impacts are significantly aggravated by social attitudes and preconceptions of what is "normal" to feel, to endure, or to consider in research and design.

Bio: Carmen Rosas-Pérez is an acoustic engineer who just finished her PhD at Heriot-Watt University. Her thesis, titled "Disabling acoustics: Lived experiences of neurodivergent, aural divergent and noise sensitive people in daily life acoustic environments", has been shaped by her past experiences as a neurodivergent participant and researcher in several institutions, and by the work of disabled scholars and activists. Bringing together her passion for acoustics, field recording, and sharing sounds, she created a Sound Map of Malaga. She's also a member of the Aural Diversity Network, and is currently developing a platform to gather practical information on acoustical inclusivity.

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences continued

Neurodivergence and Clinical Uncertainty: Rethinking Medical Professionalism Through Music

Ryan Weber; The Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

Medical education has long associated professionalism with control (Clare 2017; Neilson 2024). Within this framework, intolerance for uncertainty has helped to turn difference into deviance. Yet clinical encounters routinely present physicians with experiences that resist these expectations, including ambiguity surrounding diagnosis, prognosis, and quality of life. Not only that, but learners must also navigate problems of authority and belonging as they endure training within institutions that privilege mastery. As a result, they are often implicitly taught that "competent" physicians must eliminate uncertainty and conform to ableist norms. This hidden curriculum increases both stigma and oppression for neurodiverse learners and negatively impacts patient care (Iezzoni 2016; Shaw et al. 2024).

Although scholars have increasingly turned to literature to develop social justice frameworks, music remains largely absent from contemporary discussions of professionalism. This omission is striking given that pathbreaking work by musical scholars (Straus 2018; Bakan 2018) has illuminated how neurodivergent and disability-informed musical practices can challenge normative assumptions. At the same time, neurodiversity itself remains relatively underrepresented in discussions of accommodation and inclusion. Institutional responses often remain focused on narrow models of disability disclosure and remediation rather than broader reconsiderations of professional norms (Meeks & Jain 2018).

Therefore, this presentation introduces an interdisciplinary framework that places disability poetics, music theory, and neurodivergent experience in dialogue to reconsider how uncertainty can become the foundation for a more socially just form of medical professionalism. Music, I argue, offers powerful lessons for interrogating those cultural assumptions that shape clinical encounters. In doing so, I outline a series of strategies for guiding how disorienting states can lead to generative conditions that support diverse ways of thinking and being. Taken together, I demonstrate that music can serve as a critical medium for moving us toward professional identity grounded in interpretive humility and ethical attunement.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Ryan Weber, PhD, is Professor of Medical Humanities at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine where he currently teaches on disability topics throughout the MD, Master of Biomedical Sciences, and Genetic Counseling programs. In addition to training in medical humanities, he holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in music. His interdisciplinary research interests include disability studies, the history of eugenics, autism aesthetics, and professional identity formation. He has published articles and book chapters in Australia, America, and widely throughout Europe.

Theme 2: Neurodivergent Musical Experiences continued

Music, art and facial expression: To what extent do autistic traits influence emotional recognition?

Sophie Homatas, The Oxford Brookes University
Adam Lonsdale, The Oxford Brookes University

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)* are often characterised by having social deficits, including emotional recognition. The relationship between autism and emotional recognition has been widely studied using facial expressions and music stimuli. Other creative disciplines, like painting, have limited research on emotional recognition. Most research focuses on clinically diagnosed samples of autism, overlooking autistic traits which are present throughout the general population. The present study explored the association between autistic traits and emotional recognition in paintings, facial expressions and music. A non-experimental questionnaire was completed by 156 adult participants. The main analysis showed no significant association between autistic traits and emotional recognition in facial expressions, paintings or music. An exploratory analysis found that participants were significantly better at recognising the emotions of happiness and sadness, but less accurate at recognising fear, anger and disgust. A further exploratory analysis highlighted that autistic traits were significantly associated with poorer emotional recognition in paintings for the emotions of sadness and anger. The present findings challenge the assumption that high autistic traits indicate poor emotional recognition and highlight how emotional recognition accuracy is stimulus-specific.

**Note from committee: Autism Spectrum Disorder is listed to discuss the psychological diagnosis from existing literature to discuss prior pre-notions they are challenging.*

Bio: Sophie Homates is a final-year Psychology undergraduate at Oxford Brookes University.

Adam Lonsdale is a senior lecturer in Psychology and a senior academic advisor at Oxford Brookes University in the School of Psychology. His research is primarily concerned with the social psychology of music; applying well-established theories from mainstream social psychology to better understand music and musical behaviour. In particular, He is interested in the social functions of music and the idea that people might use their musical tastes as a 'badge' of identity and group membership.

Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices

Beyond the Deficit Narrative: A Systematic Review of Self-Representation and Creative Agency Among Neurodivergent Musicians (2015–2025)

Uriel Nutifafa Lotsu; University of Cape Coast
Theophilus Adu Achido; University of Cape Coast

For decades, research on neurodivergent musicians has been dominated by clinical and deficit-based frameworks that pathologize traits such as repetition, sensory sensitivity, and rapid ideation as impairments rather than creative resources. Despite growing calls for neurodiversity-affirming approaches, no systematic synthesis has examined how neurodivergent musicians are represented across the literature, how they represent themselves, and how their creative agency is conceptualized. This study aims to address three questions: (1) How are neurodivergent musicians represented across existing researcher-driven literature, and to what extent do these representations move beyond deficit-based frameworks? (2) In what ways do neurodivergent musicians construct and express self-representation in their own voices? (3) How is creative agency conceptualized and evidenced in studies of neurodivergent musicians' creative practices? Following PRISMA guidelines, we will search Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and RILM Abstracts of Music Literature for peer-reviewed studies published between January 2015 and April 2025. Eligible studies include qualitative, mixed-methods, or first-person narrative accounts where neurodivergent musicians (autistic, ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexic, Tourettic, or self-identifying) are participants or authors. Data extraction will focus on five indicators per research question, including theoretical models, language framing, identity construction, resistance practices, and constraints/enablers of agency. Thematic synthesis will be used to integrate findings. We expect to identify a persistent gap between deficit-framed clinical studies and emerging neurodiversity-aligned research that centres lived experience. Preliminary scoping suggests that while self-representation studies increasingly reveal how neurodivergent musicians reframe repetition as aesthetic structure and sensory sensitivity as production precision, these insights remain siloed from mainstream music research. This review will provide the first evidence synthesis of self-representation and creative agency among neurodivergent musicians, offering a foundation for neurodiversity-affirming pedagogy, accessible music production, and participatory research methodologies.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Uriel Nutifafa Lotsu is a dedicated music professional, research assistant, and freelance researcher based in Cape Coast, Ghana. She holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Cape Coast, where she developed expertise in performance, choral direction, and academic research. Currently serving as a Research Assistant at the University's Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, she specializes in data collection, quantitative and qualitative analysis using tools such as R, SPSS, and NVivo, and research synthesis. She also works as a freelance researcher, providing literature review, data analysis, and research support to graduate students and independent projects.

Theophilus Adu Achido is a research professional and freelance researcher based in Cape Coast, Ghana. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Statistics from the University of Cape Coast, an MSc in Financial Engineering from WorldQuant University, and is currently pursuing an MPhil in Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Cape Coast. He serves as a Research Team Member at Global Health Insights and Education and as a Research Assistant at the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance. As a freelance researcher, he provides systematic literature reviews, data analysis using SPSS, Python, R, and Excel, and research report writing for clients across academic and development sectors. He has contributed to multiple research projects, including needs assessments for the Daniel Ntow Obese Foundation and the Index of Government Institutions Performance towards Economic Prosperity (IGIPTEP) for ACEYE. His technical skills include data visualization with IBM Cognos Analytics, Power BI, and Google Looker Studio, as well as web scraping and machine learning with Python. He has co-authored publications in the Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education and presented at international conferences including the Rise Women Conference in Accra and the University of Salerno in Italy.

Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices continued

Dromos/Autos: The Autistic Ontology as Performance
Matt Rogerson; Sound artist and performer

//TRIGGER WARNING: This presentation shows self-induced sensory stress visibly, and noises that can induce sensory stress for participants//

This performance explores how EEG (electroencephalography) and neurofeedback-facilitated sensory overload can produce a subversive paradigm of representation within intermedia performance practice, mediated through a subversive interface for musical expression: the autistic cognition. It adopts an interdisciplinary methodology; incorporating generative sound art, psychoacoustics, audio-reactive visuals and endurance art. At its core is the production of 'provocative' stimuli, i.e. sonic and visual events tailored to overstimulate my autistic ontology into sensory overload. These sounds are curated through reflexive autoethnography, then synthesised and modulated by a series of generative systems. Their parameters are mapped to my real-time EEG input, establishing a 'neurofeedback' loop - a recursive performance ecology in which the emergent output is shaped by my passive subjectivity to it. The work employs consumer-grade EEG and BCI technology to facilitate this ecology, realised as an endurance art performance whereby the performer is subject to a sensorially arresting, rhizomatic audiovisual simulacrum of their own lived experience. This process if predicated on the centring of my autistic neurocognition as a modality of performance expression and enquiry, in addition to elucidating it to an audience by means of autoethnographic and artistic self-representation, while simultaneously provoking a decontextualisation of the structural discourses that bracket, alienate, and disable it.

Bio: Matt Rogerson is an interdisciplinary sound artist, musician and performer based in Leicester, UK. His research-practice investigates the convergence of audiovisual art, live art, cybernetics and neurodiversity studies to elucidate on his own lived experience as a neurodiverse identity—as both an embodied creative approach and a means of broader critical inquiry. He has presented his work at the IRCAM Forum (Paris, FR), NIME (Utrecht, NL), the SOUND/IMAGE Festival (UoG, UK) and the MA/AP Study Group (UCA, UK). Furthermore, he accommodates for his practice as a guitarist and improvisor by engaging in both contemporary and experimental music performance.

Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices continued

Neurodivergent Aesthetics as a Creative Framework in Music and Multimedia Arts

Jay Afrisando; The University of California, Santa Cruz

How does neurodivergence become an artistic resource in music and multimedia arts? In the general education of music composition, where the "canon" serves as the implicit role model for making, crip aesthetics, such as neurodivergent aesthetics, is largely ignored. Since aesthetics serves as a starting, fundamental point of sensing that leads to a creative practice, it is crucial to discuss how neurodivergent thinking-and-sensing processes musical and artistic events and put it forward as an important step in a creative practice.

This paper surveys the author's music and multimedia artworks and how neurodivergent aesthetics becomes a foundational creative framework. It elucidates some of his neurodivergent aesthetics, including the aesthetics of categorization in the multisensory listening diary "different types of _____" manifested in a live performance, the aesthetics of repetition in the audiovisual music "The (Real) Laptop Music :))," the aesthetics of non-verbal and asynchronicity in the multilingual radio episode "mixed feelings: Saverio Cantoni and Jay Afrisando," and the aesthetics of direct communication, inner monologue, and failure in the captions-as-actors performance "[opera captions]," the reading performance "Time Bent, Folded, Exhausted," the board game "Ramps and Slides: Finishing a Project," and the card game "Cards Against Neurotypicality." This survey serves as a catalyst for further discussion of how various neurodivergent people—regardless of whether the arts scene calls them artists—can use neurodivergent aesthetics as an immediate creative framework in music and multimedia arts.

Bio: Jay Afrisando is a hearing, neurodivergent composer and multimedia artist who works on aural diversity (diversity of hearing-listening), disability, accessibility, and decolonizing the arts through multisensory and antidisciplinary practice. He is currently the Atelier KITLV-Framer Framed Artist in Residence 2025-26 and an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices continued

How Music Creation Impacts Emotional Dysregulation in Student with ADHD: A Practice-Research Reflection

Delaney Keene; University College Dublin
*Student Mentorship Candidate***

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)* has a strong correlation with emotional dysregulation, according to both empirical research and experiences described in neurodivergent communities. When I have personally struggled with regulating my emotions, I have turned to music. While there is growing evidence linking emotional regulation to listening to and experiencing music, I have found that the psychological field lacks research connecting music making (improvisation, composition, arrangement) with emotional regulation. Additionally, due to the public stigma surrounding both neurodivergence and people engaging with musical practices, I believe the voices of those who experience the intersection of both music and neurodivergence should be amplified. Through a neuroaffirming lens, I will answer the question of how the creative process surrounding music interacts with emotional dysregulation in my experience with ADHD.

The poster illustrates a practice-research reflection based upon my relationship with music creation as a person with clinically assessed moderate, unmedicated, and late-diagnosed ADHD. My goal is not to demonstrate how music creation 'fixes' a sense of dysregulated emotions, but rather how it provides a unique avenue for expressing one's thoughts or feelings. Due to its in-depth and methodical focus, I use Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to reflect on my experiences. I discuss my personal background with emotional distress and how the engagement with the practice of creating music has impacted my mood and perception of events. Based upon previous research regarding people with ADHD and their unique perception and experience with music, I reflect on whether their research is relevant to my own experience, and suggest avenues for further psychological research that focus on a more general population.

The goal of my research is, through self-reflection, to demonstrate greater versatility in music within psychology, including the potential use of active music creation in music therapy practices to aid in the self-regulation of those with ADHD.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Delaney Keene is a second-year undergraduate student at UCD, studying my Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Music Performance. Neurodivergence has been a large part of her identity her entire life, even when she lacked the means to describe it. Her emotions, enthusiasm, and hyperfixations were all things that made her proud of who she is. Music was always a source of inspiration for her, whether it led to a new favourite band or a new instrument she learned. Thus, she values the opportunity to amplify the intersection of music and her neurodivergence.

Theme 3: Neurodivergent Creative Practices continued

Embodied Listening: Neurodivergent Sensitivities and Composition in Relationship with Outdoor Spaces

Shanna Sordahl; The University of California Santa Cruz

This research paper examines ways that neurodivergent sensitivities can be positively engaged by musical practices incorporating a relationship with outdoor spaces. It stems from questions arising in the author's own artistic practice and personal experiences as a neurodivergent performer/composer. The paper explores how sensitivities and neurological processing styles of Autistic and ADHD individuals can allow them to deeply engage with an interdisciplinary, and multisensory, approach to music making and performance by fostering immersive listening experiences.

Beginning with discussion of the nuances of neurodivergent sensitivities and drawing on the work of authors such as Olga Bogdashina, the paper discusses how those sensitivities can influence connection, perception, and the neurodivergent sense of self. It then examines work and compositional practices of Susie Ibarra and Pauline Oliveros, two composers who employ a particular listening practice and have integrated the influence of outdoor spaces into their work. The paper will detail how these composers' work can engage sensitivities and overlapping perceptual experiences commonly experienced by Autistic and ADHD individuals, creating an opportunity for embodied engagement to both place and sound. While not purposefully created for a neurodivergent audience, these works can activate and draw on the physiological and aesthetic inclinations of these groups. This combination of elements can not only be enjoyable, but can also offer benefits such as possibilities for nervous system regulation and encouraging participants to engage with their surroundings in new ways.

Examination of neurodivergent sensitivities reveals the diverse ways in which neurodivergent individuals interact and connect with other people, places, and objects. Contrary to common historic representation, this writing seeks to emphasize the positive attributes of neurodivergent sensitivities. By demonstrating how interdisciplinary musical experiences can help foster a positive relationship with them, this paper represents ways that sensitivities are part of a rich neurodivergent experience.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: As a composer, performer, and sound artist, Shanna uses sound to create spaces that illustrate transformational possibilities and question ingrained patterns of perception. Their work centers timbral and textural development to emphasize interaction with spaces and processes of change. In their current research and work as a DMA student at the University of California Santa Cruz, Shanna is particularly interested in exploring interactions between composition and outdoor environments. Utilizing an autoethnographic, neurodivergent lens while drawing on the fields of acoustic ecology, aural diversity, and neuropsychology, they examine ways that neurodivergent perception influences the creation and consumption of sound-based art.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice
Music Education:

Rhythm, Identity, and Access: My Neurodivergent Journey Into Hip Hop Education
Andrew Wang; Greenburgh Graham Union Free School District

This presentation explores a personal journey through hip hop culture and neurodivergence and how these experiences shaped a commitment to teaching hip hop as an inclusive educational practice. Growing up as a neurodivergent individual, traditional educational environments often presented challenges related to attention, sensory processing, and conventional learning structures. Hip hop, however, offered an alternative pathway to understanding rhythm, language, creativity, and self-expression. Through elements such as beat, flow, improvisation, and storytelling, hip hop provided a framework that aligned with divergent cognitive processing and allowed for authentic engagement with music and culture.

Drawing on lived experience alongside current conversations in neurodiversity and culturally responsive pedagogy, this presentation examines how hip hop can function as an accessible learning environment for neurodivergent students. Rather than framing neurodivergence through a deficit lens, hip hop pedagogy highlights strengths such as pattern recognition, rhythmic sensitivity, improvisational thinking, and hyperfocus. These qualities can become powerful assets in musical learning when instructional approaches value creativity, movement, and multiple forms of expression.

The presentation also discusses practical applications of hip hop in educational settings, including beatboxing, rhythm exploration, lyrical composition, and collaborative music-making. These activities provide structured yet flexible environments that support engagement, self-authorship, and community building among diverse learners.

By connecting personal narrative with pedagogical practice, this session argues that hip hop education can serve as a bridge between identity, culture, and learning access. Ultimately, the presentation positions hip hop not only as a musical genre but as a pedagogical framework that validates neurodivergent ways of thinking, fosters creative agency, and expands possibilities for inclusive music education.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Andrew Wang is a music educator, researcher, and presenter whose work examines the intersection of hip hop culture, neurodiversity, and inclusive music education. Drawing on his lived experience as a neurodivergent musician, he develops pedagogical approaches that use hip hop elements such as beatboxing, rhythm exploration, and lyrical expression to support diverse learners. His research and presentations explore how culturally responsive hip hop pedagogy can expand access, creativity, and engagement in music classrooms. Andrew regularly shares his work through workshops and conference presentations, advocating for educational spaces that value cognitive diversity, cultural expression, and student voice in music learning.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Music Education* continued

Access in Playtime: Reframing and Restructuring Toys for Aurally Diverse Children Through Imagination, Symbolic Language & Conviviality

Marc Perez; Independent composer and performer

Regarding children, the necessity for toys (both for enjoyment and educational purposes) is essential in their development. When you add in the framework of Aural Diversity, this becomes even more so apparent. As it currently stands, most toys marketed for children are either focused on literal representation for aurally divergent children(which is not to say this isn't important), or they diminish the aspect of sound and focus on other senses the child might have "easier" access to. My proposal is an adaptable and fluctuating toolkit/handbook that approaches musical toys and playtime as a whole in a new light, choosing to emphasize the "ability" of "disability". The ultimate goal of this project is to advocate and provide a framework in which accessible, affordable and equitable means of toys and playtime may emerge for parents, family members, educators and children to have musical enjoyment from their toys if they so desire.

Bio: Marc Perez is a composer, performer, improviser, author, curator and organization leader whose work is concerned with freedom of agency, accessibility, anti-disciplinary arts, anti-colonial approaches to community and creativity, aural diversity & improvisation.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Music Education* continued

Finding Your Voice - How to Use Free Improvisation to Empower Students

Timothy Simmons; Delaware Valley Friends School

Improvisation can help support the needs of diverse learners in the music classroom. I have designed a music curriculum aimed at the needs of students with Dyslexia and ADD that is built primarily around improvisation. In this presentation, I will demonstrate three simple improvisational forms that can be used in any music classroom to empower students musically, address language learning needs, build confidence and community, and empower students to engage with their instrument in a way that meets them where they are. I will also make some simple suggestions of how to incorporate these improvised structures into lesson planning, so workshop participants can take away concrete tools that can be applied immediately.

Bio: Timothy Simmons is the Music teacher at Delaware Valley Friends School in Paoli, PA. DVFriends is a Quaker school for students, grades 1 to 12, who learn differently. Tim has taught both English Language Arts and Music, and has been teaching for 31 years. In his 20 years at DVFriends, Tim has developed music curricula that applies free improvisation to meet the language learning needs of students in all three school divisions - Lower, Middle, and Upper. Tim received a Master of Arts in Individualized Studies from Goddard College, where he explored the intersections between music and language in order to synthesize his dual content area experience of English and Music into a curriculum that leverages the power of music to address language learning needs, build confidence and community, and exercise essential executive function skills. Tim is a multi-instrumentalist who also facilitates drum circles all throughout the greater Philadelphia area.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Music Education* continued

Reflections on a values-based approach to nurturing musical cultures in Autism Resource Bases for neurodivergent pupils

Beth Pickard; The University of South Wales
Alex Lupo; Musician and Music Therapist

This presentation reflects on a twelve-month research collaboration between autistic musician and practitioner-researcher, Alex Lupo and critical disability studies researcher, Dr Beth Pickard, funded by the AHRC Hub for Public Engagement with Music Research. The participatory action research project sought to widen access to musical opportunities for autistic pupils attending Autism Resource Bases - specialist, dedicated classes within mainstream schools.

We believe that every child and young person deserves high-quality music education. Music has potential to significantly enhance social, emotional and academic outcomes as well as bring joy and quality of life. Music plays a vital role in all children's development, but research indicates that it may play a specific role for autistic children, since approximately 1 in 20 autistic children demonstrate absolute pitch and exceptional musical potential alongside other developmental challenges. Whether autistic pupils have particular musical affinities or not, we believe equitable access to high-quality music education is all children's right.

Initial pilot work delivered by Live Music Now involved 340 pupils across 22 Autism Resource Bases in England and Northern Ireland. Internal evaluation showed limited music provision within these settings, and a lack of staff confidence and skills in nurturing musical opportunities. As resource base provision within mainstream schools grows rapidly, and in light of the Department for Education's recent commitment to this agenda in their White Paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving', this focus becomes increasingly timely and important.

During this presentation, Beth and Alex will reflect on their cross-neurotype collaboration and their engagement with a wide range of autistic stakeholders in developing their strength-based approach to music education for autistic pupils, which centers around eight core values. Outcomes of the twelve-month participatory action research project will be discussed as well as the potential impact for music practitioners, educators, pupils and wider stakeholders.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Beth is a senior lecturer and supervisor at the University of South Wales, as well as a freelance researcher, consultant, music therapist and inclusive music practitioner. Her research and practice is heavily informed by critical disability studies: exploring how disability is socially constructed, interpreted and represented across disciplines and pedagogy.

Alex Lupo is a neurodivergent musician with more than 25 years of experience, including collaborations with PJ Harvey, Charlotte Harding, and the British Paraorchestra. Lupo is an experienced community musician and has devised and led inclusive music-making projects across the UK. He is also a HCPC-registered music therapist.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice
Higher Education:

A Two-Pronged Approach to Increasing the Accessibility of Collegiate Music Education

Rhoda Bernard; The Berklee College of Music

In recent years, the population of students in U.S. higher education has become increasingly diverse in many ways, including how they learn best. This is true in schools of music and music departments, where faculty find themselves teaching many students who learn in a wide variety of ways, which may or may not have to do with a disability or a diagnosis.

This session will focus on two main areas: the unique challenges of reaching and teaching every student in higher education music programs in the U.S., and accessible music education pedagogical strategies that are particularly useful for higher education music faculty.

The session will examine the challenges of the U.S. collegiate music education context, including: (a) traditional pedagogical approaches; (b) numerous adjunct faculty; and (c) professors that are subject matter experts with little to no formal training in pedagogy. Some of the pedagogical strategies for higher education music faculty that will be shared include: (a) reducing and removing barriers to student engagement, participation, and learning through practical applications of Universal Design for Learning, Universal Design of Instruction, and Differentiated Instruction; (b) preparatory and summarizing communications; (c) checklists and graphic organizers; and (d) a wide range of options for students in assignments and assessments.

Developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the higher music education context and its unique issues and challenges can better equip administrators around the world to support their faculty and, by extension, their students. As faculty engage pedagogical tools from accessible music education, they can reduce and remove barriers in their classroom environments, teaching approaches, learning activities, and assessment. This two-pronged approach -- addressing challenges in the higher education music context, and incorporating accessible music education pedagogy -- will help college music educators to better reach, teach, and include every student in their programs.

Bio: Bernard holds a B.A. from Harvard University and a B.M. in Jazz Voice from New England Conservatory. She earned her Masters and Doctorate degrees in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Bernard has presented her research in conferences and her work has been published in numerous peer reviewed journals and books, including her recent book: Accessible Arts Education: Principles, Habits, and Strategies to Unleash Every Student's Creativity and Learning.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Higher Education* continued

The autistic inclusivity of music conservatoires: the wellbeing experiences of autistic students in high level musical learning environments

Georgia Dawson; The Royal College of Music

Autistic people "often have the tools needed to become exceptional learners [sic] and yet school and university are so frequently the worst time of our lives" (Wharmby 2023). Research and first-hand reports concur that university presents thorough wellbeing challenges for the autistic student and extensive literature has also demonstrated that the classical music industry presents complex inaccessibilities. Considering this, the classical music conservatoire is a sociological setting highly susceptible to significant difficulties for autistic students. This is particularly concerning in light of the Musicians Union's prediction that there is a vastly higher proportion of neurodiverse personnel within the music industry and its conservatoires than in the general population.

While most autism and music literature centres both childhood and pathology - focusing on music as a psychosocial intervention or documenting exceptionalist savantists through observation, there is a striking lack of research from the first hand perspective, considering the intrapersonal experiences of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) musicians themselves. The works of Heaton and Korosec have made leaps in this area, but pre-professional musicians and the context of the conservatoire are yet to be investigated. Exploring this area is especially timely considering the ongoing increases in autism diagnoses, SEND education reforms and continuing growth of public neurodiversity awareness.

This presentation explores the theoretical standing of this project in advance of prospective questionnaire data: which seeks to present a cohesive mixed-methods understanding of autistic students' wellbeing during their conservatoire experiences. This is the initial study of a PhD thesis, aiming to fill the noted academic gap and - by analysing those highly susceptible to poor wellbeing - amplify existing requests for scrutiny of conservatoire doxa and its effect on student health.

Bio: Georgia Dawson (she/her) is a LAHP supported PhD researcher at the Royal College of Music. Her project investigates autistic wellbeing in music conservatoires, supervised by Prof Rosie Perkins, Dr Anna Detari and Dr Tania Lisboa. Alongside Dr Detari, Georgia is the research assistant and co-principal investigator on "The neurodivergent musician: A Participatory Action Research study", of which the initial methodology report is accepted for publication in "Neurodiversity". Georgia has presented at the International Symposium of Performance Science, the British Horn Festival, in guest lectures for Cambridge University. Georgia also enjoys a diverse performance schedule as a freelance Horn player.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Higher Education* continued

Neurodivergence at Music Conservatoires – Potential barriers from the students' perspective

Stefani Dzjubak; The University of Music Franz Liszt Weimar

Unlike regular universities, music conservatoires have certain distinctive features in their educational programmes that warrant special consideration. The intersection of artistic, pedagogical and scientific teaching presents particular challenges for neurodivergent students, which have so far been scarcely researched in terms of their overall nature and interplay. This is particularly relevant given the high prevalence of neurodivergent individuals in the fields of music and art. The aim of the poster is to systematically outline potential barriers and highlight possible solutions, considering factors like co-occurences as well as comorbidities surrounding neurodivergent students. In doing so, I draw on both current scientific publications and surveys of music students at the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar, as well as my own experiences.

The poster is intended to provide an initial overview and encourage further (representative) research. (For example, on the intersections of gender, race, and class with neurodiversity at music conservatories.)

Bio: Stefanie Dzjubak is currently studying for a Master's degree in Music Pedagogy at the FRANZ LISZT University of Music, specialising in piano. They work as a research assistant in the fields of music education and diversity. Their research interests include queer feminism, neurodiversity and death education in music as well as eco-literate music pedagogy.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Higher Education* continued

Confronting the Stereotype of the Operatic "Mad Woman" through Tabletop Roleplaying Games: A Case Study for Gaetano Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor (1835)

Elizabeth McLain; Virginia Tech
Christopher Campo-Bowen; Virginia Tech

In Spring 2024, I taught a Topics in Musicology seminar on Music and Disability. Students co-created the syllabus, and they wanted to learn more about "mad woman" characters in opera. In particular, students expressed anxiety about discussing and performing older repertoire with problematic themes related to disability, neurodiversity, and madness. To properly address the subject, I needed to bring my expertise in disability studies and neurodiversity in conversation with fellow musicologist Christopher Campo-Bowen's extensive work on opera and gender. Chris and I also collaborate on a project called Open the Gates Gaming, a transdisciplinary research collective that empowers everyone to tell their stories through the medium of tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs). Together, we developed an innovative pedagogical approach.

Rather than lecturing students about the "mad woman" trope in opera, we created an experiential learning activity that equips students to confront the intersection of ableism and sexism directly. Within the narrative space of a Dungeons & Dragons game, students' characters interrogate opera protagonists, explore the environment, and react to the unfolding plot. The separation of "player" and "character" permits students to safely confront ableist attitudes and structures both within the story and themselves. Through Open the Gates Gaming's cognitive access tools, disabled and neurodivergent students are fully included in the exercise. Inclusive design for the activity also benefits the entire class, as disabled and neurodivergent students may interrogate the opera's narrative in uniquely cripped ways.

Our prerecorded presentation introduces the challenges to teaching "mad woman" operas, explains our pedagogical goals, then demonstrates how the Open the Gates Gaming tools and Lucia of Lammermoor module can be used in music history classrooms. We will include brief examples of play and direct attendees to our open access resources, including a sample lesson plan with suggestions for adapting the adventure for shorter or longer playthroughs.

Bio continues onto the next page

Bio: Elizabeth McLain (she/her, Assistant Professor of Musicology and Director of Disability Studies, Virginia Tech) is a chronically ill rollator-wielding autistic who aims to transform music scholarship through the principles of disability justice. Thanks to the Mellon Foundation, McLain co-directs the Disability Community Technology Center with Ashley Shew and leads Open the Gates Gaming. With the support of the NEH and ACLS, her a2ru's Ground Works team documented the inaugural CripTech incubator with an emphasis on ethical consent processes and access. Recent publications include "Unseen Sound: One Step into the Blind Future (Academic Access Version)," with Andy Slater in Leonardo.

Christopher Campo-Bowen is an Assistant Professor of Musicology in the School of Performing Arts at Virginia Tech. He is a member of Open the Gates Gaming (OtG), a research collective that focuses on inclusion and access, broadly construed, in tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs). As part of his work with OtG, he is writing a book of Dungeons & Dragons adventures based on operas, provisionally titled Adventures & Arias: Rethinking Opera through Play. His first monograph, Visions of the Village: Ruralness, Identity, and Czech Opera (Oxford University Press 2025), investigated how operatic visions of Czech rural cultures were instrumental in creating ethnonational belonging.

Theme 4: Pedagogy & Practice - *Higher Education* continued

Exploring the entwinement of artistic processes and neurodivergent lived experience: Creating greater equity and access for neurodivergent university arts students

Timothy Smith; The University of the Arts Helsinki

This session presents the findings of a pilot research study exploring the artistic processes of neurodivergent students enrolled in university arts programs, which includes the fields of music, dance, performance, fine arts, media, and design. The study particularly aims to create a greater understanding of how neurodivergent students encounter idea creation, connections to world views, smoothness/flow, obstacles/difficulties, habits/routines, and change in their artistic processes.

The findings suggest a reexamination of how diverse bodyminds of university arts students are taught, and how teachers and administrators can refine and further develop strategies of diversity, equity, and accessibility in university arts pedagogy and curriculum. The findings also provoke questions for further investigation into how artistic thinking is deeply entwined with the lived experience of neurodivergence.

The organization of this presentation will: 1.) Introduce the concepts and practices that informs this research, including disability methodology and the emerging field of neurodiversity studies as they pertain to arts education 2.) presents the concluding findings of the research study based on mixed method data collection from university arts students; and 3.) conclude with a detailed account of the various implications of this research on higher arts education and beyond.

Bio: Timothy J. Smith (they/them), PhD, MFA, is a multiply neurodivergent artist, educator, and University Researcher at University of the Arts Helsinki. Their research engages critical disability and neurodiversity studies approaches to arts education. Their artistic practice explores stimming as a methodology, which informs their teaching and research.

Our Team

About the Neurodivergent Music Network

The Neurodivergent Music Network (NMN) is a cross-disciplinary hub for neurodivergent researchers to explore the intersection between music and neurodivergence, sharing ideas and methodologies. Our mission is to support our members' work while collectively establishing Neurodivergent Music Studies as a distinct and rigorous field of studies. NMN is part of the Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-east England (CHASE) research networks.

Our Volunteers

This conference wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our team of volunteers, and we wholeheartedly thank them for their hard work!

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Our Committee

This conference is run by the organising committee of the CHASE Neurodivergent Music Network: Tara Allen, Nina Danon, Niamh Gallagher, Calanthe Milton, Carmen Rosas-Pérez, Jess Walls.

For more information about our individual research projects and our network's work, please visit: https://www.neurodivergentmusicnetwork.com/

You can use this link to join us, too!