

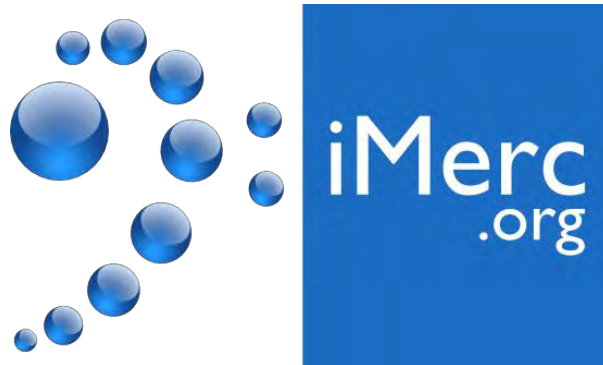
UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 17, June 2025

About us

Since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, we have been meeting regularly to share new research and insights related to diverse topics in music education, broadly conceived. We are a group of researchers at doctoral and post-doctoral levels, as well as senior researchers, with a shared curiosity and interest in advancing basic and applied research. Our monthly seminars are also designed to foster a sense of community amongst colleagues who are based in the UK, mainland Europe (such as Portugal, Germany, Greece), Asia (China, including Hong Kong), Latin America, USA and Australia. Opportunity is taken each month to update various current research projects and also to listen to the latest research from our invited speakers. If you would like to know more or to join us, please contact us.

Our upcoming research seminar will take place on Wednesday, 18th June 2025, 11am BST via Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE. We are delighted to have Dr Susan Young (Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham), along with our very own Lisa Carlin (UCL) and Dan Wang (UCL), who will be sharing their latest doctoral projects with us. Please join us by clicking the Zoom link [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

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Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, May 2025



1 - From left to right: Eunice Tang, Shike Guo, Dan Wang, Dr Regina Saltari, Asst. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Dumlupinar, Professor Mine Doğantan Dack, Ronald Pak Hang Wan, Yunjie Wang



2 - Presentation cover slide credit: Professor Mine Doğantan Dack

Professor Mine Doğantan Dack: Researching lived experience

In this presentation, Professor Mine Doğantan Dack (md787@cam.ac.uk) introduced her forthcoming two-volume work on the lived experiences of music performers, soon to be published by Routledge in the SEMPRE series. She noted that, while the concept of 'lived experience' has been widely explored in the social sciences and humanities, music performance studies have yet to systematically address the subjective experiences of performers. Professor Doğantan-Dack discussed philosophical distinctions between lived experience and experience per se, highlighting the importance of meaning-making processes. She acknowledged the methodological challenges involved in studying lived

experience from both insider and observer perspectives, but emphasised that better understanding and articulating performers' experiences can help challenge and transform problematic practices and discourses within music education and the profession.

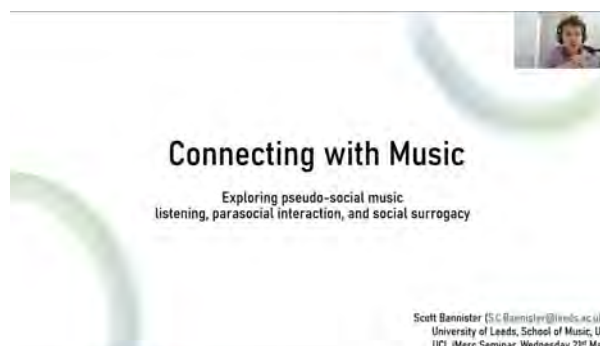
Applied Music Education Programs in Conservatories

- A Critical Examination of Inclusive Learning Experiences from the Perspective of a Blind Musicologist and Educator
- Asst. Prof. Yusuf Dumlupınar

3 - Presentation cover slide credit: Assistant Professor Dr Yusuf Dumlupınar

Assistant Professor Dr Yusuf Dumlupınar: Applied Music Education Programs in Conservatories: A Critical Examination of Inclusive Learning Experiences from the Perspective of a Blind Musicologist and Educator

Asst. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Dumlupınar's (yusuf.dumlupinar@inonu.edu.tr) presentation addressed the challenges that blind students face in conservatories and music departments, highlighting how visually oriented curricula and inaccessible materials limit their participation and learning opportunities. He emphasized a need for the proactive preparation of accessible resources, such as braille notation and audio technologies, before enrollment begins. Asst. Prof. Dr. Dumlupınar also pointed out the lack of qualified advisors in braille and audio technology, noting their essential role in supporting both the academic and emotional needs of blind students. He concluded by recommending policy reforms and personalised instructional strategies to ensure equal educational opportunities and full musical development for all students.



4 - Presentation cover slide credit: Dr Scott Bannister

Dr Scott Bannister: Connecting with music: Exploring pseudo-social music listening, parasocial interaction, and social surrogacy

Dr Scott Bannister (S.C.Bannister@leeds.ac.uk) explored new findings in the relationship between music and social bonding, revealing that even solitary music listening can be experienced as a social activity. Bannister explained that music sometimes acts as a social “agent”, fostering interpersonal or social experiences for listeners. Despite their significance, these so-called pseudo-social music listening (P-SML) experiences have rarely been investigated directly. Drawing on a recent paper published in *Music & Science* (see, New Publication Spotlight (1): Bannister et al. (2025) Explores Pseudo-Social Music Listening), the presentation situated P-SML within the broader context of concepts like parasocial interaction and social surrogacy. Dr Bannister also highlighted potential directions for future research on how listeners experience social connection through music.

Seminar Presenter Spotlight (1): Bannister et al. (2025) Explores Pseudo-Social Music Listening



5 - Credit: Bannister, S., Bailes, F., & Greasley, A. E., and *Music & Science*

The recent paper by Bannister, Bailes, and Greasley, titled “With a Little Help from my Friends”: Exploring Pseudo-Social Music Listening Experiences, has just been published in *Music & Science* (Volume 8). This fascinating study, which was also highlighted in our last seminar, delves into how we experience music socially—even when listening alone. It’s an insightful read for anyone interested in music psychology and the evolving landscape of listening habits. Lead author Dr Scott Bannister (S.C.Bannister@leeds.ac.uk) welcomes colleagues to get in touch with him via email to discuss the research further or explore collaboration opportunities.

Bannister, S., Bailes, F., & Greasley, A. E. (2025). “With a Little Help from my Friends”: Exploring Pseudo-Social Music Listening Experiences. *Music & Science*, 8.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20592043241301997>

Seminar Presenter Spotlight (2): Young's Commentary on New Materialisms in (Early Childhood) Music Education

We are delighted to welcome Dr Susan Young as the presenter for our upcoming seminar! Dr Young is renowned for her contributions to early childhood music education, and we're excited to hear her perspectives. Young's latest article has just been published in the *British Journal of Music Education*. In this insightful commentary, Young reflects on the significance of new materialisms in music education, especially in early childhood contexts. It's an engaging read for anyone interested in the latest theoretical developments in the field.

Young, S. (2025). 'To every thing turn turn turn': a commentary on new materialisms in (early childhood) music education. *British Journal of Music Education*, 1–13.
doi:10.1017/S0265051725000087



6 - Credit: Dr Susan Young and BJME

Resource Spotlight: Doğantan-Dack's Recommended Reading List for Researching Lived Experience

For those interested in exploring the research of lived experience, Professor Mine Doğantan Dack kindly put together a list of helpful readings. During her recent talk in May for the iMerc, Professor Mine Doğantan Dack highlighted several of these works, but she highly recommend the entire list for anyone looking to deepen their understanding or share valuable resources with students.

Highlighted during Professor Mine Doğantan Dack's talk in UCL iMerc Research Seminar in May:

- Doğantan-Dack, M. (forthcoming 2025). *Music Performers' Lived Experiences: Theory, Method, Interpretation (Volume 1)*. London: Routledge.
- Doğantan-Dack, M. (forthcoming 2025). *Music Performers' Lived Experiences: Personal Perspectives (Volume 2)*. London: Routledge.
- Nagel, T. (1974). *What is it like to be a bat?* The Philosophical Review 83/4: 435-50.

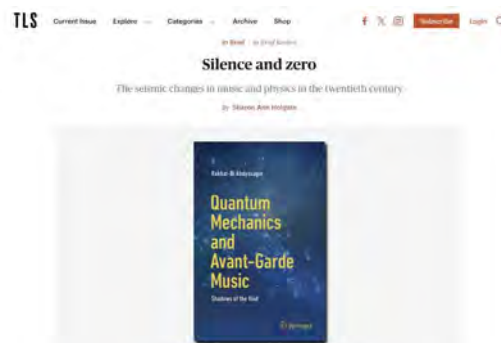
- Nagel, T. (2024). *What is it Like to be A Bat?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Additional recommended readings:

- Bevan, M. (2014). *A method of phenomenological interviewing*. Qualitative Health Research 24/1: 136–144.
- Bitbol, M. and Petitmengin, C. (2017). *Neurophenomenology and the micro-phenomenological interview*. In S. Schneider and M. Velmans (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, pp. 726-739. Chichester: Wiley.
- Clandinin, J. (2006). *Narrative inquiry: a methodology for studying lived experience*. Research Studies in Music Education 27/1: 44-54.
- Dilthey, W. (1989). *Selected Works (Volume 1): Introduction to the Human Sciences*.
- Gallagher, S. and Zahavi, D. (2008). *The Phenomenological Mind*. London: Routledge.
- Køster, A. and Fernandez, A. (2023). *Investigating modes of being in the world: an introduction to phenomenologically grounded qualitative research*. Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences 22: 149–169.
- Lumma, A. and Weger, U. (2023). *Looking from within: Comparing first-person approaches to studying experience*. Current Psychology 42: 10437–10453.
- Nagel, T. (1974). *What is it like to be a bat?* The Philosophical Review 83/4: 435-50.
- Nagel, T. (2024). *What is it Like to be A Bat?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Petitmengin, C. (2006). *Describing one's subjective experience in the second person: An interview method for the science of consciousness*. Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences 5: 229–269.
- Petitmengin, C. (2025). *Micro-phenomenology as coming into contact with experience*. In D. Schoeller et al. (eds), *Practicing Embodied Thinking in Research and Learning*, pp. 119-28. London: Routledge.
- Roth, W. (2012). *First-Person Methods: Toward an Empirical Phenomenology of Experience*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Van Manen, M. (2016). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Voronka, J. (2016). *The politics of "people with lived experience": experiential authority and the risk of strategic essentialism*. Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology 23/3-4: 189-201.
- Zahavi, Dan. (2008). *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Exploring the First-Person Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Whether you are just starting out or looking to expand your research toolbox, these resources offer a solid foundation for investigating lived experience from multiple perspectives.

Book Review: *Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void* Featured in TLS



7 - Screenshot of the review of *Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void*. Credit: *The Times Literary Supplement* and Rakhat-Bi Abdyssagin

The Times Literary Supplement has published a review of *Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void* by Rakhat-Bi Abdyssagin, one of our previous guest speakers. The review, written by Sharon Ann Holgate, explores the book's unique blend of scientific exploration and artistic expression.

You can read the review online [here](#).

Contact: Rakhat-Bi Abdyssagin (rahatbiabd@mail.ru)

Call for Papers: 37th ISME World Conference



We are delighted to share that the Call for Papers is now open for the 37th ISME World Conference!

Theme: *Unity in Music Education: Building Bridges for All*

Location: Montréal Convention Centre, Canada

Dates: 26th -31th July 2026

The ISME World Conference is a unique opportunity for educators, researchers, and practitioners to connect and exchange ideas on fostering unity and inclusivity in music education. We encourage you to submit your proposals and be part of this global conversation.

For more details and submission guidelines, visit the official conference website:

ismeworldconference.org/isme26/

UCL iMerc Research Seminar, June 2025



9 - Photo credit: Dr Susan Young

Guest Speaker: *Dr Susan Young*

Topic: *A Commentary on New Materialisms in Early Childhood Music Education*

Susan's Abstract: Members of iMerc may have noticed in music education scholarship renewed interest in materiality motivated by theories that gather under the banners of posthumanism and New Materialism. In this talk, I will introduce New Materialist theories and explain how they are being adopted in music education. I will then go on to explain some reservations towards new materialism that have emerged, mainly in the field of Childhood Studies, but that seem not to have entered into music education debates. These reservations centre on a lack of continuity with 'old' materialist perspectives, some internal inconsistencies within the theories, and problems that can arise when new materialist concepts of agency and 'decentring' are applied to children's activity.

Dr Susan Young (susanyoung351@gmail.com) was formerly Senior Lecturer in childhood studies and music education at the University of Exeter, UK and, prior to the position at Exeter, lectured at Roehampton University, London. She spent the first 20 years of her career teaching in a range of schools from early years to secondary. She first trained as a pianist at the Royal College of Music followed by a year at the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva. She holds postgraduate degrees in education, young children's musical development and biological anthropology and has published several books and many chapters and articles. She is a keen gardener and in the Covid lockdown wrote a book on Growing Beans.



10 - Photo credit: Lisa Carlin

Speaker: Lisa Carlin

Topic: An exploration of university music students with dyslexia and/or dyscalculia and the possible impact on learning and musicianship: a mixed method approach

Lisa's Abstract:

The impact of a special educational need and disability (SEND), such as dyslexia and/or dyscalculia, on the experiences of university music students is yet to be fully explored. This thesis aims to understand possible music-related difficulties and compensatory strategies

used by SEND students, and any influencing factors affecting learning outcomes, such as related to instruments studied.

A mixed-method explanatory sequential approach was used. An exploratory online survey was followed by two semi-structured interview case studies. This approach provided both a broad view and a deeper insight into the lived experiences of music students with these SEND's.

Results indicated those with a SEND do experience more difficulties and utilise several compensatory strategies in their music learning and skill development. In analysing the case studies lived experiences results were found to, in most instances, corroborate the survey findings, although some differences were evident. A multi (prism) theory approach was developed, which enabled different theoretical perspectives to be applied when assessing the same musical experience. This offered explanations of why the case studies perhaps answered in the way they did. Analyses indicated, for example, how influential their musical environment was, including the social interaction with their peers to support their learning of rhythm notation.

Considering the theoretical framework used in the study suggests that for those music students with dyslexia and/or dyscalculia underlying factors may influence difficulties and compensatory mechanisms for musical skill development and learning. However, other external influences may also have a direct or indirect effect. Many positive findings emerged from the study, which indicated how participants had utilised their strengths and their environment to ascertain suitable strategies, thus enabling them to continue progressing the development of their musicianship.

The implications for education of this research suggests there needs to be greater educational support for such students. Also, the study will hopefully be a source of inspiration for other music students with a SEND by illustrating, for example, how work-around strategies can support success in higher music education.

Lisa Carlin (l.carlin.16@ucl.ac.uk) came to academic study late in life after a career in business as a senior marketing product manager. It was during this career that she continued with music as a hobby and undertook a Diploma in Music with the Open University part-time, which is where it all began. As someone with both dyslexia and dyscalculia, Lisa began questioning if and how these learning difficulties might impact music learning, particularly sight-reading and rhythm. This led to her completing an MA in Music Psychology in Education. Currently, Lisa is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Education at UCL and just finishing her thesis. Her research focuses on special needs and music, specifically exploring university music students with dyslexia and/or dyscalculia and the impact these learning difficulties may have on musical learning. Areas of research interest include music psychology in education, music and the brain, special needs, educational neuroscience, psychology and cognition.

Speaker: Dan Wang

Topic: Defining Music in Policy and Practice: A Qualitative Synthesis of the Music Zhongkao Trajectory in China



11 - Photo credit: Dan Wang

Dan's Abstract:

This presentation explores the evolving Music Zhongkao policy in China through a qualitative synthesis of 30 government policy documents and 90 scholarly publications. The focus is on how music is conceptualised, implemented, and assessed across national, provincial, municipal, and school levels in China, and the study traces the policy's trajectory from its pilot phase in 2015 to its expansion in cities such as Yancheng, which serves as a case study.

Using the ENTREQ framework, the research examines how 'music' is defined and operationalised within this high-stakes assessment context. It reveals a tension between the holistic, creativity-oriented vision promoted by national and provincial policies—aligned with the ethos of Suzhi Jiaoyu (Quality Education)—and the narrower, exam-driven practices observed at the local level. The latter include a reliance on textbook content and computer-based assessments, often at the expense of expressive and experiential dimensions of music learning.

The presentation highlights the constrained agency of teachers and the challenges of aligning policy ideals with classroom realities. It argues for more flexible, context-sensitive policy frameworks that balance standardisation with the richness of musical experience. The findings seek to contribute to broader debates on educational equity, cultural representation, and the role of the arts in assessment-driven education systems.

Note: this study is a part of my PhD literature review, supervised by Associate Professor Ross Purves, with support from Professor Graham Welch.

Dan Wang (dan.wang.20@ucl.ac.uk) is a third-year PhD candidate at the UCL Institute of Education, supervised by Dr. Ross Purves and Dr. David Baker, with special recent support by Professor Graham Welch. Her qualitative research investigates a new Chinese educational policy introducing computer-based assessment in school music education. Her academic interests include policy research, teacher agency, music assessment, and the role of technology in education, with a particular focus on sociological theories of inequality, social class, and power relationship.

Dan has been a Postgraduate Teaching Assistant for the MA Music Education programme at UCL IOE since 2023. Previously, she taught Secondary School music in China for three years. She holds an MA in Music Education from UCL IOE (2022), a Master of Music from the University of Queensland (2017), and a BA in Musicology (Music Education) from China (2015).

Upcoming UCL iMerc Research Seminar

Please note that our seminar series will resume in the 2025-26 academic year. If you're interested in presenting your work, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch. Thank you for your continued engagement!

Contact Us

Visit us on the website at <http://www.imerc.org>

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