

Editor's Note: Inaugural Issue of Durham Undergraduate Research in Music & Science

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I am very pleased to introduce the Durham Undergraduate Research in Music & Science (DURMS) journal. This inaugural issue comprises the excellent work of 15 of our undergraduate students at Durham University Music Department, who have produced these articles using materials from their coursework for the Music and Science and Psychology of Music modules, or their final year dissertation projects. A primary aim of DURMS is to encourage emerging scholars to develop and partake in a culture of research communication and transparency that parallels the principles of the general scientific research community. The articles published here explore novel and innovative research questions, the results of which merit being shared with the wider academic community, rather than merely being submitted as required coursework that will only ever be seen by perhaps two markers.

The topics of the articles in this issue span a wide breadth of themes in music psychology and empirical musicology. These include empirical research projects investigating the effects of background music on non-verbal reasoning (Bailey), how emotional priming via news articles can influence emotion perception in music (Dillon), the effects of different musical genres on running performance (Elwes), the role of music in immersion in video games (Evans), how the effects of background music on reading comprehension might vary according to the musical expertise of the listener (Herath), whether an intervention to reduce negative self-interference can improve musical performance (Kümin), and how moving to music with different levels of groove can affect pro-sociality in pairs of young adults (Mastrolonardo). A comprehensive comparison between the cognitive and emotional qualities of autobiographical memories cued by music versus films is offered by Charlotte McVicker, who has produced her article as a shortened summary of the results of her final year dissertation. The issue also comprises seven critical review articles on the topics of the efficacy of music therapy for people with dementia (Ashby), the influence of musical fit on consumer purchases (Bruschini), the effectiveness of musical interventions for rehabilitation in prisons (Cox), the role of parental involvement in childhood musical success (Knott), the extent to which music can aid treatment in patients with Alzheimer's disease (Latchford), the evidence for music therapy as a treatment for depression (Vallentin), and the diverse ways in which musical ability can be defined and assessed (Weston).

As the above summary reveals, undergraduate students in the Durham University Music Department are encouraged and supported to pursue empirical questions that are motivated by their own interests and career goals, from music performance and music education, to the role of music in media, marketing, therapy, and rehabilitation. Research questions are also motivated by questions that are practically relevant to our students, such as whether listening to music while studying is actually hindering their retention of new information or how music might benefit their training as athletes.

This issue also represents a collaborative effort between these undergraduate students and the PhD students from our Music & Science Lab research group (James Armitage, Scott Bannister, Matthias Lichtenfeld, and Annaliese Micallef Grimaud), who have served as Editorial Assistants and copyeditors for these submissions. The Editorial Assistants have advised the authors through a light-touch peer review process as to how the work might be improved for publication. This process thus gives undergraduate students the opportunity to learn from other researchers who are working within the Music Department at a more advanced career stage.

I am delighted to see the hard work that these student authors have put in to producing this first issue of DURMS, and hope our readers find the content stimulating, whether they are undergraduate students themselves looking for inspiration for their own work, academic researchers interested in recent research findings on a particular topic featured here, or professors in search of examples of excellent student projects featuring empirical music research. We look forward to making DURMS an annual publication to give public recognition to the high-quality empirical undergraduate work that is coming out of Durham University Music Department.