

The 28th Annual

# GRADUATE STUDENTS IN MUSIC CONFERENCE



Keynote Address by

**DR. MAUREN MAHON,**

New York University



Saturday, April 26 & Sunday, April 27

The Graduate Center, CUNY

Sponsored by:

  GRADUATE CENTER



## **GSIM 2025 Conference Co-Chairs**

Madison Spahn and Diana Maron

## **GSIM 2025 Committee**

Kathryn Ball  
Lindsay Campbell  
Hang Ki Choi  
Kristopher Hilbert  
Maurice Restrepo  
Madison Schindele

## **Acknowledgments**

The GSIM Committee would like to thank the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council (DGSC) and the Graduate Center Music Department for their generous financial support of this event. Special thanks go to Professor Maureen Mahon for accepting our invitation to be the keynote speaker and to Professors Poundie Burstein, Jeffrey Taylor, Ted Gordon, Anaar Desai-Stephens, Emily Wilbourne, and Joseph Straus for serving as session chairs. Finally, we would like to extend great thanks to all music department students, faculty, and staff, with special thanks to Executive Officer Anne Stone and Assistant Program Officer Tonisha Alexander for their assistance and support.

*Program*

## Saturday April 26, 2025

*All sessions will be held in person at the CUNY Graduate Center,  
Room 5414 (5th Floor).  
\*Presentation via Zoom.*

10:00–10:30      **Registration**

10:30–12:00      **Invisible Labor**

Chair: Dr. Jeffrey Taylor

**“Mister Cellophane Shoulda Been My Name”:** How  
Invisible Labor Conceals Professional Theater  
Musicians’ Whiteness, Masculinity, and Wealth

Amanda Lee Morrill (Columbia University)

**Performing Grace Under Pressure: A Close Reading  
of Visible and Invisible Labor in Cholly Atkins’ Vocal  
Choreography**

Mary Beth Bauermann (University of Virginia)

**The Jazz Sideman as a Working-Class Symbol: ‘Philly’  
Joe Jones, Civil Rights, and Fame**

Dustin E. Mallory (Penn State University)

12:00–1:00      **Lunch (*Room 5409*)**

1:00–2:30      **Communities and Ethics of Care**

Chair: Dr. Joseph Straus

**Empowering Change: Innovative Public Education  
Models for Inclusive, Equitable, and Sustainable  
Lutherie Practices in Argentina and Brazil**

Rubens de La Corte (CUNY Graduate Center)

**Disability, Family, Artistry: A Search for Balance and  
Access\***

Molly Joyce (University of Virginia)

**Psychoacoustic Labor: Listening and Care in  
Luthiers' Work with Musicians**

Juliet Glazer (University of Pennsylvania)

2:30–2:45

**Break**

2:45–4:15

**Radical Analyses**

Chair: Dr. L. Poundie Burstein

**On the Sentience of Dried Peas: Experimental Music  
(EM) as Science Fiction (SF)**

Jacob Eichhorn (Eastman School of Music)

**Tone-Clock Theory's Expansion: An Analysis of  
Jenny McLeod's *Tone Clock Piece VIII*\***

Jonathan Lindhorst (McGill University)

**Nothing Just Appears: Form, Style, and Trend in Bill  
Dixon's "November 1981"**

Max Johnson (University of Pennsylvania)

4:15–5:00

**Keynote Lecture**

**Tina Turner in St. Louis: Musical Labor and the Rise  
of the Queen of Rock and Roll**

Dr. Maureen Mahon (New York University)

5:00–5:45

**Reception**

## Sunday, April 27, 2025

*All sessions will be held in person at the CUNY Graduate Center,  
Room 5414 (5th Floor).  
\*Presentation via Zoom.*

12:00–1:30

### **Building Global Traditions**

Chair: Dr. Anaar Desai-Stephens

#### **Tradición al talón: Mariachi, Identity, and Embodying Tradition Through Musical Work**

Erika Soveranes (University of North Texas)

#### **Open Online Communities as a Mediation Between Musical Culture and Sustainability: A Case Study of Maame Ode\***

Naa Akle Afriyie Okantey (University of Florida)

#### **“The Work”: Hip-hop as Ethnographic Process and Sonic World Building\***

Dilshan Weerasinghe (University of Virginia)

1:30–3:00

### **Women Within and Without Music**

Chair: Dr. Emily Wilbourne

#### **“Refuge of the Roads”: Portrayals of Musical Restlessness in Joni Mitchell’s *Hejira***

Ellen Shaw (Michigan State University)

#### **Gender Made Manifest in John Dunstaple's *Quam Pulchra Es***

Kieran Foss (Columbia University)

#### **Women Musicians Overshadowed by Patriarchal Society: Sonic Agency and Everyday Resistance in Post-Revolutionary Iran\***

Mina Neizari (Bowling Green State University)

GSIM 2025 – *Program and Abstracts*

3:00–3:15

**Break**

3:15–4:15

**Lecture Recitals (*Room 3491, 3rd Floor*)**

**Failing to Improvise/Improvising Failure**

Ben Papsun (Tufts University)

**Rewriting the Narrative: The Forgotten  
Contemporary Piano Works of Filipino Composers  
Buencamino, Molina, and Santiago**

Thadyn Du Pont (Florida State University)

4:15–4:30

**Break**

4:30–6:00

**Institutions and Access**

Chair: Dr. Theodore Gordon

**"The Major Ideological Schism within Our Ranks":  
Conflict between Pedagogy and Analysis in the Early  
Years of the Society for Music Theory\***

Levi Walls (University of North Texas)

**Sounding the Limits of the Institution: Julius  
Eastman's If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?**

Kevin Schwenkler (UC San Diego)

**The Pin-Striped Philanthropists: The Musical  
Economy of the Huntsville Prison Rodeo/Radio,  
1931-1986**

JD Short (Brandeis University)

# *Abstracts*

## **Abstracts**

### **Invisible Labor**

**Chair: Dr. Jeffrey Taylor**

**Saturday, April 26, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM**

#### **“Mister Cellophane Shoulda Been My Name”: How Invisible Labor Conceals Professional Theater Musicians’ Whiteness, Masculinity, and Wealth**

Amanda Lee Morrill (Columbia University)

The past quarter century has witnessed two significant transformations for American musical theater: 1) Broadway into a multibillion dollar industry and 2) its repertoire into an acceptable topic of scholarly research. However, within musical theater studies, one population remains curiously understudied: the instrumentalists who provide sonic backdrops for onstage actor-vocalists.

This paper joins recent efforts to consider musicians’ labor and performance practices in productions of musicals (Morgan 2024, Alexander-Hills 2024, 2022). It demonstrates that musicians working in this niche, “middlebrow” performance setting must simultaneously navigate the economic precarity associated with freelance music careers while seamlessly fitting into intensely bureaucratized, large scale arts organizations more commonly associated with permanent employment and “highbrow” art forms.

I argue that the longstanding tradition of concealing theater musicians from audience view has trained audiences and industry professionals alike to overlook not just the typical ensemble’s whiteness but also its masculinity and class division. I identify industry-wide, exploitative labor practices which further compound challenges for marginalized musicians. Finally, I link these practices to musical theater’s historic roots in (Blackface) minstrelsy and Blacksound (Morrison 2024) in order to demonstrate that for well over a century, the musicians best poised to contend with American musical theater’s unique labor constraints have been wealthy white men.

## **Performing Grace Under Pressure: A Close Reading of Visible and Invisible Labor in Cholly Atkins' Vocal Choreography**

Mary Beth Bauermann (University of Virginia)

Cholly Atkins was hired by Motown's Berry Gordy in 1964 as the label's choreographer-director in the Artist Development department. Atkins was responsible for preparing the artists for the stage but notably, the vocal performers signed to Motown did not possess professional dance experience. Atkins choreographed specialized dance routines for songs. However, he also navigated the task of teaching Motown acts how to carry themselves onstage in a way that convinced audiences that dancing was natural. Atkins crafted Motown's choreography and movement aesthetic around his inherently cool, "class act" tap background to teach the singers how to move in a sophisticated fashion, punctuating the music with rhythmic movement. Atkins and Motown believed that how well the performers carried themselves onstage directly correlated to their commercial success. Atkins explained in his autobiography, "Polishing their act was the first step toward increasing their profits."

The need to look polished onstage for commercial success prompts inquiry into the visible and invisible labor of Motown artists' performances. Atkins' vocal choreography, emphasizing the cool aesthetic that dominated 20th century American jazz music and tap dance performance, thereby allowed Motown artists to perform grace under various sources of economic and social pressure. Through close readings of recorded performances from 1963-1968, this presentation examines the visible and invisible labor of choreography in Motown performances before and after Atkins' choreographic shaping.

## **The Jazz Sideman as a Working-Class Symbol: 'Philly' Joe Jones, Civil Rights, and Fame**

Dustin E. Mallory (Penn State University)

One of the most recorded drummers in jazz history, "Philly" Joe Jones appeared on 250+ recording sessions. 100 of those sessions took place between 1955-1960 alone. He performed in two of jazz's most famous touring bands, appeared on numerous classic recordings in the jazz canon, and recorded with nearly all of the major jazz figures of his era. However, his contributions to music have often appeared as a footnote to his more famous contemporaries.

## GSIM 2025 – *Program and Abstracts*

Although Jones is regarded as one of the most important drummers in the genre, his life as a “sideman” embodied the ethos of the working-class. His friendship with Miles Davis symbolized the featured artist/sideman dichotomy of two musicians in the same band: Davis became a celebrity who appeared in commercials and television shows while Jones remained “fame-adjacent,” performing for per-diem. *The Encyclopedia of Jazz* and *Grove Music* both leave the 1970s unaccounted for in his musical output. Although he was no longer appearing in the pages of the *New York Times*, nearly monthly mentions in African-American newspapers show an active career that remains undocumented in mainstream sources.

Jones also had a “sideman” role in the Civil Rights movement. He participated in fundraisers for MLK’s March on Washington and was a member of the Philadelphia Eight that integrated the city’s public transportation system. This presentation will uncover his largely unknown role in President FDR’s use of the National Guard to forcibly integrate the Philadelphia Transit Company.

## **Communities and Ethics of Care**

**Chair: Dr. Joseph Straus**

**Saturday, April 26, 1:00–2:30 PM**

### **Empowering Change: Innovative Public Education Models for Inclusive, Equitable, and Sustainable Lutherie Practices in Argentina and Brazil**

Rubens de La Corte (CUNY Graduate Center)

This paper examines recent transformations in lutherie education in Argentina and Brazil through a transdisciplinary and intersectional lens, highlighting the promising involvement of marginalized groups such as women, non-binary individuals, queer communities, and racialized artisans. It draws on case studies from public institutions like Facultad de Artes de la Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, Universidad Nacional de las Artes de Buenos Aires, and Universidade Federal do Paraná, while also considering the experiences of current students and graduates. What educational frameworks may possibly disrupt or challenge patriarchal systems that could hinder equitable participation in lutherie? By examining innovative interdisciplinary curricula that promote collaboration among diverse students and faculty, the research raises questions about how these models can foster a collective ethos and encourage shared resource use (Godemann 2008; Tasdemir & Gazo 2020). Could these communal educational frameworks defy traditional mentor-apprentice dynamics that often lead to exclusionary habits? Might they facilitate access to quality custom handmade instruments for musicians across various economic backgrounds (Gibson & Warren 2021)? I argue that public education initiatives are essential for expanding access to lutherie training, addressing economic disparities, and enriching communities through diverse perspectives. Institutions incorporating sustainable, locally sourced materials and cooperative practices could enhance collective learning and amplify underrepresented voices. This study aims to identify transdisciplinary structures that might empower labor dynamics, potentially advancing a broad, groundbreaking lutherie market (Frater 2019). Ultimately, this paper seeks to open up new possibilities for fostering diversity, inclusivity, and collaborative learning in lutherie education.

## **Disability, Family, Artistry: A Search for Balance and Access**

Molly Joyce (University of Virginia)

I will present on disabled artist parents and their balance of artistic practice and family. As a disabled artist who recently started a family, the question of balancing artistry with a child has been a consistent inquiry. Especially as a disabled musician wrestling with managing one's bodily needs with a career and personal life, it is a challenging yet rewarding adjustment. Furthermore, artists often have atypical working hours, which can lend itself to parenting and take away from it in other ways. With the resultant interviews and presentation, I aim to provide critical insights into practicing disabled artists' viewpoints on parenting, ranging from the challenges to the dividends.

Interviewed artists include visual artists Fran Flaherty, Faye d'Evie, actor Gregg Mozgala, and media artist Andy Slater. I chose these artists because their practices span discipline specialties, disabilities involving physical, hearing, and vision impairments, and a further range of identities, including race and gender. My questions focused on facets related to balancing artistic practice and family life, such as creative sustainability, long-term planning, and sacrifices related to family. I hope these insights will support a singular view of disability parenting and artistry, as well as the Conference's theme of musical labor and process, particularly in regards to labor and ethics of care and their potential overlaps with disability.

## **Psychoacoustic Labor: Listening and Care in Luthiers' Work with Musicians**

Juliet Glazer (University of Pennsylvania)

Luthiers who craft violin-family instruments often work with musicians to improve instrumental acoustics and ergonomics, during what those in the business call sound adjustment sessions. In this paper, I ethnographically explore the labor involved in conducting sound adjustment sessions, drawing on participant observation and interviews with luthiers in New York City and Boston. I begin by tracing luthiers' basic practices for sound adjustment, exploring their techniques for listening not only to instrumental sound, but also to musician customers' speech about sound. Such listening practices guide how luthiers tap away at violins with tiny

## GSIM 2025 – *Program and Abstracts*

tools, making tenths-of-a-millimeter changes that can alter instrumental acoustics. I also examine luthiers' descriptions of creating aural placebo effects during adjustment sessions by wielding their authority as sonic experts, which is often gendered. Luthiers use placebo effects to help musicians play with confidence, thereby producing optimal sound qualities; as one luthier commented to me, "so much of this is just psychoacoustics." I follow this characterization to frame luthiers' sound adjustment practices as "psychoacoustic labor" that involves care work to manage the shifting, non-linear, and affect-laden relationships between musical instruments' physical production of sound, and sound as musicians, luthiers, and other listeners perceive it. The concept of psychoacoustic labor draws together scholarship in timbre studies with the history of the influence of psychophysics in anthropology, contemporary research on musical labor. I argue that psychoacoustic labor offers a nuanced way to study the role of affect, materiality, and social difference in the production of sound and value.

## Radical Analyses

Chair: Dr. L. Poundie Burstein

Saturday, April 26, 2:45–4:15 PM

### **On the Sentience of Dried Peas: Experimental Music (EM) as Science Fiction (SF)**

Jacob Eichhorn (Eastman School of Music)

In a keynote address, composer Liza Lim asks: “In what way can we say that non-human things have sentience and what does that open up for ways of making art?” (2023). Following Donna Haraway’s lead (2016), I adopt science fiction (SF)—a literary genre that begins by asking what-if?—as a critical re/reading strategy for experimental music (EM). What if we imagined plants that feel or rivers that sing? Requisite for Lim’s vanguard praxis, a science-fictional aurality (SF-A) is an imaginative, more-than-human way of listening, which “aims to free our thinking of that excess conceptual baggage” (Kohn 2016, 22) accumulated by Anthropocentric human exceptionalism. Like Chua and Rehding’s thought experiments in *Alien Listening* (2021), I play in the sandbox with Lim’s *How Forests Think* (2016) and *Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time* (2023) in an analytical diptych.

Taking a cue from the worn-out SF trope of plant sentience (Jakes 1950; Wyndham 1951; Silverberg 1968) and the real-world education of the mimosa plant (Gagliano et al. 2014), I imagine the sentience of dried peas in Lim’s *How Forests Think* (2016). In Eduardo Kohn’s monograph by the same name, *How Forests Think* (2013), the author’s ethnographic work centers on human-animal relations in Ecuador’s Upper Amazon and the diffuse more-than-human sign processes that enmesh everything in a sylvan web. Following his lead, I reach into the material-semiotic toolbox to analyze the human-plant and human-river relations in Lim’s *How Forests Think* and *Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time* (2023), respectively.

### **Tone-Clock Theory’s Expansion: An Analysis of Jenny McLeod’s *Tone Clock Piece VIII*\***

Jonathan Lindhorst (McGill University)

New Zealand composer Jenny McLeod's (1941-2022) substantial expansion of Dutch composer Peter Schat's (1935-2003) Tone-Clock Theory (TCT) through her unpublished manuscript *Tone-Clock Theory Expanded: Chromatic Maps I & II* (1994) is not only a radical rethinking of post-tonal harmony, but also offers unique new approaches for contemporary composition. Whereas Schat's conception of TCT deals exclusively with twelve 'chromatic tonalities,' (twelve-tone collections that are derived from the twelve trichordal set-classes and are organized into 'hours' based on their interval-classes), McLeod's expanded theory functions as a 'map' of all chromaticism by identifying a myriad of previously uncatalogued harmonic networks and providing detailed entries on all 220 of Allen Forte's pitch-class sets. This led to the development of many innovative compositional techniques specific to TCT, which she utilized while composing her 24 *Tone-Clock Pieces* (1989-2005) for solo piano, resulting in beautiful short works that expertly balance the highest level of musicality with deep layers of mathematical structure.

To date, little has been written about McLeod's creative applications of her Tone-Clock expansion, and it is only through a detailed analysis of these works using TCT itself that one can properly gain insight into both her compositional process and her exploration of these complex interconnected harmonic networks. In this paper, I will present a detailed analysis of *Tone Clock Piece VIII* (1995), showing how McLeod was able to practically apply her expanded version of the theory to her creative work, and to demonstrate how TCT functions as the preferred analytical methodology for such pieces.

## **Nothing Just Appears: Form, Style, and Trend in Bill Dixon's "November 1981"**

Max Johnson (University of Pennsylvania)

In a world where the wall between fully improvised and completely notated musics are thankfully being blurred and challenged, it is important to study the work of the groundbreaking musicians that paved the way for this integration. For over five decades, the trumpet player, composer, pianist, improviser, educator, visual artist, and organizer Bill Dixon challenged what the idea of composition and improvisation meant, always reinventing and finding new ways to organize sound through various forms of notation,

## GSIM 2025 – *Program and Abstracts*

coaching, manual cues, attitude, and his individualistic trumpet and piano playing. This presentation will expound on my paper “Nothing Just Appears” from 2023, exploring Dixon’s styles of music making through notated, non- notated, and hybrid means. We will listen to and discuss free improvisation and formal composition and how Dixon weaves the two together on his groundbreaking recording "November 1981". As a singular figure in music, Dixon’s music deserves to be heard and explored against the social, musical context of the 60’s to the present, as someone who helped to affect many of the wonderful evolutions we now enjoy regularly in contemporary music.

**Keynote**

**Saturday, April 26, 4:15–5:00 PM**

**"Tina Turner in St. Louis: Musical Labor and the Rise of the Queen of Rock and Roll"**

Dr. Maureen Mahon

How did Tina Turner become the Queen of Rock and Roll? My presentation will respond to this question by discussing archival materials related to Turner's formative years as a vocalist in the vibrant St. Louis music scene of the 1950s and engaging with recordings of her live performances from the mid-1960s. My goal is to consider the ways her musical labor, undertaken in her collaborations with musician and bandleader Ike Turner in the particular social and racial context of post-World War II St. Louis, laid the foundation for her to become a global rock and roll star.

## **Building Global Traditions**

**Chair: Dr. Anaar Desai-Stephens**

**Sunday, April 27, 12:00–1:30 PM**

### **Tradición al talón: Mariachi, Identity, and Embodying Tradition Through Musical Work**

Erika Soveranes (University of North Texas)

As a cultural symbol, mariachi embodies Mexico in every way. Mariachi music reflects cultural and social practices that represent both the country and its people. Therefore, mariachi musicians must uphold the traditions of an entire nation through their daily work. While Mexican people are recognized for their dedication to agricultural labor, mariachi as a musical career is one of the lesser-known occupations available to Mexican Americans in the United States. While there is a lack of scholarship on mariachi and musical labor, I analyze the works of academics such as Daniel Sheehy and Leticia Soto-Flores to analyze the ways in which the weight of tradition and national symbolization combine with the pressures of business in mariachi work to create a complex dynamic within the individual musician as well as the musical ensemble. Mariachi skillsets are unique, yet automatic to mariachi musicians and the vast quantity of memorized repertoire and other ‘blue-collar’ skills demonstrate a level of expertise on par with traditions in the Western canon. I argue that the transnational exchange of culture produced by these working musicians has established a musical working-class identity that consequently alters the identity of the Mexican nation. Musicians in the Mexican diaspora utilize this musical work to connect their cultural identity to their economic homebase in a foreign country. Mariachi work performs a transnational identity that transcends borders and political tensions during the currently tumultuous, civil condition of the United States.

## **Open Online Communities as a Mediation Between Musical Culture and Sustainability: A Case Study of Maame Ode**

Naa Akle Afriyie Okantey (University of Florida)

This paper explores adowa, an Akan funeral music and dance tradition, through the career of Maame Ode, a contemporary Ghanaian indigenous music composer and performer. Drawing from Joshua Brew (2023), whose work on “Music Career and Sustainability” argues that sustained musical careers lead to sustained musical cultures, I examine how Maame Ode uses her agency, cultural knowledge, and digital technology to promote her career and essentially re-present adowa music to the local and global market. I argue that, aside from the rich funeral economy I among the Akans in Ghana, open online communities also provide avenues for adowa to be sustained. I illustrate how the sustainability of the genre occurs on open online communities by drawing from Tony Perman’s (2020) metonymic and deixis indexical process. This paper also seeks to push scholarship in applied ethnomusicology away from generalized notions of sustainability—especially tropes of change and preservation of “local music culture”—to acknowledge new forms of hybrid music created through an artist’s agency. While contributing to ethnomusicological literature on Ghanaian music and career development, my work is relevant to the broader literature on new ways of conceptualizing sustainability, continuity, and change. This paper is based on nine months of ethnographic, historical, and archival research on communities like Maame Ode’s in contemporary Ghana.

## **“The Work”: Hip-hop as Ethnographic Process and Sonic World Building**

Dilshan Weerasinghe (University of Virginia)

The musical labour of Hip-hop artists remains overlooked in scholarly circles. I contend that the work of Hip-hop artists functions as ethnographic process, archiving the culture, in addition to building an Afro-Surrealist sonic world, away from our current world of antiblackness. In academic circles, we are quick to praise the work of researchers archiving Hip-hop culture in powerful cultural and academic institutions. Yet, we often gloss over the archival work and documentation of the culture- its cities, scenes, and stories- that is already being done through the labour of Hip-hop artists in their own work, which simultaneously building a new

AfroSurrealist world in sound. My paper explores the dismissal of Hip-hop as a form of knowledge, one based in a discriminatory Eurocentric framework of what Cassandra Hartblay calls “textocentrism”, before drawing on Alexander G. Weheliye’s work to understand the form of knowledge documentation which is done through the labour of Hip-hop artists. I then turn to how we can understand the labour of Hip-hop artists as an ethnographic process, documenting the stories and sounds of different spaces, as well as using music to build new worlds in sound, through discussing artists such as Noname, as well as my own work, based around the intersection of Hip-hop and Afro-Surrealism, and the work of Black Studies theorists such as Fred Moten. I also explore the archival work of Halifax based Hip-hop artist Aquakultre, to further explore how we can understand the musical labour of Hip-hop artists, and Hip-hop as an artistic form, as not just an expression of Black culture, but as a knowledge practice, an ethnographic practice, and a sonic world builder, documenting stories and building musical worlds against the grain of an antiblack world.

## Women Within and Without Music

Chair: Dr. Emily Wilbourne

Sunday April 27, 1:30–3:00 PM

### “Refuge of the Roads”: Portrayals of Musical Restlessness in Joni Mitchell’s *Hejira*

Ellen Shaw (Michigan State University)

Joni Mitchell composed her eighth studio album, *Hejira*, in 1975–76 while on three road trips throughout North America. Fittingly for its nomadic genesis, Mitchell says of *Hejira*, “There is this restless feeling throughout it” (Hilburn 1996). My presentation illuminates three ways in which *Hejira* portrays restlessness.

First, the poetry of *Hejira* ebbs and flows between two modes of address: Mitchell’s recounting of her travels directly to the listener, and her more inward meditation on her melancholic state. Adding to Matt BaileyShea’s (2014) model for interpreting discourse in popular music, I propose a new type of second-person address, *deflected reflection*, wherein “you” is used as a stand-in for “I/me” to bring the listener into the reflective realm of the singer. Then, to show how restlessness manifests across the entire album as well as within its individual songs, I map the nine songs of *Hejira* on two spectrums—*descriptive to reflective*, and *literal to metaphorical*—and show the larger-scale ebbing and flowing of the poetry in aggregate.

Second, I draw on Nancy Murphy’s (2023) theory of self-expression in singer-songwriter music to show how Mitchell’s poetry forces her vocal melodies to employ malleable melodic phrasing. The misalignment between vocal phrasing and the strict metrical grid established by the guitar contributes to the theme of restlessness, denying listeners consistency in phrase and verse length and conflicting more generally with the expected regularity of strophic song forms.

Third, I adapt Mark Spicer’s (2017) concepts of absent, fragile, and emergent tonic *chords* to reveal that the vocal melodies of the songs “Coyote” and “Hejira” have avoidant and emergent tonic *pitches*. The obscurement of  $\hat{1}$  prevents these melodies from achieving resolution.

Thus, in *Hejira*, Mitchell depicts restlessness in three domains: poetic, metrical, and melodic.

**Gender Made Manifest in John Dunstaple's *Quam Pulchra Es***  
Kieran Foss (Columbia University)

In a 2011 *Music Theory Spectrum* colloquy, Elizabeth Eva Leach and Sarah Fuller debated the validity of reading gender into Medieval music theory. In this paper, I build on Leach's proposition that certain musical structures were understood theoretically as gendered based on their perceived levels of rationality and completeness. I analyze John Dunstaple's liturgical motet, *Quam Pulchra Es* to revisit how gender in these terms manifested in fifteenth-century English polyphony. Dunstaple's handling of consonance vs. dissonance, perfect vs. imperfect time, and measured vs. unmeasured time can be mapped onto explicit expressions of gender in the lyric text. In developing this intertextual gendered reading between the text and the music, I consider the extent to which this mapping corroborates Leach's gendered interpretation of the musical structures themselves.

The text of the motet is excerpted from Book VII of the Song of Songs and portrays two gendered characters, one male and one female. Dunstaple employs or transgresses from rational musical structures based on the gender of the speaker in the text. For example, the first verse, written in the man's voice, coincides with fewer and weaker dissonances and is written in perfect time with no notated tactus modifications. In contrast, the second verse, written in the woman's voice, gives greater prominence to dissonances, switches to imperfect time, and uses fermatas to suspend the tactus on the first word of the verse. Ultimately, an intertextual gendered reading provides a more concrete basis for interpreting these musical structures as contemporaneously gendered phenomena.

**Women Musicians Overshadowed by Patriarchal Society: Sonic Agency and Everyday Resistance in Post-Revolutionary Iran**  
Mina Neizari (Bowling Green State University)

This presentation explores the lived experiences of women musicians in Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with a particular emphasis on the

contemporary context shaped over nearly five decades since that historical turning point. It focuses on how their voices and bodily presence have been systematically silenced through legal, cultural, and religious restrictions. These limitations not only remove women from official musical spaces but also define what kinds of voices are allowed to be heard. The study investigates how women resist these structures through acts of sonic and spatial intervention. Some perform privately or underground; others use digital platforms to circulate their music outside the state's control. Drawing on autoethnography, ethnographic observation, archival study, and media analysis, this research highlights everyday acts of defiance that challenge the gendered politics of sound in Iran. Case studies include personal experiences and examples such as impromptu performances under the acoustically resonant dome of the Shah Mosque in Isfahan, or state intervention in concerts despite official permits. These moments reveal how even fleeting female voices can disrupt patriarchal control over public sound. I utilize feminist theory—particularly Judith Butler's concept of the performative body—to argue that female musicians are reshaping Iran's auditory landscape. Their music becomes more than art: it becomes political presence.

## **Lecture Recitals**

**Sunday, April 27, 3:15–4:15 PM**

### **Failing to Improvise/Improvising Failure**

Ben Papsun (Tufts University)

This lecture combines examples of jazz piano improvisation with a theoretical discussion about improvisation and defeat, misfiring, collapse, and unthinkability. I depart from the question: What is the relationship between (jazz) improvisation and failure? Following the insights of Fred Moten, who associates Black improvisational music with “the unthinkable of the event-determined circularity of the history/narrative of the West,” and Fumi Okiji, who writes that jazz “take[s] advantage of the inevitability of failure encoded in artistic pursuit,” I argue that both the artistic triumph and challenge of jazz music are caught up in productive ways with notions of mis-reading/-hearing and infelicity. The unthinkability of pure

improvisation functions asymptotically as a perpetually generative horizon for jazz, since jazz foregrounds experimentation and resists common demands for stasis, coagulation, and unambiguous success.

Using the blueprint of a familiar jazz standard (“Body and Soul”), I will intersperse this framing of jazz improvisation with illustrative musical examples of my own improvisations. By playing with the tune’s harmonic, melodic, and formal logic to varying degrees, I will show how failure is not reducible to questions of intent or autonomy, but inheres in the practice of interpretation (reading/listening) itself. What I hope to show is how the jazz tradition, even as it formulates its own regulatory criteria for evaluation and criticism, nonetheless produces an unavoidable surplus of meaning in the form of what appears to be “failure.”

## **Rewriting the Narrative: The Forgotten Contemporary Piano Works of Filipino Composers Buencamino, Molina, and Santiago**

Thadyn Du Pont (Florida State University)

Prior to the Spanish-American War, music in the Philippines was exclusively influenced by Spanish, Catholic, and Islamic liturgical and societal culture. However, US occupational control after 1898 introduced economic, political, and cultural reform that increased Filipino access to western education; specifically, educational improvement allowed convent-trained musicians to continue their studies at newly established conservatories either at home or abroad. It was via these avenues that major contributors to contemporary Filipino piano music were able to gain traction in the modern world. While there are multiple solo piano composers from the early 20th-century, composers such as Francisco Buencamino and Antonio Molina benefited from the colonization of the United States. Though each composer is distinct in their compositional style, they incorporated extensive Filipino characteristics into their pieces. Folk genres such as *harana* (serenade) and *kundiman* (Filipino Art Song), folk rhythms such as *danza* (the Filipino iteration of habanera rhythms), and even *Tinguian* and *Tagalog* folk melodies are each present in the aforementioned composers’ pieces. The inclusion of Filipino musical traits served as a subtle form of cultural revolution, empowering these composers to embrace their indigenous identities that colonization attempted to erase. This presentation aims to

## GSIM 2025 – *Program and Abstracts*

bring awareness to virtually unknown Filipino composers and their works, focusing on their efforts to incorporate their personal heritages into western-inspired compositions.

## **Institutions and Access**

**Chair: Dr. Theodore Gordon**

**Sunday, April 27, 4:30–6:00 PM**

### **"The Major Ideological Schism within Our Ranks": Conflict between Pedagogy and Analysis in the Early Years of the Society for Music Theory**

Levi Walls (University of North Texas)

As shown in SMT archival materials, the society grew from a series of 1975 letters among an eclectic group of composers, pedagogues, and analysts. A central debate among this group was the relative importance of pedagogy versus analysis, the results of which would prove definitive for what constitutes music-theoretical work. A widely distributed questionnaire showed that a diverse array of pedagogical topics constituted a major area of interest for the inaugural conference; when the conference arrived, however, this interest was subverted in favor of analytical systems, thus setting a precedent for subsequent years. For those not privy to the conflicts behind the curtain—seeing only a lack of genuinely pedagogical topics—it seemed as though the pedagogy side of the debate lacked serious support.

In this paper, I open that curtain, revealing the role of these conflicts in establishing pedagogy as external to the interests of music theory. These behind-the-scenes discourses provide context for an illuminating 1976 panel titled "Music Theory: The Art, the Profession, and the Future," which was dedicated to dictating the qualities of a proper theorist—what Forte called a "theorist-theorist," *not* a "composer-theorist" or a "teacher-theorist." Forte understood the precarious foundation and limited appeal of this exclusion, lamenting that "the constituency of music theory [theorist-theorists] is actually very modest in size." After detailing this formative period of music-theoretical disciplinarity, I draw from several critical methodologies—particularly Marxism and terror management theory—to examine the underlying rationales and anxieties behind music theory's analysis-centered posture.

## **Sounding the Limits of the Institution: Julius Eastman's If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?**

Kevin Schwenkler (UC San Diego)

Eastman's 1979 piece *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?* (IYSS) opens with a trumpet line certain to exhaust the player's embouchure. This makes the musical labor of the performer visible, contrary to norms of concert hall music. I follow how this piece shows up in the archive, including in correspondence and press reviews, and I perform some listening description and analysis. Archival materials reveal a controversy within the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra arose around IYSS. Eastman rendered the limits of the BPO institution visible, alongside the limits of the organization's aesthetic program, while testing the limits of ensemble director Lukas Foss's support. Sonically, the piece at first seems raucous and even disorganized. However, in my analysis I find that Eastman carefully organized this piece to be maximally discordant. With this piece, Eastman explored a set of experimental sonic possibilities while also revealing the limits of institutionalized contemporary music. In his revelation, Eastman reminds us not to elide the separations between social spaces in music, or to ignore the aesthetic limits in a pretense of freedom. What does freedom sound like to Eastman? What kinds of limits should we try to make visible in contemporary practice of his music?

## **The Pin-Striped Philanthropists: The Musical Economy of the Huntsville Prison Rodeo/Radio, 1931-1986**

JD Short (Brandeis University)

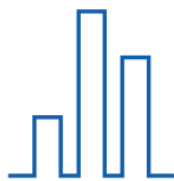
Built shortly after Texas' annexation to the Union, the State Penitentiary at Huntsville, the only remaining Confederacy-era prison in the United States and Texas' first integrated state institution, is a haunting cultural landmark. Some famous inmates have included James "Iron head" Baker, David Crosby, and Pimp C. Between 1931 and 1986, Huntsville hosted a prison rodeo that featured performers like Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, and Willie Nelson. The rodeo's proceeds, boosted by celebrity appearances and original music produced in-house by inmate bands, not only funded Huntsville Penitentiary's recreational programming but also stimulated Huntsville's economy. Overlapping with the rodeo, between 1938 and 1958, Huntsville inmates performed on a public radio program, WBAP's Thirty

## GSIM 2025 – *Program and Abstracts*

Minutes Behind the Walls, to broadcast the improvements and innovations of the Texas carceral system. Because Huntsville prison used inmate artists as cultural laborers, I analyze Huntsville prison's musical life within this paper as what Fernand Braudel calls an anti-market: meaning that these prison rodeo/radio economies are purposefully segregated from normal market processes. Music in carceral settings is often characterized as conveying expressions of resistance or liberation: however, I show Huntsville Prison's musical programming challenges this assumption. By incorporating interviews, prison journals, warden memoirs, Huntsville prison's historiography, a codex of inmate performers, carceral theory, and several generations of music produced in and out of the prison—I show that interpreting Huntsville as an anti-market helps us understand that recreational music programs that enable inmates to publicly demonstrate their rehabilitation incentivize compliant behavior that lubricates an anti market.



**CU  
NY**



**GRADUATE  
CENTER**