

Major Music Project Conference 2026

What We Come to Care For



Hilma Af Klint – The Swan, No. 12 (1915)

MMP CONFERENCE 2026

Music, Edinburgh Napier University
Merchiston Campus Room G08
Tuesday 17th March 2026

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Major Music Project Conference 2026.

The one-day, student-led MMP conference is part of the learning & teaching activities of the fourth-year [MUS10105 Major Music Project](#) undergraduate module offered at Edinburgh Napier University, School of Arts and Creative Industries. The purpose of this student-led event is to act as an opportunity for our 4th year BA Music students to present their final year dissertations and practice-led research projects work-in-progress, and to share their research processes and findings with their peers and the extended academic community.

The theme of the MMP Conference 2026 is **‘What We Come to Care For’** and aims to highlight two important undercurrents: **perspectives** and **love**. Here, *perspectives* are understood as situated viewpoints shaped by lived experience, and *love* as the care, curiosity, and passion that can animate creative and scholarly practices. Presenters are invited to reflect on how their lived experience, musical background, biographical and cultural context, identity, and values inform the research projects and questions they pursue, and how these aspects shape their perspectives and the work they come to care for and feel drawn to explore with enthusiasm and passion.

This theme resonates with Tim Ingold’s (2018) framing of research as “a practice of correspondence”: a sustained, attentive engagement with the people, ideas, and materials we work with. For Ingold, this helps foreground *care* and *curiosity* as part of the research process, with *research* becoming a “labor of love” rather than a “technical operation” (ibid.). This perspective highlights how care and love often sit at the heart of meaningful creative and academic work, with **love** understood here not only as a feeling, but as a way of attending and responding to what we work with.

Ingold’s emphasis on researching with care, curiosity, and attention invites us to ask how that love and curiosity are shaped over time, and how our viewpoints — formed within wider musical, academic, and personal contexts — inform this practice of correspondence. In other words, if research involves attentive correspondence, then what we notice in correspondence shapes our perspective, and our perspective, in turn, shapes what we notice, respond to, and attend to. Patricia Williamson (2021)

helps us explore this idea when she suggests that perception and perspective continually influence one another:

“Perception and perspective, while separate, are entwined because they constantly influence each other in a circular way. Perceptions, the way you sense the world and interpret it, impact on your perspective, your point of view of said world, which again influences your perceptions.” (Williamson, 2021)

As perception moulds perspective, our ongoing, attentive engagement with musical materials and practices, research fields and questions, experiences and understandings, discourses and lived contexts shapes what we come to care for.

The 2026 MMP one-day conference wishes to underline this relationship between love, care, perspective, and perception, and encourages presenters to reflect on the origins and development of their passions in the context of their research projects, and on what love might mean for them in relation to the questions and materials **they come to care for** as they move towards finalising their Major Music Projects.

References

Ingold, T. 2018. Anthropology Between Art and Science: An Essay on the Meaning of Research. FIELD, A Journal of socially engaged art criticism. Spring 2018 (11).

Williamson, P. 2021. Academic Writing Skills, Chapter 30: Perception and Perspective – The Subjective Writer. Published by the University of Queensland.

MMP CONFERENCE 2026 – COMMITTEE & CONTACT

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MMP CONFERENCE 2026 – SCHEDULE

Merchiston Campus Room G08

Time	Presenter	Presentation title
09:45–09:50	Clara Balhetchet	<i>Welcome / Introductions</i>
09:50–10:15	Gordon McGruer	<i>Putting the Pedal Steel on a Pedestal</i>
10:15–10:40	Archie Lund	<i>Composing With Space: My Methods in Site-Specific Practice</i>
10:40–11:05	Douglas Foy	<i>A Love for Video Game Audio, Explored through Practice-Led Research</i>
11:05–11:15	Break	Break
11:15–11:40	Cameron McGale	<i>Seeing Further Inward: Using the Works of Giants to Inspire a Compositional Practice</i>
11:40–12:05	Clara Balhetchet	<i>Lesbianism and Lyricism: The Challenge of Objectivity</i>
12:05–12:15	Break	Break
12:15–13:45	DISCUSSION	DISCUSSION

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Gordon Mcgruer

Composing With Space: My Methods in Site-Specific Practice

Archie Lund

This presentation offers a work-in-progress reflection on my practice-led research project. My project aims to explore different methods of site-specific composition and how acoustic, architectural, and social aspects of a site can actively shape the compositional material and process. The presentation will outline the experimental techniques that I have explored so far, including impulse-based analysis of room resonance and recursive re-recording processes inspired by Alvin Lucier. These methods will be examined alongside relevant composers and theoretical frameworks that have informed this practice-led research. I will also critically reflect on the outcomes of these explorations, evaluating their effectiveness and identifying directions that will guide the development of my final compositional works for this project. I also aim to engage with the conferences sub themes of of “perspectives” and “love” by considering multiple viewpoints on site-specific composition (I.E. architectural, acoustic, and social) while also reflecting on how I have come to care for this style of composition.

Seeing Further Inward: Using the Works of Giants to Inspire a Compositional Practice

Cameron McGale

In this presentation, I provide an overview of my practice-led research project and critically analyse its genesis and approaching completion. For this purpose, I look at my project through the lens of the conference theme 'What We Come to Care For', as well as its undercurrents 'perspective' and 'love'. My practice-led research project is centred around a portfolio of compositions created in reaction to the narrative of Octavia E. Butler's 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower*. I conducted a thematic analysis of the novel through multiple readings, for which I extrapolated several key scenes from the narrative. Utilising my own perspective as a reader, I worked alongside the text to realise several musical renditions of how those scenes make me feel and how they sit within the larger narrative. The presentation will dive into my motivations behind the project, the correspondence between my shared passions of music and literature, and the historic and ongoing exchanges between musicians and authors.

Lesbianism and Lyricism: The Challenge of Objectivity

Clara Balhetchet

This presentation will provide an insight into my practice-led research project that explores the relational dynamic between lesbianism and lyricism through creative practice. Upon reflection of foundational literature within the fields of queer, feminist and songwriting academia, I am writing songs, with lyrical content as the primary focus, to critically analyse how my lyrical output corresponds with themes and concepts presented in these academic texts. I intend to critique some lyrical examples from songs I have written thus far, examining my active intent and subconscious positionality behind the textual material, implementing the aforementioned literature as a framework for reflection. Drawing on my experiences as an outspoken lesbian with a passion for lyric writing, I aim to actively engage with the theme of 'What We Come to Care For' by highlighting my desire to amplify and celebrate sapphic songwriters through discussion of case studies (such as Brandi Carlile) as a methodological tool and its relevance to my project. My presentation will consider the explicit and implicit behind lyric writing to contribute to the understanding of lesbian womanhood in musical practice.

A Love for Video Game Audio, Explored through Practice Led Research

Douglas Foy

In light of the conference theme being What We Come to Care For, my presentation will directly address and respond to the theme, by focusing on the deep rooted love and passion I possess for my chosen area of study; as well as how a variety of subjective experiences have informed my perspective on not only my research but the wider art on which it is focused. My project is a practice led research project exploring video game audio composition, with specific areas of interest being in interactive sonic environments, systems design, atmospheric potential and compositional approaches. Referring to Ingold's text, the notion of a labour of love is crucial to my project, and accurately describes my engagement with research activities and the practice led elements of my project. These take the form of re-scoring exercises in which I compose and synchronise my own music to pre recorded footage of gameplay, with the goal of simulating how my adaptive score would function if applied to a working game engine.

My studies are rooted in the theoretical work of Margaret Boden, specifically her notion of combinational creativity that she proposes in her text *Creativity & Art - Three Roads to Surprise*. The idea here being that one of the fundamental ways in which we can think about creativity is by creating unfamiliar combinations from familiar objects (the objects in this case being my established love, knowledge and passion for the medium of video game audio, and my knowledge of the relevant technologies, Logic Pro and Pure Data). When combining these two objects with the documentation of my learning journey through the acquisition of new knowledge, I seek to better my own understanding of the nuances of video game composition and programming, both out of a desire to seek work in the industry, but additionally (and far more crucially) out of the sincere love I have for this fantastic artform.

Putting the Pedal Steel on a Pedestal

Gordon McGruer

The purpose of this presentation is to argue a case for the pedal steel, to reveal the instrument's mysticism from behind the curtain and into the spotlight, to put the pedal steel on a pedestal. I will cover a brief history of the instrument, its birth as the Hawaiian guitar and its heyday of charting American popular music in the 1910s. The Hawaiian slide technique is often forgotten as a major influence at the inception of both Blues and Country music, two pillars of American music and culture. This will provide the context of my practice led research project, a labour of love that seeks to uproot the pedal steel from its now cemented supporting and textural role into a new limelight. The centre piece of the presentation will be a composition where I have recontextualised the steel guitar as a songwriter's instrument, in the same class as the piano and acoustic guitar. I will present a compelling voice and instrument relationship unique to the pedal steel and expose its harmonic advantage granted by the complex copedent of pedal and lever arrangement. Through uncovering my songwriting process, I will assess the benefits and challenges when working with the pedal steel and report on my developing relationship with the instrument