Major Music Project Conference 2025

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
Dialogue

MMP Conference 2025 Edinburgh Napier University
Merchiston Campus - Rooms G20, G21, G23
Tuesday 18 March 2025

Edited by Angus Walker, Kasia Jurek, Lea Shek & Michael Palmer

"Mycelium is an immune system protecting habitats by nourishing a diverse succession of collaborating organisms that are continuously exchanging resources and information. Within these life-giving networks – just one cell wall thick – comes the power to steer entire ecosystems on their evolutionary path."

[Stamets, 2024]

INTRODUCTION

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 2025 MMP Conference is '**Dialogue**'. In thinking about dialogue, we draw inspiration from the metaphor of mycelium. Just as mycelium connects and nourishes diverse organisms, facilitating the exchange of nutrients and information across ecosystems, dialogue in research fosters the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and knowledge. These interactions, whether subtle or overt, influence the trajectory of research, driving interdisciplinary development and growth within academic fields.

We invite participants to reflect and explore these subtle and layered interactions in their own research, and to consider how various forms of dialogue — such as academic lineage (existing dialogue), interdisciplinary or intersectional exchanges, and metacognition (internal dialogues) — nourish and contribute to the ongoing development of their research work.

Participants may also consider more specific forms of dialogue, such as non-verbal interactions between performers in live settings, collaborations among artists across mediums, or broader conversations on the role of art in research. Artistic research, in particular — a field whose identity is in constant negotiation within the academic community (Jullander, 2016) — often embodies dialogue, as it navigates between disciplines, methodologies, scholarly study, and creative practice.

To this end, the aim of the 2025 MMP one-day conference is to exemplify the power of dialogue by providing a platform for presenters to share, critique, strengthen, and cherish their work through mutual exchange and peer/lecturer feedback, ultimately sparking new insights that will nourish, nurture, and guide their Major Music Project research journeys.

References:

Jullander, Sverker. 2016. "Introduction: Creating Dialogues on Artistic Research." Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning 95: 11. Available at: https://ltu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A975834&dswid=8407

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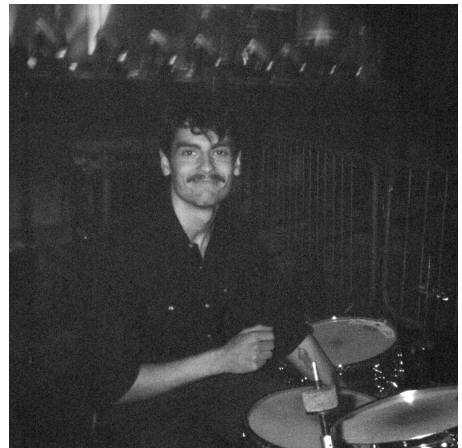
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Major Music Project Conference 2025

SCHEDULE

TIME	PRESENTER	PRESENTATION
09:50-10:00	Chair	**Welcome & Introduction**
10:00-10:20	Jamie Cook	Birthright Ballads: understanding the relevance and importance of 'truth' through the practice of folk song and remembering
10:20-10:40	Maddy Tully	Beyond the Shore: Musical Interpretations of Scottish Selkie Mythology
10:40-11:00	Lea Shek	Spring Is Coming: Reunification and Reconciliation through Music
11:00-11:10	BREAK	BREAK
11:10-11:30	Josh Simpson	Music as a Record
11:30-11:50	Liam Laverty	Music and Image - Protest Aesthetics
11:50-12:00	BREAK	BREAK
12:00-13:00	Discussion	Group Discussion Chair Concluding Remarks

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SCHEDULE

TIME	PRESENTER	PRESENTATION
09:30-09:40	Chair	Welcome & Introduction
09:40-10:00	Jakub Zalewski	The Recording Studio and its People
10:00-10:20	Chelle Logan	Composing for Adaptive Video Game Music: Vertical and Horizontal Techniques
10:20-10:40	Kasia Jurek	Order In The Cosmos - Designing a Contemporary Multimedia Practice
10:40-10:50	BREAK	BREAK
10:50-11:10	Angus Walker	Tacit Dialogues Between Performer and Machine
11:10-11:30	Owen Dougan	Heavy is The Head that Captures the Sound: The Application of Binaural Recording Techniques and Workflows in Interactive Media
11:30-11:50	Cynric Acosta	Development of Analog effects circuitry; Overdrive
11:50-12:00	BREAK	BREAK
12:00-13:00	Discussion	Group Discussion Chair Concluding Remarks

Major Music Project Conference 2025

SCHEDULE

TIME	PRESENTER	PRESENTATION
09:50-10:00	Chair	**Welcome & Introduction**
10:00-10:20	Lewis Robb	Music education and the neurodiverse. How music teaching can be made better for people like me
10:20-10:40	Michael Palmer	This Is Me - An interdisciplinary exploration into musical practice as a reflection of the self
10:40-11:00	Aidan Kavanaugh	Taking the Long Way Round: Recording Liveness and Creating Authenticity in Rock Music
11:00-11:10	BREAK	BREAK
11:10-11:30	Max Kiesele	Siren Songs - How Freudian drive theory, Nick Cave's love songs and Greek mythology can help us write compelling songs about desire
11:30-11:50	Thomas Tribe	An Exploration Of Sampling Techniques And The Worlds They Create
11:50-12:00	BREAK	BREAK
12:00-13:00	Discussion	Group Discussion Chair Concluding Remarks

CONTENTS

AIDAN KAVANAUGH

Taking the Long Way Round: Recording Liveness and Creating Authenticity in Rock Music

The purpose of this research paper is to document and develop studio workflows/techniques that are in line with the current public expectations of what rock music should sound like. Authenticity is incredibly difficult to create in a genre where the goalposts of what is 'authentic' and 'live' are in constant state of flux, and through the lens of practice led research, this paper will explore the meaning of 'liveness' in rock recording, and how this helps to create rock music that can be perceived as authentic.

ANGUS WALKER

Tacit Dialogues Between Performer and Machine

This presentation will detail my practice-led research project through the conference theme of dialogue. The project, as it stands, is an adaptation of Agostino Di Scipio's 'Modes of Interference' – a series of systems in which music is generated by interaction between instruments, rooms, loudspeakers and microphones. Specifically, 'Modes of Interference / 3' which consists of an electric guitar, amplifier, and DSP, with no input from a performer. My project seeks to extend this interaction to include that of a performer. Using a guitar, amplifier, and DSP program, I'm looking to explore the depths of how such interaction can take place and the implications of it. The system could serve as an extension to the performer's intentions or perhaps as an adversary to generate unexpected interactions. I'm also interested in applying theories of improvisation to the system and speculate on how improvising with a machine may differ from improvising with other live musicians. The presentation might also detail the process and technical challenges of developing the DSP program in such a way as to nurture interaction. The conference theme of dialogue is quite interesting in the case of this project, as the dialogues taking place in improvised music are tacit and subject to much interpretation.

CHELLE LOGAN

Composing for Adaptive Video Game Music: Vertical and Horizontal Techniques

With respect to the conference theme of "dialogue" this presentation will be discussing the conversation that takes place between a video game and its player. The game prompts a player to react and in turn the player's reaction progresses the game towards new prompts. It's cyclical. This conversation, known as Interactivity, will be explored through the lens of sound design, with a specific focus on music for video games and how it is composed. This project will develop a deeper understanding of the process and purpose behind video game music, centering the dialogue between composers and players. With this understanding, this project will outline key thinkings and core processes involved with the aim of demystifying parts of video game composition which may be taken for granted. To reflect this project's large focus on the development of practice, the research methods used will be practice led. The presentation will include video snapshots of a compositional portfolio. Due to the vastness of video game music, this presentation will focus on 3 key elements: adaptivity, vertical layering techniques and horizontal composition. By first exploring the importance of each of these elements, it will then be discussed how the combination of all 3 can come together to create a perfect interactive video game soundtrack. Whilst the dialogue between player and composer is certainly taking place, it may be more subtle than the conversation between player and game play, or player and narrative. This project will unmask both the player and the composer, so that both parties may participate in the conversation of music with greater intention.

CYNRIC ACOSTA

Development of Analog effects circuitry; Overdrive

This presentation will aim to showcase the scope and progress made in regards to the design and development of an overdrive effect pedal, within the realm of analog guitar effects pedals. In particular, this project will draw from the Marshall BluesBreaker topology, and researching into several other pedals which have expanded upon the technologies presented by the BluesBreaker. The aims of this project will be to gain understanding of relevant technical knowledge, research into technologies commonly used within different iterations of the effect, as well as research into methodologies utilised to design and expand upon circuitry, in order to make decisions, informed creatively and technically, to effectively develop an existing effect, featuring elements desired by myself as a guitarist. This research will also include elements such as physical circuit design considerations, such as using a prototyping platform (breadboard), and construction of the final circuit (veroboard). The project also aims to explore the interaction of creative and technical process, and the two way street of how designing your own tools may influence your interests as a musician, and how your interests as a musician can inspire the tools your strive to create. As this endeavour is more technically oriented in regards to typical creative practices, there will be a multi-disciplinary approach when considering the methodology of this project, including some elements from the scientific method, understanding of relevant maths and physics, practice led research, and circuit design approaches used when developing small signal circuitry.

JAKUB ZALEWSKI

The Recording Studio and its People

The music industry landscape has drastically changed, especially in the past few decades. The change has resonated right across the diverse network of the industry and in particular the recorded music sector, having a profound impact on recording studios and associated professions. The changes forced many large commercial studios to close and those that survived to radically adapt their business practices to the ever-changing circumstances. Of course, there is a multitude of factors to consider, when examining the potential causes, however, the advancement and democratization of technology for music creation being primarily at the root of the matter. The rise in accessibility to these technologies has enabled potentially anyone to create studio quality products, creating a steep rise in bedroom and home studio productions. Equally, fewer and lower budget investments by record labels into their artists have had a significant effect on recording studios, which for a long time saw much of their income derive from and played a crucial role in the production process of a record. Much of the current literature on recording studios predominantly pertains to studios located outside of Scotland, with a very limited number of studies conducted directly in Scotland. In general, there has also been a lack of cultural workplace studies conducted at studios, that have looked in-more depth into the actual realities of these working professionals. With this in mind, this presentation will focus on exploring, how recording studios have been adapting to the variety of challenges they have been facing over the years, hopefully, providing some insights from working professionals in Scotland, which will have been directly gathered through semi-structured interviews, serving as case studies.

JAMIE COOK

Birthright Ballads: understanding the relevance and importance of 'truth' through the practice of folk song and remembering

Birthright Ballads is a practice led creative project in which I have produced a podcast on folk song and memory. This project aims to draw a link between the way in which folk song is experienced and the way in which memory is experienced. Through a process of personal recollection and thought association it explores the unique meaning of art to the individual and argues that 'truth' is as authentic and valid in the recreation of art or memory as it is in the original artwork or experience. The podcast looks at how our understanding of our own personal narratives is always subjective; and that the birth, development and death of a memory can be compared to the natural growth, embellishment and eventual loss of a folk song. Folk music is an intergenerational dialogue, spanning several lifetimes, that is preserved through rememberings, forgettings, mistakes, loss and new creation, just as memory too is a dialogue that spans generations and develops through new understandings and misunderstandings. Each snapshot moment of a song or a memory's development is as real and truthful in the moment as any other point in its life.

JOSH SIMPSON

Music as a Record

A look into how music can document the history, sociopolitical background, and architectural development of various areas across Edinburgh.

KATARZYNA JUREK

Order In The Cosmos - Designing a Contemporary Multimedia Practice

Through a practice-led research approach, I aim to develop a distinctive performative and listening environment through the cross-disciplinary unification of visual art and music. This synergistic integration aims to create an immersive, multisensory showcase that invites audiences to engage on multiple levels. The showcase is based upon the wider theme of natures' patterns, spanning from the macro to the micro, which is exemplified through the unfolding of patterns found within the cosmos, funnelling down to earth and ultimately being reduced down to an abstraction. Through the creative process, I'm exploring strategies which will blend various mediums to construct a cohesive show, as well as create a sense of unfolding narrative - for instance, integrating projected animation to enhance a conceptual storyline in a tangible and direct way. Through personal observation of live installation experiences, as well drawing upon others case studies and existing literature, I intend to take the qualities, theories and production techniques from contemporary art and multimedia practices to inspire and apply to my own production; this is rooted in the notion of intersectionality as I thread a dialogue between the perspectives, principles and methodologies found across these disciplines to inform and support my process of research. More specifically, my main contextual influences lie in a range of installation practices that highlight particular aspects of audience engagement, including object-based installations, music for site-specific works, the interplay of sound and light, and progressive digital art practices. Through this conference I aim to present the methods of production I'm exploring and the effect of their application in relation to the other elements, focussing on narrative as the binding element. Whilst doing so, I will interweave relevant theories from my research to illustrate the ways they situate and influence my practice.

LEA SHEK

Spring Is Coming: Reunification and Reconciliation through Music

The project will look into how music can serve as a tool to foster better understanding between two countries as well as encouraging reunification and reconciliation of two countries. The collaboration between North and South Korean artists in the 'Spring is coming' concert held in 2018 in the capital of Pyongyang, North Korea, will be used as an example of this developing relationship between North and South Korea. There will be three points which will highlight the significance of this concert towards the relationship between North and South Korea. The first point will briefly look at the contrasts and development in political and cultural stances of which shaped the way music is presented and viewed in the two countries from the Korean War up to present day. The second point will analyse the reactions of both countries with their perspectives on each other's musical culture and styles. Thereafter, both points will aid the final analysis on the concert, exploring how years of accumulation of different perspectives and musical culture shaped the concert and how similarities were also brought together then, building to a goal of reunification. For exploring the theme of Dialogue, the presentation will view sources critically that comment on North and South Korean musical and social cultures within this research topic and how this feeds into the different perspectives gained on each side. The observation from these sources can then be applied to the concert and in what way these differences are respected and balanced for North and South Korea in the concert.

LEWIS ROBB

Music education and the neurodiverse. How music teaching can be made better for people like me

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate current musical education pedagogy and how it can modify to better support neurodiverse students. I will research current music pedagogy and current pedagogy for the education of neurodiverse people, as well as interviewing neurodiverse music students to get first hand reference on there experiences, where they found points of friction and areas they felt work best. Through this research I aim to develop some new pedagogical advice and techniques for music education that can enhance the experience of and improve the learning environment for neurodiverse students. This will be demonstrated in a series of lesson plans I will create. Using the research from the earlier stages I aim to make a collection of lesson plans/educational guides to help educators of and neurodiverse students adapt to create a more inclusive learning environment.

LIAM LAVERTY

Music and Image - Protest Aesthetics

The topic I would like to discuss revolves around protest athletics and protest performance. In this project I aim to record a video of four protest songs written by me. Which will include elements of live performance such as live looping, rapping, playing drums/ piano, or both. Two of the songs are not finished yet so determining what elements of live performance will be incorporated can't yet be decided. Alongside the performance aspect of the music, I aim to focus on the protest performance aesthetics in the attempt to communicate visually the political nature of the songs as well as aurally. I intend to have a projection on the wall/screen behind me where a pre-edited video will play alongside the music. The projection will include the lyrics of the songs as I sing them and real-life images/ videos that relate to the subject of the songs. A great example of this is the song 'Hinds Hall' by Macklemore. In the creative process, between the visual and aural aesthetics of the project is where I consider the dialogue between the two to be crucial. The music should enhance the image and vice versa. Both elements of the performance should work together. If the communication between the two is off both parties lose credibility/ effectives or takes the viewer out of it. And by dialogue, I mean critical reflection of how these two interact and attempt to make the image relate to the music in the most effective way possible. How to achieve maximum effectiveness is what I'm researching.

MADELINE TULLY

Beyond the Shore: Musical Interpretations of Scottish Selkie Mythology

This presentation explores aspects of musical composition based on the Scottish folklore myth of the Selkies. These seal-human creatures are prevalent in many Celtic folk stories and explore themes of the ocean, loss, exploration, and the relationship between land and the sea. Through this project, I have sought to explore these themes through my musical compositions by drawing from ideas throughout various folk stories, other compositions also inspired by folklore and drawing from my creative input. I aim to represent different emotions, themes, and narratives throughout Selkie's stories. Each piece encapsulates a different aspect or feeling of a story, ranging from traditional storytelling techniques to using the music to transport the listener to my interpretation of a specific feeling a character may have in a story. Through a practice-led research methodology, my compositions in themselves are the medium in which I am doing my research. I have kept a journal accounting for my progress and thought processes of my compositional decisions. With dialogue as a conference theme, my work contributes to the reimagining of folklore in artistic practice. This allows us to continue to analyze and learn their cultural and historical context and how this may connect to the modern day. This presentation will discuss these processes and demonstrate my music as a medium for these folklore story interpretations and how I fit in the dialogue between music, Selkies, folklore, emotional themes, and other musicians in the conversation.

MAX KIESELE

Siren Songs - How Freudian drive theory, Nick Cave's love songs and Greek mythology can help us write compelling songs about desire

This presentation focuses on a portion of my artistic research project on desire in songwriting, using the example of the song "Nereid/Siren" to demonstrate how musical and extramusical influences can inform the treatment of desire in popular music. It will trace how Freudian and Lacanian perspectives on desire have been used in composition, and how they can be applied to lyric writing in the context of popular music. These perspectives will be compared to Nick Cave's theoretical writings about love songs. The presentation will emphasise how the dialogue between this work and its cultural influences (such as Greek myths and modern folk songs) allows for creating a compelling narrative about desire. It will leverage above theories to better understand, reproduce, and subvert existing narratives about desire. Scene Setting Freudian psychoanalysis has been used both to inform the process of musical composition and its interpretation, albeit largely in the realm of through-composed, classical repertoire. Freud and related scholars understand desire as a force defined by underlying psychological drives. These drives have formed the basis of interpretations of the works of composers such as Scriabin and Wagner. Nick Cave's lecture "The Secret Life of the Love Song" contains fascinating parallels to Freudian theories. The song examined in this presentation directly references the song "Song to the Siren" by Tim Buckley, which in turn draws on the mythological Sirens as a metaphor for the desired object. Findings While the use of drive theory in understanding classical composition is not directly applicable to popular music, there are still aspects of it that can inform chord choice and arrangement. The largest potential for exploration of these ideas is in lyric writing. Greek mythology is a fertile source of inspiration for compelling narratives beyond just the somewhat tired trope of the malignant female Siren. Shape-shifters and sea-nymphs provide much potential for exploring more introspective perspectives with reference to Freudian theories of desire in contrast to the somewhat misogynistic implications of the Siren metaphor.

MICHAEL PALMER

This Is Me - An interdisciplinary exploration into musical practice as a reflection of the self

How do you write a song? What does your creative process look like? Why does it look like that? For generations, artists and creators have been inventing, reshaping and discovering new ways to express themselves using various mediums and methods. In music, the creative landscape has completely transformed over the course of the last 50 years. The development of new technologies and the ever-moving cultural and political environment have led to the birth of new aesthetics and techniques in music creation and consumption. On an individual level, this may manifest itself in the devices and instruments we use to aid our creative practice. Whether it's using a modern DAW or finding a chord progression in a social media video that inspires us we're each influenced by our circumstances. But what else is at play? We know that tools and inspiration are useful in creative practice but they're not the origin of creativity itself and they're certainly not the only things that influence the way creative practice manifests. My research project aims to answer the question of why we create in the ways that we do. By employing theories from the fields of phenomenology and autoethnography I aim to uncover themes and patterns in my own practice and use these factors to devise a framework for understanding my creative practice in music. My hope is that in doing this I might discover parallels between circumstantial factors and experiences and how they relate to the development of specific creative techniques and habits. that apply not only to my personal musical practice but extend beyond it, offering insights that may be applicable to broader artistic creative practices.

OWEN DOUGAN

Heavy is The Head that Captures the Sound: The Application of Binaural Recording Techniques and Workflows in Interactive Media

Binaural audio presents engineers with a plethora of opportunities for innovation within audio recording concerning interactive media. Can binaural recording techniques be used for more than just a barbershop tech demo? Previous famous research such as the barbershop demo failed to highlight the applications that binaural audio can present concerning interactive media, more modern research however has innovated and created the technology that allows binaural audio to be used in applications such as video games and virtual reality. This study will experiment with binaural audio recording techniques and post-production techniques that allow the end product to be implemented in interactive media, this will be conducted through a series of methods; replication of past experiments to create a usable media that can be manipulated in various ways to replicate others results and find some new ones. Data will also be gathered through a literature review of current articles that explore current research. Overall, the goal of this thesis is to gather and collate information regarding binaural technology and methods and synthesise and improve upon existing methods and technology when it comes to implementation in interactive media.

THOMAS TRIBE

An Exploration Of Sampling Techniques And The Worlds They Create

Sampling is the act of reusing existing sounds in new musical contexts. This is primarily done through technology being used to warp pre-recorded audio into something unique. It is the main way I compose my music, as I find it easier working with sound that is already characterised rather than creating that character. Also, it allows me to directly pay homage to music that inspires me and change the way it makes me feel. One of the first forms of sample based music is Musique Concréte, a movement spearheaded by the composer Pierre Schaeffer in the early 1940s. The music used analog technology, like tape machines to loop, slow down, and distort prerecorded audio. This created a shift in the way music was perceived/created as it put a stronger focus on the choice and phenomena of sound rather than the notation and theory behind it. I will examine these ideas and compare it to how I create sample based music. The main focus will be on the listening experience, and how the use/choice of sample techniques (micro-sampling or time stretching) might affect it. These techniques will be displayed in short songs I have composed, aimed at creating different contexts whether that be in the tone being darker or brighter, or the style being more abstract or tuneful. This will then be discussed with the audience and how they felt listening to it.