



Joining together in
strengthening and supporting communities
through recreational music making

Presents

The Thirteenth Annual Music & Medicine Conference

110 Compton Road Cincinnati, OH 45215
At the Centennial Barn, Schervier Hall, & Live Streamed

September 26, 2025 | 8:00am - 4:00pm

Keynote Speakers



Barry Bittman, MD

Neurologist/Population Health Innovator, and Researcher



Rhonna Shatz, DO

University of Cincinnati College of Medicine



Stefan Fiol, PhD

University of Cincinnati College- Conservatory of Music

Conference Schedule

Schedule for Option A

Located in Music & Wellness Center

- 8:30am Welcome**
Arlene de Silva, CEO, Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition
- 8:45am The Inclusionary School Orchestra: A Longitudinal Assessment Of Children With Disabilities (New Research)**
Barry Bittman, MD
- 9:45am Break**
- 10:00am Cincinnati Music Resources**
Brian Shepard, BA, Natasha Naik, MMV, and Shonda Malik, MS, LPC, LPMT, MT-BC
- 11:00am Sound Meditation for Deep Relaxation and Inner Awareness**
Sonya Verma, MHSA, MBI
- 11:30am Experience Clavinova Connection**
Jim Waddle/Barry Bittman, MD
- 12:15pm Lunch**
- 1:15pm Measuring Impact: The Role of Data in Music-Making Programs for Wellness**
Robert Graham, PhD, Melinda Butsch Kovacic, PhD, and Brenda Ely, MS, MA
- 2:15pm Break**
- 2:30pm HealthRHYTHMS Interactive Sessions- Aging/ Children & Youth/Special Populations**
Trained Facilitators from Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition
- 3:30pm Evaluations**

Schedule for Option B

Located in Schervier Hall

- 8:30am Welcome**
Anne Wildman, LISW, Associate Director-Northern Kentucky Area Development District
- 8:45am Cincinnati Music Resources**
Brian Shepard, BA, Natasha Naik, MMV, and Shonda Malik, MS, LPC, LPMT, MT-BC
- 9:45am Break**
- 10:00am The Inclusionary School Orchestra: A Longitudinal Assessment Of Children With Disabilities (New Research)**
Barry Bittman, MD
- 11:00am Measuring Impact: The Role of Data in Music-Making Programs for Wellness**
Robert Graham, PhD, Melinda Butsch Kovacic, PhD, and Brenda Ely, MS, MA
- 12:00pm Lunch**
- 1:00pm Sound Meditation for Deep Relaxation and Inner Awareness**
Sonya Verma, MHSA, MBI
- 1:30pm Musical Awe and Cognitive Reserve**
Rhonna Shatz, DO and Stefan Fiol, PhD (pre-recorded with presenter(s) on zoom for Q&A)
- 2:15pm Break**
- 2:30pm HealthRHYTHMS Interactive Sessions- Aging/ Children & Youth/Special Populations**
Trained Facilitators from Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition
- 3:30pm Evaluations**

Consider a lunchtime visit to The Franciscan Peddler, a charity shop located on campus grounds!

Conference Speakers & Presenters

The Inclusionary School Orchestra

A longitudinal assessment of children with disabilities (new research)

By Barry Bittman, MD

Barry Bittman, MD

Barry Bittman, MD is a neurologist, author, international speaker, researcher and population health innovator who serves as the Chief Population Health and Quality Officer for the Inland Empire Foundation for Medical Care (IEFMC) in Riverside California. He is a recognized thought leader for healthcare transformation. Dr. Bittman serves as the Faculty Chair of the Population Health Management Academy, as well as for the nation's first Population Health Fellowship Program that began in 2021. Bittman is widely published — having served as the Principal Investigator for several peer-reviewed scientific publications including two molecular research studies focusing on stress reduction on the genomic level utilizing novel creative music expression strategies. His presentation at this conference will be about his latest research.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To review the conceptual historical framework for promoting inclusion in the educational process for children facing the challenges of disabilities.

To discuss the psychosocial benefits associated with traditional band/orchestra participation for children with disabilities.

To learn about an empiric longitudinal data assessment performed in a multi-site study focused on mainstreaming children with disabilities into traditional school orchestras.

Cincinnati Music Resources

Brian Shepard, BA - Natasha Naik, MMV - Shonda Malik, MS, LPC, LPMT, MT-BC

Brian Shepard, BA

Brian Shepard is Chief Executive Officer of Music Teachers National Association. Shepard first began his career at MTNA in 2003 as the Director of Marketing and Public Relations. In addition to his work at MTNA, Shepard serves on several other nonprofit boards and committees, including the National Music Council. He currently serves the Hall of Fame as Board President. Shepard is also an accomplished musician who performs frequently for church and community programs as a pianist, vocal soloist and choral conductor. A graduate of Miami University of Ohio, Shepard holds degrees in marketing and music education. He was named an MTNA Foundation Fellow in 2010.

Natasha Naik, MMV

Natasha Naik is a mezzo-soprano and Arts Administrator originally from Edmond, Oklahoma and currently splits her time between Cincinnati and Oklahoma City. She is Programs Manager for Cincinnati Song Initiative (CSI). In her work with Cimarron, she has led the production of multiple operas, organized educational outreach tours, and coordinated the company's 3-week Opera Camp, a premier arts education program. With Cincinnati Song Initiative she helps in the production of concerts around the Cincinnati metro and CSI's 1 week song intensive the Fellowship of the Song every May. Additionally, she is a multifaceted and dynamic performer noted for the vocal warmth heard throughout her range.

Conference Speakers & Presenters

Shonda Malik, MS, LPC, LPMT, MT-BC

Shonda Malik earned her Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Wright State University and her Bachelor's degree in Music Therapy from Ohio University. Shonda has worked in private practice as a Music Therapist for over 20 years in a variety of settings including acute and long-term psychiatric hospitals, day programs, schools, hospices, young children with autism and other developmental disabilities and senior communities. Shonda is a Licensed Professional Music Therapist and Licensed Professional Counselor who works with all ages, young children through senior adults. Shonda is passionate about helping her clients grow through creative and expressive therapies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To gain comprehensive knowledge of the resources, initiatives and professional opportunities provided by Music Teachers National Association (MTNA).

To learn how to connect people of all ages and abilities through music and song.

To learn about how each population can benefit from music therapy and how the community can be informed to ask for music therapy if and when they encounter a need for a particular service.



Sound Meditation for Deep Relaxation and Inner Awareness

Sonya Verma, MHSA, MBI

Sonya Verma, MHSA, MBI

Sonya Verma is a certified Ayurvedic Practitioner, 1000-hour E-RYT Yoga and Sound therapist. She received her Bachelor of Science in human nutrition from the University of Kentucky and two master's degrees: a master's in Healthcare Administration from Xavier University and a Master's in Business Informatics from Northern Kentucky University. While getting her Masters Degree at Xavier University she specialized her degree in long term care. Prior to completing her master's degree, she attended medical school for two years but pivoted to focus on other integrative health modalities and has worked in corporate healthcare for many years.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To define mindful listening and its role in sound therapy, distinguishing it from passive hearing and active listening.

To examine the physiological and neurological effects of sound and vibration, including how mindful listening engages the auditory system, nervous system, and emotional regulation.

To explore the role of silence and resonance in sound therapy, understanding their impact on perception, relaxation, and inner awareness.

To engage in guided sound-based listening practices to experience the effects of different frequencies, overtones, and rhythmic patterns on attention and mindfulness.

To discuss practical applications of mindful listening in sound therapy, meditation, and everyday life, including how it can enhance self-awareness, emotional balance, and deep presence.

Conference Speakers & Presenters

Experience Clavinova Connection (Only in option A)

Jim Waddle and Barry Bittman, MD

Jim Waddle

Jim Waddle is a long-time trained facilitator for HealthRHYTHMS and Clavinova Connection. He participated in the first HealthRHYTHMS training in 2009 from Barry Bittman, MD and in 2010 took Clavinova Connection training from Lori Frazer of Yamaha Corporation. He is experienced in HealthRHYTHMS facilitation with institutionalized and independent older adults with particular skills working with memory care participants. He also has experience with elementary children and developmentally disabled adults. Jim is a leading facilitator for Clavinova Connection having worked with both short and long-term programs in several labs throughout the region.

Barry Bittman, MD (See Bio On Page 1)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand the results of the genomic study on Clavinova Connection.

To understand the benefits of the program for cardiovascular patients.

To understand how the program benefits non-musicians and health outcomes.

To participate in an experiential session of the program.



Measuring Impact: The Role of Data in Music-Making Programs for Wellness

Robert Graham, PhD, Melinda Butsch Kovacic, PhD, and Brenda Ely, MS, MA

Robert Graham, PhD

Robert Graham, PhD serves as a Research Scholar with Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University. Dr. Graham graduated from Lee University before earning a masters of gerontological studies from Miami University and a PhD in sociology from the University of Cincinnati (UC). Graham worked as a research analyst at UC's Institute for Policy Research for 2 years and a Research Associate at UC's Dept of Family Medicine for 3 years. Dr. Graham has been a faculty member for 21 years. Prior to joining Scripps Gerontology Center, he was Professor of Sociology and Chair of Behavior and Social Sciences at Lee University for 11 years and Dean and Provost at Waynesburg University for 5 years.

Melinda Butsch Kovacic, PhD

Melinda Butsch Kovacic, MPH, PhD is a Professor and Associate Dean of Research for the University of Cincinnati (UC)'s College of Allied Health Sciences. She is also a Professor at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) and in the Department of Pediatrics at UC's College of Medicine. In 2022, she was appointed as the Associate Director of Community Outreach and Engagement at the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center. She is also the Program Director for the Cancer Research Scholars Program, a 5-year NCI-funded program that offers cancer research experiences to 22 undergraduates.

Conference Speakers & Presenters

Brenda Ely, MS, MA

Brenda Ely, MS, MA is the Data and Program Coordinator for Cincinnati Music and Wellness Coalition. With thirty years of experience in the nonprofit sector, her experience spans program evaluation, data analysis, customer experience, and educational advocacy. She holds a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, as well as master's degrees in Special Education and Instructional Design. Brenda has held several leadership roles in education and children's programming, participating in research and data work at local, state, and national levels.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To gain insights into how data supports and communicates the effectiveness of music-based wellness programs.

To explore different types of data and their real-world applications and limitations in music and wellness contexts.

To reflect on and discuss ways to incorporate meaningful, manageable data collection practices in their own wellness promotion work.

HealthRHYTHMS Interactive Sessions - Aging/Children & Youth Special Populations

Trained Facilitators from Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand the health benefits of the HealthRHYTHMS protocol for diverse populations.

Musical Awe and Cognitive Reserve (Only in Option B)

Rhonna Shatz, DO and Stefan Fiol, PhD (pre-recorded with presenter(s) on zoom for Q&A)

Rhonna Shatz, DO

Rhonna Shatz, DO is the Medical Director of the Memory Disorders Center and the Bob and Sandy Heimann Chair in Research and Education of Alzheimer's Disease. She is a UCNS-certified (United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties) behavioral neurologist who came to Cincinnati after 25 years at Henry Ford Health Systems in Detroit, where she was the Clayton Alandt Chair of Behavioral Neurology. She has received numerous Alzheimer's Association awards for service and innovation, and Best Teacher awards from residents and medical students.

Stefan Fiol, PhD

Stefan Fiol, PhD joined the CCM faculty in 2010 and is Professor of Ethnomusicology and Affiliated Faculty in Asian Studies. He researches music, dance, ritual practice, media and the histories of commercial and folkloric cultural representation the Uttarakhand Himalayas and North India. His current research explores drumming as a historiographic tool in the central Himalayas, specifically through mapping drumming practice and reading shifts and continuities against insights from oral history, archaeology and sociolinguistics.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To demonstrate how a service-learning course at the University of Cincinnati can develop skills in leadership, communication, active listening, improvisation, songwriting and adaptation through intergenerational learning between medical and music students, and people with neurodegenerative cognitive disorders.

To assess the biological signature and subjective experience of awe induced through musical listening.

To understand factors in an individual's personal context (personality, cultural background, musical background, age, cognitive status) that may predict the likelihood of experiencing awe.



Continuing Education Approvals

The following have been approved:

7 CMTEs for Music Therapists-Board Certified

Approved by The Certification Board of Music Therapists (CBMT)

Provider Number: P-238

6 CEUs for Social Workers and Counselors

Approved by the NASW Ohio Chapter for CEUs in Ohio.

Provider Number: 333350-062625

NASW is recognized as a Continuing Education Approver for social work and counselor CEUs by the OCSWMFT Board.

6 Instructional hours for Activity Professionals (NCCAP)

Approved By The National Certification Council

Approval number NCCAP5351349-26

5.25 Credit Hours of Continuing Education for Licensed Nursing Home Administrators

Board of Executives of Long-Term Services & Supports has approved.

6 CEUs for Music Educators

MTNA certification renewal: 1 Point under Standard V; Category 4 for music educators

Six (6) CEUs for Recreation Therapists

Six (6) for Chaplains

5.25 CEs for Nurses

This CE Activity, OLN-S-3214-2025, offered by Cincinnati Music and Wellness Coalition has been approved for 5.25 contact hours by the Ohio Board of Nursing

through the approver unit at the Ohio League for Nursing (OBN-006-92)

This program is approved to be offered through August 17, 2027

Registration Information

Registration Deadline: September 10, 2025



In-Person & Live Stream: \$100

Early Bird Registration: \$90

Student Registration: 50% off

Call and request details

Phone: (513) 315-7393

Online

Musicandwellness.net

(Paypal & Major Credit Cards accepted)

Mail

110 Compton Road

Cincinnati, OH 45215

(Make check payable to Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition)

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