



Because everybody hears differently!

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Edited by Andrew Hugill



Participants with Noa Nishizawa in 'See the Sound, Play the Music!'

Aural Diversity Conference

The Call for Abstracts is open for this year's edition of the Aural Diversity Conference!

Staff and students from the University of Salford's Leverhulme Aural Diversity Doctoral Research Hub (LAURA) are organising this hybrid event, happening on the **3rd September 2026 in MediaCity**, Salford, UK, and online.

Please join us for a great day of research on Aural Diversity! Musicians, engineers, acousticians, psychologists, and more are welcome, and registration is free!

Applications, registration and further information [can be found here](#).

Feel free to email if you have any questions: auraldiversityconference@gmail.com

We look forward to seeing you there!





See the Sound, Play the Music!

Last week, Manchester Deaf Centre hosted *See the Sound, Play the Music!* – a Deaf-led inclusive music workshop created by musician and researcher Noa Nishizawa in collaboration with Manchester Deaf Centre. The workshop explored new ways of experiencing and creating music beyond traditional listening, using visual communication, rhythm, movement, vibration, and group interaction. Designed specifically for Deaf and hard-of-hearing participants, the session welcomed adults with all levels of musical experience – including many who had never made music before.

[View a video account of the workshop.](#)



Our ears sometimes sing to us

Lola de la Mata presented her work 'Our ears sometimes sing to us' at the [Sounds From The Other City](#) Festival in Salford in May 2026.

She takes the anarchic being – the ear, as her muse. Duetting with her tinnitus she is led into an embodied experimental research practice which draws on the field of aural diversity for the creation of her glass and metal instruments.

Noise Action Week



This year's [Noise Action Week](#) took place from May 11th – 15th and included Aural Diversity as a key theme.

Noise Action Week is a campaign to raise awareness and reduce noise pollution across the UK. Noise Action Week is run by the Environmental Policy Implementation Community (EPIC) at the Institute for Environmental Science and supported by leading acoustics and environmental health organisations. Working with the Aural Diversity Network and our partners Arup, the IES has also produced a [KS3 Lesson Pack on Aural Diversity](#).

News & Updates

Xsara Helmi selected for Editors' Choice by Bristol University Press

PhD researcher Xsara Helmi (funded by the Leverhulme Aural Diversity Research programme) has had her first paper selected for Bristol University Press's latest [Editors' Choice Collection](#). The paper—'Hospital Noises: Sonic Autobiography and the Embodied Experience of Autistic Auditory Perception - A Transdisciplinary Arts-Practice Enquiry'—was recently published in the *Journal of Creative Research Methods* (Vol. 2, No. 1). It innovatively combines sonic autobiography and music improvisation to explore autistic perception outside traditional research frameworks. You can [read the full study](#) for free until August 31, 2026.



Also, this autumn, Xsara will join Cambridge Digital Humanities at the University of Cambridge as a visiting student for the Michaelmas term 2026. Supervised by her external advisor Prof. John L. Drever, Xsara will further develop her project, *The Numinous Ear: Autistic Listening and Aural Diversity as a Gateway to the Divine and Sublime*.

Autoimmune Inner Ear Disease



Neil Canham recently wrote [an article about Autoimmune Inner Ear Disease](#), something he wasn't previously familiar with but was asked to look into. As he remarks: "this seems like something people should be aware of as early treatment can make a big difference".

Jay Afrisando: new publications



Jay Afrisando: *In Which to Trust?* Photo credit: Terry Perdanawati. Event: Sound Scene 2022

"[Mapping Aural Diversity through *In Which to Trust?*](#)" shares the story of the 5-channel film installation *In Which to Trust?* from its making to its public presentations. The project maps differences in hearing-listening and brings together five aurally diverse listeners—Bill Davies, Josephine Dickinson, Ed Garland, Alan Jacques, and Terry Perdanawati—who documented their lived experiences through creative-experimental sound captions. The article has been published by *Ars Vivendi Journal* in Special Issue No. 18.

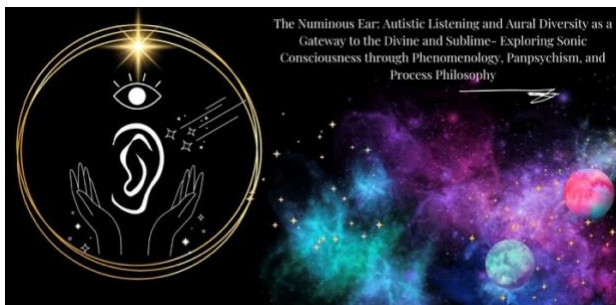
"[Crippled captions: Captions as actors in \[opera captions\]](#)," discusses the making of his multifaceted music-theater performance *[opera captions]* premiered by New York-based composer-performers collective thingNY. The work features captions as "actors" and brings together accessibility, inner-imagined voices, and creativity, manifested in theater, music, live film, translation, on-site captioning, interactive poetry, audience participation, and educational work.



HELA (Healthy Ears Limited Annoyance)

The [HELA Initiative's](#) mission is to transform the live music and events industry by advancing safe, healthy, and sustainable sound practices through education, research, and collaboration. Their Outreach Group is led by Aural Diversity Network member Sam Couth and Laura Sinnott.

The HELA Research Cooperative recently announced its [first funding round](#), with a deadline of June 22nd 2026 for expressions of interest. Focused on safe listening at music venues and events, the call aims to support innovative, multidisciplinary feasibility studies, ideally serving as a springboard for future larger-scale projects, that address gaps in knowledge relating to safe listening at music venues and events.



Acoustic Design for All

Call for Papers

Chiara Visentin writes from the University of Ferrara, Italy: "I am currently serving as Guest Editor of the Special Issue "[Acoustic design for all: human-centric and inclusive approaches to sound environments supporting well-being and performance](#)" in *Applied Acoustics*.

This Special Issue aims to gather original contributions exploring human-centred and inclusive approaches to acoustic design, with a particular focus on how sound environments can support well-being, accessibility, participation, and performance across diverse populations and contexts. I believe it closely aligns with the principles and research perspectives of aural diversity. In particular, the issue seeks to address how acoustic environments can be designed and evaluated by taking into account the wide variability in how people perceive, experience, and respond to sound".

The Numinous Ear at Oxford

On 16-17 May, LAURA's Xsara Helmi returned to the University of Oxford to present her paper, *The Numinous Ear: Autistic Listening and Aural Diversity as Sacred Experience*, at the [Sacred Arts 2026](#) conference. Hosted by the [London Arts-Based Research Centre](#), this marks the second year in a row that Xsara has been invited to share this research. Her work bridges philosophy and neurodivergence, exploring how the intricate patterns of autistic listening may unlock deeply affective, transcendent states of consciousness.

[Read more about the project.](#)

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PARTICIPANTS WANTED!

Are you a musician, or do you have musical experience?

Do you suspect you have auditory aphasia, (also known as anauralia), or any other form of aphasia?

If so, your insights to this study are most valuable!

This survey aims to learn about the experiences of musicians with any form of aphasia.

Scan this QR code to take the survey!





WHAT IS AUDITORY APHASIA?

Also known as anautalia, it's a distinct cognitive profile causing an inability to hear sound, music, and inner speech in the mind as real-sounding experience.

To take part, please complete the form linked in the caption, or scan the QR code. The survey will take 10–15 minutes to complete. At the end, you'll learn about opportunities to participate in future aphasia studies.

This study has passed ethical approval by the University of Salford, and is supported by the Leverhulme Trust Aural Diversity Doctoral Research Hub (LAURA). Feel free to contact me or my supervisors, regarding any questions on the study and the use of data:

Neesa Sunar: N.S.Sunar@edu.salford.ac.uk
Adam Hart: A.M.Hart1@salford.ac.uk
Gonçalo Barradas: G.T.Barradas@salford.ac.uk

Auditory Aphasia

Neesa Suncheuri Sunar writes: "I'm a PhD music researcher at the University of Salford, supported by LAURA. This project explores the experience of auditory aphasia in musicians. Auditory aphasia (also called anauralia) is a distinct cognitive profile which causes severely reduced to no ability to experience auditory imagery as actual sound in the mind's ear. While neurotypical musicians recall memories, sounds, music and inner speech as audible sound, this ability is not universal. Those with auditory aphasia think in silence.

While it may seem counterintuitive, there exists a small but noteworthy cohort of musicians who have auditory aphasia. Likewise, these musicians may experience other forms of aphasia, such as visual aphasia, characterized by the inability to create voluntary visual mental imagery in the mind's eye. I myself am a classical violist with total aphasia. I have mind's eye blindness across all six sensory imagery domains: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory and kinesthetic/motor.

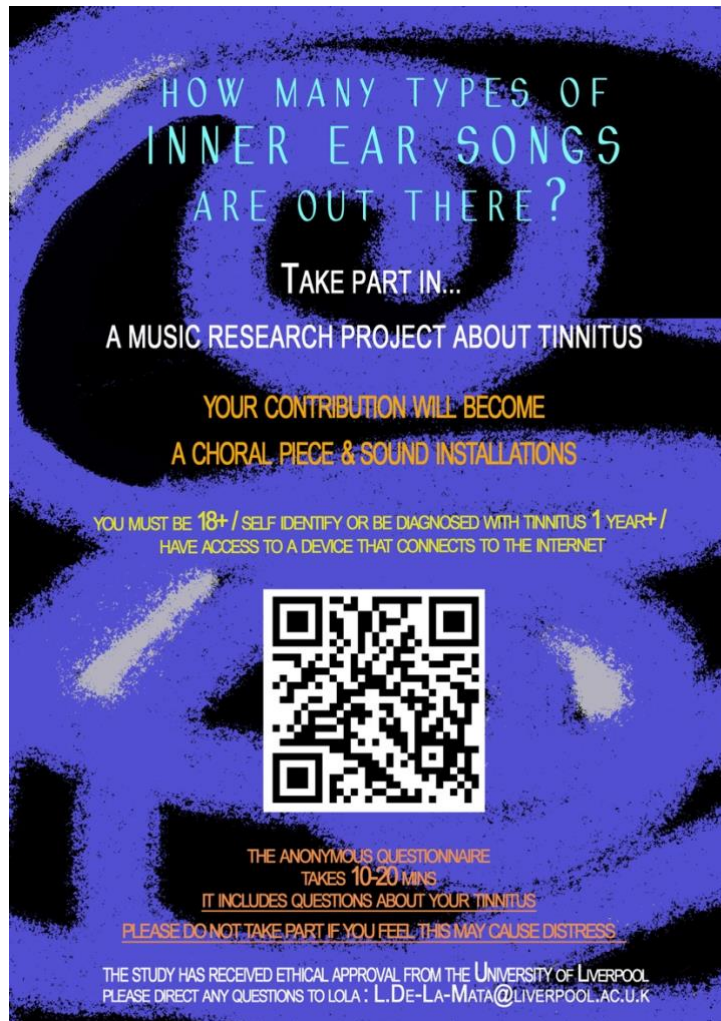
Presently, the perspectives and insights of aphasic musicians remain largely unknown. This includes: 1) knowledge of their adaptive musical skills, which they may have developed without awareness of having aphasia, and 2) experiences of hardship faced in participating in musical training and performance. Therefore, this project aims to explore these experiences.

To start, I've generated a Phase 1 survey, which queries participants on musical experience. This study has passed ethical approval from the University of Salford, and has been developed bearing in mind the dignity, wellbeing and safety of participants. The flyer pictured offers the QR code; alternatively [the survey can be accessed here](#).

Eligibility for participation in the survey is: 1) aged 18 and older, and 2) having musical experience at any level. Although this survey aims to gather responses from aphasic musicians, all musicians are invited to partake and reflect on their mind's eye capacity.

The survey takes 10 to 15 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, participants can opt in to be notified by email about future musician aphasia studies that I will generate later. Currently, I have a Phase 2 study entailing semi-structured interviews, which has passed ethical approval. After reviewing data, selected Phase 1 participants will be invited to participate in Phase 2.

For more information, please feel free to contact me at n.s.sunar@edu.salford.ac.uk



Inner Ear Songs

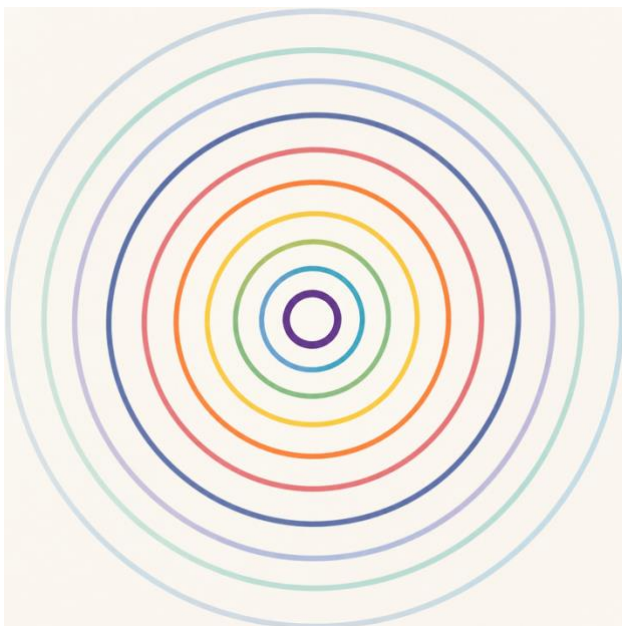
Lola de la Mata, a third-year PhD student in the Department of Music, University of Liverpool, is undertaking a research project entitled "How Many Types of Inner Ear Songs are Out There?".

Lola experiences chronic tinnitus.

The study will gather information via a questionnaire about individual experiences of tinnitus: the loudness, texture and rhythmic quality.

Contributions will then form the basis for vocal workshops and become part of sound installations and a choral project.

[The Questionnaire is live](#) and includes an information Sheet for Participants and a Consent Form.



Aural Diversity Research Continues to Grow

Recent publications have applied aural diversity perspectives to soundscape studies, autistic listening, tinnitus research, acoustic design, and music production. New work includes Marie Gorm Aabo's forthcoming article *Tinnitus Attuning*, and Chatburn, van den Bosch and Talebzadeh's *A Critical Perspective on Inclusion and Diversity in Soundscape Studies*, which calls for greater recognition of hearing difference in acoustic research.

Links to the papers have been added to the [Aural Diversity website](#).

A Taste of Paradise

Neil Canham writes: "I've had a taste of paradise the past two days. For whatever reason my hearing has been dramatically better and Monday evening I played my first social music evening for a couple of months, and I almost felt like my old self. Then last night I had a rehearsal for a new band I've formed with my daughter and a good friend ready for our first gig in two weeks - I made the plans ages ago before the hearing totally collapsed and we kept everything going in the vain hope that maybe I'd somehow be OK. And this evening I was close to tears - everything sounded just, well, perfect. I was making beautiful music with my beautiful daughter. I thought "It could all end tomorrow, but I had tonight and no one is taking that away from me ever."

"If you've been following my Meniere's journey, either from occasional posts here or [on my Substack](#), you'll know I've come very close to quitting music altogether several times. I use hearing aids but have had appalling diplacusis and massive drops in hearing (swings of 40 or 50dB), and the first few months of this year were awful. So this has been an amazing few days. What did I do to achieve this? What magical advice do I have for you to achieve the same? What pill, potion or secret blend of supplements did I use? Nothing, none. Literally nothing but patience, time and hope."



Growing Connections

 **59** countries reached

 **672** active users

 **6,000+** interactions

Since February 2026

These figures reflect a growing international interest in hearing difference, listening, accessibility and aural diversity. Thank you to everyone who has visited the site, attended events, shared resources, and contributed to the conversation.

auraldiversity.org

How Does a Café Sound?

Why can the same café feel welcoming to one person and unbearable to another?

For some people it is a pleasant social environment. For others it can be overwhelming, exhausting, confusing, painful, or inaccessible. Written for Noise Action Week, Andrew Hugill's 'Hearing the Café' explores how the same sonic environment may be experienced very differently by people with hearing loss, tinnitus, hyperacusis, cochlear implants, autism and other forms of aural diversity.

[Read the full article here](#)