



Because everybody hears differently!

INSIDE

News & Updates

Forthcoming, Conference
Report, Policy & Advocacy

Research

Updates, Calls for
Participation,
Creative Work

Experts by Experience

Tarang Singh

Edited by Andrew Hugill



Delegates applauding at the Aural Diversity Conference, 03.09.26

Editorial

This sixth Aural Diversity newsletter reflects the growing range of activity taking place across the Network and beyond. Alongside reports from recent events, this issue includes new research, creative work, policy developments and, importantly, accounts of lived experience.



auraldiversity.org

What connects these very different contributions is the recognition that there is no single way of hearing or experiencing sound. That principle has implications far beyond questions of accessibility: for research methods, environmental policy, musical creativity, technology and the ways in which we design and share our sonic environments.

Thank you, as always, to everyone who has contributed to this issue. The breadth of the material here gives a good indication of just how many directions aural diversity is now taking us.

Andrew Hugill (editor)

News & Updates: Forthcoming



CADENZA PROJECT
AND
MANCHESTER CAMERATA
RESEARCH CONCERT

29TH OCTOBER
03:00 PM

The Cadenza project is researching how to improve music for people with hearing loss. This is a unique opportunity for you to shape future research on hearing aids while enjoying hearing the fabulous Camerata.

Free event

LOCATION
STOLLER HALL, MANCHESTER

DURATION
1 HOUR 15 MINS (NO INTERVAL)

FEATURES
BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONY NO. 6,
THE PASTORAL SYMPHONY

SCAN CODE TO RESERVE OR BOOK NOW AT:
cadenzachallenge.org

   Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

Cadenza Research Concert

The Cadenza Project is a five-year research project involving the Universities of Salford, Sheffield, Nottingham and Leeds, exploring how hearing loss affects music listening and how musical experiences might be improved.

At this free research concert, Manchester Camerata will perform Beethoven alongside specially selected musical excerpts exploring issues experienced by people with hearing loss. Audience members – with or without hearing loss – will be invited to provide feedback through a questionnaire, with an optional research task and Q&A afterwards. Hearing-aid and cochlear-implant users are encouraged to use their devices as usual.

29 October 2026, 3pm
Stoller Hall, Manchester

Free event · 1 hour 15 minutes

Book: cadenzachallenge.org

Captioning Awareness Week



For 26 years, Stagertext has been making theatre, talks, festivals, and live events accessible to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing audiences across the UK, through captions and subtitles. What started with one captioned theatre performance back in 2000, we now caption and subtitle more than 1000 arts and culture events every year. That's roughly 3 captioned or subtitled events happening in the UK every day.

This November, we're celebrating Captioning Awareness Week (9-15 November), a whole week all about making the arts accessible through captions and live subtitles. We'll be shining a spotlight on the brilliant captioned and live subtitled events happening across the UK. We'll also be celebrating the venues that make access a priority, and sharing stories from deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people who can now enjoy live performances without missing a word.

Working on something that could include captions or live subtitles? Get in touch. We'd love to know how aurally diverse audiences are shaping your work.

<https://www.stagertext.org/>

Aural Diversity Conference 2026



By Mathilde Bauer (chair), Safiye Sena Dokmeci (co-chair), and Paula Schneider (co-chair)

The latest edition of the Aural Diversity Conference took place at the University of Salford, UK, on the 3rd of September 2026. It was a great success! Over 70 attendees joined us both online and in person. A wide range of disciplines were represented, a token of the interdisciplinarity and openness that defines the field of Aural Diversity.

The conference was organised by Leverhulme Trust Aural Diversity Doctoral Research Hub (LAURA) students, building on the example that was set the year before. This year's conference was full of insights from this emerging field of research, presented in 15-minute talk sessions, acoustic performances, 5-minute blitz talks, a poster session, and a sound installation. Auracast – a Bluetooth technology – allowed attendees with compatible devices to access the conference audio in a way that suited their individual listening needs.

Throughout the day, the talks addressed various differences in auditory perception, including those associated with neurodivergence and blindness or sight loss. Another major topic was aurally diverse accessibility ranging from captions and music experiences to public space design. A few talks investigated Aural Diversity from a medical perspective, but most presentations explored ways to foster community through the arts and how to improve the quality of life of people with diverse hearing needs. Follow the link to the conference website for more information, including the programme and abstracts: <https://laura.salford.ac.uk/conferences/programme/>

The friendliness and shared fascination for auditory perception were visible throughout the event, creating great opportunities to collaborate across fields to improve access and development of more inclusive sound environments.

A new addition to this year's edition was the acoustic performances, showcasing musical research from LAURA researchers including aphantasia and hearing loss. In addition, an introduction to Auracast was facilitated through a vocal performance. The conference also included a sound installation, a space where artists presented their work. These were played over lunchtime, allowing attendees to discover artistic representations of Aural Diversity.

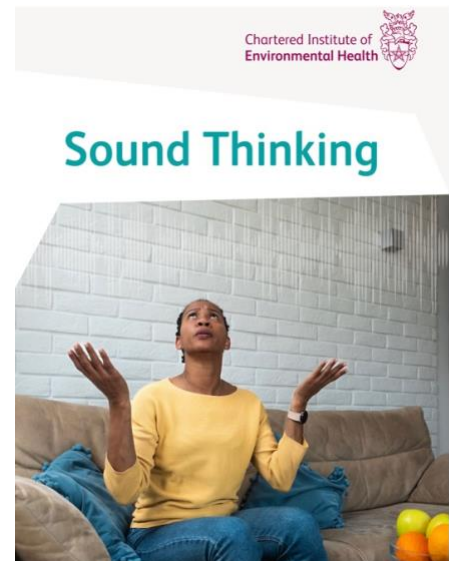
To close the day, a poster session was held, during which 11 posters exploring different aspects of Aural Diversity were presented. It was a great opportunity to network and conclude an engaging day! In the evening, members of the organising committee, staff and attendees joined a lovely social for dinner and drinks at KargoMKT. Many wonderful discussions were held, about Aural Diversity, future research opportunities, and more!

Thank you to everyone who contributed!

We once again thank you all for your contribution and participation, and hope to welcome you back next year, along with some new faces, for a new edition of the Aural Diversity Conference!



CIEH Sound Thinking



The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health has published [Sound Thinking](#), a new report highlighting environmental noise as a significant but often overlooked public-health issue. It warns that falling numbers of noise complaints do not necessarily mean less noise harm and calls for better and more consistent ways of recording people's experiences and responding to their needs.

Neurodiversity & Music: Britten Pears Arts

In August, Britten Pears Arts hosted a two-day ThinkTank on Music and Neurodiversity, bringing together musicians, researchers, composers, educators and neurodivergent practitioners. Aural diversity emerged as an important strand of the discussions, particularly the ways in which differences in hearing, sensory processing and listening can shape people's experiences of music.

Discussion explored how musical spaces, teaching, performance and professional practice might better accommodate diverse sensory and cognitive experiences. Participants considered what neurodivergent ways of listening and creating can teach us about music itself, and how greater recognition of aural diversity might help challenge assumptions about the supposedly 'normal' listener.

Fireworks & Pyrotechnics in the UK consultation



Open consultation

Fireworks and pyrotechnics in the UK

Published 16 July 2026

Contents

- Ministerial Foreword
- Introduction
- General information
- Background
- The proposed changes to pyrotechnics regulation
- Summary of proposals
- Next steps
- Annex A – further information about pyrotechnics classifications and fireworks noise impacts
- Footnotes

Ministerial Foreword

Fireworks play an important role in many public celebrations, community events and personal milestones, and are enjoyed responsibly by millions of people each year. However, I recognise that views on their use vary considerably. Many people have expressed serious concerns about the noise, safety risks and distress that fireworks can cause, and these concerns have driven an unprecedented level of public campaigning for change.

In response, the Government has undertaken a programme of work to improve the safe and considerate use of fireworks. This has included an annual public awareness campaign to educate everyone on the safe and considerate use of fireworks during the fireworks season. Guidance specifically for those community groups running displays was published in October 2025, and a roundtable held with retailers and trade associations in July 2025.

The Aural Diversity Network has submitted [a response](#) to the UK Government consultation on fireworks and pyrotechnics, drawing on lived-experience evidence from Network members. The response argues that regulation needs to consider the experienced impact of fireworks, including unpredictability, repetition, proximity and duration, rather than relying on maximum decibel levels alone. ADN supports reducing the consumer limit to 90 dB(A,imp), alongside tighter controls on private use, better advance notification of displays and greater recognition of people with diverse hearing and sensory experiences. Its central message is simple: there is no single "normal listener".

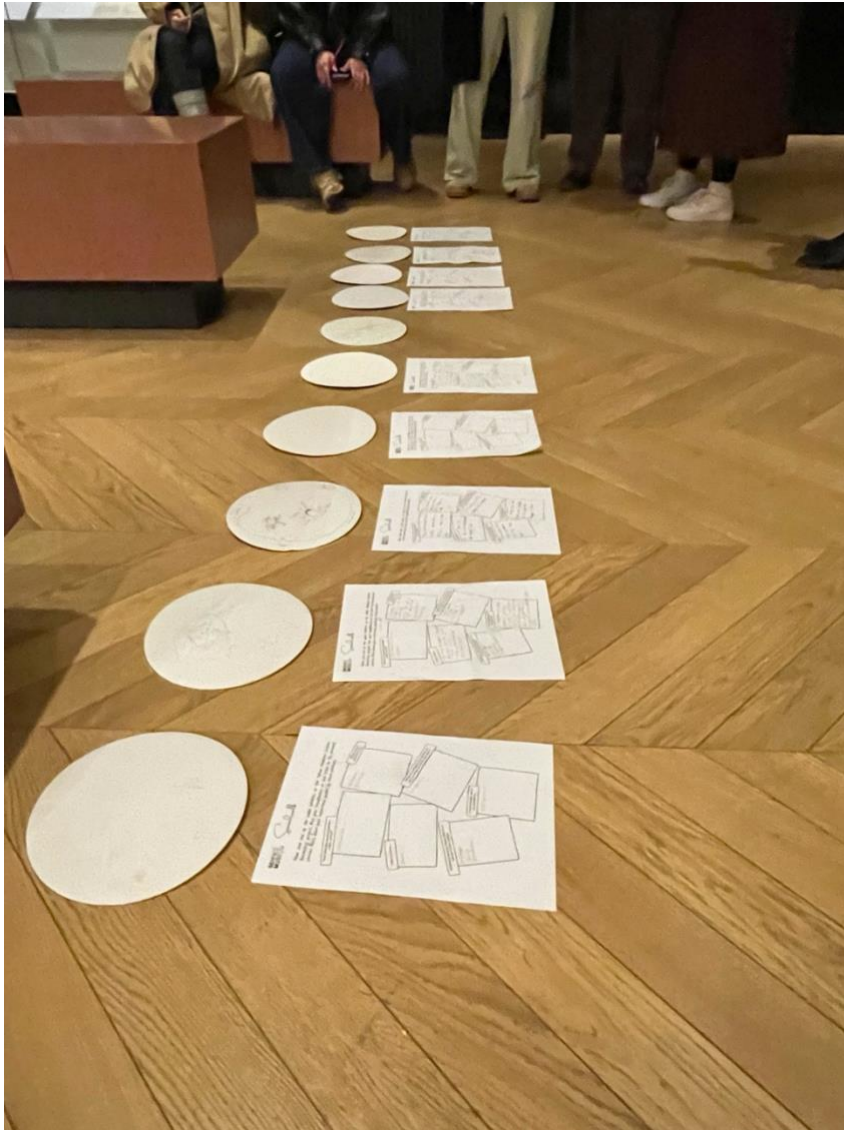
Towards an Aural Diverse Practice of Sound Design: A New Publication

How does a museum's sonic environment make me feel?

This is the question driving a pilot study conducted at the Science Museum's Medicine Galleries in March 2025, described in the new open-access paper 'How sound makes me feel'. Towards an Aural Diverse Practice of Sound Design in Museums written by sound studies researcher Stefania Zardini Lacedelli and design scholar Marco Mason.

The goal was to test whether creative and human-centred design methods could help capture the diversity of hearing experiences, allowing different ways of perceiving, processing and emotionally responding to sound to emerge gradually through a combination of individual observations and collective reflections. The study explored a range of multimodal approaches - including soundwalking, sound drawing and aural empathy canvas - demonstrating their potential to externalise tacit and embodied experiences of listening and bring different sensory perspectives into the design process.

This research has grown out of Stefania's work in the cultural sector, where she became interested in how the complex auditory environments of museums and heritage sites can provide valuable contexts for exploring aural diversity. The study was first presented at the Aural Diversity Conference in Salford in 2025 and is now available open access.



[Read the full article here](#)

Research: Updates

Mixing with a different ear: what hearing-diverse sound engineers can teach us

Lorenzo Bonoldi

Most benchmarks used in music mixing, including loudness targets, “balanced” spectra and wide stereo images, quietly assume a listener with typical hearing. But many working sound engineers don’t hear that way. Lorenzo Bonoldi’s PhD research at the University of Salford’s Acoustics Research Centre, supervised by Prof Trevor Cox and Dr Adam Hart, asks what happens when these engineers are treated as perceptual experts rather than deviations from a norm. He recently presented the work at SMPR 2026 at the University of Huddersfield.

The project began with a questionnaire (112 responses) and twelve interviews with hearing-diverse audio engineers. Four themes emerged: perceptual comfort and fatigue, clarity and frequency management, spatial organisation, and the adaptive strategies engineers develop. In the second year, four engineers with different documented hearing profiles each remixed a track. Lorenzo developed the Descriptor-Metric Mapping Framework (DMMF), linking terms such as “congested”, “veiled” or “punchy” to measurable features including spectral centroid, crest factor, low-mid overlap and stereo correlation. This allows mixes to be compared on perceptual terms rather than against a single “correct” target.

Each engineer took a distinct approach, but some clear patterns emerged:

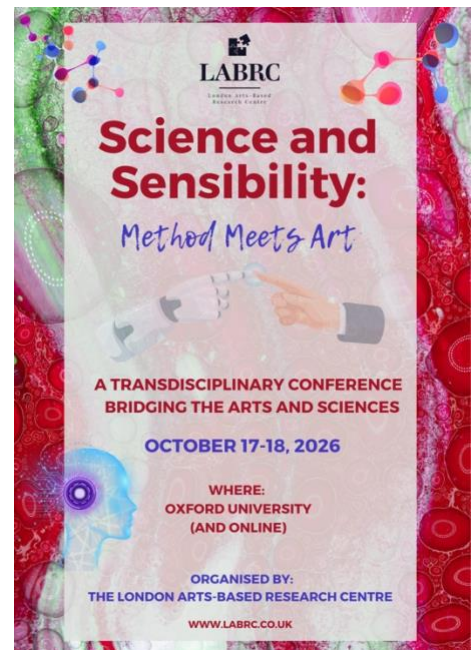
- Low-mid masking is a key constraint. Reducing energy between 250 and 500 Hz improved clarity particularly consistently.
- Louder isn’t better. Quieter mixes could sound clearer, more open and less tiring through greater dynamic range and reduced density.
- Wider isn’t necessarily more open. Narrowing the stereo field could improve clarity by creating more stable, better-localised elements.
- High frequencies need control, not maximising. Reducing excessive energy in the 2-6 kHz region could improve comfort without losing articulation.

These strategies were systematic and related closely to each engineer’s hearing. Where their mixes departed from normative benchmarks, that reflected expertise, not error. Mix quality emerges as relational and negotiated rather than universal.

The final stage will test these strategies with 30 music listeners with mild-to-moderate hearing loss, examining spectral compensation, masking, dynamic range and preferences for mixes personalised to listeners’ audiograms.

For the aural diversity community, the message is simple: if there is no standard ear, there should be no standard mix. Inclusive mixing means treating perceptual diversity as an active design factor from the start, not an afterthought.

Xsara Helmi



LAURA PhD researcher Xsara Helmi will present Hospital Noises: Sonic Autobiography and the Embodied Experience of Autistic Auditory Perception at Science and Sensibility: Method Meets Art, University of Oxford, 17-18 October 2026. Her article of the same name, exploring autistic auditory perception through field recording, autoethnography and improvisation, was recently published in the Journal of Creative Research Methods.

Xsara will also join the Faculty of Music at the University of Cambridge as a visiting student during Lent term 2027, developing her research into autistic listening, aural diversity and numinous experience, sponsored by ethnomusicologist Dr Peter McMurray.

Her doctoral research is also being supported by external advisers Dr Helen Kara and Dr Roula-Maria Dib, bringing expertise in creative research methods and arts-based research respectively.

Research: Calls for Participation

University students with dyslexia needed to take part in our language and music project!

Join our online study!

Eligibility
18+ years old
UK university student/ recent graduate
Native British monolingual English speaker
Normal/corrected- to- normal vision & hearing
A formal diagnosis of dyslexia

What do I have to do?
Session 1: Complete a series of questions on language and music experience. Complete some memory, reading and word syllable tasks! (30 mins)
Session 2: Complete some word sound, rapid naming and music listening tasks! (30 mins)

Scan the QR code to sign up!

Complete both sessions to receive £15 shopping voucher

ETHICS CODE: SOPREC - 2025 2615-3523
For more details please contact : B.Selvarajah@leeds.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



Dyslexia & Auditory Processing

Participants wanted

Baira Selvarajah is recruiting UK university students and recent graduates with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia for an online study of language and musical perception.

Participation involves **two 30-minute online sessions**, with a **£15 shopping voucher** on completion.

Deadline: 31 December 2026

Contact: B.Selvarajah@leeds.ac.uk

Investigating the Lived Experience of Aural Diversity

Help shape a new research project

Stefania Zardini Lacedelli is developing an Early Career Fellowship exploring new creative and lived experience approaches to understanding hearing differences, particularly those that can be difficult to capture through conventional clinical approaches. As part of this early consultation stage, she is looking for informal conversations with people with lived experience across different forms of aural diversity, to better understand gaps in current approaches to hearing health and make sure the project is informed by the priorities and needs of the AD community. If you would be interested in sharing your experience, please email Stefania at stefaniazardinilacedelli@gmail.com to arrange a conversation.



I Am Your Body



Artist and researcher Marco Donnarumma's ongoing project *I Am Your Body* explores sound, deafness and embodied listening, asking how technologies such as hearing prostheses and AI mediate sensory experience. Emerging from Donnarumma's own experience of late-deafness, the project was developed through collaborative research with a group of D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people, whose experiences informed a series of artworks combining performance, film, installation, sound and interactive technologies.

Rather than treating normative hearing as the reference point, *I Am Your Body* asks what sound might become when understood through different bodies and forms of perception. The resulting works include the film *Niranthea*, the performance *Ex Silens* and the installation *Lestes*, which are currently touring internationally.

Photo: Chris Scott / EFI, Edinburgh

<https://marcodonnarumma.com/series/i-am-your-body/>

Undertone III



Attendees at previous Aural Diversity events might recognise the vibrating floor (and Andrew Hugill lying atop it!) that was used most notably for the specially commissioned work [Undertone](#), by Simon Atkinson and Amit Dinesh Patel.

Simon Atkinson's latest composition for this medium, entitled *Undertone III*, was exhibited at the Leicester Gallery, De Montfort University, over the summer.

Visitors stand, sit or lie on a wooden vibrating floor, approximately 1.2 metres square. There is nothing to hear, yet the changing vibrations convey perceptible melodic and harmonic relationships.

For a full account of the experience, read [Andrew's blog](#).

Experts by Experience

Tarang Singh

Soon after I filed a formal complaint about neighbour noise with the management of my student accommodation this past summer, I noticed a shift in their attitude towards me. In the past, fearing this very outcome, I had chosen to voice my concerns directly to residents through a common WhatsApp group. However, despite “complaining” only a handful of times across the year, and not being the only person to do so, I was told by the louder voices in the group to “stop whining,” “get up and talk to the neighbour, simple,” and “go down to reception and complain.” It was also suggested that I “stop policing” and “not talk about tenancy laws and legalese,” after I mentioned tenancy obligations and university regulations surrounding noise in residences.

On paper, both the university and the accommodation provider claim to recognise noise as an actionable offence, yet neither is candid about defining what it is. To the accommodation provider’s credit, they increased staff patrols at night and sent a notice to the neighbour. However, this did little to help, other than seemingly prompting on-site staff to gossip and say things like, “What’s her problem? It’s just sound. Why is she complaining all the time?” That these sentiments were relayed to me by a member of staff as part of a “helpful” talk is another matter altogether. These were people I had made *masala chai* for and shared cat photos with, but who now pretended to look busy whenever I walked past reception.

I stopped joining staff-resident events and bingo nights, kept to myself in my room with an assortment of ear protection and, ironically, BBC Radio 3 Unwind on blast. My university disability adviser and professors were far more sympathetic, although I suspect my pre-existing disabilities, and the resulting reasonable adjustments, significantly helped with the former. I moved back to my home country as soon as I could, and half of my postgraduate coursework remains unfinished. I know I should file further formal complaints, but a part of me also feels that I shouldn’t have to be the one to educate institutions to take misophonia and sound sensitivity seriously, or to request their users to follow the confusing laws. I am tired of fighting and of the sensory gaslighting.

Like they say, it’s just sound, right?