MUS–T410: Topics in Music Theory

Music and Mind

Professor Daphne Tan
Monday and Wednesday, 1:00–2:15 p.m., room M 271

Have you ever wondered . . .

. . . what role memory plays in musical performance?
. . . whether infants can distinguish between consonance and dissonance?
. . . how music incites emotions in us, or why different tones in a scale “feel” different?

This course is an introduction to music cognition, a diverse field that is interested in the above questions and many others. Students will learn foundational concepts in this area through a survey of seminal writings from the humanities and sciences. The topics we will explore include:

- origins of music and music acquisition
- perception of musical structure
- music and language
- memory, tonality, and expectation
- music and emotion
- expressive performance and creativity
- musical expertise and musical deficits

Students will acquire basic knowledge of empirical methods and elementary statistics in order to understand published research in the field. Class discussions and short written responses will provide forums to evaluate this research. In a final project, students will have the opportunity to investigate a topic of their choosing related to music and mind.

Requirements:

✓ short written responses to assigned readings
✓ regular contribution to class discussions
✓ one research project (paper and presentation) on a specialized topic (student’s choice)