



**Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing (AIRS)**  
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April 23, 2015

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To all colleagues engaged in the AIRS Major Collaborative Research Initiative:

April 1 signalled that the AIRS project has been in full swing for 6 years, and the 7<sup>th</sup> and final year of the current SSHRC grant is upon us. Many projects are coming into fruition. This year we will consolidate our findings and target remaining loose ends. We are holding the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting in Nashville over July 30 and August 1<sup>st</sup>. Last year, we held many smaller individual events in Canada and around the world. Nashville will be the first opportunity to get together as a larger group since our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting in Toronto, 2013. Last summer the 1st AIRS summer workshop for students and early career researchers took place in Toronto. We hope to capture those same opportunities for students and early researchers at our Nashville meeting.

The next pages provide information about:

1. The AIRS 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting
2. Recent peer-reviewed publications of research supported by AIRS
3. AIRS Research Operations News
4. Other Conference Activity
5. Accolades to Members
6. Forthcoming events
7. Brief Acknowledgement to SSHRC
8. Final remarks

Thanks to everyone's cooperation and collaboration, AIRS is in great shape to carry out the plans of Year 7.

Hoping to see you all at AIRS6 in Nashville, July-August 2015, followed by SMPC.

Sincerely,

Annabel Cohen, Ph. D., ARCT  
Director, AIRS

[www.airsplace.ca](http://www.airsplace.ca)



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada



# 1. AIRS Annual 6th Meeting - July 31 – August 1, 2015 Nashville Tennessee

The **AIRS 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting (2015)** takes place at the Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. It will officially begin at 9:00 AM Friday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, and end at noon August 1<sup>st</sup> prior to the start of the biennial meeting of the Society for Music Perception and Cognition (SMPC).

	AIRS Annual Meeting		AIRS/SMPC	SMPC Biennial Meeting			
	July 30 Thurs.	July 31 Fri.	Aug 1 Sat.	Aug 2 Sun.	Aug 3 Mon.	Aug 4 Tues.	Aug 5 Wed.
Morning		AIRS Overview Theme Breakouts	AIRS Workshops Plenary	SMPC  Jeanne Bamberger (MIT) Keynote	SMPC	SMPC	SMPC
After- noon		AIRS Poster Tech Session	SMPC Vanderbilt Music & Mind Kickoff		SMPC	SMPC	
Evening	Policy & Planning/ Student & Early Career Researcher pizza event	AIRS dinner AIRS concert	Charles Limb Keynote	On your own in Nashville	SMPC Ban- quet Dinner	Blair School of Music Concert	

The AIRS meeting will provide an update of the AIRS project, technical papers from each of the Developmental, Education, and Well-being research themes, a poster session, research theme team breakout, plenary session, banquet and concert of AIRS members. Students and early career researchers are invited to a pizza dinner and ideas-sharing event on Thursday evening. The AIRS Policy and Planning Committee will also meet on Thursday evening. An opportunity to share information with practitioners and researchers of the renowned Vanderbilt Voice Center is also being arranged. AIRS6 promises to be an intensive, inspirational event, not to be missed!

For AIRS Faculty Co-Investigators and Collaborators, and their students, accommodation for 2 nights will be provided in the Scarritt Bennett Center which is also the venue for the AIRS Conference. **Please contact Ross Dwyer** (AIRS administrative assistant) [rdwyer@upei.ca](mailto:rdwyer@upei.ca) in order to reserve your accommodation (the number of rooms is limited). The Air Canada Code for a 10% discount on air travel to/from Nashville for the AIRS meeting is **CZ9XEET1**.

The meeting is open to others who have a keen interest in singing, as was the case at previous Annual meetings. For those unaffiliated with the AIRS collaboration, a fee of \$80 for students and \$100 for non-students will be charged to partially cover costs of meals, nutrition breaks on the July 31<sup>st</sup>, and breakfast, nutrition break and box lunch on August 1<sup>st</sup>, plus the full program.



AIRS6 Forms for submission of abstracts, student travel awards, and performance volunteering are found on the homepage of the AIRS website [www.airsplace.ca](http://www.airsplace.ca) or as described as follows:

### Abstracts – **Deadline May 15**

Please submit abstracts of your recent research on singing for presentation at the AIRS6 as either a paper or a poster. We will try to balance time for oral presentations against time for people to discuss ideas as a group; therefore, poster presentation is also encouraged.

### Student Travel awards:

Students may compete for 9 travel awards of up to \$1000 each. Students from all research sub-themes are encouraged to apply.

### Theme 1- Development of Singing

- 1.1 Perception and production of singing: inter-relations
- 1.2 Singing as a multimodal behavior: auditory, visual, motor
- 1.3 The AIRS Test Battery of Singing Skills

### Theme 2 - Education

- 2.1 Learning to sing naturally
- 2.2 Formal teaching of singing: voice studio or choral singing
- 2.3 Using singing to each

### Theme 3 – Singing and Well-being

- 3.1 Singing and cross-cultural understanding
- 3.2 Singing and intergenerational understanding
- 3.3 Singing and health benefits

### Performance volunteers

AIRS traditionally incorporates singing into the technical program and holds a more formal vocal concert showcasing the broad range of singing styles and levels of performance. All those willing to sing, accompany, lead or teach a song are invited to complete the form.

## 2. Recent Peer-Reviewed Publications of Research Supported by AIRS

**Neto, Félix, Pinto, M., & Mullet, E. (2015). Can music reduce anti-dark-skin prejudice? A test of a cross-cultural music education programme. *Psychology of Music*, 1-11, DOI: 10.1177/0305735614568882 (ahead of print publication)**

In 2005 (pre-AIRS), **Félix Neto (University of Porto)** and co-authors explored the role of music in reducing anti-dark-skinned prejudice. They tested the assumption that the provision of common ground through music would provide the basis for a positive attitude. In an article reported in the *Psychology of Music*, they reported that Portuguese children who learned African songs as part of their usual singing curriculum showed a decreased anti-dark-skin prejudice compared to that prior to the singing intervention and in comparison to a control group of children who learned only Portuguese songs. While this finding was intriguing, the real value of such an intervention would be in its endurance. The study had unfortunately



only explored the immediate effect of the intervention. With the encouragement of AIRS, the study was replicated and extended such that 200 participants (one half experimental, the other control) were tested on four occasions: pretest, post-test, 3 months later, and, 2 years later (for a reduced number of participants). Results of tests of anti-darkskinned prejudice showed significant enduring decreased prejudice in the group which learned the African (Cape Verdean) songs, while evidence of prejudice remained stable for the control group which learned only Portuguese songs. The authors note policy implications of these findings.

**Countryman, June, Gabriel, M., and Thompson, K. (2015). Children's spontaneous vocalizations during play: aesthetic dimensions. *Music Education Research*, DOI: [10.1080/14613808.2015.1019440](https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2015.1019440)**

*Abstract:* This paper explores the phenomenon of spontaneous vocalisations in the self-chosen, unstructured outdoor play of children aged 3–12. Spontaneous vocalisations encompass the whole range of children's unprompted, natural, expressive vocal soundings beyond spoken language. Non-participant observations at childcare centres and on elementary school playgrounds anchor this investigation into the nature and extent of children's spontaneous vocalising, grounded in scholarship that establishes these musical expressions as socially embedded and culturally contingent. Previous research has usually considered these ubiquitous playground soundings from a functional standpoint. Our project examines the potential of applying Dissanayake's artification hypothesis, specifically her five affective aesthetic devices, to examples of children's vocalisations to make tangible the artistry inherent in these spontaneous soundings. Pedagogical implications are considered.

**Gick, M. L. & Nicol, J. J. (2015). Singing for respiratory health: theory, evidence and challenges. *Health Promotion International*, 1-10. [doi: 10.1093/heapro/dav013](https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dav013).**

The premise that singing is a health promoting activity for people with respiratory conditions of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma is a growing area of interest being investigated by researchers from various disciplines. The preliminary evidence, a theoretical framework and identification of methodological challenges are discussed in this perspective article with an eye to recommendations for further research to advance knowledge. After a brief summary of main research findings on singing in healthy people to provide background context, research is reviewed on singing in people with COPD and asthma. Studies include published research and as yet unpublished work by the authors. Methodological challenges arising from the reviewed studies are identified such as attrition from singing or control groups based on weak and strong, respectively, beliefs about singing's effectiveness. Potential solutions for these problems are considered with further recommendations made for other singing research. [LINK](#)





### 3. AIRS Research Operations News

#### Student Funding

The Steering Committee has been assessing remaining research gaps and areas requiring consolidation as per the original Milestone document and goals and these have been passed on to the sub-theme leaders for their input. A list of targeted research projects will soon be announced for which student funding will be made available, on a competitive basis. Examples include populating and testing the AIRS Digital Library, developing guidelines for assessing the benefits of voice lessons from videotaped lessons, media interviews of AIRS collaborators for the web-site, and laboratory and research exchanges for purposes of cross-fertilization of themes and sub-themes. We are aiming to make the list available by May 20th. Suggestions are welcomed until then. Funding amounts are limited in accordance with the original bell-shaped budget (original commitments to student funding to date have been more than honoured). Meanwhile many projects involving students have been ongoing throughout Canada and around the world.

#### AIRS Web-site [www.airspace.ca](http://www.airspace.ca)

The AIRS Web-site has just moved to the upgraded platform, which has been planned for some time. During that time, we have been maintaining the old site and a version of the new site. We have therefore been hesitant to add much content to the web-site, because every addition entailed duplication on the future site. The new site has a few new features, providing the opportunity to display a slide show on the home-page, but the key thing is that it can eventually (very soon) allow you to connect to the Digital Library, for ingesting examples or accessing materials.

#### AIRS Digital Library

The basic infrastructure for the AIRS Digital Library has now been completed. The permissions facility (allowing for 5 levels of permission, from private to public) is being tested on the new platform. (It really did work before the move to the new site). The user manual has been developed by Tom Germaine, but one will find uploading quite user friendly. Uploading individual items is a time consuming task, but the effort is rewarded by opening access to the materials. Populating the Digital Library will be a joint effort of AIRS collaborators for the coming year.

#### AIRS Tri-Fold Publicity Brochure

If you would like brochures for the AIRS please contact Ross Dwyer @ [rdwyer@upei.ca](mailto:rdwyer@upei.ca) and printed copies can be produced and sent to you.

### 4. Other Conference Activity

The Suncoast Music Education Research Symposium, at the University of South Florida, organized by Jennifer Bugos, saw the presentation of two papers from AIRS:

- **Carol Beynon** and **Jennifer Hutchison** presented a paper “The Power of Intergenerational Singing in Alzheimer’s Care” at the February, 2015.
- **Lily Chen-Hafteck** presented a paper “AIRS Quadcultural Study on Singing and Cultural Understanding”



**Petra Hauf** and her student **Caitlin Bridson-Pateman** (St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, working with Annie Laroche, and S. Hélène Deacon, Dalhousie, Nova Scotia) will present a paper "The impact of singing on language development in 4-year old children" at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Reading, July 2015. They are testing the hypothesis that singing training will increase children's supra-segmental and segmental phonological awareness, as well as vocabulary and letter recognition skills. Singing with young children has been linked to increased vocabulary and phonological awareness. At the same time, children's supra-segmental phonological awareness appears to be related to strong reading development. There is an intuitive connection between singing and supra-segmental phonological awareness, both of which involve pitch and prosodic related information. The researchers have developed a study to connect these two literatures, by investigating the effects of a singing intervention on young children's supra-segmental and segmental phonological awareness. The work also takes advantage of Petra Hauf's expertise in eye movement recording.

Several presentations from AIRS will be made at meetings of the Canadian Psychological Association, and the American Psychological Association.

## 5. Accolades to AIRS Members



**Johan Sundberg** organized the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Voice Day, April 16<sup>th</sup> which had over 500 activities around the world. The SmartLab Choir (see below) made its debut performance in recognition of the event.

**Stefanie Stadler Elmer** has just published her book: Stadler Elmer, S. (2015). [\*Kind und Musik\*](#) – *Das Entwicklungspotenzial erkennen und verstehen*. (Child and Music: Heidelberg: Springer.



**Jane Ginsborg** delivered a keynote address at the Best Practice Music Symposium 2015 (an Arts4dementia sponsored event) held at the renowned Wigmore Hall in London on April 17<sup>th</sup>. As President of the European Society for the Cognitive Science of Music, Jane is also planning the [9<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of ESCOM](#) August 17 to 22 to take place at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, UK ([escom2015.org](http://escom2015.org)). A number of presenters at the meeting are members of AIRS and as well a number of papers will be presented on singing research. The possibility of an AIRS-sponsored post-conference half-day symposium on singing research is being discussed.



**Larry O'Farrell**, UNESCO Chair in Arts and Learning, Queen's University, Ontario is Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Network for Arts and Learning (CNAL), and member of the international advisory board of the World Alliance for Arts Education. CNAL/RCAA held its National Conference on March 2015 at the Royal Conservatory of Music, in Toronto, with Grammy award-winning tenor (retired from singing, 2014) Ben Heppner presiding.

**Bing-Yi Pan** completed the Cantonese version of the AIRS Test Battery of Singing Skills which **Esther Mang** has begun to use in Hong Kong.

## 6. Forthcoming events

*Music Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 12 pm Eastern time*

Across Canada, school children and community members will unite in singing "We are one" (composed by 16-year old Connor Ross, winner of the Music Monday Anthem Search in 2015). In Charlottetown, the AIRS UPEI Multicultural Choir will join students at the Sherwood School. The event, sponsored by **The Coalition in Music Education** (Eric Favaro – Chair of the Board; Holly Nimmons – Executive Director), claims to be the largest single event dedicated to raising awareness for music education. This is the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the event. Last year the song *Is Somebody Singing* was composed by International Space Station Commander Chris Hadfield and Ed Robertson of the Barenaked Ladies. Hadfield joined the national singalong from space.



**Darryl Edwards** again will serve as Artistic Director for the **Centre for Opera Studies in Italy (COSi)**. This year a Music Research Workshop and Symposium for Artist-Teachers is planned for July 13<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>. The intensive program will offer the opportunity to gain the background to meet the increasing emphasis on research studies in the arts, research components to

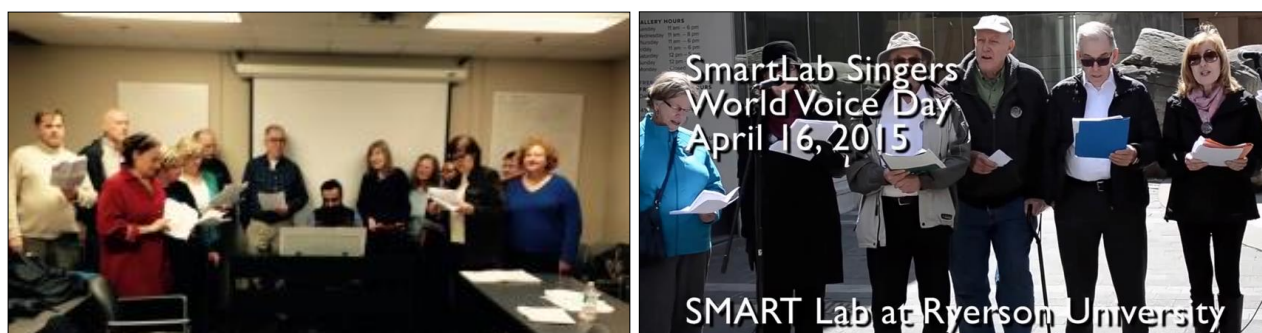
grant applications, and academic standards for article submissions to journals in the field. Along with Darryl Edwards, Faculty are **Susan O'Neill** (Simon Fraser University), and Y. "Slava" Senyshyn, (Steinway Artist, Simon Fraser University). The location is Sulmona, Italy. AIRS will also be involved in several ways, from data collection to dissemination of findings. For more information: [www.co-si.com](http://www.co-si.com) or e-mail [darryledwards@me.com](mailto:darryledwards@me.com). Graduate course credit is also being offered.

## A Smart-Lab at Ryerson new direction bridging AIRS Sub-themes 1.1, 2.2, 2.3, & 3.3

In a new research project that spans all three AIRS Themes, **Frank Russo** is exploring the possible benefit of choral singing for older adults with a hearing loss. A group of such individuals have joined the Smartlab Singers (50+ Choir). But it is more than a choir. Frank says: "We are interested in determining whether older adults with mild hearing loss can show improvements in their ability to understand speech in noise, as a result of short-term musical training. Specifically, we are testing the effects of singing training through group choir lessons. Since January of 2015, 14 older adults have attended weekly choir sessions over a 13-week



period. Participants were also required to complete one hour of homework per week, through the use of online music training software, designed to aid users to improve voice pitch control. So far, the results are very promising. There has been significant improvement in the ability to perceive speech in noise as a result of the choir training. In addition, participants have shown improvement in their ability to discriminate pitch, which is important for tracking speaking voices. These preliminary findings suggest that short-term musical training is able to mitigate some of the age-related difficulty in hearing that is experienced by older adults.



## 7. Brief Acknowledgement to SSHRC, the AIRS Primary Funder

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is gratefully acknowledged for funding AIRS (over 45 students received funding in Year 6 alone)

## 8. Final remarks

We hope as many as possible of the AIRS research family will be able to attend AIRS-6 in Nashville. We look forward to keeping in touch with you all during 2015-2016, a year which promises consolidation of our labours, working toward the grand finale of this 7-year major collaborative research initiative which officially ends in March 2016. Even so, we are planning for that final conference in PEI in the summer of 2016 – please keep that in mind too for the longer term, and to continued activities and collaborations well beyond the period of the grant.

Sincerely,

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