**Digital Music Lab**



**Describe musical sounds**

**Background**

Humans have produced and listen to a wide range of musical styles. Listening behaviour between individuals suggests that people describe and interpret similar types of music in different ways. *Genre* is a classification method that is useful to categorize musical pieces that belong to a shared group (e.g., rock songs all sound a certain way). There are shortcomings, though, in that genres are difficult to describe and interpret in scientific studies (e.g., what *exactly* does rock music sound like?). *Music acoustic features* are proposed to be measurable, manipulable, and perceivable within music. They can help objectively describe and categorize music.

The study you just participated in aims to help identify and establish these foundational music acoustic features. They should be objectively measurable, manipulable and musically/psychologically relevant to participants. By providing evidence for these feature-characteristics, we aim to provide more accurate descriptions of music. With this increased objectivity, we seek to better understand previous findings in music cognition research and improve the methods we use in upcoming studies. By investigating individual interpretations of music, we hope to better understand how individuals relate to music.

**The experiment**

This study began by asking basic demographic questions about you. This measure is used to get an idea of how musical training and other personal factors affect the genres you perceive. The second part of the study presented musical excerpts (independent variable) that varied in musical style and certain musical features. You then rated (dependent variable) how much an excerpt sounded (on a Likert-scale) like each of six robust music acoustic features. We will compare your responses to (1) how other individuals rated the musical excepts and to (2) audio waveform analyses to determine whether the features we have selected are appropriate for future studies in music cognition.

If you have any questions or would like further information about this study, please contact Maya Flannery ([flannerm@mcmaster.ca](mailto:flannerm@mcmaster.ca)).

**Thank you for participating in our study**!