

MIRIAM PIILONEN

Assistant Professor of Music Theory ♦ Honors Program Director

Department of Music and Dance ♦ University of Massachusetts Amherst
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EDUCATION

- Ph.D., Music Theory and Cognition, Northwestern University 2019
Dissertation: “Resonating Subjects: Music and Emotion in Victorian Evolutionary Thought”
- M.S., Human Development, Virginia Tech 2013
Masters research project: “Tap To The Beat: Designing and Implementing a Beat-Entrainment Assessment Tool (iPad Application) for Preschoolers”
- B.M., Composition, New England Conservatory 2010
Composition studies with Lee Hyla, David Rakowski, and John Mallia

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

- 2020-present Assistant Professor of Music Theory, UMass Amherst
2019-2020 Instructor of Music, Northwestern University

BOOKS

- Theorizing Music Evolution: Darwin, Spencer, and the Limits of the Human*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2024.

REFEREED PUBLICATIONS

- “Review of Fanny Gribenski’s *Tuning the World: 440 Hz in Music, Science, and Politics, 1859-1955*.” *Journal of Music Theory* (forthcoming).
- “Music Theory and Social Media.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Public Music Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- “Evolutionary Voices in Gary Tomlinson’s *A Million Years of Music*.” *Empirical Musicology Review* 15 no. 1-2 (2020): 151-158.
- “Review of Gary Tomlinson’s *Culture and the Course of Human Evolution*.” *Critical Inquiry* 46 no. 2 (2020): 464-465.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

“North American Music Theory and the Early Internet.” Blogpost. *History of Music Theory Blog*. Society for Music Theory, History of Music Theory Interest Group.
<https://historyofmusictheory.wordpress.com/2022/07/28/north-american-music-theory-and-the-early-internet/>

“Cook County’s ‘Amusement Tax’ Is An Insult to Chicago’s Music History and a Threat to Its Future.” In *The Chicago Tribune* (Sept. 2016).

AWARDS AND HONORS

Select Grants and Scholarships

2023 UMass HFA Conference Grant (for the “Werk Related” conference)
2023 Five College Lecture Fund (for the “Werk Related” conference)
2022 Massachusetts Society of Professors Flex Research Grant (awarded twice)
2021 Five College Lecture Fund (for the “Werk Related” conference)
2021 Massachusetts Society of Professors Research Support Fund (for “Werk Related”)
2021 UMass Humanities and Fine Arts Grant (for “Werk Related”)
2020 Massachusetts Society of Professors Research Support Fund
2018 Faculty-Student Interaction Grant, Northwestern
2017 Graduate Research Grant, Northwestern
2016 Mellon Cluster Catalyst Grant, Northwestern
2015 Student Award, Conference on the Multimodal Experience of Music
2012 Study Abroad Scholarship (South Africa), Virginia Tech

Fellowships

2019 SMT-40 Dissertation Fellowship, The Society for Music Theory
2017-20 Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Searle Teaching Center, Northwestern
2017-18 Franke Humanities Fellowship, Kaplan Humanities Institute, Northwestern
2016 Cornell School of Criticism and Theory Fellowship, Northwestern
2013 Incoming Cognitive Science Fellowship, Northwestern

SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

Invited Talks

Guest composer presentation. UMass Amherst. March 21, 2023. Salvatore Macchia
Composition Seminar. Amherst, MA.

Guest composer presentation. New England Conservatory. April 20, 2021. Kati Agócs
Graduate Composition Seminar. Boston, MA/Online.

“What is music adaptationism?” Arizona State University. April 5, 2021. ASU Music Theory Studio. Tempe, AZ/Online.

“Against adaptationism in evolutionary musicology.” Western University. December 4, 2019. Seminar Series in Music, Cognition, and the Brain. London, ON.

Panel Organization

Scholars as Activists/Activists as Scholars: Avenues for Advancing Positive Social Change at Every Stage of Our Studies/Careers. *Scholars for Social Responsibility Interest Group (SSRIG) Meeting at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory*. November 2021. Online. Organized with the SSRIG. Panelists: Britney Alcine and the UMass Music Department Equity Group, Adam Kolek, Runchao Liu, Judith Lochhead, Kimberly Loeffert, Megan Ross.

Modulations and Intersections: Disability and the (Un)Critical Role of Music. *Joint Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory*. November 2020. Online. Organized with Stefan Honisch, Jeannette Jones, Gavin Lee, Ji Yeon Lee, and Chantal Lemire. Panelists: Tekla Babyak, Andrew Chung, James Deaville, Anna Gatdula, and Ryan Weber.

The Power of Sound: Excavating the Interdisciplinarity of Edmund Gurney’s Philosophy of Music. Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society. October/November 2019. Boston, MA. Organized with Miklós Veszprémi. Panelists: Katherine Fry, Miriam Piilonen, Gary Tomlinson, Alexander Wilfing, Bennett Zon.

Musical Affect and Posthumanist Literatures. *Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association*. March 2019. Washington, D.C. Organized with Jason D’Aoust. Panelists: Rolf Goebel, Veronica Jimenez, Joseph Pfender, Miriam Piilonen, Ana Calle Poveda, Nick Stevens.

Paper Presentations

“Music theory memes: Spreading information and misinformation.” *Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Society for Ethnomusicology, and Society for Music Theory*. November 2022. New Orleans, LA.

“Teaching music theory on Zoom.” *West Coast Conference of Music Theory and Analysis*. May 2021. Online.

“Questioning music evolutionism.” UMass Amherst “5 at 4” Faculty Research Series. October 2020. Amherst, MA/Online.

“Edmund Gurney’s Darwinian music theory.” *Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society*. October/November 2019. Boston, MA.

- “Music and language in Herbert Spencer’s evolutionary thought.” *Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory*. November 2019. Columbus, OH.
- “Music and language in Herbert Spencer’s evolutionary thought.” *Music Theory Midwest*. Cincinnati, OH. May 2019.
- “Analogies between musical feeling and amorousness in the Darwinian musical hypothesis.” *Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association*. March 2019. Washington, D.C.
- “#musictheory will be the death of me: Reflections on tweeted complaints about music theory.” *Joint Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory and American Musicological Society*. November 2018. San Antonio, TX.
- “Resonating bodies: The origins of music and Victorian evolutionary theory.” *Franke Future Directions Forum*. April 2018. Evanston, IL.
- “Charles Darwin vs. Herbert Spencer: Reinterpreting a historic debate about the evolutionary origins of music.” *Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association*. March 2018. Los Angeles, CA.
- “#musictheory will be the death of me: Reflections on tweeted complaints about music theory.” *Public Music Discourse*. March 2018. Columbia, SC.
- “Charles Darwin vs. Herbert Spencer: Reinterpreting a historic debate about the evolutionary origins of music.” *Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society*. November 2017. Rochester, NY.
- “Charles Darwin vs. Herbert Spencer: Reinterpreting a historic debate about the evolutionary origins of music.” *Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory*. November 2017. Arlington, VA.
- “All music is originally vocal: Herbert Spencer’s evolutionary theory of music.” *Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association*. July 2017. Utrecht, the Netherlands.
- “M. Piilonen analyzes M. Piilonen’s *t.v. poem #6*.” *Resistance, Radicalism and Aesthetics*. June 2017. Evanston, IL.
- “Outcomes of incorporating student-selected music into undergraduate music theory courses.” *Great Lakes Association for Sound Studies (GLASS)*. April 2017. Chicago, IL.
- “Collaborative playlists in the aural skills classroom.” *Joint Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory and American Musicological Society – Scholars for Social Responsibility Interest Group*. November 2016. Vancouver, BC.
- “Listening for ‘fun’ in electronic dance music.” *Annual Meeting of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music*. May 2016. Calgary, Alberta.
- “Dressing the body in movement / Dancing the body in fashion.” *Doing the Body in the 21st Century*. May 2016. Pittsburgh, PA. Joint presentation with Thomas Love.

“For more than our voices: Cavarero, Wordsworth, Bartok, and the posthuman.” *Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association*. March 2016. Cambridge, MA. Joint presentation with Andrew Welch.

“Queer voices in Charles Butler’s ‘The Bees Madrigal.’” *Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory – Queer Resource Group*. November 2015. St. Louis, MO.

“Queen bees and amazons: Female insect embodiment in music.” *Midwest Graduate Music Consortium*. April 2015. Chicago, IL.

“The cross-modal pursuit of fear in Messiaen’s *Apparition de L’Eglise eternelle*.” *International Conference on the Multimodal Experience of Music*. March 2015. Sheffield, UK.

“The figure of the womb in music theory.” *Violation: Representations in Literature*. February 2015. Montreal, Quebec. Joint presentation with Andrew Welch.

“The proto-spectral pursuit of divine fear in Messiaen’s *Apparition de L’Eglise eternelle*.” *Audio Technologies for Music and Media*. November 2014. Ankara, Turkey.

Bradburn, I. S., Chang, W-N., **Piilonen, M.**, Taggart, A., Melkonian, A., Jordan, H. & Lane, S. J. “Embodied cognition in young children: An exploratory measurement study.” *Association of Psychological Science*. April 2013. Washington D. C.

Response Papers

Listening In: Sonic Interventions in the Middle East and North Africa. May 2016. Evanston, IL.

Queer Temporalities and Media Aesthetics. May 2016. Evanston, IL.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record

Fall 2023	Aural Skills I, UMass Amherst
Fall 2023	Graduate Seminar: Analysis of Rock/Pop Music, UMass Amherst
Fall 2022	Aural Skills I, UMass Amherst
Fall 2022	Graduate Seminar: Pedagogy of Music Theory, UMass Amherst
Fall 2022	Graduate Theory Review, UMass Amherst
Spring 2022	Music Theory IV (2 sections), UMass Amherst
Spring 2022	Music Theory V, UMass Amherst
Fall 2021	Graduate Seminar: Analysis of Rock/Pop Music, UMass Amherst
Fall 2021	Aural Skills I, UMass Amherst
Spring 2021	Graduate Seminar: Music Since 1945, UMass Amherst
Spring 2021	Music Theory IV (2 sections), UMass Amherst
Fall 2020	Graduate Seminar: Musical Forms, UMass Amherst
Fall 2020	Aural Skills I, UMass Amherst

Spring 2020	Aural Skills VI (2 sections), Northwestern University
Winter 2020	Aural Skills V (2 sections), Northwestern University
Fall 2019	Aural Skills IV (2 sections), Northwestern University
Spring 2018	Chicago Music Scenes, Northwestern University
Spring 2017	Music Theory VI, Northwestern University
Winter 2017	Music Theory V, Northwestern University
Fall 2016	Music Theory IV, Northwestern University
Spring 2016	Aural Skills III, Northwestern University
Winter 2016	Aural Skills II, Northwestern University
Fall 2015	Aural Skills I, Northwestern University

Advising and Teaching Supervision

Fall 2021-present	Honors Program Director, UMass Amherst Music Department
Fall 2023	Graduate Aural Skills TA: Austin Fitterer
Spring 2023	Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Carter Parker Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Kathleen Coker Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Meghan O'Harra
Fall 2022	Graduate Aural Skills TA: Carter Parker Undergraduate Aural Skills TA: Eleanor Sturm Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Joshua Burniece Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Juan Tovar Vargas Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Esther Jo Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Carter Parker Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Meghan O'Harra Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Kathleen Coker
Spring 2022	Masters Music Theory Teaching Practicum / TA: Mitch Gibbs Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Pedro Gomes Lobato
Fall 2021	Independent Study / Undergraduate Aural Skills TA: Hannah Cherry Graduate Aural Skills TA: Meghan O'Harra
Spring 2021	Independent Study / Graduate Music Theory TA: Christopher Bolduc Masters Music Theory Teaching Practicum: Annierose Klingbeil Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Britney Alcine Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Thomas Gruenthal Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Penrose Allphin
Fall 2020	Independent Study / Undergraduate Aural Skills TA: Jordan Kinder Independent Study / Graduate Aural Skills TA: Austin Smith Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Rose Baker Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Lynn Barszcz Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Kristen Flanagan Masters Oral Exam Committee Member: Victoria Senko

Guest Lecturer

- Fall 2023 Writing About Music, taught by Benjamin Court, UMass Amherst
- Writing CVs, resumes, and cover letters
- Fall 2018 Electronic Dance Music, taught by Mark Butler, Northwestern
- “Women and electronic dance music”
- Fall 2015 Music and the Body, taught by Mark Butler, Northwestern
- “Erin Manning’s processual theory of movement”

Teaching Assistant

- Spring 2013 Human Sexuality, taught by Christine Kaestle, Virginia Tech
- Fall 2012 Family, Law and Public Policy, taught by Joyce Arditti, Virginia Tech
- Spring 2012 Middle Childhood and Adolescence, taught by Victoria Fu, Virginia Tech
- Fall 2011 & 2012 Infancy and Early Childhood, taught by Victoria Fu, Virginia Tech
- Fall 2009 Developmental Psychology, taught by Ellen Birchander, Simmons College

Other Teaching Experience / Teaching Development

- Fall 2016–
Spring 2020 Tutor for Doctoral Music Theory Exams, Northwestern University
Analysis of fugue, sonata form, Romantic lieder, and post-tonal music
- 2017-2020 Graduate Teaching Fellow, Northwestern University
Mentor to graduate teachers developing new courses
- Spring 2017–
Fall 2018 Searle Center Teaching Workshop Series, Northwestern University
Workshop designer and facilitator:
- “Strategies for Engaging Conflict in the Classroom”
 - “Using Technology to Help Students Learn”
 - “Compose Yourself!: Practical Speaking Skills for Music Classrooms”
- 2017 Searle Center Teaching Certificate, Northwestern University

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Conference Organization

- Sept. 21-
25, 2023 Werk Related: Chicago Footwork Music and Dance Conference
Five-day event featuring guest lectures, panels, community party, and dance battle
Co-organizer, co-coordinator, grant writer
Featured guests: King Charles, Prince Jaron, Dr. ShaDawn Battle, DJ T-Rell, Pause
Eddie, Miki Ishizaka, Kelli Forman, Talia Sugarmann, Donnetta “Lil Bit” Jackson
- April 21-
22, 2023 New England Conference of Music Theorists (NECMT)
Program committee member; session chair: Electronics, Extended

- Nov. 9-10, 2022 Music, Sound, and Climate Justice Conversations (MSCJC)
Program committee member
- April 10-11, 2022 Annual Meeting of the Music Theory Society of New York State (MTSNYS)
Program committee member
- Sept. 23-26, 2021 Werk Related: Chicago Footwork Music and Dance Conference
Four-day event featuring guest lectures, panels, community party, and dance battle
Co-organizer, co-coordinator, grant writer
Featured guests: King Charles, Prince Jaron, Dr. ShaDawn Battle, DJ T-Rell, Pause Eddie, Miki Ishizaka, Kelli Forman, Anthony and Talia Sugarmann
Sponsored by UMass Amherst Department of Music and Dance, UMass Humanities and Fine Arts, UMass Department of Afro-American Studies, The Five Colleges, Five College Lecture Fund, Berkshire Pulse Dance Studio
- April 10-11, 2021 CFology Music Edition, Featuring DJ Clent, RP Boo, and Traxman
Online music conference/camp created by Chicago Footworkology (King Charles)
Organizing committee member
Co-sponsored by Chicago Footworkology and UMass Amherst Music Department
- May 1, 2018 Graduate Teaching Symposium, Searle Center, Northwestern University
Organizing committee member
Sponsored by the Searle Center at Northwestern
- Feb. 16-17, 2017 Graduate Conference: “What Is the Use of Theory?”, Northwestern University
Conference chair, grant-writer, and coordinator
Sponsored by Critical Theory Cluster, Music Studies, Mellon Cluster Catalyst Grant
- 2018 & 2015 Meeting of the Midwest Graduate Music Consortium, Northwestern
Organizing committee member, webmaster, abstract reviewer, panel chair
Sponsored by the Midwest Graduate Music Consortium

Colloquium Organization

- 2021-23 Mutual Mentoring Event Series in Music Theory, UMass Amherst
Organizing committee member, grant writer, mentor/mentee
Sponsored by a UMass Mutual Mentoring Grant
- November 2022 Chicago Footwork Workshops, ft. King Charles, DJ T-Rell, & Kelli Forman
Sponsored by UMass Department of Music and Dance
- April 2021 Chicago Footwork Lecture/Recital by DJ Taye (online)
Sponsored by the UMass Amherst Department of Music and Dance
- March 2021 Werk Related: Online Guest Lecture About Chicago Footwork
Feat. King Charles, ShaDawn Battle, Prince Jron, Lil Bit, DJ TRell
Moderated by Kelli Forman and Miriam Pilonen
Co-sponsored by UMass Amherst and Chicago Footworkology

- October 2020 Chicago Footwork Lecture/Recital, ft. Heavee, DJ Taye, and DJ Paypal
Sponsored by the UMass Amherst Department of Music and Dance
- April 2018 Chicago Footwork Lecture/Recital, ft. DJ Taye, DJ Spinn, and DJ Paypal
Sponsored by a Student-Faculty Interaction Grant and Northwestern Music Studies
- May 2017 Lecture and Workshop with Prof. Branka Arsić (Columbia), Northwestern
Sponsored by the Kaplan Institute, Buffett Institute, and 5 other departments
- Summer 2014– Music Theory and Cognition Colloquium, Northwestern
Spring 2016 Co-coordinator of the visiting scholar series (8-14 events per year)

Leadership and Advocacy

- Fall 2022– Department Personnel Committee (UMass Music and Dance)
Spring 2024 Elected member, assists in making recommendations for hiring and promotion within the department
- Fall 2023– North East Conference of Music Theorists (NECMT)
Summer 2024 Elected Secretary
- Spring 2023 Search Committee: Assistant/Associate Professor of Music Theory (UMass)
- Winter/Spr 2022 Music Theory Society of New York State (MTSNYS)
Program committee
- Winter 2019– Sustainability Coordinator for the Society for Music Theory
Fall 2022 Appointed by the President to a term of three years. Aids in the Society's adherence to its Sustainability Guidelines and makes recommendations involving issues of sustainability in SMT's management and operations. Organized a Climate Taskforce in 2020 that assisted in researching how the SMT can reduce its climate impacts.
- Spring 2016– SMT Scholars for Social Responsibility Interest Group (SSRIG)
Fall 2022 Chair of the SSRIG (2020-2022)
Panel co-organizer: "Scholars as activists / Activists as scholars" (2021)
Panel co-organizer: "Modulations and intersections" (2020)
Workshop leader: "Writing winning grant applications" (2019)
Panel co-organizer: "SMT award demographics" (2019)
Discussion leader: "Notions of truth in the era of fake news" (2018)
Program committee member and abstract reviewer (2016)
- Fall 2020– Mutual Mentoring Committee
Spring 2022 Department of Music, UMass Amherst
- July 2017– Executive Board of Music Theory Midwest

July 2019	Elected graduate student representative
Fall 2016– Spring 2018	Graduate Leadership and Advocacy Council (GLAC), Northwestern Elected Treasurer (2017-18), Department Representative (2016-17)
Fall 2011– Spring 2012	Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning and Research Coordinator of the undergraduate field study program

OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Fall 2014– Spring 2015	Music Theory Graduate Assistantship: Corpus Analysis Principal Investigator: Vasili Byros
Fall 2011– Fall 2013	Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning and Research Principal Investigator: Isabel Bradburn
Fall 2011– Summer 2012	Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute Human Neuroimaging Lab Principal Investigators: P.R. Montague and K. Kishida
Summer 2012	VT Lifespan Research and Community Service Principal Investigators: S. Jarrott and M. Dolbin-MacNab

SELECT PERFORMANCES

“Sharp Diamond” with Ghost Ensemble

Bezanson Hall, UMass Amherst. April 16, 2023. Amherst, MA.

An evening of works by ensemble members Ben Richter, Sky Macklay, the late Pauline Oliveros, and my own “Sharp Diamond” (flute, harp, vibraphone, accent percussion)

Original Electronic Sound Art

Red Cross. December 10, 2022. Northampton, MA.

Tenor Saxophone with Pledge Drive

Sleeping Village. January 26, 2020. Chicago.

DZ Records. October 26, 2019. Hickory Hills, IL.

Subterranean. August 18, 2019. Chicago.

WHPK. August 16, 2019. University of Chicago Radio.

Reed’s Local. June 26, 2019. Chicago.

Dwell. April 5, 2019. Washington, D.C.

Bug Jar. March 31, 2019. Rochester, NY.

UFO Factory. March 29, 2019. Detroit.

The Empty Bottle. October 9, 2018. Chicago.

What About Chicago? September 7, 2018. Chicago Radio Show.

Metro Chicago. July 7, 2018. Chicago.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Society for Music Theory
Northeast Conference of Music Theorists
American Musicological Society
American Comparative Literature Association

ADDITIONAL STUDIES

Summer 2016 School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University
 Sponsored representative of Northwestern

Summer 2015 Theory and Analysis of Contemporary Music at IRCAM in Paris
 Study abroad seminar participant, led by Robert Hasegawa, Eastman/McGill

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Popular music & music analysis / music theory / history of music theory / history of science /
music theory pedagogy / emotion & affect / voice studies / gender & sexuality studies /
internet & social media studies

REFERENCES

Mark Butler (Dissertation Director)
Professor of Music Theory and Cognition
Northwestern University
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Robert Gjerdingen (Dissertation Committee Member)
Professor of Music Theory and Cognition
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Associate Professor of Musicology
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Daniel Shanahan (Professional Mentor)
Assistant Professor of Music Theory
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