

## **The Musical Genome (Is musicality in our genes?)**

**Location:** Petit Palau hall- Palau de la Música Catalana  
([https://www.palaumusica.cat/en/petit-palau\\_1178817](https://www.palaumusica.cat/en/petit-palau_1178817))

**Date:** September 17th 2025

**Time:** 6-7:30pm Public Event

Event in English (translation service to Catalan provided).

Preregistration required (<https://palaumusica-promot.shop.secutix.com/selection/event/date?lang=ca&productId=10229434219123>)

### **Speakers: (short bios at the end of the document)**

- Henkjan Honing (UvA / MusicGens consortium)
- Tara Henechowicz (UToronto / MusicGens consortium)
- Gemma Marfany (UB)
- Cristina Cubells (ESMUC)

Presenter/Moderator:

- Bea Rodríguez (BTV)

### **Format**

- Setting: Round panel with moderator in the middle. See picture below for an idea (the venue in the pic does not correspond to Petit Palau).
- Audio/video: Participants will wear a headset microphone and two handset microphones will be available for the audience. Slide projection will be available.
- Language: The act will be in English. Translation service to Catalan will be available free of charge. Questions/participation from the audience will be allowed in other languages.

**Program of the event:**

- Welcome and presentation of the event.
- Introduction to the study of musicality by Dr. Henkjan Honing (UvA / MusicGens consortium).
- Introduction to musicality genomics by Dr. Tara Henechowitz (UToronto / MusicGens consortium).
- Roundtable conversation and discussion. Brief contextualization from the participants field of expertise.
- Questions from the audience.

**Local organizers:**

Ernest Mas-Herrero ([emasherrero@ub.edu](mailto:emasherrero@ub.edu))

Josep Marco-Pallarés ([josepmarco@ub.edu](mailto:josepmarco@ub.edu))

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Facultat de Psicologia – Institut de Neurociències (UB)

## **Background / Rationale for the event**

Music is one of the most fascinating human activities. Although it does not provide a survival advantage, it has been found in every known human culture since prehistoric times. The study of music is a very fruitful field of study in different disciplines, from philosophy, musicology, psychology and biology, among many others.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in understanding the genetic bases that allow human beings to compose, produce, perceive and enjoy music. Different research teams around the world have been able to advance this knowledge. In 2022, the Musicality Genomics consortium (MusicGens, <https://www.mcg.uva.nl/musicgens/>) was established, an international consortium of researchers studying the relationships between genes and music. The consortium brings together 45 researchers from universities and research centers in 13 countries, including interdisciplinary experts in fields such as genomics, musicality, cognitive neuroscience, psycholinguistics and bioethics. The consortium aims to be a platform for discussion of the different aspects that encompass the study of the genetics of musicality, with a multidisciplinary perspective that aims to cover from the pioneering technological aspects in genomics, to aspects related to music and the cognitive and emotional functions that accompany it, and with a special interest in bioethical aspects.

As part of their activities, the members of the consortium meet in person once a year to work on the research projects that are underway. This year, the meeting will take place from 18 to 20 September 2025 in the Barcelona area. Having some of the most outstanding scientists in the field of genetics and music psychology is a unique opportunity to open up this scientific knowledge to society.

Relevant actors from the local scientific and artistic community of Barcelona will participate in the event together with some of the members of the MusicGens consortium to establish a conversation-debate around this research, which is located at a privileged intersection between the biological sciences (genetics, neuroscience), social sciences (psychology) and humanities (artistic creation). Thus, it constitutes a meeting point between different disciplines, favoring a dialogue that breaks the limits of each of them and that can be very interesting and stimulating for the general public.

## Participant short bios



### Henkjan Honing

*Professor of Music Cognition at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). He studies what musicality is or can be and to what extent human beings share musicality with other animals. His aim is to define the cognitive and biological mechanisms that underpin musicality. In addition to a research agenda (*The Origins of Musicality*, 2018, MIT Press), Honing has published several books for the general public, including *Music Cognition: The Basics* (Routledge, 2022) and *The Evolving Animal Orchestra* (MIT Press, 2019).*



### Tara Henechowicz

*PhD in Neuroscience (Music and Health Science) by the University of Toronto. She studies data of musicians and non-musicians to examine the genetic overlap of music, motor, and brain traits, with support from a scientific research grant from the GRAMMY Museum Foundation. She is also passionate about music cognition and neuroscience and has published on music therapy, performance kinematics, and neurorehabilitation.*



### Cristina Cubells

*Stage director of opera and instrumental theater. Currently, she also teaches at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC), where she leads the Seminar on Critical Pedagogies. She holds a MA in Musical Theory and Critics (UC3M) and Degrees in Music Teaching (ESMUC) and Psychology (UB).*



### Gemma Marfany

*Professor of Genetics at the Universitat de Barcelona (UB). She currently leads research on genetic diseases that affect retinal vision. As an expert in bioethics, she is member of the Bioethics and Law Observatory (OBD) and the Bioethics Commission of the University of Barcelona (CBUB). She is an active science communicator, and publishes regular articles in different local media.*



### Bea Rodríguez

*Editor, scriptwriter and reporter at Barcelona TV (BTV, <https://beteve.cat/>). She holds Bachelor degrees in Audiovisual Communication and in Journalism (UAB).*

**Organizers and financial support:**



**Institut de Neurociències**  
UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA



**Musicality  
Genomics  
Consortium**



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