

# THE POWER OF THERAPEUTIC MUSIC THROUGH THE EYES OF COMPOSITIONAL LEGENDS

BY MARTHA SUMMA-CHADWICK AND STEVE WEISER

A spectacular series of concert performances, lectures, and workshops to advocate for a very special musical cause is scheduled in the beautiful city of Erie, Pennsylvania, during the week of April 13 to 17. The Erie Chamber Orchestra (ECO) has designed a distinctive weeklong festival to promote the idea of music for therapeutic as well as aesthetic use. To create this unique musical tapestry, the ECO has woven a network of local, regional, and national partners to help disseminate information about this very important cause.

The festival had its roots in local events beginning in May 2013. Always seeking opportunities to reach out to the community and share the joy of music, the ECO connected with Erie's Barber National Institute (www.barberinstitute.org - BNI), a nonprofit organization serving persons with a wide range of disabilities, with a special focus on children with autism. A school wide instrumental petting zoo day initiated by the ECO proved to be a landmark event for students and faculty at BNI, as well as the ECO musicians by establishing a deep bond between the two organizations. Since then, ECO musicians have provided dozens of memorable experiences for the clients and educators at BNI in the form of monthly, on-site concerts. The annual petting zoo day concludes each season in late May.

The children have responded to these musical experiences with great enthusiasm, and ECO General Manager and percussionist Steve Weiser was one of the many musicians observing the remarkable changes music brought to them. With this transformation in mind, the idea was born to create a festival to bring information to the community about the importance of music in the therapeutic world and how music affects the brain. In addition, it would provide a platform for outstanding concert performances centered on the works of challenged composers.

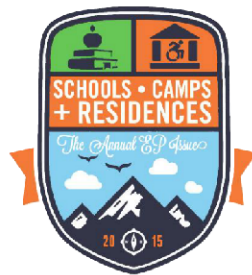
How does an organization lay the groundwork to bring such an idea to reality? After discussing the idea with a network of friends and colleagues, Weiser was put in touch with Martha Summa-Chadwick, DMA, Executive Director of the nonprofit organization Music Therapy Gateway In Communications, Inc. in Tennessee. Dr.

Summa-Chadwick, a concert pianist and active campaigner for the use of biomedical music techniques with persons with special needs, is a frequent guest speaker at regional and national conferences in advocating for these techniques to assist persons with motor, speech, and cognitive challenges. Unlike standard music therapy based on social sciences, biomedical music techniques result from evidence-based research (developed at Colorado State University) that shows how music and rhythm can actually help redirect neural networks. MTGIC has already established unique concert and workshop opportunities to advocate for the use of music in therapy, and the connection with the ECO was a natural for both organizations.

Clients guided by a therapist utilizing biomedical music techniques are actively engaged in goal-oriented sessions where the rhythmic drive of music is added to nonmusical therapeutic tasks, such as walking with a normal gait or maintaining the ability to focus attention. When music is introduced to such tasks in a population that is already "in tune" with music, the results can be remarkable. In Erie, the exposure of the children at BNI to the wonderful music provided by the ECO has already raised interest in providing many more musical experiences.

Maureen Barber, Executive Vice President of BNI, says of the connection to the ECO, "Our teachers have recorded the sessions and the students request to play them over and over to listen and hear the music again. Our students are sitting longer and attending better as the sessions unfold. Each session has introduced a new set of instruments, so a new set of sounds and sights are presented. We cannot wait for what music we will hear and touch next with the upcoming musical petting zoo."

There's no doubt the ECO has tapped a huge well of potential with this experience. They present a wide range of musical concert experiences, ranging from symphonic works in traditional concert settings to accompaniment for silent films. As such, they are very excited to be a part of expanding the models of how we typically think about and react to music. ECO Music Director



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**THE BEAT GOES ON:** Master classes, lectures, and workshops presented by Summa-Chadwick will follow throughout the week, as musicians and audience members will be invited to learn about the physiology of the musician's brain as well as learn how the biomedical music techniques affect the central nervous system.

Matthew Kraemer says, "The Erie Chamber Orchestra strives to present great music in unique and exciting formats. One of our hopes is to compel our audience into changing how they typically think about and react to music. Our April program, entitled 'The Burden of Genius', focuses on composers who, while suffering terribly from mental afflictions, were able to create beautiful works of art."

**A**s an integral part of the festival in April 2015, Summa-Chadwick will be coaching the therapists and educators at BNI with an introduction to biomedical music techniques and ideas for ways to utilize these techniques with the children there. Parents, educators, caregivers, and musicians will also be able to participate in these workshops, so that the whole community can reap the benefits from the dissemination of this exciting information.

Knowledge gained from such presentations is a worthy goal, but an essential part of a music festival is enjoying wonderful music! The ECO will sponsor two concerts during festival week. The festival activities will begin with a chamber concert on April

13 (as part of their Joe Luckey recital series) when Summa-Chadwick will join the musicians of the ECO in a chamber concert dedicated to bringing awareness to the idea of music in therapy. This concert, presented at 7:30 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie, will feature the Schumann *Piano Quartet in E flat Major* on the first half of the program. The Quartet, written in 1842, was composed during Robert Schumann's "year of chamber music" when his (probable) bipolar disorder still allowed him full latitude in his compositional efforts. The second half of the evening's chamber concert will feature a performance of Claude Bolling's light-hearted *Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano*. The audience will be encouraged to feel how the music makes them want to tap their toes and embrace the flow of the rhythm, which is the basis of how music is such a powerful force in the therapeutic world. Summa-Chadwick will also present a pre-concert lecture at 7:00 pm for audience members interested in learning about the dynamics of music and the brain.

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audience members will be invited to learn about the physiology of the musician's brain as well as learn how the biomedical music techniques affect the central nervous system. Some of these presentations will be in the form of individual sessions, but many are open to the public; check the ECO website for specific information about presentation dates and times.

To conclude the week's events, the full orchestra of the ECO will participate in a symphonic tribute designed to highlight works by composers with neural challenges. Maestro Kraemer will lead the ECO in works by Beethoven, Schumann, and Wolf at First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, 250 W. 7th St in Erie on April 17. The concert will include a pre-concert lecture presented by Summa-Chadwick, providing detailed information about the composers' neural challenges and then commence musically with Wolf's *Scherzo and Finale*, a composition written before Wolf's chronic bouts of depression overcame his ability to compose. Following this work, the ECO will be joined by Summa-Chadwick at the piano and the Slippery Rock University Concert Choir, led by Director of Choirs Stephen Barr, for



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Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy, Op. 80*. Written in 1808, six years after Beethoven's despair over his impending deafness had caused him contemplate suicide, the *Choral Fantasy* is thought by some to be a preparatory composition to his triumphant 9th Symphony.

The final piece on the April 17 concert presentation is Schumann's *4th Symphony in D minor*. Based on Schumann's symptoms (bouts of mania combined with inventing creative imaginary personalities to "assist" him with his compositions), speculation is that Schumann had bipolar disorder. Fortunately for those who love his music, he was able to overcome his symp-

tom and continue his composition until an attempted suicide in 1854. He would succumb to his illness two years later.

The legacies of these incredible composers show how each was able to persevere beyond their neural challenges and leave the world a treasure trove of wonderful music. By designing this exceptional music festival in April 2015, the ECO also seeks to create a legacy of information and memories of wonderful music with the knowledge of how it affects us on many levels. Only in the last few decades have we acquired evidence-based knowledge of the value of music in therapeutic use for those with motor, speech, or cognitive challenges.

The Erie festival creates a new platform of opportunities designed to heighten awareness and expand paradigms of how we think about music. It will be a week to be remembered in Erie, Pennsylvania! •

*Additional information about the festival week with the Erie Chamber Orchestra can be found at [www.gannon.edu/eriechamberorchestra](http://www.gannon.edu/eriechamberorchestra). You can also learn more about the ECO on their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/ErieChamberOrchestra](http://www.facebook.com/ErieChamberOrchestra)*

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**

Martha Summa-Chadwick ([www.marthasumma.com](http://www.marthasumma.com)) has achieved an extensive reputation as concert pianist, educator, presenter, information technologist, and advocate for the use of music in therapy. She holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts Degree from the University of Kansas, and has completed both Academy and Fellowship level training in Neurologic Music Therapy at Colorado State University. She is the Executive Director of the nonprofit organization Music Therapy Gateway in Communications, Inc., [www.mtgic.org](http://www.mtgic.org)

Steve Weiser, GM of the Erie Chamber Orchestra, is now in his third season with the Erie Chamber Orchestra. A trained classical musician, Mr. Weiser was previously the Principal Timpanist of the Reading Symphony for 8 seasons and operated a full-time percussion teaching studio. Mr. Weiser additionally plays percussion with the Erie Philharmonic and the Erie Chamber Orchestra.

**FESTIVAL EVENTS**

April 13	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Pre-concert lecture, chamber concert Chamber concert to celebrate music in therapy
April 14	TBA	Individual therapy sessions at BNI
April 15	12:00 pm 3:00 pm 7:30 pm	Radio show broadcast on WQLN, local NPR affiliate Biomedical Music presentation, Gannon University Piano Master Class
April 16	TBA	Group sessions with students at BNI
April 17	10:00 am 6:30 pm 7:30 pm	In-service presentation at BNI for therapists and educators Pre-concert lecture, Erie Chamber Orchestra concert ECO concert – The Burden of Genius