

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Music therapy beneficial for pregnant women and their children

Laurier conference focuses on how mothers may use music throughout pregnancy and birth

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**Contact: Debra Martz Melanson
Administrative Assistant, Music Therapy Department
(519) 884-0710, ext. 2658**

**or Michael Strickland
Media Relations Officer
(519) 884-0710, ext. 3070**

WATERLOO – Giving birth at home has become a more popular choice for expectant mothers, and many women are looking to enhance the experience and make it more relaxing. A one-day conference at Wilfrid Laurier University on Saturday, May 6, will focus on how music therapy can be used as part of the birthing experience and on its benefits to mothers and children.

Open to midwives, doulas, health-care professionals and expectant mothers, the *Birth Notes* conference features a panel discussion with music therapists and clients, and presentations on practical techniques by music therapists Caryl Ann Browning and Gabriel Federico.

Browning, a certified doula or trained labour-support coach, will explain how she uses music to help women develop a greater sense of control while giving birth and as a tool for relaxation. Having worked with 30 expectant mothers, her research focuses on the relatively new combination of music therapy and labour support.

"Music therapy is non-invasive, non-medical and has no known side effects," says Browning. "As a doula, I start working with pregnant women in their sixth month and of the 18 women I've coached through music therapy birth, all say they would use music therapy again."

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Federico, founder of the First Argentine Center for Music Therapy and Pregnancy and author of the book *Music Effects During Pregnancy*, focuses on fetal hearing and on using music throughout pregnancy to condition responses in young children. While music does not have proven long-term effects on a baby's intelligence, sounds heard in the womb, like familiar music or a mother's voice, can be used to calm young children.

Music therapy is most often associated with the treatment of various disabilities and disorders, however, its use during pregnancy is part of a growing interest in the birthing experience. Browning, who also supervises student clinical placements as part of Laurier's music therapy program, says the World Health Organization advocates the demedicalization of normal births.

Registration for the one-day conference is \$25. For more information on the conference or to register, please contact Debra Martz Melanson at (519) 884-0710 ext. 2658.