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OCT. 12, 2018 | 138-18

## Laurier to host national conference on music and aging

WATERLOO – Researchers have long marvelled at the power of music to stimulate aging minds or provide comfort to those who are ill – particularly when that music is enjoyed amid a group. And yet, music is still rarely seen as an integral part of health care and aging.

Lee Willingham, an associate professor in Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Music and director of the Laurier Centre for Music in the Community, hopes to change that. On Nov. 17, he will co-host a conference to bring together music therapy researchers from the U.K. and across Canada, along with health practitioners and musicians to discuss how music can make a difference in quality of life in an aging population.

Willingham was awarded a \$25,000 Connection grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to host the conference, called Music Care: Music, Aging and Wellness.

The Laurier Centre for Music in the Community, along with the Room 217 Foundation, were founding partners of the first Music Care conference in 2010, and several more conferences have been held since in centres across Canada.

This year, the conference will focus on community-created music to aid aging and wellness, with the foremost experts in the field coming together to share knowledge, such as keynote speaker, music therapist Gary Ansdell.

"Gary believes participatory music-making with a health and wholeness perspective is intrinsically therapeutic," said Willingham. "We're thrilled to have him for this."

Andrea Creech, a Canada Research Chair in Music in Community from Laval University, will also offer an address on how those in later life can use technology to listen, play, create and perform music to support active aging.

Other discussions will explore using music in dementia and palliative care, the aging voice, inter-generational community music and developing policies for integrating arts into health care.

"It's exciting to bring together health care practitioners, scholars, students and seniors to study how music can enhance life," said Willingham.

Willingham led the launch of Laurier's Master of Arts in Community Music program in 2013. The first of its kind in Canada, the program takes an interdisciplinary approach to music education that builds leadership skills for application in community settings, such as seniors' homes and hospitals.

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Laurier's Faculty of Music is also a global leader in music therapy and is home to the Conrad Music Therapy Institute for Research as well as the Laurier Centre for Music in the Community. Both centres work collaboratively to bridge the disciplines of music therapy and community music through research and through mobilizing their findings into the community.

The Music Care conference will take place Nov. 17, 2018 at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) Campus at Laurier's Waterloo campus. It is supported through the tri-council [Research Support Fund](#).

For more information about the conference or to register, visit [MusicCareConference.ca](http://MusicCareConference.ca).

- 30 -