

# Gary McPherson

Subjects: **Music**

Contributor: Gary McPherson

- music
- self-regulated learning
- music education
- music psychology
- music research
- self-determination theory
- talent development
- instrumental music education
- music advocacy

## Basic Information



**Name:** Gary McPherson  
(Apr 1954–)

<b>Birth</b>	Parkes, NSW
<b>Location:</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	Professor
<b>Affiliation:</b>	University of Melbourne
<b>Honors:</b>	Honorary Life Membership of the International Society of Music Education Fellow of the Australian Society for Music Education Australian Piano Award Artium Doctorem Honoris Causa, Honorary Doctorate, Lund University, Sweden

## 1. Brief Introduction

Gary Edward McPherson (born April 1, 1954) is an Australian music educator, academic and musician, who has researched various topics within the areas of musical development, music performance science and music psychology. He has served as the Ormond Chair of Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (MCM) since 2009 and between July 2009 and July 2019, served as director of the MCM at the University of Melbourne. McPherson's research primarily focuses on exploring the factors that influence the development of musical proficiency during childhood, later performance excellence, and the motivators of music participation in individuals of all ages and musical skill levels. Much of his research has been informed by his interest in the formation of musical abilities and identity in developing musicians. McPherson served as the foundation Professor of Creative Arts at the Hong Kong Institute of Education from 2002 to 2005. Prior to taking up his position at the MCM, he was

the Marilyn Pflederer Zimmerman endowed chair in the School of Music, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from 2005 to 2009.

## 2. Early Life and Education

As a boy McPherson played soprano cornet in the Parkes Town Band, and by the age of 16 had won over 50 regional, state and Australian titles before he changed to trumpet in the last two years of high school. He went on to complete a four-year Diploma of Music Education at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music, graduating in 1977. He obtained his Licentiate and Fellowship in Trumpet Performance from Trinity College, London in 1975–76 and then undertook a Master of Music Education at Indiana University, graduating in 1982. He earned his PhD at the University of Sydney in 1993 with a dissertation entitled: 'Factors and abilities influencing the development of visual, aural and creative performance skills in music and their educational implications' which investigated the acquisition of five types of musical performance skills: performing rehearsed music, sight-reading, playing from memory, playing by ear, and improvising. In 2021 he was awarded an *Artium Doctorem Honoris Causa*, Honorary Doctorate at the Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Lund University, Sweden (established 1666). In 2022 he was awarded a Lifetime Research Achievement Award from SEMPRES (Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research). In 2022 he received the second Star of Parkes Shire (star 3034556 Lyra), a symbolic honour presented by the Mayor of the Parkes Shire Council, in the tradition of presenting the key to the city, for an outstanding contribution to music and music education that brings credit to my hometown of Parkes. The stars are reflective of the most iconic symbol of the Parkes Shire, the Parkes Radio Telescope (the 'Dish'), and was presented at the opening of the Cooke Park Performance Stage on April 2, 2022. He has also been invited to serve on the "Honor Committee" for the Music Education Society of Spain. This prestigious committee represents the Society.

## 3. Research

McPherson is a proponent of evidence-based approaches to music pedagogy and his work seeks to understand the nature of learning, musicianship and music performance.

His research has explored the acquisition of different facets of performance skills during childhood. He is known for having helped to introduce self-regulated learning theory, self-determination theory and self-efficacy research to music learning and teaching research in the context of better understanding the psychological dimensions which frame efficient and effective musical learning and development. Much of his research has been conducted with Australian students, where he has sought to understand how students' self-belief and attitudes toward instrumental practice translate to success in the face of stressors, difficulties and competing interests.

He has developed new approaches in defining giftedness and talent in music performance that has highlighted the natural abilities, environmental and personal catalysts that distinguish between various types of musical competencies.

## 4. Ormond Chair

Professor Gary McPherson, by Andrew Mezei (2019). Collection; University of Melbourne, Melba Hall

The Ormond Chair of Music was endowed by Frances Ormond, a Scottish-Australian Pastoralist, member of the Parliament of Victoria and philanthropist. First occupied by George-Marshall-Hall from 1891 to 1900, it is the oldest endowed chair at the University of Melbourne. McPherson is the eighth Ormond Professor of Music at the University.

## 5. Professional Activities

McPherson has taught and lectured music students at primary, secondary, tertiary and graduate levels in music education, instrumental pedagogy, musicianship and musicology and served as a full-time professor at universities in Australia, Hong Kong and the United States. He has headed music and creative arts departments at several tertiary institutions and held an honorary professorship in the Department of Cultural and Creative Arts, Hong Kong Institute of Education from 2009 to 2013. Since his appointment as director of the Melbourne Conservatorium in 2009, he has promoted the MCM as a centre of cross-disciplinary research. He has played a key role in the development of the *Music, Mind and Wellbeing* initiative; an ongoing collaboration between the MCM and the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences.

In 1993, McPherson co-established the peer-reviewed journal *Research Studies in Music Education*, of which he is currently associate editor and the *Asia-Pacific Symposium on Music Education Research* in 1997. He has served on the editorial boards of all the major English language research journals in music education., McPherson's wider academic work has been cited over 7000 times. He has supervised numerous master's degree and PhD students, many of whom have gone on to become distinguished researchers in their own right.

McPherson has held leadership roles within the Australian Society for Music Education for 18 years, serving as state chair, national president (1995–1997) and on state and national committees in New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia. He has held leadership roles within the International Society for Music Education for 34 years, beginning as review editor for the *International Journal of Music Education*, and then moving to serve as treasurer (1996–2000), executive committee and member of the ISME board of directors, president-elect (2002–2004), president (2004–2006), past president (2006–2008), and chair of the ISME Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual Review Committee (2014–2018). He has also served as an executive board member of UNESCO *International Music Council* (2011–2013), and board member of the *Music Council of Asia and Oceania* (2011–2013). Largely informed by his corpus of work looking at attitudes of musicians toward their own practice, and broader community perceptions of music learning, he has worked extensively to promote the value of music training and exposure in people of all ages, particularly in childhood, having given hundreds of teacher workshops and presentations across all parts of Australia, Europe, the UK and the USA.

McPherson was chair of the scientific committee convening the International Symposium of Performance Science hosted by the University of Melbourne in July 2019. He has consulted for the Music Sector Development Plan for UNESCO's International Music Council from 2008. He also serves on the Federal Board of the Australian Music Examinations Board. As chair of the International Society for Music Education Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Manual Review Committee from 2012 to 2018, he oversaw a complete overhaul of the governance and workings of the society. McPherson was a co-founder, along with Hong Soo Lee (Korea) and Tadahiro Murao (Japan), of *Asia-Pacific Symposium on Music Education Research* (APSMER), to provide a forum for Asia-Pacific researchers, graduate students and teachers in music education to meet every two years. He served on its board of directors 1997–2009, and 2013–2017.

McPherson was a leading contributor in the planning of the new multimillion-dollar Melbourne Conservatorium and Victorian College of the Arts Precinct in Southbank, Melbourne. The opening of the Ian Potter Southbank Centre in 2019 allowed the MCM's specialist music degrees to be relocated from the Parkville to Southbank campus, where it had been operating for over 100 years.

## **6. Music performance**

As trumpeter and conductor, McPherson has worked with many classical and contemporary music organisations throughout his career, including the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Opera Company. He has also performed and recorded extensively with smaller ensembles, and for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

## **Further Reading**

<https://scholar.google.com.au/citations?hl=en&user=ULax-xQAAAAJ>

<https://www.findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/display/person25385> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary\\_E.\\_McPherson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_E._McPherson)

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