



Joining together in  
strengthening and supporting communities  
through recreational music making

Presents  
**The Fourteenth Annual  
Music & Medicine Conference**

110 Compton Road Cincinnati, OH 45215  
At the Centennial Barn, & Live Streamed

October 2, 2026 | 8:00am - 4:00pm

## Keynote & Speakers



**Barry Bittman, MD**  
Neurologist/Population  
Health Innovator, &  
Researcher

Keynote Speaker



**Arlene de Silva, BS**  
Founder and CEO of Cincinnati  
Music & Wellness Coalition



**Gail Fyke, DNP, RN**  
Associate Professor and  
Researcher,  
Millikin School of Nursing



**Prana Rising, BM**  
Sound artist and passionate  
advocate for the transformative  
power of music



**Rahul Sharma, PsyD**  
Psychologist, musician, and  
pioneer in integrating music  
with learning and healing



**Shonda Malik, MS,  
LPC, MT-BC**  
Psychologist, musician, and  
pioneer in integrating music  
with learning and healing

# Conference Schedule

**8:00am**    **Breakfast and Registration**

**8:30am**    **Welcome**

Arlene de Silva, Founder and CEO

**8:45am**    **Creative Musical Expression:  
Community Building in a Challenging Era**

Barry Bittman, MD

**9:30am**    **Break**

**9:45am**    **HealthRHYTHMS in a University Setting**

Gail Fyke, DNP

**10:30am**    **The Handpan in Wellness & Inclusive Music-Making**

Prana Rising, BM

**11:15am**    **Music as Manifestation of and Metaphor for Wellness & Belonging:  
Healing in an Era of Disconnection**

Rahul Sharma, PsyD

**12:00pm**    **Lunch** (Stop in upstairs for an optional Clavinova Connection demo)

**1:00pm**    **The Evidence Based Power of Music:  
Understanding Music Therapy & Its Clinical  
Benefits**

Shonda Malik, MS, LPC, MT-BC



**HealthRHYTHMS Interactive For CMWC Trained  
Facilitators only. Limited capacity; preregistration  
required.**

Barry Bittman, MD

**1:45pm**    **Up Close with the Handpan**

Prana Rising, BM



**Budgeting, Branding, and Building Impact**

Arlene de Silva, BS

**2:30pm**    **Break**

**2:45pm**    **Wellness through Music**

Rahul Sharma, PsyD



**Interact with HealthRHYTHMS**

Gail Fyke, DNP

**3:30pm**    **Wellness Jam**

All

**3:45pm**    **Evaluations**

**Consider a lunchtime visit to The Franciscan Peddler, a charity shop located on campus grounds!**

# Conference Speakers & Presenters

## Creative Musical Expression: Community Building in a Challenging Era

By Barry Bittman, MD

Barry Bittman, MD is a neurologist, author, international speaker, researcher and population health innovator who serves as the Chief Population Health and Quality Officer for the Inland Empire Foundation for Medical Care (IEFMC) in Riverside California. He is a recognized thought leader for healthcare transformation. Dr. Bittman serves as the Faculty Chair of the Population Health Management Academy, as well as for the nation's first Population Health Fellowship Program that began in 2021. Bittman is widely published having served as the Principal Investigator for several peer-reviewed scientific publications including two molecular research studies focusing on stress reduction on the genomic level utilizing novel creative music expression strategies. In his presentation, participants will explore the challenges of building community synergy and learn evidence-based, rhythm-driven strategies to foster dialogue, bridge differences, and promote respect, equity, and connection.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Discuss the serious challenges to building synergies within communities.

Succinctly review prior research as an evidence base for effectively building community dialogues.

Share examples of rhythm-based team building that bridge differences and reduce biases.

Implement rhythm-based strategies for addressing divisive issues.

Understand the psychosocial importance of building strategies that promote respect, beneficence and equity.

## HealthRHYTHMS in a University Setting

Gail Fyke, DNP

Dr. Gail Fyke has been a valued member of the Millikin University School of Nursing faculty since 2017. With 32 years of experience as a Registered Nurse across medical, surgical, and critical care settings, Dr. Fyke also spent many years as a clinical adjunct instructor before transitioning to a full-time academic role. Dr. Fyke's work is grounded in a deep interest in integrative and alternative approaches to healing. This presentation explores the use of the HealthRHYTHMS recreational group empowerment drumming protocol as a university-based wellness intervention, grounding participants in its theoretical foundations and facilitation structure. Attendees will examine current research on the physiological, psychological, and social benefits of recreational drumming within higher education settings. The session will also consider how these findings translate into meaningful health promotion strategies on college campuses. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of how structured, group music-making can support well-being and community.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Describe the theoretical foundations and facilitation structure of the HealthRHYTHMS recreational drum circle protocol as a university-based wellness intervention.

Analyze current research findings regarding the physiological, psychological, and social outcomes associated with participation in recreational drum circles at a university setting.

Evaluate the potential applications and implications of HealthRHYTHMS drum circles for health promotion in university settings.

# Conference Speakers & Presenters

## The Handpan in Wellness and Inclusive Music-Making

Prana Rising, BM

Prana Rising is a handpan artist, sound practitioner, educator, and founder of Sound Artist Handpan & Creative Music School NY—a pioneering center for handpan, percussion and creative music education. Holding dual degrees in Music Education and Percussion Performance from the Eastman School of Music, Prana has spent over a decade inspiring individuals to unlock their authentic self-expression through music. Rooted in the belief that everyone is born with the gift of making music, Prana helps people tap into their intuitive creativity through one-on-one sessions and handpan and creative music workshops. Prana also offers sound baths and sound practitioner training rooted in the percussive and holistic arts. Prana's session will explore the handpan as a tool for wellness and inclusive music-making, highlighting its ability to promote calm, focus, and emotional regulation. Participants will experience how his instruments encourage accessibility, creativity, and engagement, even for those who may not traditionally connect with music or consider themselves musicians.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will reflect on and experience the handpan's role in wellness and inclusive music-making.

Participants will examine how its sound fosters calm, focus, and emotional regulation.

Participants will experience how the instrument invites participation from individuals who may not traditionally connect with music.

Participants will consider how handpan-centered spaces expand accessibility, creativity, and shared musical engagement.

Participants will be open to the handpan as a versatile musical tool with vast potential in a traditional, structured music learning curriculum.



# Conference Speakers & Presenters



## Music as Manifestation of and Metaphor for Wellness & Belonging: Healing in an Era of Disconnection

Dr. Rahul Sharma, PsyD

Dr. Rahul Sharma is a consultant, psychologist, musician, & keynote speaker with expertise in leadership, individual/community health, music, and wellness. He has lead over 150 customized drum circles to date. He is a former Associate Professor at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, where he chaired its Diversity Concentration for 13 years. Prior to that, he was Executive Director of University of Chicago's Resources for Sexual Violence Prevention, initially reporting to then Associate Dean Michelle Obama. He has done pioneering work integrating music with learning and healing. Through hands-on music-making, guided reflection, and interactive prompts, Dr. Sharma will lead participants in a shared experience of wellness and self-care centered on self-awareness, values, identity, and belonging. Emphasizing empathy, connection, and psychological safety, he highlights the role of inclusion and justice in everyday wellness practices. Drawing on his work as a psychologist, consultant, and musician he integrates live sitar, guided visualization, drumming, values-based activities, and group dialogue to foster reflection and connection.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Identify challenges to wellness and belonging in our current culture.

Reflect on personally-held values that drive our work and sense of purpose.

Learn experiential music techniques, combined with dialogue facilitation techniques, that open up crucial dialogue on wellness and belonging.

Apply insights and approaches to participants' work.

## The Evidence-Based Power of Music: Understanding Music Therapy and Its Clinical Benefits

Shonda Malik, MS, LPC, MT-BC

Shonda Malik earned her master's degree in mental health counseling from Wright State University and her bachelor's degree in music therapy from Ohio University. Shonda has worked in private practice as a music therapist for over 20 years in a variety of settings, including acute and long-term psychiatric hospitals, day programs, schools, hospices, young children with autism and other developmental disabilities and senior communities. Shonda is passionate about helping her clients grow through creative and expressive therapies. Her presentation explores music therapy as a clinical, evidence-based practice, highlighting the role of board-certified music therapists and its impact on physical, emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. Participants will also learn to distinguish between key music therapy approaches, including receptive, active, and neurologic methods.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Define Music Therapy as the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions and explain the essential role of a Board-Certified Music Therapist (MT-BC).

Identify the key goals and therapeutic outcomes of music therapy in promoting well-being across physical, emotional, cognitive, and social domains.

Differentiate between common music therapy interventions, such as receptive, active, and neurologic music therapy (NMT) approaches.



# Conference Speakers & Presenters



## Budgeting, Branding, and Building Impact

Arlene de Silva, BS

Prior to founding the Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition (CMWC), the nation's first community-wide recreational music making coalition, Arlene de Silva served as Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer of the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio, a regional non-profit organization and federally designated Area Agency on Aging. Over the years she was credited with leading a senior management team to increase the agency's revenue from \$12 million to \$75 million, directing the daily operations of the organization, responsible for an annual budget of \$75 million and oversight of over 250 employees. She also led the statewide grant submission for \$158 million to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, for the under 60 disabled population, partnering with mental health, developmental disabilities services, hospitals, and multiple social service organizations. Arlene introduced a Performance Based culture in the organization saving approximately \$1 million in administrative costs over a period of two years. She has served as CEO of CMWC since the beginning (2009). Through her leadership CMWC has grown from 30 members to over 120 members. Participants will learn practical strategies for creating goal-driven budgets, identifying key audiences and stakeholder needs, and developing action plans.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to develop a basic budget aligned with goals, priorities, and available resources.

Participants will be able to identify target audiences and stakeholder needs.

Participants will be able to design an action plan that connects resources, messaging, and measurable outcomes.

# Registration Information

## Continuing Education Approvals

The following have been approved:

### 6 CEU's Music Educators

MTNA certification renewal: 1 Point under Standard V; Category 4 for music educators

### 6 CEU's Recreation Therapists

### 6 CEUs Chaplains

## The following are pending approval

Physicians/Nurses, Counselors, Social Workers, Music Therapists - Board Certified,  
Activity Professionals, Licensed Nursing Home Administrators



## Registration Information

**Registration Deadline: September 25, 2026**

**Early Bird Registration Deadline: August 21, 2026**



**In-Person & Live Stream: \$100**

**Early Bird Registration: \$90**

**Student Registration: 50% off**

Call and request details

**Phone: (513) 315-7393**

**Online**

**Musicandwellness.net**

(Paypal & Major Credit Cards accepted)

**Mail**

**110 Compton Road**

**Cincinnati, OH 45215**

(Make check payable to Cincinnati Music & Wellness Coalition)

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