



## Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider McNamee  
Columnist

### 'Dogs are people, too'

Neuroscientists have finally taken a look inside the mind of man's best friend by training dogs to lie motionless in an MRI scanner.

After scanning the brains of dozens of dogs, neuroeconomics professor Gregory Burns said he's left with the inescapable conclusion that "dogs are people, too." Burns' work is providing evidence that our furry friends experience consciousness and emotions at a level comparable to humans.

Maybe you've noticed that Rover seems to enjoy doing nearly everything you do. Hiking, playing, swimming, watching TV and listening to music.

Research now confirms that dogs have musical preferences and react differently to particular types of music. Psychologist Deborah Wells, at Queens University in Belfast, exposed dogs in an animal shelter to different

types of music. The dogs' reactions were observed when they listened to a variety of different music, which included classical, pop, and heavy-metal rock bands. Wells found that the kind of music the dogs listened to made a difference.

When the researchers played heavy-metal music the dogs became agitated and began barking. Listening to popular music did not produce a reaction that was noticeably different from having no sound at all. Classical music, on the other hand, seemed to have a calming effect on the pooches. While listening to it, their level of barking was significantly reduced and the dogs often lay down and seemed comforted.

You've probably heard of CDs and music playlists designed for babies – there are even prenatal tracks available for moms-to-be to hold against their tummy in hopes of it having the so-called Mozart effect, (supposedly) helping kids grow to be more intelligent adults.

But how about dogs? Could our canine companions benefit from listening to music daily?

According to Charles Snowdon, an authority on the musical preferences of animals, no matter how well composers perfect their animal songs, animals will probably never appreciate music quite as much as we do because they lack an important musical ability that people possess: relative pitch. Snowdon, who is also



PHOTO PROVIDED

Research is showing that dogs have musical preferences.

an animal psychologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has discovered that dogs enjoy what he calls "species-specific music" – tunes specially designed using the pitches, tones and tempos that fit to their particular species.

Concert pianist Lisa Spector, known as The Pet Calming Maestro, combines her passion for music with her love of dogs. She co-created "Through a Dog's Ear," the only music clinically shown to relieve canine anxiety issues.

Spector and her team create arrangements of classical music designed to soothe anxious dogs and cats. She is a Julliard graduate who discovered that music could help dogs. Her findings led to 15 hours of albums, a portable player, the iCalmDog, and now music for cats.

Spector explained that there's a big difference between their arrangements and the traditional versions. "Classical music is such a range, and our arrangements are simplified. The music

is slowed down to a lower frequency, because lower frequencies calm the canine nervous system."

When Spector and her researchers co-founded "Through a Dog's Ear," they already knew anxious dogs responded well to classical music. Spector had been learning about how music could focus and calm children, so she tried it on her puppy. Spector was amazed at the results. That's when she collaborated with Joshua Leeds, a sound researcher, and a veterinary neurologist, Dr. Susan Wagner.

Considering the great demand for new ways to please our pets, more progress is likely to be made in the field of animal music.

So, do dogs like music? The bottom line: yes. But it seems that dogs prefer music when it's soothing. In other words, if you turn off the Black Sabbath and try a little Beethoven, your furry friend just might thank you for it.

## Acoustic concert set at library

Dennis McGregor is set to make some noise at the library – and nobody is likely to say "ssshhhh!"

The Sisters artist and musician will play solo acoustic at the Sisters Library on Friday evening, in support of an exhibit of his paintings from a children's book series, "You Stole My Name." Each painting features two animals that share names – bull trout; turtle dove, etc.

McGregor promises quirky songs and stories and verse related to the book.

"I am looking forward to playing music in front of my paintings," McGregor said. "I've never done that before. It will also be the first time I've played in a library. It's a good thing that I have a bunch of really quiet songs. This show will be different than when I play with the band in that there will be no dancing or alcohol. Is it still possible to have fun? I think so."

The all-ages show is free, with any donations at the door to benefit Sisters Folk Festival. The performance is set for Friday, September 22, 7 p.m. at Sisters Library in the community room.

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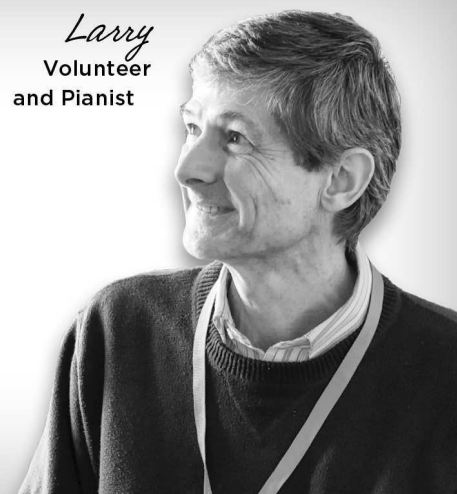


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