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Abstract:
From a global perspective, the pitch is used to signify melody in music and intonation in language. From a local perspective, pitch differentiates different notes in music and is the primary feature of lexical tones in tone languages. In this talk, I will discuss the interplay of music and language regarding the local use of pitch as the primary tone feature in language and as the note feature in music. On the one hand, evidence shows a significantly higher prevalence of absolute pitch among native tone-language-speaking music students than among nontone-language-speaking music students, supplementing the genetic account of absolute pitch. On the other hand, the music experience of nontone-language-speakers has been demonstrated to facilitate L2 learning. These findings suggest a bi-directional influence between music and language. Moreover, neurophysiological evidence suggests the Acoustic Density Hypothesis: The denser the tone inventory of a language, the better pitch discrimination ability its native users possess. The applicability of such a hypothesis to music domain will also be discussed.