

RNCM Music Education News

Autumn 2018



RNCM music education at international conference

Our Head of Music Education, John Habron, and Dalcroze Eurhythmics tutor, Bethan Habron-James were invited to share their work at a conference at the University of James I, in Castellon de la Plana, Spain in November. John's opening keynote 'Dalcroze and disciplinarity' discussed Dalcroze Eurhythmics (an approach to music education and wellbeing) from the perspective of

transdisciplinarity and Bethan's workshop focused on Dalcroze practice as educating for sustainability. Bethan also contributed to a panel alongside Victoria Tischler, Professor of Arts and Health at the University of West London. The conference theme was 'Interdisciplinarity and sustainability through the arts' and was aimed at educators and trainee teachers from a variety of subject areas.

Music Mark conference

In September we hosted the Music Mark North-West Regional Conference. More than 300 delegates and exhibitors spent the day with us, sharing good practice and debating some of the pressing issues in music education. Breakout sessions focused on, amongst other topics, working with boys' voices, ukulele, Dalcroze, loopstation software and approaches for children with SEND. The conference was opened by Music Mark CEO Bridget Whyte and the keynote speaker was Alun Jones, Head of Chetham's School of Music. Music Mark is a membership organisation, subject association and charity. It lobbies for, and champions, government-supported, high-quality, music education provision for all school-aged children and young people which addresses diversity, equity and inclusion at its core. RNCM is an HE Member of [Music Mark](#).



Rosalind Ridout

New jobs at London schools

After finishing her MMus this summer, Rosalind Ridout took a job at the Jack and Jill Family of Schools (South West London) in the nursery and prep schools. She's enjoying making and sharing music in creative and interesting ways. The nursery children have 20-30 minutes of music teaching daily, enabling rich musical development from age two onwards. Between singing, 'classroom music lessons' and musicianship lessons, the older children are given time, space and opportunity to develop excellent music-making skills. Rosalind said: *'A central and joyous part of my teaching is Dalcroze Eurhythmics, which I first encountered at RNCM and on which I have been hooked ever since!'*

Second-year postgraduate, Grace Scott Deuchar will be joining the TeachFirst programme in September 2019 to teach music in a London secondary school. Grace has worked as a peripatetic oboe and piano teacher for several years, and currently teaches for The Nucleo Project, an affiliation of Sistema England, which is a charity that aims to effect social change through music education. She said: *'My work within Sistema has been an eye-opening experience, and I am looking forward to continuing my career in music education.'*

PedagogyPlus reading groups



The Pedagogy Plus staff reading groups are proving popular. These informal, lunchtime sessions bring staff together to share experiences of teaching and learning, with a text as a starting point. This term, we have read Karin S Hendrick's 2016 article ('The Sources of Self-Efficacy: Educational Research and Implications for Music') and 'Pedagogy and Pleasure' from *The Slow Professor* (Berg & Seeber, 2016). These are rare CPD opportunities for staff from different walks of life to meet and share, as you can see from the photo: Cheryl Duncan (Learning Support Tutor),

Daniel Snyder (Knowledge Exchange Manager), John Habron (Head of Music Education), Malcolm Williamson (Alexander Technique teacher) and Jennifer Langridge (cello tutor). Staff in the groups have valued the recognition and affirmation that comes from hearing colleagues reflect on their day-to-day lives and the benefits of seeing long-held intuitions made explicit on the page. There are three different time slots, to accommodate staff timetables. If you are interested in joining a group, please contact [John Habron](#).

Independent thinking for health



RNCM PhD students Raluca Matei and Keith Phillips completed a set of four workshops in Manchester and London in September on setting guidelines for a health education programme for music students. They brought together musicians, health professionals and experts in psychology, health and sports

sciences, and asked them to debate several thinking tools that could help music students become independent thinkers, in charge of their own health. The project was funded by Realab, NWCDTP and RMA, and received one of the four Early Career Research Grants 2018/2019 from the IMR.

Holy Name choir

Back in July, an audience gathered in St Emmanuel's Church in Didsbury to listen to the choir from Holy Name Roman Catholic Primary School (formed by postgraduate Olivia Dance) perform alongside RNCM students. The concert raised funds to ensure future year groups would continue to receive life-enhancing opportunities, such as a trip to Spain, offered annually to Year 6. For many of the children, going abroad is a one-off experience that can have significant beneficial impacts. £2105 was raised and a further £5000 was donated by loyal patron Mr Paul O'Reilly.



Support for young artists

Larry Goves launched a new composition/creative practice course at Snape Maltings last summer. Part of the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme Composition, *Alternative Performance and Performance Art (CAPPA)*, the course welcomes diverse practitioners (for example, those working in improvisation, devising, composition, creative interpretation etc.) and makes connections between musical practice and performance/visual art practice and recent history. It emerged from a lecture series elective at the RNCM (Music, alternative performance and performance art) which looks at musical history, theory and practice from the perspective of 20th and 21st century performance art.

Association of Popular Music Education (APME) at RNCM

The inaugural APME UK consultation meeting took place at the RNCM in October. Thirty seven delegates, from a range of institutions including Higher Education providers (state and private), Further Education providers, Music Charities, Music Hubs and Trusts, and RNCM students attended. The meeting raised awareness of good practice among Popular Music Education providers and explored synergies between organisations. Conversations were enthusiastic, engaging and insightful, and there was a genuine desire among the delegates to move forward with a UK-based association under the APME banner.

ConductIT

In September, RNCM and partners the University of Stavanger, the Universidade de Aveiro and the Open University launched ConductIT, an EU-funded project to build an open access MOOC (massive open online course) on conducting. As an ERASMUS+ strategic partnership, ConductIT will develop an innovative online and distance-learning approach to teaching a subject that is fundamentally practical. Any musician who has had to lead an ensemble will be able to develop their knowledge and understanding of conducting from a theoretical, philosophical and practical point of view by studying the MOOC at their own pace. Watch out for the ConductIT website!



Young Strings celebrates success

In the Summer 2018 Concert, all children performed in ensembles and shared some of the movement and vocal activities they had used to explore the ensemble repertoire. Audience members and Young Strings students said they noticed the musical progression from the youngest groups to the oldest. All the leavers are progressing into new ensembles, including Stockport Youth Orchestra and Manchester Youth String Orchestra, or to places at Junior RNCM and Chetham's. The Young Strings Summer School saw 65 young musicians enjoying a daily schedule of orchestra, chamber music, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, choir and craft. The theme

was Blue Planet, so there was music about the sea, songs about environmental issues and beautiful sea birds made from single-use plastic, which decorated the hall at the end of the week.

At Young Strings, and at Summer School, the young musicians have many opportunities to play chamber music. One group, coached last year by Double Bass tutor Rachel Meerloo, enjoyed playing together so much that they now meet independently to rehearse. They will perform at the Winter Concert in December.



OMF: Children's Voices

Since September 2017, the award-winning Olympias Music Foundation (OMF) has been running a weekly community children's choir called **Children's Voices**. Led by RNCM postgraduate, Megan Thompson, Children's Voices brings together pupils from primary schools around Longsight and Ardwick to sing

together every Tuesday after school. The children perform music in a wide range of different styles and perform publicly for their friends and family at the end of each term. As the choir enters its second year, we look forward to seeing what new opportunities and experiences lie in store for our brilliant young singers!

Safe start

Young Strings violin tutor Emma Peake presented a paper (*Empowering a 'Well' Musician from Inception to Demise*) at the 2018 PAMA (Performing Arts Medicine Association), International Symposium, held in Orange, California, USA. The presentation was based on her doctoral thesis *Safe Start: Don't they Deserve it?* which addresses the aetiology of the musician's pain from a variety of perspectives, as well as suggestions of salvation, and moreover, what educators can do to prevent pain in students from the very first stages of learning. Emma's doctorate, undertaken at Bangor University, is one part of a growing, sector-wide effort to support and educate young musicians to practice and perform healthily throughout their lives.

Did you know?

Three members of staff are undertaking doctorates in music education? Robert Gardiner, Assistant Head of Music Education (PGCE): 'Value in Music Education: Assimilation and Contradiction' (Manchester Metropolitan University); Karin Greenhead (Tutor in Dalcroze Eurhythmics): 'Dynamic Rehearsal and Dalcroze Eurhythmics: A phenomenological investigation into participants' experiences and their implications for the practice, teaching and learning of music and musical performance' (RNCM); Bethan Habron-James (Tutor in Dalcroze Eurhythmics) 'Exploring the meaning of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in the life journey of a Dalcroze practitioner: An autoethnography' (Bangor University). If you are interested in undertaking a PhD in music education at RNCM, please contact **John Habron**.

Teaching tip

Professor Nick Reyland

A misaligned spine can be painful. When teaching becomes painful – whether you are prepping, delivering, marking, evaluating, etc. – try asking if your teaching is out of alignment. John Bigg's theory of constructive alignment is a powerful teaching and curriculum design tool, but also of everyday assistance. Are your intended learning outcomes – *what you want students to learn to do* – appropriate for students at this level? *Does your teaching actually teach them to do those things?* *Does your assessment genuinely test their ability to perform those abilities?* If not, you may have misalignment. Here's a short three-part **video**.

2 minutes with...

Andrew Heggie



Andrew Heggie, Tutor in the School of Vocal Studies and Opera, talks to Dr John Habron, Head of Music Education

Could you tell us a story about a teacher that had a big impact on you? What made the difference? And why?

I have been very fortunate to have had some excellent teachers, both within music and other subjects. A couple spring to mind. One was a school music teacher and choir conductor, Sean O'Dea. A larger than life person, both in personality and physically, he engendered passion for music in his students. He would regularly take singing practice with hundreds of students at once, most of them more interested in rugby than music, and get them all singing. Despite being from a 'rough area', he also encouraged us to take the opportunity to audition for and then sing with the Australian Opera in the children's chorus.

Another was my singing teacher at the RNCM Peter Wilson, who still teaches here and I value very much as a friend, mentor and colleague. His infectious passion and expertise were probably the things that made the difference. Also, both teachers gave me exactly what it seems (in hindsight) I needed at the time. It seems unlikely I would be doing what I am doing without their influence.

How did you get into teaching?

I guess I started teaching when I was at school - mathematics! Whilst at boarding school, other students would approach me to help them with their studies. I started teaching singing whilst at University under similar circumstances - people just asked me if I could teach them, or the students at their school, and I said yes. In the first instance people would ask me based on hearing me sing, which was no guarantee that I could teach singing. (I also taught swimming for a couple of years, which has a much greater potential than singing to go horribly wrong.)

How would you describe your approach to teaching and learning?

My first thought is I don't know. What I mean is that I'm not entirely sure how to articulate it (which has some interesting parallels to vocal pedagogy). I'll give it a go... 'In Meliora Contende' was the school motto - 'Strive for better things'. There is an optimism in

that idea that suggests we can make things better by our actions. I guess my aim in teaching is to guide students along a path. Different students will be on different parts of the path, some may have taken a wrong turn, some may not yet realise there is a path to better things, some may think a signpost is an end of the path... (singing teachers do tend to like imagery and metaphor!). I would say that my approach is always evolving, but things that I think have contributed to it are: my own great teachers, observing other teachers, discussing teaching with other teachers, a bit of reading, and *experience*.

Are there specific areas of pedagogy that are important to you?

My instinct is to say no, but on considering some of the many aspects of vocal pedagogy I find myself getting animated. Maybe teaching them all is important to me. A couple of things come to mind: the singer and the many components of the singing voice are interlinked; each student is an individual; my pedagogic approach is at least somewhat specific to each student; that does not conflict with objective aesthetic, musical or vocal aims.

How has teaching influenced your creative practice, as a performer?

I think it has had a positive impact in two main ways. When you teach, or need to explain something, you get to know it better. The unique insights and experiences of the many wonderful and inspiring students I have taught, I think (hope), has given greater depth and nuance to my own approach to singing.

What advice would you have for a young musician who is not sure about the place of teaching in their career?

No matter how wonderful and successful you are as a performer, you will almost certainly teach in some way, shape or form. As someone committed to excellence, you will want to do it well. Take the opportunity to begin preparing yourself for this aspect of your career now. When you do, you will find that teaching enriches other areas of your career (and life).