

# RNCM MUSIC EDUCATION NEWS

Spring 2018



## New choir for local primary school



Olivia Dance (BMus piano, Year 4) has formed a children's choir at Holy Name

Primary School, Moss Side, as part of her Creative Project. Many children auditioned and 18 (Years 4-6) were chosen to take part.

At the end of last year, the choir - the first for the School - had a busy schedule, which included performing at the Hulme Winter Festival, at the annual Schools' Christmas Concert at St John's

Roman Catholic Church, Chorlton, and in a concert at Our Lady's.

*Olivia says, 'Leading the choir each Monday afternoon gives me a tremendous sense of purpose. Not only are we having a great deal of fun, but I realise that I'm responsible for shaping part of their musical journeys and this is something I feel immensely proud of.'*

## Visiting Professor from North-West University

In December we hosted Dr Liesl van der Merwe, Associate Professor at North-West University (Potchefstroom), South Africa. Liesl presented her collaborative research with Dr John Habron in the College Research Forum and gave a doctoral training seminar on using qualitative data analysis software.

Whilst in the UK, Liesl and John presented the culmination of a five-year research project on spiritual experiences

in music education at the 4th Nordoff-Robbins Plus/4th SAME (Spirituality and Music Education) conference 'Exploring the spiritual in music: Interdisciplinary dialogues in music, wellbeing and education' in London (9-10 December). Here, they were joined by colleagues from the MASARA (Musical Arts in South Africa: Resources and Applications) Research Niche Entity, which is based at North-West University.

## PhD student mentors A-level composers



Mark Dyer, first-year PhD candidate in Composition, recently started mentoring at the Holy Cross College, Bury, assisting A-level students with their composition projects.

Mark's visit involved a presentation of his work and compositional process, giving students ideas of how to start their own project. Next, Mark will meet students individually to look over their own work, providing suggestions for next steps and further listening. He said: 'I am deeply passionate about teaching, and creative practitioners

*sharing their methods and experiences. It was incredibly exciting to see students willingly engage with more abstract ways of thinking at such an early stage in their musical education. Additionally, the experience has provided an opportunity to reflect upon my own compositional processes and my ability to render these intelligible for an audience.'*



# Music Educator Professional Engagements

Twelve Year 4 Popular Music students are currently completing their Professional Engagement module as Music Educators in Manchester, London, China and the US.

This professional development module enables students to work full-time as part of their studies, providing a seamless gateway into the profession as they graduate from

the programme. The College has formed partnerships with high quality education providers around the world to enable students to practise their craft, add value to the partner institutions, and to act as RNCM ambassadors.

Our students are currently teaching in the Dulwich International College network in Beijing, Shanghai and Zhuhai,

at the Arts & College Preparatory Academy in Columbus Ohio, across the UK with Music for Youth, and closer to home as peripatetic instrumental/vocal teachers with Fidler Music and Bolton Music Service.

Two students have already been offered further employment on completion of the module – Rachael Booth will take up a

position as vocal tutor for Bolton Music Service and Ruairi Leonard will return to China after his final recital as a class teacher at Dulwich International College Beijing. Congratulations!



## Did you know?

2017 saw the launch of the Journal of Popular Music Education, the first of its type. The inaugural issue is available to download free [here](#).



## Congratulations...



The OMF comprises students and alumni who engage in music education projects in deprived areas of Manchester to enable underprivileged children and adults to enjoy the benefits of music-making. Its director, Jo Cheung, is undertaking a PhD with us, investigating metacognition in young musicians and the role that parents play in their learning.

If you would like to know more about OMF and how you can get involved, email [director.omf@gmail.com](mailto:director.omf@gmail.com)



...to the [Olympias Music Foundation \(OMF\)](#), winners of the Grassroots Champion Award at the 2017 Community Integration

Awards, a national organisation celebrating best practice in community integration and cohesion across the UK.

## RNCM Children's Opera placement

Dennis Tijok conducted and arranged our Children's Opera, *Into the Underworld*, as part of his third year BMus Professional Placement, working with musical director and composer Kate Pearson. He said:

*'Very few opportunities exist for children, students and professionals to encourage creativity in this particular way. Learning across the generations throughout the creative process is an experience everyone should*

*have during their studies here. I highly recommend the project, as it provides ample opportunities to develop flexibility as musicians, be it improvising in different styles or getting to perform in a pit band for the very first time. Not only composing melodies and harmonic progressions, but also dramatising the storyline together with the kids has been very fruitful. Experiences that get you out of your comfort zone will undoubtedly enrich your musical education!'*

## HEA successes

Congratulations also go to Dr Amanda Babington and Dr Cheryll Duncan on gaining Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA), and to Dr Michelle Philips on achieving Senior Fellowship (SFHEA).

Reflecting on the process, Cheryll said: *'Initially I was unsure about how useful the application process would be, but in fact I got a lot out of it. It's more than twenty years since I qualified as an HE teacher, and*

*reflecting on my recent practice in light of current pedagogical research was both useful and reassuring. Excellent support is provided by the College, and colleagues were very willing to share their own reflections*

*with me, so overall it has been a hugely positive experience.'* Michelle added: *'I was really pleased and proud when I heard that my SFHEA application had been approved. It feels rewarding to have my experience as a teacher,*

*manager and researcher in higher education recognised by the HEA.'*

Staff interested in developing their reflective practice through the HEA scheme, please contact [John Habron](#) or [Dawn Edwards](#).

# RNCM at MEC seminar

The RNCM is a member of the [Music Education Council \(MEC\)](#) and in November, Robbie Gardiner (Assistant Head of Music Education) attended their most recent seminar: 'Social Justice, Wellbeing and Identity'. The intention was to build and take forward a cross-sector approach in order to lobby government.

Robbie said: *'Many facets of music education were represented (conservatoires, universities, Special Educational Needs and*

*Disabilities institutions, music services etc.), so this was complex. These themes meant different things to different sectors, but the debate was open and engaging. There was also consensus that there was a fundamental role for Music Education in enabling social justice, wellbeing and identity formation.'*

Delegates presented their views of the state of music education and debated formal and informal music education. They agreed that music education

ought to be more about holistic development than elitist notions of progression. Robbie reflected that *'although we wait to see how MEC will take these ideas forward, for the RNCM to be involved in the discussion is important in an age of increasing artistic marginalisation.'*

## Did you know?

The Music Education Council is the UK's National Affiliate for the International Society for Music Education (ISME). It also produces a newsletter roughly every two months. Look out for the next one!

# Pianists lead the way in pedagogy



*'Within their portfolio careers, nearly every piano student will teach. My colleagues and I consider it important that we prepare them for this.'* So says Helen Krizos who, for over 15 years, has led the training of our Year 3 and 4 piano students in teaching young pupils.

Apart from weekly classes and workshops, students are offered hands-on experience of teaching pupils in different settings.

Year 3 students teach a pupil for six months in a primary school, normally working with disadvantaged children. Feedback from the schools and the parents shows the invaluable and grateful support RNCM is offering in the wider community.

Year 4 students teach two pupils privately for free, affording them the

chance to liaise more directly with parents. In some cases, they continue teaching the pupils they had in the Year 3 programme.

Each year there is a celebratory concert in College and in 2017-18, the Year 4 students requested to increase this to two concerts.

A Christmas Concert took place in December. Helen said: *'The children in many cases have only had lessons for the last few weeks with their new teachers and I have been impressed with this group, especially their initiative and interest in presenting this programme. This has been a cause close to my heart. Students and teachers to have the opportunity to open the world of music to those who would not otherwise have this chance.'*

# Dalcroze Conference



RNCM staff and alumni made their presence felt at the 3rd International Conference of Dalcroze Studies (ICDS3) at Université Laval, Québec City, Canada (30 July-3 August).

Amongst more than 200 delegates were Karin Greenhead, Bethan Habron-James, John Habron, and Becca Spencer.

They were joined by practitioners and scholars from 28 countries, and all

presented papers, workshops or roundtables. Karin also gave one of the keynotes, her presentation including a rhythmic class, and John chairs the ICDS Scientific Committee.

Becca and Bethan are both RNCM alumni. Other alumni who attended were: Kaye Barker (Postgraduate Sinfonia course, Diploma in Orchestral Studies, 1984), Monica Wilkinson (RNCM Sinfonia 1983, PGCE in

Music with Specialist String Teaching 2007), Diane Daly (PG Diploma 1999) and Emma Dixon (BMus Hons 2003, MMus 2004). All in all, a fantastic showing for RNCM!

The programme focused on improvisation and included performances, exhibitions and visits to the city of Québec.

Click [here](#) to find our more, or [here](#) to watch a 10-minute video about the ICDS3 conference.



# 2 minutes with...

# David Horne

John Habron, Head of Music Education, talks to our Deputy Head of Graduate School, MPerf and International Artist Diploma Course Leader



## What are your main roles as a musician?

I am a composer, performer and teacher. One of my passions is performance studies, which fundamentally informs my research. I wouldn't call myself a musicologist, but a lot of what I teach is musicological.

## Could you tell us a story about a teacher who had a big impact on you?

My piano teacher was really extraordinary. Audrey Innes. I spent six years with her. It wasn't just about piano lessons. If I was playing Debussy, we would talk about other music by Debussy, about art, about water, about getting outdoors. She was also interested in Alexander Technique, so there was a lot of physical awareness. It was a real synthesis, it had everything. It had generosity and it was a

total experience. Also, my composition teacher Geoffrey King. There was no sense of him being the composer and I the student. There was immediately this sense of collegiality. When he was talking about a compositional problem in my music, he reflected on how he might solve it. The fact he was talking at that level made all the difference. And I always understood what he was saying. I mean, I remember having lessons with composers who said things I didn't comprehend. At the time, I thought they were really clever and I wasn't, but I realise now they were talking at an inappropriate level.

I took two things from Geoffrey, which form part of my philosophy of teaching: that teaching is about teaching students to

teach themselves. That seems to me to be the ideal. And it is also partly about being a secretary; we have to encourage students to organise themselves, to be their own PA!

## How did you get into teaching?

I got into teaching later than most musicians. In my third year of postgraduate, teaching experience was built in. After gaining my PhD, I then became a visiting lecturer. But later there was a really interesting change. When I came to the UK, I had a Composer-in-Association position at the RLPO and I started doing outreach work in primary, secondary and special schools. That was really amazing and I got a lot out of it. Now, I am one of the Key Tutors for the Sound and Music (SAM) summer school. It's one of the most fun weeks of my year. It's all about the joy of learning whilst working towards an outcome. Every single student produces something. But there is no assessment, and that's a big difference. I mentor composers as well, on Making Music's Adopt a Composer scheme.

## How would you describe your approach to teaching and learning?

A big part of what I do is to demystify aspects of the music. Giving students confidence in how to talk about music is also very important. I'm interested in recognising what students already know. For example, students are already analysing and researching as they learn music, even though they might not realise it.

## You've mentioned passion several times during our interview.

I want to help students develop a passion for something. I don't set essay questions because generally students engage more if they have to discover their own topic. It allows students to reflect on their own practice and it also prepares students for their careers, when they will need to be more autonomous.

## Does teaching influence your creative practice, as a composer?

All the time and in so many different ways. Sometimes a 14-year-old composes a sound you'd never thought about and that can inspire how I compose.

That's extraordinary. Also, by teaching, we sometimes help with problems which we haven't had ourselves yet and it can prepare us.

## And as a teacher?

Teaching a 14-year-old informs my teaching practice as much as teaching an 18- or 19-year-old. But what doesn't change is that I ask students to tell me what they're trying to do. This is more useful than telling them what I think they've done.

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

When you teach someone else, you start to think so much more about what you do and how you learn. That is very useful. As I work, it's not like I teach and you learn, I teach and I learn at the same time.

## In three words, what are the most important qualities a teacher should have?

That's a tough one. [Long pause...] I think teaching should be empathetic. [Another long pause...] Encouraging. And instructive.