

THE NORTHERN

Issue 7
Spring 2024

RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

‘Following an incredible 50th anniversary year, I am proud to say that the RNCM continues to thrive as one of the most progressive conservatoires in the world. We secured Gold in the latest Teaching Excellence Framework and were delighted to win the Outstanding Entrepreneurial University category at the 2023 Times Higher Education Awards.

Our community of alumni, students, staff, partners and supporters are an incredibly important part of this success story, and we look forward to continuing our RNCM journey together.’

Principal Professor Linda Merrick CBE

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North*



News Round Up



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RNCM Rolls out the Red Carpet



We were thrilled to welcome hundreds of artists and guests from across the industry to the RNCM on 5 March for the 2024 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards.

Marking the event's first trip outside of London in 34 years, the evening shone a light on Manchester's musical heritage and community while presenting an uplifting picture of classical music's resonance, impact and reach.

Hosted by BBC Radio 3 presenters Elizabeth Alker and Linton Stephens, who nodded to his time as a student here 20 years ago, the night proved a true celebration for the RNCM, with multiple alumni shortlisted across various categories, and students and staff taking to the stage for very special performances.

James Murphy, Chief Executive of the RPS, said: *'We all talk about partnership in music, but here at the RNCM we've seen and cherished the very best of it.'*

Pop Artists Take Centre Stage: Sony Music UK Hosts Live RNCM Showcase



Popular Music students and members of our flagship Young Artists programme headed to London in March to present a live showcase at Sony's headquarters.

Held in partnership with Sony Music UK's Social Justice Fund (the inaugural sponsor of our award-winning Young Artists project for 11 to 18-year-olds), the event offered an exceptional opportunity for students from our BMus in Popular Music degree and participants from Young Artists to perform for an audience of industry guests.

Artists included pianist, singer-songwriter and 2023 CASIO Sessions winner May Payne; soul and jazz singer-songwriter Daisy Cameron; three-piece alt-pop band and founders of Manchester's RedRoom event Sister Grace; innovative pop musician Nadeem Shakir; and several Young Artists groups.

Founding Principal Honoured with New Sculpture by Hazel Reeves

RNCM Founding Principal, Sir John Manduell CBE, will be honoured this summer with a new bust created by 'Our Emmeline' sculptor Hazel Reeves. The bronze head and shoulders sculpture, which celebrates Sir John's 25 years at the helm, will be revealed in a grand unveiling ceremony on Friday 21 June ahead of a spectacular concert featuring the RNCM Chamber Orchestra and Chamber Choir, under the direction of David Hill MBE.

The commission was initiated by two members of Sir John's original team, Bryan Fox and Richard Griffiths, and includes the creation of a unique plinth designed and made by alumnus Jonathan Stockton – now an internationally collected furniture designer and maker. *'Sir John is the most remarkable person it has been my privilege to know and to work with,'* Bryan said. *'His vision, energy, focus and meticulous care quickly created an inspiring atmosphere, enabling this young institution to record some truly extraordinary achievements.'*

Hazel's exceptional bronze of Emmeline Pankhurst in St Peter's Square, *Rise Up Women*, attracted the attention of Bryan and Richard and led to her being commissioned. Speaking about the project, Hazel said visiting the RNCM had allowed her to fully appreciate Sir John's significant legacy. *'To see what the RNCM has grown into, it was like a blood infusion – seeing all these young people, all that talent, and the conservatoire itself made Sir John more tangible,'* she added. *'It really helped me to understand him and his impact.'*

Bust of Sir John Manduell, progress so far



Specialised Music Education Programme Launched

In an innovative response to tackling the crisis in music education, we have announced a new and industry-leading Master of Education (MEd).

Open for 2024 entry, this highly specialised degree is aimed at music teaching professionals who wish to gain further training and accreditation for their teaching and/or conducting practice. It's also ideal for musicians who have completed an undergraduate or postgraduate course at university or conservatoire and are now looking to specialise in education.

Robbie Gardiner, Programme Lead for Music Education, said: *'Our new Master of Education is an exciting and innovative programme that has been deliberately designed to support the varied and flexible professional lives of music educators, aiming to nurture and support teachers across all disciplines, musical styles, contexts and settings. It's rooted in our passion for developing inclusive approaches to music education and enriching the lives of everyone through music.'*

Applications are now open via UCAS Conservatoires. If you like to learn more about the course, please contact admissions@rncm.ac.uk or visit rncm.ac.uk/med.

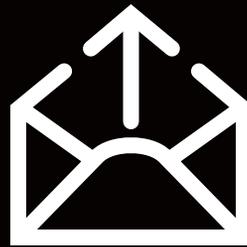


Save the Date: Driving Change in Music Education

The RNCM will be hosting a music education conference on Wednesday 26 June. Aimed at music teachers, the event will include practical workshops, presentations and performances exploring themes such as inclusion, diversity, decolonisation, creativity, and adaptability within teaching. Visit rncm.ac.uk/edconf for further information.

Sound business sense:

the entrepreneurial conservatoire
teaching Tchaikovsky and
tax returns



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After accepting the Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Entrepreneurial University, RNCM's Head of Enterprise (Academic) Dr Michelle Phillips talks about the critical role institutions must play in preparing their students for success beyond their studies.

It turns out there's more to that perennial groan with school friends about why long division and not tax returns were on the maths curriculum; in fact, an alumni survey conducted by the RNCM suggested that graduates believe real world business training would have been a significant asset when moving from education to the workforce, and the decision to add it has been a good one for the conservatoire.

The Times Higher Education (THE) Awards panel seem to agree. Earlier this year, they named the RNCM Outstanding Entrepreneurial University for its StART Entrepreneurship Project, a future-facing programme put together by Michelle Phillips and the team that focuses on equipping students with entrepreneurial skills – including finance, tax, project planning and management, networking, idea generation, and pitching – as well as providing access to an in-house artists agency. The panel said the RNCM *'really demonstrated what can be done to ready students for the business of being a musician.'*

For Michelle (who is also a chartered accountant, a professional saxophonist, and Senior Lecturer in Music Psychology), the award is a tremendous badge of honour *'for something we've been good at for a long time'*. It affirms her belief that universities, particularly those that specialise in the creative arts, have a responsibility to equip students with the tools to go out and define what the music industry will look like next – not simply to train graduates to fit in now.

'We have a lot of evidence that creative graduates need entrepreneurial skills more than graduates of other disciplines,' says Michelle. *'They're much more likely than any other graduate to have a career in which they earn freelance income.'*

'Making sure graduates are equipped with skills to embark on their self-employment careers, to effectively start new businesses,



should really be a top priority for conservatoires; it's our responsibility to train our students for their careers, and it would be irresponsible of us not to do so.'

'A trumpeter needs to spend time honing their craft – practicing, of course, and performing in orchestras and ensembles, attending masterclasses, and playing in small ensembles – but to thrive in the music industry they need to also develop skills in presenting themselves, at networking, at working out their own rates and doing their taxes. We have a responsibility to equip students with the ability to go out and make a difference in the world with their music.'

Nurturing the next generation of musicians in a progressive educational environment has long been the focus of Principal Professor

Linda Merrick CBE. In fact, the RNCM was recognised for its unique work in supporting professional studies as far back as 2005, when it became the only conservatoire to be awarded a substantial grant to create a new Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) Research Centre for the Vocational Training of Musicians. But in an ever-changing industry, work must continue to stay ahead.

'There's a principle called effectuation which says that if you want to train people to be entrepreneurial, there are two ways you can do it: you can look for a gap in the world and work out how to fill it, or you can start with who you are, what you have, what you believe in and feel passionately about, and you can use those qualities and resources to make something that no one has even imagined yet,' Michelle continues.

'Entrepreneurship is saying, "Right, let's generate ideas to have an impact on this, let's design a project, let's pitch that project to get some funding". Young people want to change the world with their music. If our work helps more of these incredible graduates to generate value in the world, what more could we want?'

That unique mix of music and business is inspiring students in unexpected ways. Wellbeing and awareness sit at the core of many of their big ideas; so far, they've used music to spotlight sexual abuse and educate audiences about mental health issues, to design an innovative sculpture that asks



Dr Michelle Phillips

questions about urban development and nature, to set up a community orchestra, to challenge industry gender imbalances, and they've employed social media to lobby the government for better music education in schools. Many of these projects have also received generous support from the RNCM Creative Innovators Award, which offers students the chance to pitch their ideas and secure part of a £5,000 prize fund to help make them happen (this prize is also backed by Yamaha, which contributes to the annual pot).

Since scooping the latest THE Award, Michelle has focused on the team's research into 'testing' creative thinking, as well as grant applications to continue the work that has got major academic institutions looking to the RNCM for inspiration on entrepreneurial education. *'We are really on the map,'* Michelle enthuses. *'People in the entrepreneurship sector are now seeking us out and asking us what we're doing.'*



**Do you run your own business
or social enterprise? Are you
pursuing a freelance career?**

If you'd like to connect with our network of current students and recent graduates to mentor and share your career expertise and skills, get in touch at alumni@rncm.ac.uk or add your profile on RNCM Connect rncmconnect.com.

RNCM Connect

Network. Mentor.
Share. Inspire.

**Be part of our global network of
Alumni, Students and Staff.**

Sign up at rncmconnect.com for job opportunities,
latest news, events calendar and more!

   @rncmalumni



Every seat tells a story.

'We have such wonderful memories of our days at the RNCM. When the opportunity to name a seat came up, we knew it was the perfect way to celebrate our amazing time in Manchester – a city that still feels like our home away from home.'

We love that we could personalise our seat's plaque with a quote from the opera we appeared in together at the RNCM, making it all the more sentimental and special to us.'

Adam Player *tenor* and **Jonathan Alley** *baritone*
Graduated 2013

Personalising a seat plaque lets you leave your mark on the RNCM, honour a special memory, or celebrate a loved one, all while supporting current students.

Seat plaques are available in the
Concert Hall and Theatre, from £400.

To name a seat, contact
alexandra.maliphant@rncm.ac.uk | 0161 907 5389
or visit **rncm.ac.uk/nameaseat**





The Changing Faces of the School of Composition

ISSUE 7

Only three people have led the School of Composition since the RNCM opened in 1973. As Dr Larry Goves takes over as third Head of School, he and his predecessor Professor Adam Gorb discuss the past, the present, and the exciting future.



FACT FILES:

Name:
Adam Gorb

Graduated: Peterhouse, Cambridge, BA (1980) and MA (1984); Royal Academy of Music, MMus Composition (1992) and Dip RAM (1993); University of Birmingham, PhD Composition (2013).

Joined RNCM: Head of School from 2000-2023, replacing founding Head Dr Anthony Gilbert.

Career highlights: Winner of the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize (for concert band composition *Metropolis*) and three British Composer awards; works performed by the BBC Philharmonic, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Marines, and more.

Name:
Larry Goves

Graduated: RNCM, BMus (2002) and MPhil (2006); University of Southampton, PhD (2011).

Joined RNCM: Returned to the RNCM in 2004 to study for an MPhil; began teaching in 2006 before moving to Deputy Head of Composition (2021), Head of Practice Research (2022) and Head of Composition (since September 2023).

Career highlights: Awarded a Jerwood-Aldeburgh Opera Writing Fellowship, recipient of a Paul Hamlyn Award for Composition, shortlisted for RPS Award and Ivors Classical Award, founder/director of ensemble The House of Bedlam.

How has the School of Composition (SC) changed and grown over the years?

ADAM: I took over from Anthony Gilbert in 2000. At the time there were 12 composition students, and I had a target of 25. The plan was to go into schools to see students on certain courses – such as the National Youth Orchestra and Chetham’s Sound and Music summer school – and spread the word around. When I got to 25, the feeling was, ‘*Well, 30 wouldn’t be too bad!*’ At the last count, we have over 60.

What has been the secret to SC’s success?

LARRY: The only thing you really need to be able to compose is confidence, so promoting this is essential for our students to thrive. Students hear all their work and can really focus on their own priorities. We also offer unrivalled tuition in technical composition and technology alongside individual lessons and seminars.

ADAM: We’ve always marketed ourselves quite vigorously as, let’s not be modest, probably the best place on the planet! Eighteen-year-olds want independence; we’d tell them there’s an enormous amount going on in Manchester, and we’re small, friendly, geographically accessible. I always used to ask candidates on open days, ‘*Why do you compose?*’. The main answer was, ‘*Because I want to hear it!*’. We’re world leaders because our students’ work is performed in proper, rehearsed concerts.

LARRY: Our students get real-world experience, and we have an incredible offer of opportunities. Over 190 different students’ works were performed and/or workshopped

this year. There are public facing concerts here and outside of the institution with student and professional ensembles, we have five symphony orchestra opportunities this year alone (including with the Hallé and BBC Philharmonic), six large ensembles workshops, new scores for silent film, and dozens of chamber and solo projects. We’ve even had students featured on Stuart Maconie’s BBC Radio 6 Freak Zone playlist. We’re everywhere!

What does SC look like in the future?

LARRY: The School has evolved so much over the time Adam was Head of School. When I was an undergraduate, just before Adam arrived, I was one of eight students. I have inherited 45 undergraduates and postgraduates, and a battalion of research students, so that’s a lot of change!

ADAM: The most important thing for me has been our ability to say, ‘*If you write your music here at the RNCM, you will hear it!*’. It wasn’t a philosophy that many universities embraced 25 years ago; traditionally, they’d workshop a segment, but here we’d rehearse it, play it in a public concert, and record it. Very early on, I realised that it’s vitally important to make friends with orchestral managers, players, conductors and recording engineers; composing is a lonely profession, it pays to be sociable, and being able to work alongside other sympathetic human beings changes things.

LARRY: We will continue to embrace technology and composition in varying contexts. For many



L-R: Adam Gorb,
Anthony Gilbert, Larry Goves

years Adam's approach was that if you want to write music for film, TV, and video games, first get a good foundation in composition and then direct those skills into those areas. However, the skill set required for those areas has changed; we will always ensure all our students have an essential broad training in composition, and retain a focus on concert music, but we are looking much more at composition for screen and gaming, and exploring recruiting students with a focus on production and composition with technology, with our USP being the close involvement of instrumentalists and vocalists. I want to be able to embrace students from different musical backgrounds and with different approaches to composition and notation - potentially a provocation for our current programmes.



SC alumni networking brunch

We'd love to hear your memories of studying in the School of Composition.

Get in touch with the Alumni Team at alumni@rncm.ac.uk to share your stories and to let us know where your career journey took you.

NORTHERN

Transforming Lives through Access to Music

Award-winning charity Olympias Music Foundation (OMF), created by piano alumna **Dr Jo Yee Cheung** (2017), has announced a long-term partnership with the RNCM to open up access to music education for diverse young people in Manchester.

The partnership cements a long-running relationship that has already led to more than 30 children and young people gaining free access to music education, and created over 20 professional opportunities for students to work in the charitable sector.

OMF funded its first project in 2015 with a £1,000 grant from the RNCM's Creative Innovators scheme. It was recently presented

with the King's Award for Voluntary Service and remains the only organisation in Manchester dedicated to providing free formal one-to-one music lessons to hard-to-reach groups who have typically been excluded due to income, race, age, or disability.

The collaboration also offers major benefits for RNCM students, who gain real-world experience of outreach work and the possibility of long-term professional futures with the charity. Currently, 60 percent of OMF staff and seven out of 10 of its teachers are RNCM alumni. Additionally, the College hopes the initiative will help to build lifelong relationships with new audiences that reflect the cultural richness of modern Manchester.

HIGHLIGHTS



Dr Jo Yee Cheung

'As an alumna, it gives me great personal pleasure to introduce our OMF communities to the RNCM. We are excited for the future!'

Bold as Brass

Mike Cavanagh

The RNCM has become the first UK conservatoire to appoint a dedicated baritone horn professor. Principal specialist instruction in the instrument, which has traditionally been led by professors of the euphonium, will be delivered by alumnus **Mike Cavanagh** (2018), co-founder of the multi award-winning quartet A4 Brass. Mike says the appointment is a *'huge step forwards'* that acknowledges the growing popularity of the instrument. He will take up the appointment from September 2024, adding to his current role as a chamber music professor which he has held since 2021.

Commenting on the new role, Mike said: *'There's much more music being written for the baritone horn – more in brass bands, in competitions, in concert music. It is being seen more as a solo instrument and yet it has remained the only brass instrument you can study that doesn't have its own principal tutor.'*

'Creating this chance to study it as a principal instrument with a specialist tutor will enhance the Wind, Brass and Percussion department and build on the incredible work of Professor Steven Mead and Dr David Thornton.'



Matteo Tontodonati



Mike Cavanagh

Blazing a Trail

Matteo Tontodonati

Recent Popular Music graduate **Matteo Tontodonati** (2023) has scooped a top prize at a prestigious industry awards show. Matteo rubbed shoulders with the likes of Duran Duran, Nia Archives, and Tinie Tempah as he took home the 2023 Student Trailblazer Award at the annual Music Managers Forum's (MMF) Artist and Manager Awards, held at London's Bloomsbury Big Top.

The MMF panel commended Matteo for his 'extracurricular activities as a manager and promoter' in Manchester's 'vibrant' music scene during his time at the RNCM, naming him as one to watch in the industry.

Matteo paid tribute to the training in business and entrepreneurial skills he received at the RNCM: *'I have learnt the importance of innovation in both marketing and release campaigns, and many of the creative ways in which managers help artists shine through the highly competitive industry.'*

'I believe in a creative, relaxed but focused approach to management, allowing you and the artist to collaborate on ideas, songs and albums, creating a unique experience for the audience.'

Contact alumni@rncm.ac.uk to keep us up to date with news of your successes.

CONGRATULATIONS TO

- Composer and founding director of PRISM **Emily Howard** (2004) on being awarded Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Arts.
- Guitarist **Craig Ogden** (1992) on his debut recording release with the London Tango Quintet, *Dancing with Piazzolla*.
- **Yuuki Bouterey-Ishido** (2019) on his appointment as Sub-Principal Cello with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.
- Pop alumni **Porij** on their live session with BBC 6 Music festival, new single release, and US and UK tours.
- Soprano **Alexandra Lowe** (2017) whose album *Le Voyage* has been nominated in the Newcomer category of the BBC Music Magazine awards.
- **Matthew Swann** (1998) on being appointed Director of the BBC Concert Orchestra.
- Composer and writer **Ailís Ní Riain** (2004) on the broadcast premiere of orchestral work *Calling Mutely Through Lipless Mouth* by the Ulster Orchestra on BBC Radio 3.
- **Wayne Kwon** (2021), appointed Sub-Principal Cello with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Where are they Now?

CONGREGATION OF AWARDS

In this issue of Where are they Now?, we remember Congregation ceremonies from over the years. Always one of the highlights of the RNCM calendar, we love welcoming back graduands to applaud the hard work, dedication and commitment shown during their studies, and to celebrate with tutors, families and friends.

We hope these photos bring back memories of your own graduation day. Do you feature in any of these images or do you recognise anyone? Go to RNCM Connect to share your photos or memories in the Album rncmconnect.com/photos-albums



Throwing Open the Concert Doors

The sleeping audio archive being
woken up to go back to work

An extraordinary catalogue of student recordings capturing more than 50 years of performance sit in silent storage in the basement of the RNCM.

But with tapes degrading and machinery becoming obsolete, the race against time has begun to digitise a critical chapter in the story of Manchester music.



It's one of Manchester's most important unheard audio archives: a collection of thousands of performances and masterclasses that capture the phenomenal talent that has come through the doors of the RNCM since it first opened in 1973.

Stored mostly on obsolete tape formats, the audio collection contains 6,800 recordings that fill a room, while a neighbouring room is packed with contextualising ephemera (programmes, photographs, and so on). The library grows each year, too, as recordings of current students are added to this extraordinary catalogue – only now, direct to digital.

An examination of the tapes by the project's lead, the RNCM's Archive and Museums Manager Heather Roberts, unearthed around 2,000 audio and video recordings that were at real risk of being lost forever because of age and deterioration. At best, their condition could reduce sound quality, but at worst it might prevent them from ever being played again. A decision was made to digitise the most vulnerable tapes first – mostly, those on magnetic reel-to-reels and VHS – and the RNCM launched Throwing Open the Concert Doors with the generous support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which provided £206,076 to get the ball rolling.

It's the first time that many performances by notable alumni will have ever been heard – and, in a few cases, seen – since their original presentation. Names in the first set of digitised tapes include pianist Sir Stephen Hough CBE,

composer Alison Cox OBE, conductor Sian Edwards, violist/composer Sally Beamish OBE, leading sopranos Joan Rodgers CBE and Amanda Roocroft, composer and former tuba student Brian R Earl, solo percussionist Simone Rebello (now Director of Percussion at the RNCM), and conductor of the Queensland Symphony Orchestra Richard Davis (whose Principal Study was flute). Many more greats in classical and opera are on the remaining tapes too, and they tell a chapter in Manchester's music history that has been seriously overlooked.

'As a performing arts organisation, the only proof that we are as good as we say we are is in these recordings: the talent, progress, and delivery of our students when they are under our tutelage,' says Heather.



The Listening Booth



'For Manchester, this is even more pertinent. Our reputation for music is international; whether it be indie, punk, classical, or pop, Manchester's musical reputation spans the globe. These recordings support Manchester's identity as a music-making city throughout the rise of various genres. They allow a glimpse into that rich auditory heritage we are so proud of.'

This is not a simple exercise in music preservation, though. Throwing Open the Concert Doors will reilluminate the catalogue and the College, creating a legacy that is engaging to students and alumni but also pulls in people who know little about the RNCM. Partnering with Unlocking Our Sound Heritage at Central Library and the Manchester Digital Music Archive, the RNCM is evaluating its place in the community outside its current audiences.

To achieve all that, Heather brought in Consulting Oral Historian Dale Copley and Community Engagement Programme Manager

Charlie Booth, who have worked with alumni and community groups such as Back On Track, Inspired Taskforce, and The Proud Trust to understand how the RNCM contributes to Manchester's modern music story.

On the technical end, Audio Preservation Engineer David Govier has so far digitised 800 of the 1,700 vulnerable tapes over at Central Library and has been pleasantly surprised by their condition (he's had to rescue a few using a drying technique called 'baking'). He stresses that both the tapes and the technology are facing obsolescence, and that while digitising is a critical step it is not the end of the process – because even digital formats can expire and corrupt.

The special quality of these tapes, says David, is in the proficiency of the performances but also in the transportive noise around the edges. *'Before the concert starts, you'll hear the orchestra start up, snippets of conversations, the sound of the hall as people are sitting down. That's what we're preserving; as much as the music, there's the context of it, the unique moments that are happening.'*

Dale agrees that her work, too, is utilising the recordings to capture surprising aspects of the story that would otherwise be lost. *'With oral histories, a lot of the interesting details come from the anecdotal stuff because that's the information that doesn't get formally recorded,'* she explains. As examples, Dale highlights the story of former Librarian Anna Wright who had to shush the singing students as they listened

to the archive in headphones and joined in more loudly than they realised; and of former student Nicholas Buxton who would sneak into the Halls of Residence chapel after dark and sing the opera pieces his tutors told him his voice wasn't ready for.

'Stories don't have to be about a big important event,' she continues. 'The stories that capture the experience, that are funny or share an opinion, these are hidden histories that shaped the careers of illustrious alumni or the next part of a person's life.'

Community engagement so far is already hammering home the potential impact of an accessible archive for local residents. One social group wrote a song, recorded it at the RNCM (just like students have done for decades), and then played the recording on their local radio show. Another is working to unearth the LGBTQ+ stories from the RNCM's history. Strangely, the biggest and most common obstacle all the groups highlight is feeling like they're not allowed in the building (answer: they are).



Keeping attention is critical: the team is now campaigning to raise additional funds to continue the archiving work, with a £5,000 target set for the current crowdfunding campaign. *'It's important to keep and maintain archives, but you have to find a way for people to engage with them and not keep them locked away unseen or unheard,'* adds Charlie. *'You need to make the artefacts relevant to an audience's present day lives. You might look at this collection and think, "If I'm not in the business or a musician, why would I care about this?," but the answer is that the RNCM's history is Manchester's history.'*

David agrees: *'Imagine how it would feel to be alumni and family members listening to this for the first time since it was recorded. It means something to people who were involved in creating it, and it could mean something to a new generation as long as it's captured and saved.'*

You can find out if recordings of your own RNCM performances are included in the digitisation project at **rncm.ac.uk/archive-recordings**.

We would also love to celebrate your memories of your college days and record them as lasting oral histories of the RNCM, NSM and RMCM. If you'd like to find out more or get involved, contact Heather Roberts, Archive and Museums Manager, at **heather.roberts@rncm.ac.uk**.

Then

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In this edition of Then & Now, we revisit the RNCM's hidden oasis: the Roof Garden.

RNCM Roof Garden | 1970s

&



RNCM Roof Garden | 2024

Originally opened in 1974, the Roof Garden was commissioned when the RNCM building was almost finished as a gift from the first Chair of the Board, Dame Kathleen Ollerenshaw, in memory of her daughter. The designs were created by landscape architect Michael Brown, in collaboration with his wife, ceramic artist Joan Brown.

Over the years, many alumni and staff will remember it as a tranquil view from the windows of the old Library location, or as a relaxed space to enjoy lunch, or maybe as a space to get some fresh air during the infamous Student Social evenings!

Following generous funding from the Godlee Family and the Haworth Trust to mark our 50th anniversary, the RNCM is now breathing new life into the much-loved Roof Garden, to create a secluded green space for the benefit and wellbeing of students and staff.

What are your memories of the Roof Garden? Get in touch at alumni@rncm.ac.uk to share your stories. And you can see more images on our socials and RNCM Connect.

Now

Each year, RNCM students are able to pursue their dreams of studying music thanks to the lasting and transformative gifts that we receive through legacies from our supporters, alumni, staff and music lovers.

One such bursary was established by a gift left to the RNCM in memory of musician Pat Barney; the gift was made by Pat's husband. Their son Tom explains: *'She would doubtless have been pleased by it, both by its support for flautists and because we chose the RNCM, which we did because she was a Lancastrian in origin, from Bury. My mother learned the piano as a child, and then took up the flute in her 20s while living in Birmingham, playing for a time in what she afterwards described as "a sort of orchestra". When I was a child growing up in West London, I remember her playing in two orchestras and for operatic productions, as well as chamber music ensembles with friends.'*

Alumna Jenny Dyson, who graduated in 2013, was a recipient of the Pat Barney Award during her studies, and shares her thoughts on the impact the gift made on her time at the RNCM and her subsequent career.

When did you start learning to play the flute, and what did you love about it?

I grew up watching my parents play with their local amateur orchestra, hearing symphonies in churches, local concert halls, and string quartets rehearsing at home. I began to learn the flute aged eight, loving the way composers wrote for the instrument.

Why did you want to study at the RNCM?

The RNCM has always had one of the best flute departments in Europe and it was a dream to audition and be accepted to study my Masters. I loved performing, and after reading music at The University of Manchester, I wanted to hone my performance skills. The RNCM saw my talent, drive, and determination, taking me on with my potential in mind.



**A Timeless
Legacy Nurturing
Generations of
Talented Musicians**

Jenny Dyson

At what point did you receive financial support during your studies?

In my second year, I received the Pat Barney Award – a scholarship established by a legacy gift.

What difference did this support make to you?

During my first year, I had to work five days a week at a bar to support my studies, trying to fit in practice and everything else I needed to do around my shifts – I worked my socks off!

When I received my scholarship, it enabled me to devote more time to my studies, but also to establish much more balance in my schedule, which was absolutely essential for my wellbeing. Being dyslexic, having more time to spend on my essays rather than working outside college really helped too. Without the award, I would have worked as hard as I could, but might have burnt out and not reached my full potential.

Receiving this kind of financial support not only gave me time to focus on my studies and took away the stress of financial pressure, but it also showed belief in my talent and my future.

What opportunities were opened up to you because you didn't have to worry as much about financial pressures?

Without having to fit in my studies around my shifts, I had more energy to enter competitions and went on to become a finalist in the prestigious RNCM Gold Medal competition, as well as winning a chamber music prize with my quartet. It made a huge difference to my life, and to my career prospects.

Since graduating in 2013, Jenny has performed with major orchestras across the UK including the BBC Philharmonic and RLPO, has toured with bands such as JAMES, recorded for multiple artists, as well as being a soloist and chamber musician. Jenny has worked extensively with musical outreach projects including National Orchestras For All, Live Music Now and Music in Hospitals and Care, and delivered performance masterclasses and composition talks at Leeds Conservatoire and the University of Liverpool. She's also worked alongside RNCM Fellow Yolanda Brown on *Yolanda's Band Jam*, bringing music to children on national television, and enjoys examining and adjudicating for competitions and final recitals at universities.

Jenny stays involved with RNCM life by inspiring the next generation of students with her career insights and experiences. In 2020 she gave an online talk about life after college to final year students, and regularly gives advice to young people regarding further study and future careers.



Pat Barney

Not only do students continue to benefit from the Pat Barney Award today, but her family also receives regular updates from recipients and enjoys hearing about the incredible impact of their generous gift.

If you are thinking of leaving a gift to the RNCM in your will or in memory of a loved one, please do let us know so that we can acknowledge your generosity.

You can contact Bethan Ward, Senior Development Manager, at **bethan.ward@rncm.ac.uk** or **0161 907 5388** to discuss your gift; or visit **rncm.ac.uk/leaveagift** for more information.

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