

THE NORTHERN

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT MUSIC

The RNCM50 Fund will support young musicians from the earliest moment, breaking barriers to music education, and equipping musicians to enrich society.

To celebrate our 50th birthday, RNCM Chair, Ravi Gupta, is kindly matching £25,000 of donations towards the RNCM50 Fund.
Give now and your donation could be worth double!

Scan the QR code or visit
rncm.ac.uk/rncm50fund to donate.



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A Message from *the* Principal

As Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music, I am incredibly proud of everything our community of students, staff and alumni have accomplished over the last 50 years.

The RNCM's reputation for excellence stretches far beyond the College walls. We are privileged to be part of a global network of professional partners and supporters, who make invaluable contributions to our community. More locally, we are proud to be at the heart of music-making in Manchester, both here in our own venues and through our relationships with the region's schools, hospitals, arts and cultural organisations, and more.

Our work is vast, creative, and brings so much enjoyment to thousands of people each year. You will read more in the following pages about just some of the ways in which our graduates, students and staff are making a tremendous difference to society and the profession through these connections.

On this landmark anniversary, we are not just celebrating the last five decades; we are also paying tribute to the legacy of our founding institutions, the Royal Manchester College of Music and the Northern School of Music. As alumni from both colleges, you are much-valued members of our community, and it is always a delight to welcome you to the RNCM.

At just 50 years young our journey is very much beginning, and as we look to the future I hope you will remain part of our story.



Professor Linda Merrick | Principal

Our Journey So Far...



1893

The Royal Manchester College of Music (RMC) opens on Ducie Street on 3 October. Its Founding Principal is Sir Charles Hallé.



1920-1943

The Matthey School of Music opens on Deansgate on 22 September. Its Founding Principal is Hilda Collens. In 1943 the Matthey School of Music is incorporated as the Northern School of Music (NSM).

1955-1956

Informal discussions towards a possible merger of the RMC and NSM begin. In 1956 Ida Carroll is appointed Principal of the NSM.



1962

A site on Oxford Road is identified for a newly merged college.

1969

Construction of the NCM begins. An organ, costing £40,000, is commissioned from Hradetzky of Austria. The organ is still in use today.

1971

John Manduell takes up office as Principal.

1972

300 RMC and 150 NSM students are admitted to the partially completed NCM, which includes a Junior School. The inaugural concert of the NCM Orchestra takes place at Manchester Town Hall as the Concert Hall is not finished.

1973

Her Majesty the Queen grants the prefix Royal to the Northern College of Music and the new Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) is officially opened by its President, the Duchess of Kent, on 28 June.



To read our timeline in full visit
rncm.ac.uk/rncm50/celebrating-50-years/

Timeline



1978-88

A decade of incredible performances and achievements includes Wagner's *Das Rheingold* (1978) and Britten's *Billy Budd* (1985); the formation of the RNCM Sinfonia (1980) and RNCM Chorus (1982); and the first of many Manchester International Cello Festivals (1988).

1989

RNCM Opera's production of Verdi's *Don Carlos* wins the Manchester Evening News Theatre Award for Best Opera.

1997

The extension on Booth Street West opens bringing a new library, rehearsal spaces, and dedicated storage for the RNCM Archives and Collection of Historic Instruments.



1998

The Junior Strings Project, established in 1992, wins The Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education.

2000

A second Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education is awarded, this time for 'Wind ensemble music: commissioning, training and performance.'



2001

Sir Charles Groves Hall of Residence opens.

2002

The RNCM's 'International music festivals: education, cultural and for the public' secures a third Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education.

2007



The Oxford Road Wing opens, housing the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The College gains degree awarding powers for its taught courses.

2013

The RNCM marks its 40th anniversary. Work to refurbish the Concert Hall begins. Professor Linda Merrick is appointed Principal.



2014

The RNCM is ranked the UK's leading music college for research in the Research Excellence Framework.

2016

The RNCM Entrepreneurship Awards are established, enabling students to develop independent projects with support from industry experts.

2015

The College launches the UK's first four-year BMus Honours Degree in Popular Music.



2017

The RNCM is awarded Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework. RNCM Pathfinder is established for young people to access musical activities.



2018

The RNCM presents a significant Paris-Manchester 1918 performance and research project in collaboration with the Conservatoire de Paris.

2020

The College launches its new strategic plan, *Defining the Future of Music*; an ambitious vision to enable graduates to become highly skilled, creative practitioners with a commitment to making a real difference in society. The outbreak of covid-19 causes the RNCM to close its doors on 18 March, and all teaching and learning becomes remote. RNCM Engage wins a Times Higher Education Award for Widening Participation and Outreach Initiative of the Year. Nile Rodgers is awarded Honorary Professorship.



2021

Studio 8, the UK's first Meyer Constellation system in higher education, is unveiled. The RNCM receives £6.5 million from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).



2022

Live music returns. RNCM Young Artists launches. As the College enters its 2022/23 year its student population sits at almost 1000.

Timeline

AN EXCITING YEAR AHEAD

RNCM50

We want to say a very big thank you to everyone who joined us on Tuesday 27 September for the launch of our 50th anniversary.

Designed to give a unique insight into degree-level music education and what goes into the performances you see on stage, the significant event began with performances at Manchester's Oxford Road and Piccadilly Stations, before potential students and guests arrived at the College for a special edition of our award-winning *Discover RNCM50* open day.

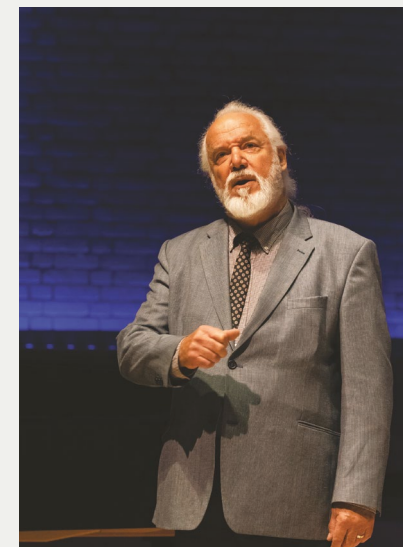
This included talks, performances, classes, backstage tours and panel discussions on key industry topics, such as technology and the future of music, Underrepresented, popular music in a modern conservatoire, the importance of health and wellbeing, and the exciting opportunities students experience both on and off stage.

Following this, it was our pleasure to welcome supporters and other special guests to the College to learn more about our 50th anniversary public performance programme, with live music from current students, staff and alumni.



There's lots to look forward to throughout the year, including projects and performances by students past and present, concerts with our worldwide partners, special events to unite our local communities, and opportunities to share memories, and look to the future with those we're yet to meet.

Take a look at what's coming up on the next page; we can't wait to welcome you rncm.ac.uk/whats-on



**Manchester Collective:
Bag Of Bones**

Fri 10 Feb // 8pm

With alumna Alice Zawadzki (voice)

**RNCM Session Orchestra:
50th Anniversary Edition**

Sat 25 Feb // 7pm

With special guests



Elias String Quartet

Mon 27 Feb // 7.30pm



Book now at rncm.ac.uk/whats-on

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Stephen Hough (piano)

Fri 3 Mar // 7.30pm

**Simon Keenlyside (baritone)
& Malcolm Martineau (piano)**

Mon 6 Mar // 7.30pm

**Leonard Bernstein's Mass at
The Bridgewater Hall**

Sun 12 Mar // 4pm

Manchester première



Made in Manchester

Wed 3 May // 6pm

Celebrating the amazing breadth
of music created at the RNCM



**RNCM 50th
Birthday Celebration**

Thu 22 Jun // Doors 6pm

Featuring staff and students from
across the years



Opera Gala

Wed 28 Jun // 7.30pm

In collaboration with Opera North



RNCM Engage Weekender

Fri 30 June - Sun 2 July

Celebrating our under 18 and
community activity

Issue 6

Imagine a world *without* music

Each year, the Development Team enjoy the incredible privilege of getting to know an army of College supporters, including many alumni, students, staff and their families, who financially support the RNCM.

As we celebrate 50 years, we have launched the RNCM50 Fund. This campaign aims to secure the future of music: to support our young musicians from the earliest moment, breaking barriers to music education, and equipping them to enrich society.

Rhiannon McKay-Smith | **Director of Development**

RNCM50 Fund Imagine a world without music...

We know the power that music has in our hearts, minds, and lives; a power to unite and uplift, to help and heal. If the past two years have taught us anything, it's that a world without music, if only for a short while, is an empty one.

Funds raised during our 50th year will support:

RNCM Engage: our innovative engagement programme nurturing the musical talent of children and young people, ensuring they don't give up their instruments, and securing the pipeline of future musicians.

Student Support: removing all barriers to pursuing higher education in music; creating an equitable, diverse environment, and protecting 'endangered instruments'.

RNCM Music and Health: we are deeply committed to inspiring our students to use their talent to enrich lives through music. This project trains RNCM musicians to benefit young people in special educational needs schools and children's hospitals.



Rhiannon McKay-Smith

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Find out more at
rncm.ac.uk/rncm50fund

Jessie's Fund

Songbirds Music UK

Crossing Musical Boundaries: pioneering projects in children's health settings

Lesley Schatzberger was playing with Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Romantique et Révolutionnaire in Barcelona, with her daughter, nine year old Jessica, in the audience. Jessie had recently been diagnosed with a brain tumour. Lesley told us: *'At that time, we knew that the conductor Sir Roger Norrington had had some successful treatment in New York, and without us knowing our friends had quietly started raising funds for us to get treatment for Jessie too. Until this time, we never realised just what a warm family the music world is.'* Lesley and her husband are both musicians - Lesley benefited from years of study at Junior RNCM as a clarinettist - and music was core to home life. She didn't anticipate at this stage the journey ahead of her into the world of music and health.

When mother and daughter returned home, it was Jessie who suggested that the money raised for her treatment be set up as Jessie's Fund. But they never made it to New York. *'Instead, we ended up in a children's hospice for the last few days of her life. The hospice was where I became so aware of my blindness to what other people are living with. Jessie could no longer talk. It was so obvious to me that music was the way we could communicate.'* Jessie's Fund continues in her memory and as her legacy, and helps children with additional and complex needs or serious illness to communicate through music. When it started in 1995 there was no charity dedicated to music support of this kind. Now they have established music therapy posts in hospices, special schools and

community settings across the UK, and have a programme of training courses in making music with children who have special needs – and a brand new partnership with RNCM will start this year.

It was in 1993 that [Dr Ros Hawley](#) graduated from the RNCM, also as a clarinettist, knowing she wanted to do something different with her music: *'A seed was sown when I was encouraged to improvise for the first time. Then at the RNCM I came across [Live Music Now](#). Partnerships open opportunities, they helped me realise I wanted to explore music beyond the orchestral side. How could we use music to cross those boundaries between therapy, performance and interaction?' This was the beginning of a journey which, among other outstanding work, has now seen more than 120 RNCM students trained by Ros, with her colleague Mark Fisher, through their charity Songbirds Music UK CIC, many of them in children's hospitals.*

The RNCM has been leading the way in the field of music and wellbeing for many years, with significant moments in 2005 and 2006 when [Holly Marland](#) set up the first training programmes. One former music and health trainee, [Hannah McCabe](#), now works at the College developing opportunities for students. Another is setting up a music programme in a hospital in Stockholm, and another working with the [Ulster Orchestra](#) to set up work in hospitals in Northern Ireland. The breadth of the work continues to grow.



When Lesley first went into that children's hospice with her daughter, there were only eight like it in the country. Now there are 54 and, largely thanks to Lesley's work with Jessie's Fund, almost all of them have music therapy posts. As she points out, *'It's a relatively young profession. Of course, music has always been therapeutic. Plato and Socrates talk about it, the Ancient Chinese talk about it, but as a discipline music therapy is not a century old. When I started my career as a player, music in health wasn't really a thing in my sphere.'*

Gradually orchestras began to get education officers, and there started to be funding available from government. But it really wasn't until my own personal circumstances changed that I realised that music could be pivotal in people's health. Perhaps you're in a challenging musical career, where you have to work quite hard to hold your own, and don't think broadly enough. Until I went into a hospice, I hadn't been aware of how many children can't communicate verbally. *It's an eye opener.'*

Ros has noticed the impact on students too: *'Society is moving forward, isn't it, but it is still quite segregated in some ways. Unless you have a family member, or you have personal experience, even just seeing a child with a profound disability for the first time is a lot to take on before you even think about the music making. We have to prepare students, emotionally scaffolding the experience.'*



On a hospital ward there is no stage, no chairs laid out for performance, and probably no music stands either. All the usual boundaries are gone. Music in this setting is about relationship and communication. It might be tapping someone's hand, or improvising to reflect their movements, or noticing a physical reaction from an ocean drum above their head. There's a moment of recognition. They understand the sound. They can absorb it. Lesley compares the very intimate moment of connection, perhaps with a child with very severe disabilities, as *'not unlike the depth of the connection you get if you're doing some chamber music, that thing where you're absolutely on the same wavelength, in unison in some way. When you're performing, the audience is a little bit too distant from you, so you don't always get that connection. But when you're working with children you realise that music isn't for music's sake: it's for everything else it brings.'* Ros recalls one young man who was deaf and blind, but loved the double bass and the cello. *'He felt the vibration, he would hug it, be absolutely glued to it. It's finding those unique qualities in each instrument.'*

Music can also bring physical benefits. Lesley



mentions how music can change the rate of the heartbeat, release muscular spasms, and enable children to communicate in new ways. *'I think that having a music therapist working with children is very cost effective,'* Lesley asserts, *'because there is a healing aspect to it. It gives motivation to move limbs which don't usually move. It's not just psychological; it's physical, too. Even if a child can move only by blinking, you can translate that into something much bigger. You're giving a child a voice.'*

Ros recollects one 12 year old boy, *'very bright, very clever, but he couldn't speak. He could move his face, but couldn't really move anything else. One day we took about six students onto the ward, and this young man conducted them using just gestures he made with his face. He scrunched it up, wiggled his nose, moved one of his cheeks, and the students had to watch him so closely and play in response. As a conductor he was so in control! He had this mini orchestra there with the students. They were absolutely transfixed on*

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following him - and he was loving it! His control enabled him to equal the power balance. In hospital, that's hugely important, because everything gets done around you and for you and to you. Having that space for your own voice is really important. The music enables that.'

Music's ability to change the balance of power and access is a recurring theme in conversation. Ros is passionate about it: 'Why should the child in the hospital not have the best, compared to somebody going to The Bridgewater Hall? You're fighting to give people equality of access. The RNCM has a place in that, by saying this work is valid, and everyone should have the right to access culture, education and quality of experience.'

This includes families without musical training. Jessie's Fund trains non-musician parents to use music as a tool and puts free resources online. 'One of the real misconceptions is that music is stuff that's composed or written or played the same every time or, well, that you always have to practise it', Lesley observes. 'When people say 'I'm not musical', it's only because they were told they can't sing in the school choir. But there isn't anybody who isn't musical. Speech is musical. I used to be tied to the stave, focused on getting it right. I've now realised that expression is not tied to perfection in any way.'

'It's creating a space to say, musicians can work in all these settings...these courses actually pioneer that way forward to create wider opportunities for the musicians that leave the RNCM.'

'For students coming in to work with children for the first time, it may feel a little threatening to let go of the learning that they've worked so hard on, playing your fifths in tune and your scales evenly. This grounding, of course, makes the work much, much better. But I'm looking forward to the moment that it dawns on them that they can do things without having to be pre-prepared. As a teacher now I sometimes stand back-to-back with a student, play something and say 'forget the pieces that you want to work on. Let's just have a conversation'. You don't have to have perfect pitch, you might start in the wrong place, but you find your way, which is actually what happens in communication anyway.'

Ros has seen RNCM students really stretch themselves: 'At the College you're so busy trying to make sure you've got the best technique in the world, and where will I be when I've finished, and can I get that concerto? Then all of a sudden, five minutes down the road, they're in the space where they're kneeling down on the floor with a child and a family, making music and not overthinking, but being interactive and spontaneous. They're not looking at a manuscript. They're thinking 'what sound do you make on your violin for a child who's giggling?' Or what music do you improvise when a child's running up and down the corridor? How do we get different

sounds from this percussion instrument? It makes them realise that they can facilitate a connection. They discover skills they didn't realise that they had. They start to think about how their music can be used. It reconnects you with your sense of self and your sense of musicianship: what you as a person bring to music. It helps them to go back into the bubble of college re-connected and re-grounded, I suppose.'

Lesley, who specialises in historical instruments as a performer, agrees that the benefit goes both ways: 'With period instruments you would add ornamentation to play in the historical style, but there are tight parameters to improvisation. Working in music and health has made me a much better musician, much freer in my music making. It is possible to have a career with different facets: one feeds the other. It's really important that you don't have to ditch performance to be involved in working with children.'

This work has opened up long term career opportunities for RNCM students, both with Jessie's Fund, Ros' charity Songbirds Music UK, and more broadly. Some go on to be music therapists, and others may work for arts and health organisations, or in education departments with orchestras. 'It forges a way forward for more employment opportunities for musicians,' Ros says. 'It's creating a space to say, musicians can work in all these settings. There is an argument for increasing opportunity, and employment... these

courses actually pioneer that way forward to create wider opportunities for the musicians that leave the RNCM.'

In the continuing spirit of breaking new ground, both Jessie's Fund and Songbirds Music UK rose to the challenges created by the pandemic, using video training, new virtual therapy techniques and even exploring robotic technologies. The hope is to involve RNCM students every step of the way in these new initiatives, with the dream of seeing every healthcare setting including music as part of their toolbox, every special school with trained staff, and every child able to access music for communication. Music, health and wellbeing is a priority for the RNCM because of music's power to cross boundaries, improve lives, widen access and inclusion, and even change the employment landscape for future professional musicians.

As Ros says, 'People might think, oh, it's really nice going into the local hospital to play music for the children. But it's much more than that. It's what happens in those spaces, when you bring a trained musician to work with a young child and perhaps a hospital and a family who maybe have never experienced music before. It brings change. It has social impact. It is about progression in society and how we relate to each other.'

Issue 6

The RNCM50 Fund will support the College's Music for Health project, which includes training and work experience for RNCM musicians in children's hospitals and schools, to work with children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Support now and help us to use music to enhance health, wellbeing, and communication for hundreds of children and young people in the North West.

rncm.ac.uk/rncm50fund

When Margaret met Beatriz:

A Mentoring Match

Margaret on mentoring Beatriz:



Margaret

What motivated you to take part?

Before the pandemic, a parent had been in touch with me via my website to mentor her daughter re: preparing for conservatoires. It was an experience which I found rewarding.

How did you prepare?

I did a little research on topics like orchestral audition applications.

Were you well matched?

Yes. Playing the same instrument meant we could have more in-depth discussions.

What were you hoping for?

I hoped that I would be able to give my mentee a realistic picture of the music profession.

What did you talk about?

How to improve a CV; where to look for music job opportunities; planning for life after college; practice and motivation.

How did you decide on your mentoring milestones?

I planned the sessions around the areas that Beatriz wanted to talk about.

What impressed you most about Beatriz?

I was impressed by Beatriz's ability to listen.

Most valuable piece of advice offered?

To be herself and to trust the sound that she makes whilst playing.

A memorable takeaway?

To really listen to what your mentee has to say.

If you could change one thing about the experience, what would it be?

I wouldn't change anything about this experience.

Describe the experience in three words.

Curious. Interesting. Rewarding.

Best part of being a mentor?

Being inspirational, I hope!

Would you recommend mentoring to others?

I would definitely recommend mentoring to my colleagues and friends.

Will you stay in touch?

Yes (if Beatriz wants to!..)

Marks out of 10...

10 out of 10.

Beatriz on being mentored by Margaret:

What motivated you to take part?

I feel guidance from professionals is really important to grow as a person and as a musician.

How did you prepare?

I researched my mentor's career to know what they were doing now and learn about their journey.

Were you well matched?

Yes. My mentor is a contrabassoonist and I've just started doing a PGDip in contrabassoon, so I felt it was the perfect match.

What were you hoping for?

Some guidelines on how to progress after finishing my studies. Practical advice on approaching the musician's life: how to apply for opportunities; how to behave in different scenarios.

What did you talk about?

How to write a CV; what can be expected of me when I graduate; what should I do when I take on a freelance job.

What were your first impressions of Margaret?

I immediately got the idea that Margaret is a straightforward person and confident. She was really friendly from the start and so there weren't any awkward moments.

Were there any unexpected moments during your sessions?

Margaret challenged me with some questions as we went along, but that didn't throw me off!

What impressed you most about Margaret?

Margaret's positive way of looking at life. When she talked about stressful things, like looking for a job or practising with earplugs for example, she always explained her view with positivity.

Most valuable piece of advice offered?

How to face life. Margaret talked about the adversities graduates face after studying and what to do in order to be successful.

A memorable takeaway?

How to write my CV. Margaret had knowledge from being involved in audition panels and has seen many CVs and judged them.

If you could change one thing about the experience, what would it be?

We were still being cautious due to covid so our sessions took place on Zoom. I would like to meet Margaret in person if that is possible in the future.

Describe the experience in three words.

Inspirational. Enlightening. Helpful.

Best part of being a mentee?

The chat was very relaxed and honest. A mentor is also such a valuable addition to your professional network.

What do you think Margaret made of the experience?

I hope she enjoyed meeting me as much as I enjoyed meeting her. I hope I gave her the impression that I'm a curious person full of initiative.

Would you recommend mentoring to others?

100%!

Marks out of 10...

10... the whole experience was absolutely amazing!

Name:

Beatriz Carvalho

Instrument:

Bassoon

Current programme:

Postgraduate Diploma in

Advanced Studies

Career aspirations:

Orchestral performance



Beatriz

GLASTO



Northern Highlights

Porij

"I've had that dream in my sleep and we just lived it"

Pop alumni **Porij** and **Piri & Tommy** made their first Glastonbury appearances in the summer.

Debuting on the BBC Introducing Stage, Porij lead singer Eggy said the experience was *'Unreal. It was like an actual dream, an actual daydream of mine. I've had that dream in my sleep and then we just lived it. I can't believe it, it was beautiful.'*

BBC Music Introducing supports the most exciting unsigned, undiscovered and under the radar music across the UK. Launching at Glastonbury in 2007, there are now over 200,000 artists uploaded to the platform. The initiative has helped to start the careers of Slaves, Florence and The Machine, Catfish and The Bottlemen, Pale Waves, Idles, Little Simz, Sam Fender and Lewis Capaldi.

The four-some, whose first single, *Lose Our Minds*, was debuted on BBC Radio 1's Future Sounds, have also just played a sell out UK tour.

Definitely ones to watch, NME tweeted: *'If their recent shows at Glastonbury and @GreenManFest have proved anything, it's that @porij_'s untempered ambition has transmuted into a newfound confidence.'*

Duo **Piri & Tommy** also had a festival to remember, bringing their dance and drum 'n' base-inspired tunes to the new Lonely Hearts Club Stage within Glastonbury's Silver Hayes area. Dedicated to UK club and festival sounds, this year's Silver Hayes line-up included the likes of Fat Boy Slim and Groove Armada.

You can follow Porij and Piri & Tommy on Instagram [@porij_](#) and [@piri.and.tommy](#)

Rncm brass alumni



RNCM brass alumni, staff and professional partners enjoyed success at this year's British Open Brass Band Championships, as it made a welcome return to Symphony Hall, Birmingham, in September.

Chris Binns (trombone, 2017, Grimethorpe Colliery) won the Stanley Wainwright Memorial Trophy, **Richard Poole** (soprano cornet, 2004, Foden's) took home the Brian Evans Memorial Trophy, and **Peter McDonough** (euphonium, 2019, WFEL Fairy), secured the Geoffrey Whitham Memorial Trophy.

Also accepting accolades were winners Brighthouse and Rastrick, conducted by **Professor David King**, RNCM International Chair in Brass, and **Steven Mead**, Senior Tutor in Euphonium and Baritone, who was awarded the prestigious honorary Mortimer Medal.

Amy Webber

Congratulations to opera and pop alumna **Amy Webber** (2012; 2020) on bringing her uniquely hilarious style of musical comedy to Manchester for her sold out show at the Women In Comedy Festival for the second year in a row.

Amy Webber; no previous experience is Amy's debut one woman show, born out of her 'CV song' released in October 2020 after much of her freelance work dried up due to the pandemic. When Rishi Sunak suggested those in the arts might consider re-training, Amy made her CV into a song. Fast forward another year and she had a full show!

Amy explains the premise, saying: *'It's half music and half talking and all the music in the show is composed, recorded and produced by me. Before starting my Masters at the RNCM, I didn't even know how to record my own voice let alone work Logic and Ableton and actually use them to make fully formed songs. Overcoming my fear of technology was helped by seeing female role models who were fluent in music tech. I use my MIDI keyboard with trigger pad, laptop and Ableton Live to make all the songs.'*

'I performed the show at the Women in Comedy Festival, which aims to support and celebrate female identifying performers within an industry which is historically male dominated. I have always considered myself a 'funny person' and perhaps if more representation existed while I was growing up, I would have considered comedy as a career path before the age of 29! Anyway, I'm here now and feel delighted to have found a path which I enjoy so much. Cheesy though it sounds it does feel like a 'true calling'. Combining my opera training, stage experience, directing experience, songwriting skills, pop singing and my dry sense of humour, I am never happier than when I'm on stage doing my show. After years of dreaming I'd go to Edinburgh Festival one day to perform as part of a larger production, maybe I'll be taking a show written entirely by myself instead!'

You can follow Amy's journey on Instagram and Facebook ([@amywebbercomedian](#)) and Twitter ([@amywebbersop](#)). 'Every follow counts!'

Congratulations to

Pianists **Alexandra Dariescu** (2007) and **Ben Powell** (2008) on joining our School of Keyboard Studies as Senior Tutors.

Singer-songwriter **Bonnie Kemplay** (2021) on supporting Adele's sold out concert at Hyde Park.

Abel Selaocoe (cello, 2018, pictured right) on being named one of the Southbank Centre's Artists in Residence 2022/23, and for the release of his new album *Where is Home*, featuring Yo Yo Ma.



Sir Stephen Hough (piano, 1981), **Elizabeth Llewellyn MBE** (soprano, 1996) and **Lieutenant Colonel Jon Ridley MBE** (conducting, 2005), for being recognised in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Birthday Honours.

Soprano **Madison Horman** (2022) on winning the Royal Over-Seas League Award for New Zealand Musician of Promise.

Robin Wallington (composition, 2019) on joining English Touring Opera as Assistant Conductor for their Spring 2023 tour.

Pianist **Victor Lim** (2017) on his appointment as Head of Keyboard at Rossall School, and being selected as a City Music Foundation Artist.

Simone Rebello (percussion, 1991) and **Murray Greig** (trumpet, 1988) on taking up the posts of Joint Heads of our School of Wind, Brass and Percussion.

We love to share your news. Let us know what you're up to by emailing alumni@rncm.ac.uk

ConstellaOpera Ballet, founded by **Leo Geyer** (composition, 2014), on reaching the amazing milestone of 1000 performances.

Two of Classic FM's '30 under 30' Rising Stars, soprano **Isabelle Peters** (2016) and pianist and RNCM Associate Member **Iyad Sughayer** (2019).

Composer **David Onac** (2007) for his commission *A Distant Star in the Stillness* for the 2023/24 ABRSM Grade 5 Piano Syllabus.

Wilbur Lin (conducting, 2014), appointed as Music Director Designate of the Missouri Symphony Orchestra.

Lucy Farrimond (2021), one of just eight singers to be selected for Opera North's Chorus Mentor Scheme.

And to **The Brodsky Quartet** (1980s), who are also celebrating their 50th anniversary this year.



1.



- 1. RNCM building with original link bridge along the Oxford Rd Corridor, c.1975.
- 2. A masterclass for the harp students, c.1980.
- 3. 10th anniversary appeal, in the Theatre, c1983.
- 4. The original entrance to the RNCM, c.1975, on Booth Street West.

These are just a few moments captured but to see more images visit rncm50/celebrating-50-years/

Archive

WHERE
ARE
THEY
NOW?

2.



3.



Album

We're celebrating 50 years of nostalgia. Do these pictures bring back memories of your College days?

Do you recognise anyone? Or maybe you can spot yourself?



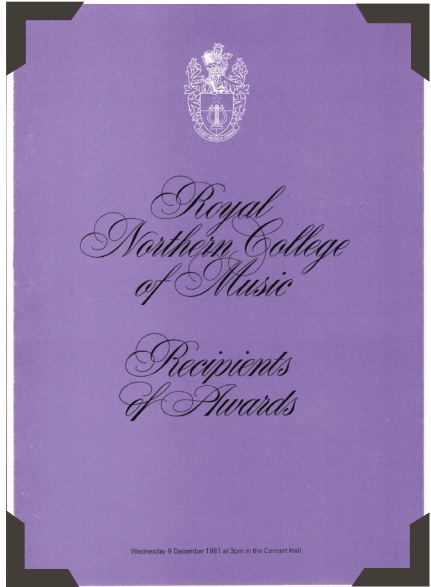
5.



8.

We're celebrating 50 years of nostalgia. Do these pictures bring back memories of your College days?

5. Practising in Hartley Hall, the first RNCM student accommodation, c.1990
 6. Congregation of Awards programme, c.1981.
 7. *La Belle Hélène*, 2009.
 8. RNCM String Orchestra, c.1980
 9. RNCM Library, c.1985, with the College's vinyl collection in use by students.



6.



7.



9.

Every seat plaque tells a story.

Commemorating a significant moment or celebrating someone special? Personalising a seat plaque lets you leave your mark on the RNCM while supporting current students.

'We have such wonderful memories of our days at 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 RNCM, making it all the more sentimental and special to us.'

Adam Player, tenor, and Jonathan Alley, baritone, 2013

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

To name a seat contact
alexander.williams@rncm.ac.uk

Or visit
rncm.ac.uk/nameaseat

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of Alumni, Students and Staff.

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Professor Jennie Henley:



Championing the Future of Music

At the RNCM, research underpins innovation. Professor Jennie Henley is the RNCM's Director of Programmes, responsible for the academic portfolio of undergraduate, postgraduate and junior programmes of study. An internationally renowned expert in music pedagogy, Jennie has taught music in many contexts. She has worked in teacher education and designed innovative music education curricula, programmes and modules, including distance learning and continuing professional development.

Professor Henley's recent research into the barriers to music progression identified four critical factors: listening to pupil voice, location, collaboration and transition points. We spoke to her about what she has discovered.

Jennie, you have written in your research that from the moment a student walks through our doors, they're co-creating. Can you tell us more?

One of the key pedagogies at the RNCM is side by side learning. Students are treated as professionals from the moment they walk through the door. They are part of the musical community. When you see the top professionals that we invite in, you see they've got that rapport with the students. They are treated as equals. And we've got a lot to learn from our students: they bring in fresh ideas and new ways to think about music. One of the really exciting things about the RNCM is the balance between the pop and the classical courses. We're encouraging that; in fact, we've just rewritten our undergraduate degree programmes to encourage that cross fertilisation.

Why is it so important that we listen to the voice of young people?

It's their future! The research data shows us that young people are quite capable of looking at a problem and thinking about different solutions compared to adults. Actually we found a difference in the findings between what national organisations thought young people wanted and what they really want. Young people are our innovators and creators. At the RNCM we want to listen to their voice, not in a tokenistic way, but because we believe in the value of it. This year we're setting up a youth council, utilising colleagues with a youth work background and working in partnership. I don't think there is any other conservatoire that has a youth council in that way.

What about partnerships? What is the RNCM's approach within the Engage programmes?

Partnerships traditionally may have one partner managing the expertise saying, 'this is what we can do for you.' What we've done is gone to our partners with a blank piece of paper and asked, 'what do you need from us?' During our research it is critical to listen to those who know what is best for their communities and their young people. One pilot project last year with brass bands used this method, and it worked really well. It can be problematic to pick up a scheme that suits one project and put it in somewhere else. We're pivoting the traditional approach to partnership-working.

'There's just nothing in the world like seeing those young performers on the RNCM stage who would never have dreamt that they'd be there.'

The Northern

There is a big push across higher education to increase access and participation. For music there are extra challenges. What do you see as the biggest barriers to young people entering the music profession?

I'm a free school dinners kid from a mining village and have found the whole concept of networking can be a huge barrier, or at least can be incredibly intimidating. Both the pop and classical worlds can seem very closed when you're not in them. In musician circles, I've found there are two questions that people always ask: where did you study, and who did you study with? The worst-case scenario is that you're discounted if you don't give the right answers. There's an exclusionary edge to it. We need a lot more mentorship. At the RNCM we're working on this through our Engage programmes and creative entrepreneurship work.

Also, education has changed dramatically since we were at school. Our research has shown that when teachers and parents have negative views about conservatoires, interestingly they are often based on bad experiences from decades ago. If a child says they want to look at music college, they might discourage them based on outdated preconceptions.

What are your fears for music education?

One is compartmentalisation. It's a fragile ecosystem, exacerbated by competition for funding. The idea of the National Plan was to work in collaboration. We've got to understand what our strengths are. We need to embrace the idea that if we want diversity of musicians and diversity of young people in music, we need diversity of provision.

Music education in school is critical because that is the only place where the young person is guaranteed access to music education, if the curriculum is right. There are people who believe that music should just be an extracurricular activity; this concerns me greatly. I didn't study at a conservatoire. That door wasn't open to me. I'm absolutely and unapologetically coming from an education background. I've trained thousands of teachers. I understand what the challenges are in schools, and we need to look after teachers. The PGCE programme at the RNCM is long standing and we've always seen it as a core element of our mission. If we don't look after music education, then we're not looking after the profession.

What are the key ways to inspire young people to pursue music?

Young people are hugely motivated when our students go into their school or organisation, especially if they came from there. Parental knowledge is crucial too. We've got to break down some of these urban myths that say you can't go to music college if you weren't a member of a youth orchestra or junior programme.

I think we should never tell a child it's not for them; never tell them that they can't do it, because they might believe it! But you've got to keep presenting them with opportunities. Our Heads of Schools at the RNCM are brilliant at identifying that raw potential.

The least sexy part of it is the sustainability. There are many initial and one-off glittering musical experiences we can give children, but there can be a real funding gap from those initial free experiences to getting them to the point where they're good enough to apply for scholarships and bursaries for advanced study. How do we get them from A to B? That's where they fall off. And it isn't always for the obvious reasons. I was talking to one of the young people participating in our Young Artists programmes. She is struggling financially to continue with music because she needs to pay for driving lessons. I've never thought of that. If you can get kids through that difficult middle bit, then they will fly and they will go forward.

What is the RNCM doing to address some of these transition barriers at each stage?

We have a carefully researched schools strategy. We work with partners on raising attainment, and on overcoming specific barriers with our Pathfinder work, often on an individual basis. We're also looking at workforce development. We've got expertise in music education. RNCM students work with young people, and that is critical. We're developing their understanding of why this work is important, what these barriers are, and why we've got to work through them. It's a strategic approach. We're developing the students, but also supporting teachers and tutors, helping to deliver positive experiences with us and break down their preconceptions.

Issue 6

For a young person who might be the first in their family to pursue music, what is the most important factor in choosing to study at the RNCM?

It's all about people! It's about whether they can see themselves reflected in the people there, and whether they feel welcome. That's essential. I know from working in schools that you can sense the atmosphere as soon as you walk in. Recently there were a few students from Junior RNCM who'd been at the RNCM Open Day the day before. The feedback was fantastic; they just found it really genuine and authentic. We always hear this: when they come in to the RNCM there is a real warmth. It's about a personal connection and perhaps seeing faces they know. Visibility is one of our strategic drivers.

Looking ahead to what the RNCM is doing to make a difference in the next year, what excites you?

For 15 years I've been researching the relationship between pedagogy and inclusion. It is so exciting that this research base can underpin our policy directions to develop strategy and implementation. I've been putting things in place to make sure we've got robust structures internally, so that we can open the doors and build things from the ground up. Our Young Artists programme is exciting because they see the RNCM as a space where they can come in and create their own original music. We are very flexible. They can come in as a trumpeter and leave as a composer, or they can come in as a singer and they can leave as a producer. It's that understanding that musicianship is fluid. If you give young people the right foundations, the right support mechanism around them, they will take the opportunity. Even if they participate in some of our Engage activities and ultimately, they don't come to study with us, then we've still been part of that young person's journey. Or, if RNCM is the right place for them to come, they will absolutely flourish.

There's just nothing in the world like seeing those young performers on the RNCM stage who would never have dreamt that they'd be there. For the Engage Brass project we worked with three partner organisations towards a performance. The parents came, and the children were so excited about making music. I was talking recently with a friend from the village where I grew up. Even decades later she's still talking about the time she and her family went to London to watch her sister play her violin at a school festival. We mustn't underestimate how important it can be.

What inspires you personally in what you do?

To be part of a young musician's life is worth its weight in gold. The cruellest thing is to open a door for a young person and not give them the mechanism to go through it. That's the point about progress and transition. As an RNCM community we need to do this. It's our responsibility to our teachers, our parents, our supporters, our community. It's our responsibility to the future of the music profession.



RNCM Young Artists

To support the RNCM Engage Appeal and our work with young musicians visit rncm.ac.uk/engageappeal

A Lasting Legacy

Norma Kendall (pictured below)
Stephanie Maitland (pictured right)



Norma Kendall adored music. She was a primary school teacher, enjoyed coming to opera performances at the RNCM with her mother Alice, and was from a musical family – her mother loved to sing opera and her brother, Alan, played guitar with the Bee Gees in the 1970s-1990s.

Norma showed incredible generosity by leaving a gift to the RNCM in her will, establishing the Alice Orrell and A&N Kendall Award. As an endowed award, this gift has been invested carefully so that it will go on to support students for years to come, indefinitely.

Not only do students continue to benefit from Norma's gift, but her family also receive regular updates from recipients and enjoy coming to the RNCM to watch them perform and experience the incredible impact of her generosity.

Since 2017, the award has already supported 19 students, including contralto Stephanie Maitland. Graduating in 2020, Stephanie has gone on to take part in the Young Artist Programme at the Wiener Staatsoper (2020-22) – one of only 13 singers selected, and the only one from Britain. Amongst numerous other incredible achievements, she is now a member of the Volksoper Ensemble in Vienna.

Each year we are kindly remembered by music lovers like Norma who leave a gift for the RNCM in their will. These ensure that a lasting, often transformative, legacy is left by every donor.

'Freeing up a young singer's time and resources does wonders for their mental wellbeing which in turn helps them to give their whole self to their training.'

On the support Stephanie received during her studies, she said: *'This made the world of difference. During my undergraduate degree I was not so fortunate, and I had to work in a bar alongside my studies which was detrimental to my voice as well as my own wellbeing. I was so thankful for the funding I received at the RNCM as it meant I did not have to take that risk of losing my voice so I could pay my rent.'*

Having financial support at such an early stage in a singer's development is crucial. I have had friends who were not as fortunate as me to have received such support from their respective conservatoires and were forced to work long hours just to be able to continue training - who ultimately came into vocal issues or missed deadlines due to having to work too much. Freeing up a young singer's time and resources does wonders for their mental wellbeing which in turn helps them to give their whole self to their training. I certainly would not be where I am today without that.'

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will, or in memory of a loved one, visit: rncm.ac.uk/leaveagift

THEN AND NOW

The RNCM Students' Union has been an integral part of life at the RNCM since the College first opened its doors. From making sure that the student voice is heard at the highest level to organising a packed social diary, the SU exists to make sure every student has the best possible College experience. As many of you will know only too well!

Here we turn back the clock to 1972 for an insight into our very first Students' Union with alumna Judith Serota, and we speak to the current President, Sinead Walsh, about her new role.

From the past...

Judith Serota studied clarinet at the Royal Manchester College of Music between 1966 and 1971. Judith was instrumental in co-creating the first 'unofficial' Students' Union which became the premise for the SU that has been recognised by the RNCM since. Here, Judith shares some of her memories from those early days.

Tell us how you came to study at the RMC.

I chose to go to, and luckily was offered a place at the RMC, to study clarinet with Sidney Fell. I grew up in London, and though he taught at the Royal College of Music, I was assured he would turn up in Manchester far more regularly, which he did. Apparently the pay was much better!

What are your memories of student life at that time?

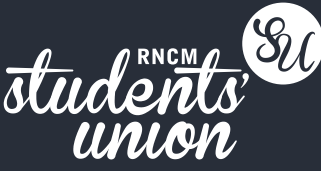
I was there from 1966 to 1971 with a five-year grant to cover fees and maintenance. I was one of the very rare southerners, and in the old Hall in the now demolished Devas St building, the singers were at one end, the stage end, the (all male) brass players congregated and practised in the basement toilets, and everyone else was at the end opposite the stage. And I remember there being a rather grim canteen.

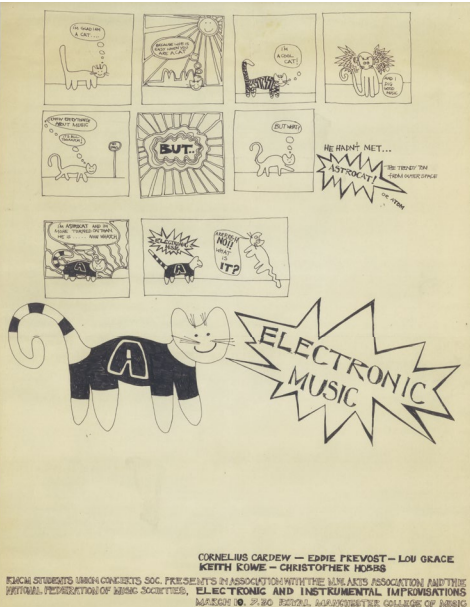
What inspired you to set up the first Students' Union?

We basically formed the Students' Union so that we could get public funding to put on the concerts I organised! William Weston was the first President, followed by Martin Baker. I can't remember the title of my position, but there were so few of us and we had no official status within the College. I think John Turner must have put together a constitution, unless we got a basic template from what was then the National Federation of Music Societies. In those days, red tape and accountability were almost non-existent. We didn't have a Students' Union Office, until we persuaded the authorities to let us use a tiny attic room at the top of one of the annexes. It didn't have a particularly sociable aspect to the Union, but Martin Baker did once organise a dinner at a hotel in Piccadilly.



Judith Serota





The Northern

Can you describe the student vibe in that era?

Well, the University students were very militant. There were endless demonstrations and sit ins, which I sometimes joined, but I didn't meet many music students there, not even from what was then known as the Joint Course. I initially made connections with the University Union, located just up the road, by reviewing concerts for the University Student paper, The Independent. By wearing this hat I was able to get press tickets for endless concerts, including the Edinburgh International Festival.

What were the priorities of the SU at that time, and what do you think your legacy was?

I don't think the Students' Union concerts continued after I left, but I certainly opened the ears of a number of students and Mancunians by introducing performers and composers to audiences. My priority in programming was to put on something different, often not already heard in Manchester.

During my student days I organised three series of concerts - 1969/70, 1970/71, 1971/2 (concert poster pictured above). Peter Maxwell Davies and Harrison Birtwistle took part in the first two series. I was hauled up by the Acting Principal for inviting such radical alumni back to Manchester. Max and I kept in touch sporadically over the years, and in 2012, he wrote *Bist du bei mir...oder?* for me to play on the piano.

The first Stockhausen was played in Manchester, also John Cage, Cornelius Cardew (who took part), Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff.

In my final season, I convinced Harrison/Parrott to let me put on a recital by Radu Lupu in the Free Trade Hall after he had won The Leeds in 1969. Unusually for a piano recital, it sold extremely well, and paved the way for me to work in what was then known as Arts Admin, a career I followed until I retired. Over the three seasons, programmes included mainly new music, but also early and Indian music. I remember inviting RCM alumna Anne Howells to perform; Anne was one of the best known alumni at the time.

Concerts were funded by North West Arts, National Federation of Music Societies (now Making Music), and Peter Stuyvesant Foundation (tobacco money) contributed, and Pilkington Glass - two £1 notes came in an envelope from Sir Harry Pilkington with a hand-written letter. I wish now I had kept it! At the time, Pilkington Glass were very big in Manchester. I honestly hadn't realised how useful this fundraising experience would be in gaining employment when I left the RCM!

Issue 6

To the Present...

Sinead Walsh is the RNCM Students' Union President for 2022/23.

A flautist from Dublin, Sinead has just graduated from the BMus course.



Why did you decide to leave Ireland to study here at the RNCM?

There's an amazing atmosphere at the RNCM. It's what instantly attracts most people to the College, well at least it attracted me!

What inspired you to apply for the role of SU President?

I applied because I saw it as a way to make a difference. I was Events Officer on the SU team last year and I've been a student ambassador during my four years of studying, so I felt confident in my ability to represent and showcase the best of the RNCM. It's an amazing job because there's so much scope to implement change, but you also get the opportunity to work alongside, and form meaningful connections with, students and staff. As a small university we're such a tight knit community so it means that the SU has even more of an impact on student life because everyone at the College can get involved.


The RNCM and SU turn 50 this year. What do you have planned to celebrate this milestone?

2022/23 is going to be an incredible year to be a student at the RNCM. There are so many top-class performances that are going to be happening throughout the year, with a host of alumni, professional partners, and conductors coming in to work with us. I'm particularly excited for the Bernstein Mass at The Bridgewater Hall because it's a work that very few people will have experienced live, and to be part of that is going to be really special.

I feel truly honoured to be President in this momentous year. I'd like to be a positive influence and deliver what the students really deserve, especially while our world is going through so many crises. I feel that they're more connected than ever since covid, having spent so much time apart, and are keen to come together to innovate and collaborate. My motto for the year is: it's all about you! Because without the students, the RNCM just wouldn't exist.

And what are your priorities as SU President?

My priorities will include expanding our EDI campaigns, to 'make the implicit, explicit'. I'd like everyone to feel welcomed, valued, and respected at the RNCM no matter what background, gender, race you are, or where you come from. I'll be looking at how we raise awareness on mental health and promote positive mental well-being during the madness that is music college. And I'm working towards improving the student feedback systems across the schools of study. Yeah, so it's exciting stuff!

A photograph of three graduates in black caps and gowns with blue and red stoles. The graduate on the left is a white male with a beard, smiling and holding a smartphone up to take a selfie. The graduate in the middle is a white male with glasses and long hair, smiling. The graduate on the right is an Asian male, looking slightly to the side. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

STAY IN TOUCH

BEING PART OF THE RNCM FAMILY DOESN'T END AT GRADUATION.

Whichever path you choose, wherever in the world, remaining part of your life is important to us. Our alumni network is integral to our DNA and we're continually impressed by the amazing things you achieve.

You're part of our story; let's share it together.

There are lots of ways that you can get involved in RNCM life, to inspire, mentor and support the next generation of alumni. To learn more email alumni@rncm.ac.uk, call 0161 907 5377, or visit rncm.ac.uk. Alternatively, join hundreds of alumni online at rncmconnect.com.

   @rncmalumni

To be
continued...