



NEWSLETTER

UCL iMerc Music Education Research Seminar

RESEARCH SEMINAR IN JUNE 2023

GUEST SPEAKER: PROFESSOR RAYMOND MACDONALD

Professor Raymond MacDonald talked about *what are new musical virtuosities and healthy musical identities and why are they important?* Raymond shared his latest research about musical identities in action (4E cognition) (MacDonald and Saarakalio, 2022), the importance of healthy musical identities in educational (and other) contexts, and music education research should embrace new musical virtuosities beyond technical mastery.

What are new musical virtuosities and healthy musical identities and why are they important?

Raymond MacDonald

The identity of secondary school musician-teachers in England

Dr Christopher Dalladay

Independent researcher

Formerly Senior Lecturer, Music Education, The University of East London

iMerc Music Education Research Group
Institute of Education, University of London
Thursday 22 June 2023

THEMES
The Music Education Seminar 2



SPEAKER: DR CHRISTOPHER DALLADAY

Dr Christopher Dalladay shared the findings of his doctoral thesis, *The biography of music teachers, their understanding of musicality and the implications for secondary music education* (<https://repository.uel.ac.uk/item/8591y>). Christopher also talked about how he formulated a model of the developing music teacher identity and how this led to a model of musician-teacher identity.

ABOUT US

Since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, we have been meeting regularly to share new research and insights related to diverse topics in music education, broadly conceived. We are a group of researchers at doctoral and post-doctoral levels, as well as senior researchers, with a shared curiosity and interest in advancing basic and applied research. Our monthly seminars are also designed to foster a sense of community amongst colleagues who are based in the UK, mainland Europe (Portugal, Germany, Greece), Asia (China, including Hong Kong) and Australia. Opportunity is taken each month to update current research projects and also to listen to the latest research from our invited speakers. If you would like to know more or to join us, please contact us using one of the email addresses below.

UPCOMING RESEARCH SEMINAR

Our upcoming research seminar is on 25th October 2023, 11.00–13.00 UK Time. This will be held on Zoom and in Professor Graham Welch's office, room 943, at the IOE. We are very happy to have Yee-Ni Tse (Cindy), Can Lu, and Rebecca Moseley-Morgan speak to us. Please join by clicking the Zoom link below, which is the same as the Zoom invitation. Everyone is welcome!

Zoom Link



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RESEARCH SEMINAR SPEAKER

YEE-NI TSE (CINDY)

TOPIC: GRADED MUSIC EXAMINATIONS AND THEIR CULTURAL PERSISTENCE IN HONG KONG: COMMONALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF PUPILS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Yee-Ni Tse (Cindy) is currently a doctoral candidate at the UCL. She is a co-founder of the Upbeat Music Institute in Hong Kong and was a former instrumental lecturer at Kingston University, a Postgraduate Teaching Assistant in the MA Music Education Programme, a Doctoral Research Training Programme, and a Research Assistant at the IOE. She is currently teaching at the UCL as a Senior Postgraduate Teaching Assistant for BAsC. Cindy is also a professional pianist and an instrumental teacher. She has been teaching both Chinese and Western instruments and theories for over 15 years in both Hong Kong and the UK. Cindy is one of the few focusing research on the wider impacts of Graded music examinations on the culture of instrumental teaching and learning in Hong Kong. Her other research interests include arts assessments and education systems, piano teaching pedagogy, socio-cultural influence on instrumental teaching and learning, and cognitive functioning and metacognition.



Cindy's Abstract

Musical performance assessments have had a long tradition. It has been suggested that formal music examinations, such as Graded examinations, are beneficial to students' musical learning in terms of increasing motivation, structuring learning, setting goals, providing challenges, and obtaining certification. Yet, it has been observed that there is an association between the perceived importance and advocacy for taking these examinations as part of the competitive culture in the Hong Kong education system. Therefore, this study aims to understand how key stakeholders perceive these examinations and their cultural value in the highly achievement-based society that characterises contemporary Hong Kong.

A theoretical model inspired by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1994), Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001), and Creech's (2009) model of parent-pupil-teacher triadic relationship was used to reflect and understand how Graded music examinations were perceived and experienced. The study employed a mixed methods approach in a progressively focused manner that embraced two sequential phases: N=182 questionnaire responses from instrumental teachers, parents, and pupils, and N=14 individual semi-structured interviews. Three cases were also chosen to study example interactions and views within a participant triad. Results suggest that stakeholders had different perceptions and levels of agreement about the values and functions of Graded examinations, such as the benefits, level of association with the Hong Kong education environment, and pedagogical approaches towards Graded examinations. Although participants generally advocated the taking of Graded examinations, they also recognised potentially unhealthy, unintended effects.

Due to its highly competitive and achievement-based educational context, Hong Kong culture puts a huge emphasis on credentialisation in educational attainment. Because of this, a number of social educational issues emerge, including a 'teaching for assessment' culture and examination-oriented learning. Extra-curricular activities are used for pupils to access 'top-rated' schools. Overall, the importance of certifications is overly emphasised. A double-edged effect was reported and contradictory attitudes were observed from participants in relation to the advocacy of these examinations. This rise in popularity of Graded examinations, then, acted as a driving force for a further emphasis on achievement and certification, which in turn built a further achievement-based society, leading to a self-serving cycle.

RESEARCH SEMINAR SPEAKER

CAN LU

**TOPIC: A NEW TOOL - THE MELODIC ANALYSIS OF PITCH MATCHING
SYSTEM - USED TO MEASURE VOCAL PITCH ACCURACY FOR SONGS**



Can Lu come from Hunan Province, China. She studied for her bachelor's degree in music education at the Music College, Hunan Normal University, China from 2009 to 2013. Then, she continued her music education with a master's degree in the Department of Music, University of York in the United Kingdom from 2014 to 2015, guided by Mr. Bruce Cole. Since 2016, she has been a doctoral student at the University College London, Institute of Education. Her two supervisors are Prof. Graham F. Welch and Dr. Jo Saunders. Her doctoral study explores Chinese Primary school children's singing behaviour in general and in a more detailed way.



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Can's Abstract

Pitch-matching accuracy in song singing has been widely tested using ratings scales. The main drawback of these scales is that they are relatively subjective and summative, relying on the perception of the assessor(s). Young children's singing is often quite inaccurate against a song model. Consequently, this study sought to design a more objective measure which could also be used to reveal the missing detail and validity of subjective ratings. $N = 1,608$ song singing products, including $n = 696$ one-year longitudinal singing performances, were collected from Grades 1 to 6 in seven schools across rural and urban areas in Hunan and Guangdong provinces in mainland China from 2017 to 2018. All participants sang three familiar children's songs: Twinkle, twinkle; Little donkey (a Chinese nursery song); and Happy birthday, with no starting pitch given.

Performances were audio recorded. $n = 134$ (8.3%) sung performances were randomly selected and analysed using the two separate measures: the Vocal Pitch Matching Development scale (VPMD) and a new software-based measure, based on absolute semitone errors. In the new measure, each sung pitch was compared with a related standard pitch, based on the sung key as defined by the first sung pitch. Each sung product was entered 2 into Praat for frequency analysis and simultaneously played as pitch using Sing & See software. The sung products – based on Praat frequency and Sing & See pitch – were inputted into an Excel file for each target note. Secondly, analysis was undertaken to calculate sharp and flat semitone errors, noted from -8 to 8 (0 means no semitone error), based on the sung key. Thirdly, a different colour was applied to characterize each semitone error to illustrate visually the most common sung key. Fourthly, semitone error was recalculated by the most dominant key centre, taking its absolute value noted from 1 to 9 (9 means no semitone error).

Finally, the percentage of pitch accuracy of each song singing (100% means no pitch error) was calculated and analysed by SPSS. The ratings using the VPMD scale and the new scale for three songs were positively correlated ($r(134) = 0.713$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = 0.508$). These results suggest that the new scale is a reliable measure to test the pitch accuracy of song singing, and is appropriate to use in further studies to provide a more objective judgement.

RESEARCH SEMINAR SPEAKER

REBECCA MOSELEY-MORGAN

TOPIC: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF VOCAL FUNCTIONALITY AND LONGEVITY IN THE MATURE FEMALE VOICE

Rebecca is currently chair of Education for the British Voice Association. She is a specialist voice teacher for the older voice, and she has a busy voice studio in Oxford and London. She gives workshops throughout the UK on the functionality of the voice, accent breathing and vocal care and maintenance. She works with many choirs across the UK and especially enjoys collaborating with conductors to enable them to achieve optimum vocal quality from their choirs.

In her early career, Rebecca won scholarships to the Royal College of Music and Opera School and sung professionally at Glyndebourne, WNO

and Opera 80 amongst others. As a soloist, she has performed throughout the UK and Europe. After starting her family, she focussed on being a career voice teacher. She spent much time in researching the latest advances in voice science which underpin her vocal teaching methods.



Rebecca has an MA in musicology and has just finished her PhD thesis at UCL. This thesis investigated how to maintain the functionality of the mature female voice and what effective teaching methods are best for older singers. She is currently involved in two other research projects. The first is on the effectiveness of vibrational therapy on the larynx in order to assist recovery from vocal fatigue and the second is testing and analysis of historical breathing pedagogies and a new, simple yet effective method of breathing. She often presents her research at conferences throughout Europe, in the past year she has presented work in Vienna, Estonia, Sweden and the UK.



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Rebecca's Abstract

Scientific literature reports that a voice will suffer from age-related changes over-time due to a decline of its primary anatomical and physiological components. This thesis has examined these age-related changes and investigated whether or not the functionality and longevity of the voice can be maintained.

Respiratory function, agility, vibrato, resonance, mode of phonation and pitch range were all examined. There were scant models on which to base this study, hence the fieldwork designed has had to be innovative in order to capture meaningful data. One of these innovations has been the use of acoustic software to recognize and monitor perceptual acoustic vocal changes.

The conclusions indicate that vocal behaviour does not change in a regular, patterned way and at the same rate for all singers. The cross-referencing of empirical data has allowed the author to gather insightful information about any atypical results and their causes on both individual and group levels. Vibrato, resonance, and mode of phonation do not automatically decline with age, factors such as musical training, personal circumstances such as grief, former careers and lifestyle all play a part.

Further conclusions indicated that respiratory function and vocal agility could achieve statistically significant improvement over-time. Effective vocal technique was shown to aid good functionality. The fundamental frequency of the main cohort dropped over-time as literature predicted, but the majority of singers were able to maintain and even increase their highest pitches through targeted exercise.

The conclusions from the questionnaires, diaries and research log overwhelmingly indicated that singing is good for health and well-being which concurs with the literature.

Finally, the tests designed for the fieldwork in this study will provide a basis for an effective pedagogy for mature female voices in the future. This will benefit singers by helping them to maintain vocal functionality and sing into senescence.

IN CONVERSATION WITH DR XUANYI MA

Dr Xuanyi Ma recently passed her PhD viva at UCL and has now embarked on a new journey at the University of Glasgow. Here is the interview between Eunice Tang (Left) interviewed Xuanyi Ma (Right).

1. Congratulations on passing the PhD viva and now graduated successfully! Can you tell us a bit about your background?

Thank you very much for inviting me to this interview. A little bit about myself: I gained a Bachelor's degree (BSc) in Psychology at Fudan University and a Master's degree (MSc) in Basic Psychology from East China Normal University before I came to London in 2016. Since then, I have completed a Master's degree (MA) in Music Education and PhD in Psychology of Music at the Institute of Education, University College London. My doctoral study is about the initial establishment for real-time psycho-physiological and emotional response measurement with findings from a small-scale empirical study on sad erhu music. I am now working as a research assistant on the scientific team of a project – Paratexts Seeking Understanding – at the School of Psychology and Neuroscience within the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow.



2. How exciting! Any tips to share with our doctoral colleagues about preparing the Viva?

"How to survive your viva" by Rowena Murray is highly recommended by others. I personally also find it very helpful with all the general questions listed in the book. However, some questions that examiners may ask could be very specific. Thus, having a mock viva with your own doctoral supervisors are very important. Please don't panic if your answers in mock viva are not "satisfactory" as that is how you learn to generate good answers. Please don't hesitate to ask your supervisors what good answers should look like and compare your original answers with them to see what makes the differences. Reading through your own thesis several times before your viva is also vital. Meanwhile, using the sticky notes to record your ideas and remind you the important information on certain pages could also be helpful for answering the questions during viva.

3. What do you enjoy most during your time at the IOE?

IOE is such a friendly faculty, especially in our department. I consider myself extremely lucky to have Evangelos and Graham as my supervisors. I must pay tribute to them for their instructive advice, fantastic suggestions and patience regarding my research and thesis. I am deeply grateful to them for their guidance! I have also met a lot of fantastic colleagues and friends in the IOE, and their selfless help, thoughtful kindness and constant encouragement have been invaluable.

4. How's your life in Glasgow?

I have just settled down and started my job two weeks ago. I personally find Glasgow a very lovely and lively city. People are very nice although the weather is not as "friendly". Waterproof clothes with a hood are necessary, as they say. I share the office with two other colleagues, and the working atmosphere in the office is quite good.



A snippet of Gibson Street, where I stepped out of the office building. Foggy Glasgow.

–Photo by Xuanyi

5. What are your future aspirations?

I am very enthusiastic about the current project I am working on. Here is the link if interested: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/research/researchclusters/biblicalinterpretation/paratextsseekingunderstanding/>

So for the next couple of years, I will be working on this project with the opportunities to learn and use new (new for me) technologies, such as eye-tracking. I would also like to continue with the study of music and emotions when the time is right.