



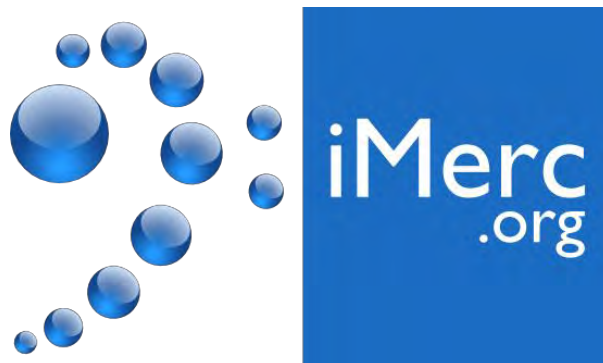
# UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 9, July 2024

## 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 mainly based in the UK, mainland Europe (such as Portugal, Germany, Greece), Asia (China, including Hong Kong), Latin America and Australia. Opportunity is taken each month to update various 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.

Our upcoming research seminar is on Wednesday, 3rd July 2024, at 11 a.m. BST. It will be held hybrid on Zoom and in room 936 at the IOE. We are very happy to have our guest speakers, Dr Monica Esslin-Peard (University of Liverpool), Samuel D. Loveless (composer, sound creator), Claudia Fernández de Cañete (Visiting Scholar at UCL IOE, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia), and our colleague Luna Xinlu Zheng (UCL IOE) speak to us. Please join us by clicking the Zoom link [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

## In This Issue



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## Previous iMerc Research Seminar, May 2024



1 - Presentation cover slide presented by Dr Yang Yang

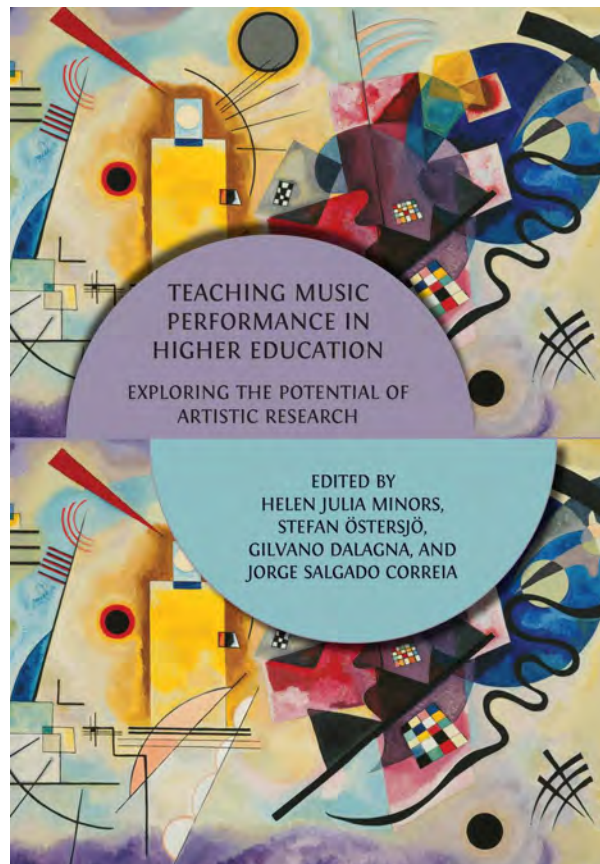
Dr Yang Yang ([yangyang@eduhk.hk](mailto:yangyang@eduhk.hk)) shared his recent study, which critically reviews the nature and development of key features of the discourse on music education philosophy in China over the past three decades from the 1990s. The research adopted a text-mining approach to investigate this discourse in 346 Chinese academic articles across this period. The keyword network analysis (a) raised critical concerns on translation, logic, and philosophical issues in this developing Chinese MEP discourse, and (b) revealed that academic discourse substantially impacts national music education policymaking and its implementation. Implications of the current study are discussed in light of the methodological merits of a corpus-based critical review.

Dr Karen Wise ([karen.wise@gsmd.ac.uk](mailto:karen.wise@gsmd.ac.uk)) shared her recent Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project at the Guildhall School, 'Finding a Voice.' Her presentation was titled, *Understanding the journeys of adult non-singers learning to sing: A multi-method approach*. This study adopted a multi-method approach to understanding the needs and developmental trajectories of adults taking their first steps in singing since childhood. This naturalistic training study aimed to track, from multiple perspectives, the journeys of non-singers taking their first steps in singing since childhood. As well as outlining some of the key findings, she also aimed to reflect on the methodological and ethical complexities and challenges of the work.



2 - Presentation cover slide by Dr Karen Wise

Book release: *Teaching Music Performance in Higher Education:  
Exploring the Potential of Artistic Research*



The book "Teaching Music Performance in Higher Education: Exploring the Potential of Artistic Research," edited by Helen Julia Minors, Stefan Östersjö, Gilvano Dalagna, and Jorge Salgado Correia, and published by Open Book Publishers, has just been released! Access the full book for free via the following link: <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0398>

**Abstract**

Higher Music Performance Education, as taught and learned in universities and conservatoires in Europe, is undergoing transformation. Since the nineteenth century, the master-apprentice pedagogical model has dominated, creating a learning environment that emphasises the development of technical skills rather than critical and creative faculties. This book contributes to the renewal of this field by being the first to address the potential of artistic research in developing student-centred approaches and greater student autonomy. This potential is demonstrated in chapters illustrating artistic research projects that are embedded within higher music education courses across Europe, with examples ranging from instrumental tuition and ensemble work to the development of professional employability skills and inclusive practices.

Bringing together diverse and experienced voices working within Higher Music Education but often also as professional performers, this edited collection pairs critical reflection with artistic insight to present new approaches to curricula for teaching interpretation and performance. It calls for greater collaboration between Higher Education and professional music institutions to create closer bonds with music industries and, thereby, improve students' career opportunities. Teaching Music

Performance in Higher Education will appeal to scholars, performers, teachers, but also students whose interests centre on innovative practices in conservatoires and music departments.

Contact: Gilvano Dalagna ([gilvano.d@ua.pt](mailto:gilvano.d@ua.pt))

## Article release: *The development of music education philosophy in mainland China during 1900-2022: A corpus-based thematic review*



3 - Article cover

### Abstract

This study used corpus-based text analysis to examine the discourse on Music Education Philosophy (MEP) in 346 Chinese scholarly articles published after 1990. Applying topic modelling techniques, the study identified 685 key terms in the corpus that collectively established six prevailing themes: Aesthetics, Praxis, Confucianism, Teaching and Learning, Values of music education, and Influence factors of music education. It was discovered that Aesthetics, Praxis, and Confucianism were three streams in Chinese literature that significantly influenced the MEP study landscape. In contrast, the other three topics served as the 'battleground' for these competing philosophical paradigms. The study discussed the sources of contemporary MEP in China, where combined influences from European North American Chinese philosophies are evident. It was argued that music, education, and philosophy emerge as three equally critical components that collectively define the inherent 'nature' of MEP. Thus, while the nature of music does not predetermine the nature of music education, the foundation of music education was shaped collectively by understandings, judgements, and expectations of music and education in the Chinese context. In addition, corpus analysis presented a promising methodological approach for tracing the evolution of discourse over time and facilitating critical inquiries in MEP discourses.

Complimentary e-copy is available

at <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/MSEBSTA9EFBXQEEGUTYE/full>.

The permanent link for the article is .

Contact: Dr Yang Yang ([yangyang@eduhk.hk](mailto:yangyang@eduhk.hk))

## Call for papers: OHMI Birmingham Conference & Awards 2025

Music & Physical Disability conference takes place in Birmingham on 15th and 16th March 2025. The conference, which is being delivered by the OHMI Trust in collaboration with Birmingham City University and Imperial College London, will explore the music-making barriers faced by people with physical disabilities, from the design and ongoing production of instruments to wide-ranging issues around performing. The event aims to bring together perspectives and experiences from a wide range of people including disabled musicians and instrument makers, as well as academic researchers from many different disciplines, teachers, charities, funders, and government agencies. Recently developed instrument designs will also be demonstrated.

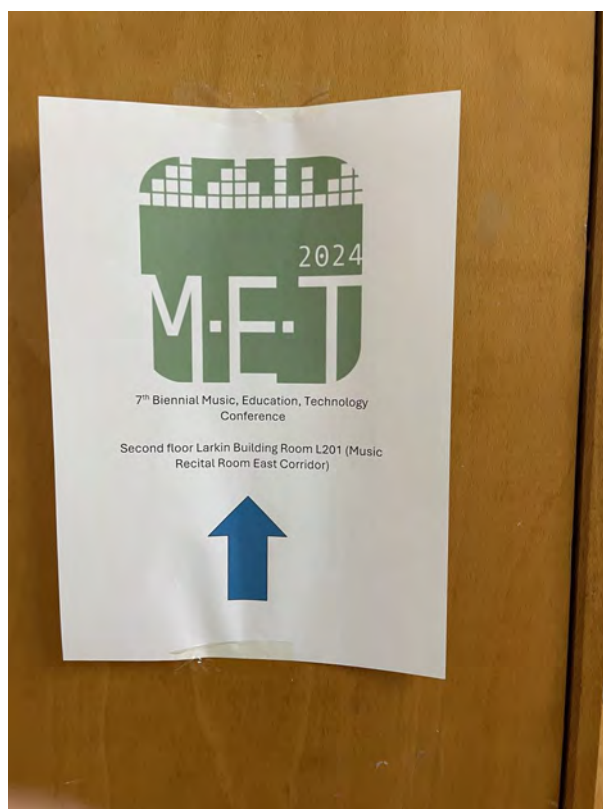
The event builds on the success of the inaugural OHMI Conference in 2018 which attracted international representation and speakers from five continents. The deadline for papers is 30th September 2024. The winners of the OHMI Competition awards will also be announced at the event.

Further information is available on the OHMI Research Partnership website: <https://www.ohmirp.org.uk/ohmiconference.html>





## Conference highlights: SEMPRE MET 2024



5 - SEMPRE MET Poster



6 - Professor Evangelos Himonides delivered his presentation titled, Creative A-buse of technology for vocal rehabilitation at the MET 2024 conference.



7 - From left to right: Samuel Loveless, Dr Xuanyi Ma, Dr Yanyi Lu, Viktoria Juganzon, Dan Wang, Eunice Tang at the University of Hull



8 - Quick drinks at Old Grey Mare, Hull



9 - Dr Xuanyi Ma delivered her presentation titled, Towards a novel framework for the measurement of real-time psycho-physiological and emotional responses to music



10 - Professor Andrew King (R) and Professor Evangelos Himonides (L)

7th Biennial Music, Education, Technology Conference

14th-15th June 2024, University of Hull

Full details read [HERE](#).



*Guest Speakers: Dr Monica Esslin-Peard, Samuel D Loveless*

*Topic: I want to break free: challenging the hegemony of traditional composition through improvisation, performance, collaboration and sound installation*

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*11 - Guest Speaker: Dr Monica Esslin-Peard*

**Dr Monica Esslin-Peard** ([mep1961@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:mep1961@liverpool.ac.uk)) is an Honorary Fellow in the Department of Music, University of Liverpool and divides her time between academic research and teaching in Secondary education in London. Her research interests include reflective practice and musical learning of classical and popular musicians, reflective practice with inter-cultural groups and reflective practice and pedagogy. She has published seven peer-reviewed papers/chapters, including a paper in the first volume of the Journal of Popular Music Education (2017) and is in demand as a reviewer for academic publications in the fields of classical and popular music, jazz and reflective practice. Monica is a frequent presenter at UK and international conferences and has more recently reported on the effects of COVID-19 upon music education. She is working closely with Music Hubs and HE institutions to develop pathways into music higher education for student musicians lacking formal music qualifications.

**Samuel D Loveless** ([samueldloveless@gmail.com](mailto:samueldloveless@gmail.com)) is a neurodivergent creative, working in a plethora of media, predominantly located in the sonic realm. He is an award-winning composer and sound creator whose works span a range of genres challenging traditional approaches, exploring the relationship between performer, space and audience, with accessibility and inclusivity being central to his work.

Samuel studied at Goldsmiths, University of London (Bachelor of Music: BMus, First-Class Hons), where he received scholarships in both performance and music technology. During his time there he studied performance practice with Mira Benjamin and Pete Furniss, as well as at the Royal College of Music (Master of Composition: MComp, Distinction) where he was a South Square Trust Award Holder and a Vaughan Williams Bursary recipient. During his Masters, he studied at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague (Master of Composition) as part of the Erasmus+ programme. He is currently a Britten Pears Young Artist 2023/24.

Samuel now continues to compose for and is commissioned by world-renowned creatives and festivals, most recently for the Sigmum Quartet, Residentie Orkest, The House of Bedlam, and the Philharmonie Luxembourg's Rainy Days Festival 2025. ensembles such as Explore Ensemble, Apartment House and the Ligeti Quartet, with commissions from the Sigmum Quartet and the Residentie Orkest. As a composer, he receives regular commissions and enjoys collaborating with leading practitioners across a myriad of disciplines throughout the UK and Europe.

Read Samuel's full profile [HERE](#).



*12 - Guest Speaker: Samuel D Loveless*

### **Monica and Samuel's abstract:**

According to research conducted since 2012/2013 (Whittaker et al., 2019; Savage 2018, 2020), the provision of public examinations such as GCSE and A-level Music is under serious threat. These qualifications require students to perform, compose and critically analyse musical works selected by the examination board. Whilst the performing element of these qualifications seems to be adequately supported by schools, Music Hubs and private tuition, students are increasingly turning towards technology-based approaches to music creation and production, not necessarily in school, as articulated by Folkestad in a keynote at the 2022 SEMPRES conference in London. Furthermore, whilst traditional approaches to music composition used to be firmly situated in the Western Classical Art tradition, it could be argued that some music teachers may be clinging to these traditions, despite their students' preference for music technology and digitally based genres. How, therefore, can music educators adapt their pedagogy to encourage wider participation in musical composition and performance in secondary schools?

This paper analyses critically the response of music teachers, musicians, music students and young people to a fully immersive ninety-minute sound installation project. We examine the extent to which participants break free from traditional composition, performance and improvisation techniques in order to understand approaches to sound art. Through thematic analysis of video recordings and workshop written feedback, different responses to creating sound, storytelling and performance are identified. Whilst findings point towards mixed levels of confidence in working in new ways from all five groups, as such installations are equitable and open to all, consideration should also be given to the potential benefits of this approach for participants who are neurodiverse or have specific learning needs which make traditional approaches to notation-based composition challenging. Furthermore, exposure to sound art in Primary and Secondary education might also initiate an interest in music that would not otherwise be realised because of the restrictions of the current traditional approach. We conclude that developing approaches to sound installation may have positive benefits for a wide range of student musicians in school settings and we call for further training for music educators to gain awareness and embrace such pedagogical approaches to widen participation in music in HE, as well as offering enriching musical experiences in the wider community.

### **Keywords**

Installation, creative composition, performance, secondary education, community

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*Guest speaker: Claudia Fernández de Cañete, Pastora Martínez Castilla*

*Topic: The impact of music instrumental training or second language learning as extracurricular activities on children's cognitive development and academic abilities*

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13 - Guest Speaker: Claudia Fernández de Cañete

**Claudia Fernández de Cañete** ([cfernandezdecanete@psi.uned.es](mailto:cfernandezdecanete@psi.uned.es)) is a third-year PhD student in Health Psychology at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Spain. She is currently undertaking a visiting doctoral stay at UCL this Summer with Pr. Graham Welch. In 2021, she was awarded with Spanish national funding called FPU ("Formación del Profesor Universitario"), which aims to introduce and lead doctoral students to start their careers at in the university sector. Thus, from 2021, she is also an Associate Professor at the Developmental & Educational Psychology department of the same university.

Her research focuses on the impact of instrumental music training and second language learning on children's cognitive development, well-being, and language skills. She holds the B-Mus Degree in Piano Performance – with honours – and a Degree in English Studies. She also completed with Distinction the Master of Science in Performance Science at the Royal College of Music. She has received many prizes and awards, both from her piano and research trajectories, highlighting the *XII Premio Fundación Musical de Málaga* – 30.000€ award for having the best B-Mus Academic Records, *Young Researchers Award* at the 8th International Conference of Education and Learning (Porto), and the *International Piano Seminar Award* by the International Academy of Arts Belgium, among others. She has presented her research at a number of international conferences and continues to disseminate her recent findings.

#### **Claudia and Pastora's abstract:**

In recent decades, interest in after-school activities for children has grown considerably, perhaps because parents seek not only entertainment, but also the acquisition of skills and the promotion of their children's development across the lifespan in various areas. The existing literature has reflected

this through studies assessing the impact of different extracurricular activities on various areas of cognitive development in childhood. Music instrumental training and second language learning are complex cognitive extracurricular activities that require the coordination of several skills controlling a variety of stimuli, making them plausible cognitive enhancers.

This presentation will report the results of a randomised controlled intervention investigating the cognitive impact derived from nearly seven months of extracurricular English lessons as a second language and musical instrument training on Year 4 (8–9yo) children from Spain. Participants (N=70, 38 males, 32 females) were randomly assigned under two experimental groups of Music and English, and a Control group. Each intervention group was further divided into two subgroups based on the mode of instruction – individual or in small groups. Intelligence, auditory working memory, auditory short-term memory and academic abilities tests were administered before and after the intervention programme. Besides the typically assessed control variables, this study also controlled for personality and motivation, as it was referred in research of the last decades for follow-up studies. Compared to the Control and Music groups, children in the English groups exhibited greater increases in auditory working memory from pre- to post- lessons. The magnitude of such effects (partial eta squared) was large (.19). No other significant differences among groups were found.

(Dr. Pastora Martínez Castilla is the supervisor for Claudia's PhD in Spain.)

### **Keywords**

Music instrumental training, second language learning, cognitive development, academic abilities, intelligence

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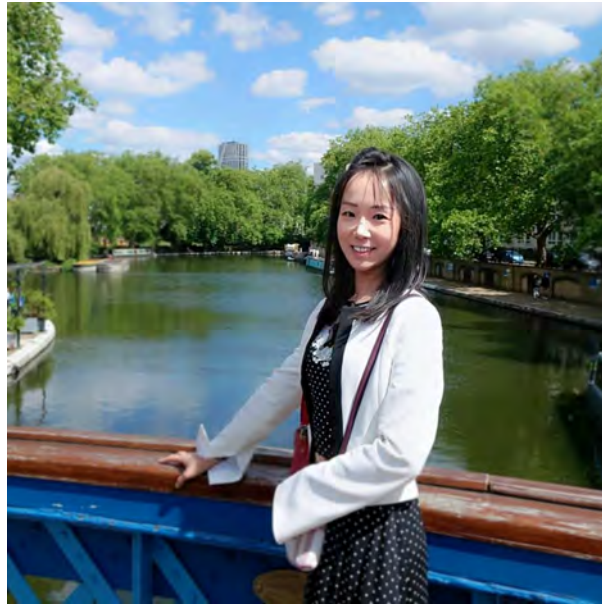
*Speaker: Luna Xinlu Zheng*

*Title: Conducting digitally-facilitated life history interviews: processes and reflections*

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**Luna Xinlu Zheng** ([luna.xinlu.zheng@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:luna.xinlu.zheng@ucl.ac.uk)) is currently completing her PhD research in sociology, music, and education at UCL IOE. Her PhD is a life history project with eminent/prominent female composer/producer/conductor in six countries and across three generations, where she focused on understanding the female musicians' lifelong development of multiple identities within and across different historical and social contexts. Prior to her postgraduate studies, including MAs in Music Education and Comparative Education at UCL IOE, Luna was a teaching director at a multi-lingual international school and a curriculum designer for hybrid learning environments. During her postgraduate years, she worked as a community teacher in London Borough of Westminster and a teaching assistant in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Luna is an accredited Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA) and a Mental Health First Aider (MHFA).





*14 - Speaker: Luna Xinlu Zheng*

**Luna's abstract:**

At the upcoming iMerc seminar, I will present the processes and reflections of my PhD research – a life history study on the educational and professional experiences of female composer, producer, and conductor in six countries and across three generations. My presentation focuses on my experiences of adapting the traditional life history method (e.g., Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson et al., 2016) to a digitally-facilitated life history research design. I first introduce the research context and my research adjustment plan. Then I illustrate my experiences of doing the remote life history interviews, including technical knowledge learnings and experiments, digitally-informed sampling and research invitations, and using digital communications to establish collaborative research relations with participants, including potential participants. I discuss successful and unsuccessful research participation and interview cases, summarise what have worked and what have not. Then I explain how the integration of data collection and analysis was played out in my life history research. At the end of my presentation, I reflect on the above processes and suggest implications for future social and educational research, especially those using qualitative or mixed-methods designs.

## **Congratulations!**

Please join us in sending well wishes and congratulations to Drs Xuanyi Ma, Mai Abdulkareem, and Marie McNally, supervised by Prof Evangelos Himonides, for celebrating this wonderful milestone at the Royal Festival Hall! Photo taken at UCL Graduation Ceremony, 20th May 2024.



15 - (L) Professor Evangelos Himonides and Dr Xuanyi Ma (R) at UCL Graduation Ceremony, 20th May 2024



16 - (L) Professor Evangelos Himonides and Dr Mai Abdulkareem (R) at UCL Graduation Ceremony, 20th May 2024



17 - Dr Marie McNally at UCL Graduation Ceremony, 20th May 2024

## Upcoming Research Seminar

Please note that our next research seminar will resume in Autumn 2024. More details will be available later. If you would like to share your work with us, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you. Have a great summer, everyone!

## Contact Us

Visit us on the website at <http://www.imerc.org>

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