

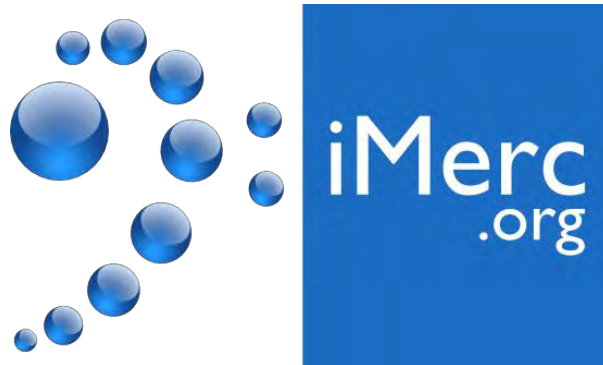
# UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 12, December 2024

## 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 will take place on Wednesday, 11th December 2024, 11am GMT via Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE. We are thrilled to welcome Professor David Elliott (New York University), Dr Jessica Pitt (RCM) and Dr Christie Haddad (UCL) as our speakers. Please join us by clicking the Zoom link [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

## In This Issue



- 
- *Previous iMerc Research Seminar, November 2024*
  - *Recommended Listening: BBC Radio 4 Documentary on the Edward Said Conservatory of Music in Gaza*
  - *A Special Feature for Remembrance Day: Voices of 1944*
  - *Book Launch Event: Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void*
  - *Call for Papers: SEMPRES Conference 2025*
  - *Newly Published: Exploring the lived experience of performance-related health and wellbeing among flautists*
  - *iMerc Research Seminar, December 2024*
  - *Upcoming iMerc Research Seminar*
  - *Congratulations!*
  - *Contact us*
-

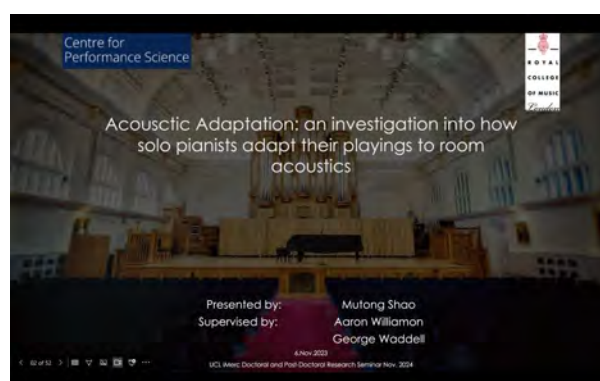
## Previous iMerc Research Seminar, September 2024



1 - Presentation cover slide credit: Emeritus Professor Dr Stephen Clift

### **Emeritus Professor Dr Stephen Clift: The need for critical appraisal of arts and health research and reviews**

Emeritus Professor Dr Stephen Clift ([s.clift@btinternet.com](mailto:s.clift@btinternet.com)) shares insights from his presentation, titled *The need for critical appraisal of arts and health research and reviews*. During the presentation, Stephen highlights the substantial growth in research over the past 25 years on the positive impact of arts, music, and cultural engagement on health and wellbeing. Specific attention has been given to performing arts, such as singing and dance, in supporting older adults with conditions like dementia, Parkinson's, chronic pain, and lung disease. However, Stephen emphasises the need for caution, arguing that some claims of such researches about the health benefits of arts interventions are overstated. Findings from recent critical reviews of studies suggested the field may face a credibility crisis due to exaggerated effectiveness claims.



2 - Presentation cover slide credit: Mutong Shao.

### **Mutong Shao: Acoustic Adaptation: An investigation into how solo pianists adapt their playings to room acoustics**

Mutong Shao ([mutong.shao@rcm.ac.uk](mailto:mutong.shao@rcm.ac.uk))'s PhD research at Royal College of Music (RCM) explores how solo pianists adapt to different acoustic environments during practice and performance. The study addresses the challenge faced by conservatoire and university students, who often practice in acoustically different spaces than where they perform,

potentially limiting their ability to adapt effectively. Despite some technological advances, such as systems to modify room acoustics, these remain rare in academic institutions. Through a primarily qualitative approach, Mutong's research is structured in three phases to better understand how piano students develop acoustic adaptation skills and how current training practices can be improved. The survey is currently open, for details please click [HERE](#).



*3 - Presentation cover slide credit: Professor Suvi Saarikallio*

### **Professor Suvi Saarikallio: Music as a resource for emotionality**

Professor Suvi Saarikallio ([suvi.sarikallio@jyu.fi](mailto:suvi.sarikallio@jyu.fi))'s talk focuses on the emotional potential of music and its role in supporting emotional regulation. Using the Access-Awareness-Agency (AAA) model, the presentation explores how music can enhance emotional competence by providing access to and awareness of emotions, facilitating embodied emotional expression, and serving as a tool for emotional self-regulation. Music is also framed as a means of fostering affective agency and identity development. Suvi draws on empirical research from various settings, including educational and clinical music therapy contexts, as well as her current project, MUSICONNECT, which examines how youth connect with themselves and others through music in everyday life. The research methods include digital ethnography, motion capture, psychometric assessments, and clinical trials.

### **Recommended Listening: BBC Radio 4 Documentary on the Edward Said Conservatory of Music in Gaza**

Professor John Sloboda has recommended an insightful BBC Radio 4 documentary that highlights the ongoing efforts to keep music alive at the Edward Said Conservatory of Music in Gaza. This moving piece sheds light on the resilience of musicians in the face of adversity. You can listen to it here: [BBC Radio 4 Documentary](#). It's an important story that offers valuable insight into the power of music in challenging times.

### **A Special Feature for Remembrance Day: Voices of 1944**

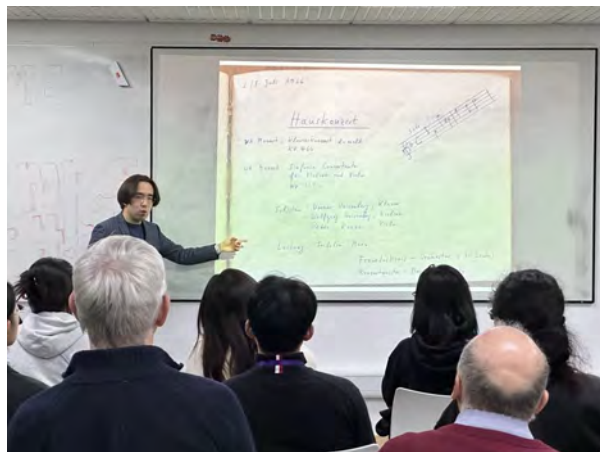
In observance of Remembrance Day, we're sharing a unique contribution from Dr Ingo Titze, one of the world's leading voice scientists and President of the National Center for Voice and

Speech in the USA. Dr Titze's work explores the remarkable "Voices of 1944," offering a fascinating link to history. You can learn more about this project here: [Voices of 1944](#).

## Book Launch Event: Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void



4 - Photo Credit: Rakhat-Bi Abdyssaign. Photo taken by Dan Wang



5 - Photo Credit: Rakhat-Bi Abdyssaign. Photo taken by Dan Wang

The book launch event for *Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void* by Rakhat-Bi Abdyssaign ([rahatbiabd@mail.ru](mailto:rahatbiabd@mail.ru)) was a successful and engaging celebration. Held on Monday, 4th November 2024 evening in Room 642 at the IOE and on Zoom, the launch highlighted the fascinating intersection of quantum mechanics and avant-garde music, as explored in Abdyssaign's new book, published by Springer Nature.

Books were available for purchase from [Blackwells](#), [Waterstones](#), and on [Amazon](#). The launch event offered a vibrant opportunity for academics, musicians, and enthusiasts of both fields to come together and celebrate this innovative contribution to the understanding of avant-garde music in the context of quantum theory.

## Call for papers: SEMPRES Conference 2025

Call for Papers: SEMPRES conference at Royal Northern College of Music, 9-10 April 2025

The next SEMPRES spring conference will be held at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) in Manchester, UK, on 9th and 10th April 2025. The theme of the conference is *Intersections between music psychology and education*. The keynote speakers will be Professor Karen Burland and Professor Daniel Müllensiefen.

Abstracts are invited for individual oral presentations (papers), posters and symposia. Only one first-authored submission should be made in each category. Individual papers will be 15 minutes long. They can be given in person or remotely via video conference. Posters can only be given in person. Abstracts for papers and posters should be no more than 200 words and structured, setting out the context, aims, methods, results/ findings and implications of the research (citations and references should not be included).

Symposia should consist of 3 to 5 linked papers, an introduction and a concluding panel discussion, with a time limit for the whole symposium of 1 hour 40 minutes. The majority of papers within a symposium should be given in person. Abstracts for symposia should include a rationale for the symposium (no more than 200 words) followed by an abstract for each of the papers included in the symposium. Abstracts must be submitted via <https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/76889/submitter>.

Deadlines:

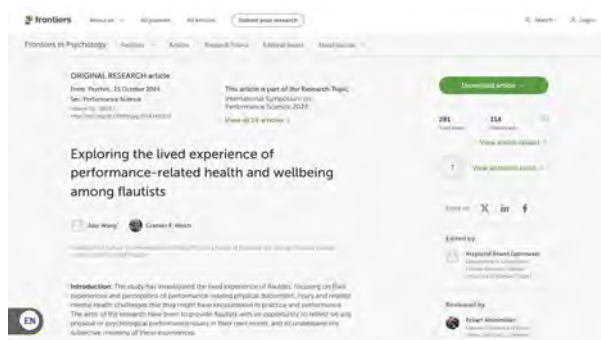
Abstract submission: 31 January 2025

Acceptances to authors: 11 February 2025

Registration: 28 February 2025

Submission of video presentations: 14 March 2025

## Newly Published: Exploring the lived experience of performance-related health and wellbeing among flautists



**Introduction:** The study has investigated the lived experience of flautists, focusing on their experiences and perceptions of performance-related physical discomfort, injury and related mental health challenges that they might have encountered in practice and performance. The aims of the research have been to provide flautists with an opportunity to reflect on any physical or psychological performance issues in their own words, and to understand the subjective meaning of these experiences.

**Methods:** A basic qualitative approach was used for gathering data. All the fieldwork was undertaken during or immediately after the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, the participating flautists were deliberately selected using professional networks on the basis of their answers to a pre-interview initial questionnaire related to the characteristics of their personal backgrounds and their experiences, as well as being able to participate remotely. There have been two data collection phases. Phase 1 was a specially designed pre-interview questionnaire drawing on themes from appropriate literature. Phase 2 built on the pre-interview questionnaire responses and was designed as semi-structured interviews, undertaken on Zoom, and included a 'River of Flute-playing Experience' activity during the interview. The 'River of Experience' method is an autobiographical research tool in which participants were asked to annotate key biographical experiences and challenges at various points along their drawing of a meandering river. The combined data analyses drew on thematic analysis.

**Results:** The eight participants reported a personal history of performance-related health and wellbeing challenges that they had faced at some point in their lives. The findings reveal that flautists encounter health-related challenges associated with their practice and performances, and the data suggest that they each require an understanding of likely performance-related health challenges and supportive resources to assist them in managing these challenges.

Wang, J., & Welch, G. F. (2024). Exploring the lived experience of performance-related health and wellbeing among flautists. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1401122.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1401122>

iMerc Research Seminar, December 2024

---

*Guest Speaker: Professor David Elliott*

*Topic: Some Key Questions in the Philosophy of Music and Music Cognition*

---





7 - Photo Credit: Professor David Elliott

**Professor David Elliott** is Emeritus Professor of Music and Music Education at New York University. Prior to joining NYU in 2002, he was Professor of Music Education for twenty-eight years at the University of Toronto. He has also been a Visiting Professor Music Education at Northwestern University, Indiana University, the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, and the Chinese Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing).

He is co-author of *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education, 2nd edition* (2015, Oxford University Press), author of *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (1995, OUP), co-author of *Musical Bodies, Musical Minds: Enactive Cognitive Science and the Meaning of Human Musicality* (2022, MIT Press), and co-editor of *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis* (2016, OUP). He has also published 50 refereed journal articles and 47 chapters in edited books, including *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*; *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*; *Music, Health, and Well-Being*; *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Identities*; *The Child as Musician*; and *Giving Voice to Democracy in Music Education*.

Professor Elliott has presented 327 keynote papers/invited lectures in 50 countries, and he is an award-winning jazz trombonist, composer/arranger.

**David's abstract:**



“It is not easy to determine the nature of music, or why anyone should have a knowledge of it” (Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII).

While it may not be easy, I believe it’s important for music educators to develop critically reasoned concepts of what music is and why it matters in life, in schools, and/or in community settings. After all, if teachers lack a reasoned explanation of what music is, then how can we expect them to teach music in reasonably comprehensive and effective ways and for the right values? And—for example—if teachers lack reasoned explanations of what music listening, and creativity, and musical interpretation involve (or should involve), then how can we expect teachers to teach these things? And what about education? What is it? How does educating differ from teaching, training, indoctrinating, and schooling?

In this presentation, and during our discussion, I’ll suggest ways of answering some of these key questions and explain why some ways might be better than others.

---

*Guest Speaker: Dr Jessica Pitt*

*Topic: Putting diffractive methodologies to work in investigations of musical play with children under three*

---



8 - Photo Credit: Dr Jessica Pitt

**Dr Jessica Pitt** ([jessica.pitt@rcm.ac.uk](mailto:jessica.pitt@rcm.ac.uk)) is an academic programmes professor the Royal College of Music. She is Co-director of [Magic Acorns](#), an EY arts development community interest company for children aged 0-3 years, carers and artists. Acting also as commissioner for ISME's Early Childhood Music Education Commission, a Trustee of MERYC England and board member for the community music charity, Sound Sense she advocates for the importance of early childhood music education locally, nationally and internationally. She serves on the editorial board for the Music Education Research journal and Music and Science. Jessica writes books, and articles on music, education and young children.

**Jessica's abstract:**

Diffraction methodologies, based on ideas of Donna Haraway (1999) and Karen Barad (2014), allow for varied insights and perspectives on an event or issue. Theories and/or philosophical positions can be read through one another to give insights through an affirming process of engagement with ideas through one another. This approach can disrupt notions of a theory-practice divide, rather than practice being considered an application of theory, the two can be read through with each other (Bozalek & Murris, 2022). The methodology gives voice to data that are beyond text, found in and inseparable from practice. Viewed in this way music-play events become emergent, entangled polyphonic assemblages of bodies, movements and feelings, situated within a world of multiple assemblages of humans and non-humans. Music-play events can be read diffractively as theory in action. Young children's funds of knowledge about creative knowing and being in the world can be quietened by adults who may have a focus on the 'future child'. Meeting and creating in the young child's temporality can mean that adults do and say less. The teaching-learning process can be seen as a multi-directional process of learning and becoming-with (Haraway, 2016). I will explore these ideas with illustrative examples with young children and artists.

---

*Speaker: Dr Christie Haddad*

*Topic: Technology-Enhanced Professional Development in Music for Early Years  
Practitioners: A Design-Based Study*

---



*9 - Photo Credit: Dr Christie Haddad*

**Dr Christie Haddad** ([christie.haddad.18@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:christie.haddad.18@ucl.ac.uk)) is a Lecturer in Digital Media Production at University College London and a Graduate Teaching Fellow for the Social Sciences BA at King's College London. Her teaching engages with media theory, digital storytelling, and the impact of cultural transformations on the modern world. Her teaching combines practical skills in media production with critical analysis, preparing students to navigate and shape the evolving media landscape.

Her primary research focuses on music education technology. For her PhD at UCL, she developed and tested methods for teaching and learning through Design-Based Implementation Research. Her study tackled sector challenges, including under-investment and digital training gaps in the Early Years Foundation Stage, offering practical solutions to strengthen practitioners' musical and digital confidence. Her findings have informed curriculum development, shaping how music and digital skills are integrated into educational programmes by providing evidence-based strategies that educators can adopt to enhance students' learning experiences.

Currently, Christie's research with UCL Knowledge Lab investigates the interdisciplinary opportunities that education technology affords, integrating the arts, mathematics, and coding to enrich learning experiences in primary education settings.

## Christie's Abstract

Christie's doctoral study documents the design, development, implementation, and critical evaluation of in-person and online professional development (PD) music workshops for Early Years Practitioners (EYPs), focusing on the use of digital tools within Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Through a thorough exploration of relevant literature, the study identifies the potential of digital tools to facilitate meaningful learning experiences and evaluates the efficacy of incorporating digital resources into PD activities to enhance musical growth, practical skills, and pedagogical practice among EYPs.

This research sets out to understand the specific needs and challenges of EYPs in relation to PD, particularly within the context of workforce recruitment challenges, sector under-investment, and practitioners' self-perceptions of their musical and technical abilities. Current PD offerings have often overlooked the integration of digital tools and failed to adequately support EYPs in enhancing their musical pedagogy. Limited access to relevant workshops and/or training programmes can impede EYPs' ability to effectively develop musical skills and pedagogical practices. This study addresses these challenges by providing and critically evaluating practical solutions, contributing knowledge that can drive positive change in Early Years music education practices.

Drawing upon empirical, practice-based design-based research methods, including interviews, video elicitation, pre/post workshop surveys and observation/reflection, these workshops were developed to meet the unique requirements of EYFS practitioners. A total number of 106 EYPs participated in 14 rounds of empirical fieldwork. The constructivist approach and practice-based design research methods employed in this study provide a robust framework that can be adapted and applied to other educational research contexts, potentially influencing research methodologies across various disciplines.

Congratulations!



10 - Photo Credit: Sandra Oberoi



11 - Photo Credit: Sandra Oberoi



12 - Photo Credit: Sandra Oberoi

Our colleague, Sandra Oberoi ([sandra@harmonybangalore.com](mailto:sandra@harmonybangalore.com)) has been involved in some fascinating choral music projects in India over this month in November. A concert in Hyderabad saw her and Tiara, her daughter, bringing choral music to over 150 children from eight schools around the city. They were invited to run a two-day choir festival and performance at the International School Hyderabad and introduced the children to a variety of songs including music by Whitacre, Coldplay and Sandra's choral arrangement of a Bollywood song. Sandra conducted, Make a Joyful Noise, a concert celebrating choral compositions accompanied by the organ. Her award-winning choir, The Harmony Chorus, sang a variety of music including compositions by British composers Kenneth Leighton and Anna Lapwood. This concert was organised to raise funds for the Leprosy Mission Trust of India and the ongoing repairs of the church organ.

### Upcoming iMerc Research Seminar

Please note that our next research seminar will be announced soon. If you would like to share your work with us, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you very much!



## Contact Us

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

Professor Graham Welch: [graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk)

Professor Evangelos Himonides: [e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk)

Ms Eunice Tang: [eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk)