

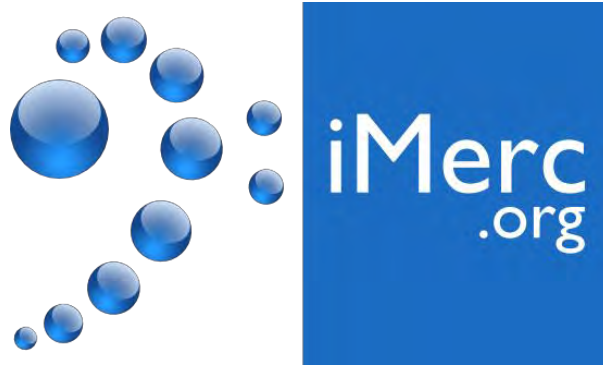
UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 13, January 2025

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, 22nd January 2025, 11am GMT via Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE. We are delighted to have Dr Elizabeth MacGregor (University of Oxford) and our doctoral colleague Jenna Brown (UCL) as our speakers. Please join us by clicking the Zoom link [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

In This Issue

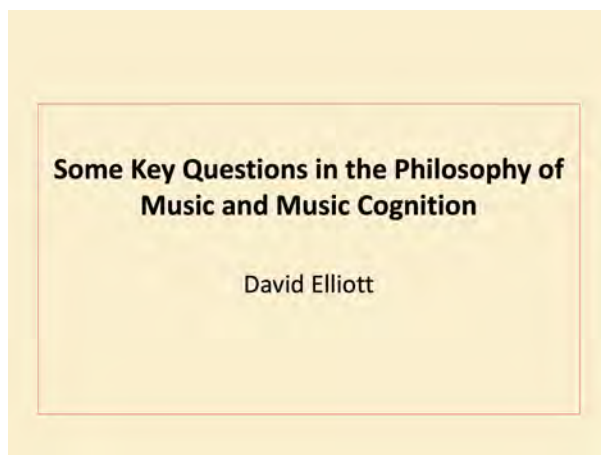


-
- *Previous iMerc Research Seminar, December 2024*
 - *Introducing: The Transformational Voice Research Network*
 - *Music Video: Kal Ho Naa Ho | Somewhere Only We Know by The Harmony Chorus*
 - *Book Launch Invitation: Musical Vulnerability: Receptivity, Susceptibility, and Care in the Music Classroom*
 - *Newly Published: The Training of Rhythm Skills and Executive Function: A Systematic Review*
 - *Newly Published: Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy*
 - *iMerc Research Seminar, January 2025*
 - *Upcoming iMerc Research Seminar*
 - *Contact us*
-

Previous iMerc Research Seminar, December 2024



1 - From Left to Right: Shike Guo, Luna Zheng, Dan Wang, Jiayi Wang, Eunice Tang, Dr Jessica Pitt, Dr Christie Haddad, Dr Regina Saltari, Professor Graham Welch.



2 - Presentation cover slide credit: Professor David Elliott

Professor David Elliott: Some key questions in the philosophy of music and music cognition

David's presentation explored the philosophical and practical aspects of music education, drawing on Aristotle's view that understanding the essence of music is challenging. He argued that music educators must develop clear, critically reasoned concepts of music's purpose in various contexts, such as schools and communities. David highlighted that without a deep understanding of music—encompassing listening, creativity, and interpretation—teachers cannot effectively teach it. He also examined the broader concept of education, differentiating it from teaching, training, and schooling, and evaluated various approaches to music education.



3 - Presentation cover slide credit: Dr Jessica Pitt

Dr Jessica Pitt: Putting diffractive methodologies to work in investigations of musical play with children under three

Jessica explored diffractive methodologies, drawing from the works of Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. She challenged the traditional divide between theory and practice, presenting them as intertwined, with theory informing practice and vice versa. Jessica emphasised how this approach allowed for insights to emerge from music-play events, highlighting them as dynamic, entangled experiences involving both human and non-human elements.

Critiquing the "future child" perspective often held by adults, Jessica advocated for a more present-focused approach, encouraging adults to adopt a less directive, more observational role. She highlighted that teaching and learning should be viewed as a co-creative process, fostering new understandings of creative engagement with young children and artists.



4 - Presentation cover slide credit: Dr Christie Haddad

Dr Christie Haddad: Technology-Enhanced Professional Development in Music for Early Years Practitioners: A Design-Based Study

Christie's doctoral research explores the design, development, and evaluation of in-person and online professional development (PD) music workshops for Early Years Practitioners (EYPs), focusing on integrating digital tools within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The study identifies how digital resources can enhance musical growth, skills, and pedagogy among EYPs. It also addresses challenges like workforce recruitment, sector under-investment, and limited access to relevant PD opportunities.

Through empirical, practice-based research methods, including interviews, surveys, and observations, the study involved 106 EYPs across 14 workshop rounds. This research offers valuable insights into improving Early Years music education and provides a framework for future educational research in various contexts.

Introducing: The Transformational Voice Research Network



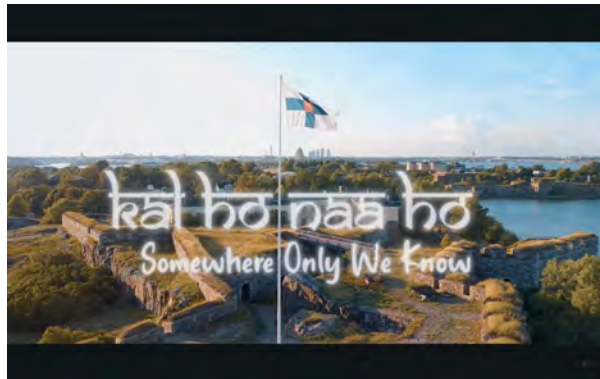
5 - Photo Credit: Jenna Brown

The Transformational Voice Research Network (TVRN) is a collective of researchers and practitioners committed to advancing the social impact of voice pedagogy and voice science through critical approaches to methodology.

It aims to support researchers and practitioners at all stages to explore transformational methodologies, which embrace non-dominant, non-hierarchical, non-linear paradigms and creative methods. The TVRN is a space for researchers and practitioners to discuss and debate the possibilities and limitations of wide-ranging methodologies, to learn from each other, form supportive partnerships and collaborations, and contribute to dissemination of, and public engagement in, research findings.

For more information about the network, please visit their website <https://www.transformationalvoiceresearch.network/> or contact jenna@bristolvoicecare.co.uk

Music Video: Kal Ho Naa Ho | Somewhere Only We Know by The Harmony Chorus



6 - Photo Credit: The Harmony Chorus



7 - Photo Credit: The Harmony Chorus

Read Sandra's Words:

Sending you all this special music video with The Harmony Chorus!

Shot in Helsinki, this video will warm your heart as it's a beautiful reminder to live each moment to the fullest.

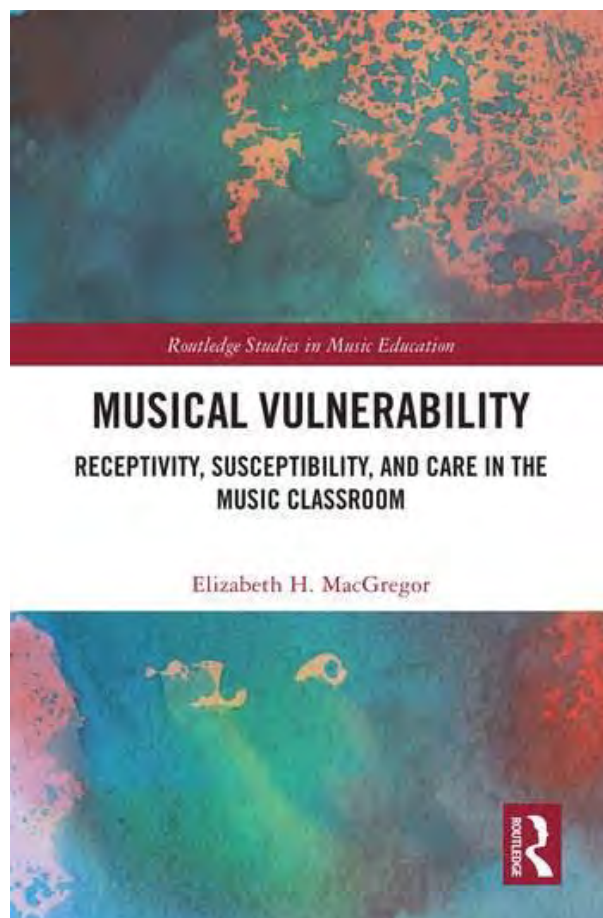
May the year ahead be filled with many moments to cherish!

Happy 2025!

Watch the video: <https://youtu.be/Wi3g27-jFoo?si=e3P8LV0UuK9MBoVD>

Contact: Sandra Oberoi (sandra@harmonybangalore.com)

Book Launch Invitation: Musical Vulnerability: Receptivity, Susceptibility, and Care in the Music Classroom



8 - Book Cover Credit: Dr Elizabeth MacGregor

Musical Vulnerability

BOOK LAUNCH



MUSICAL VULNERABILITY
RECEPTIVITY, SUSCEPTIBILITY, AND CARE IN THE
MUSIC CLASSROOM

Elizabeth H. MacGregor



Elizabeth H. MacGregor
AUTHOR | Joanna Randall MacIver
Junior Research Fellow, Somerville
College, University of Oxford



Stephanie E. Pitts
GUEST SPEAKER | Professor of
Music Education, University of
Sheffield



Alexis A. Kallio
Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University

RSVP



Friday 21 February 2025, 5-7pm
Margaret Thatcher Centre, Somerville College, Oxford

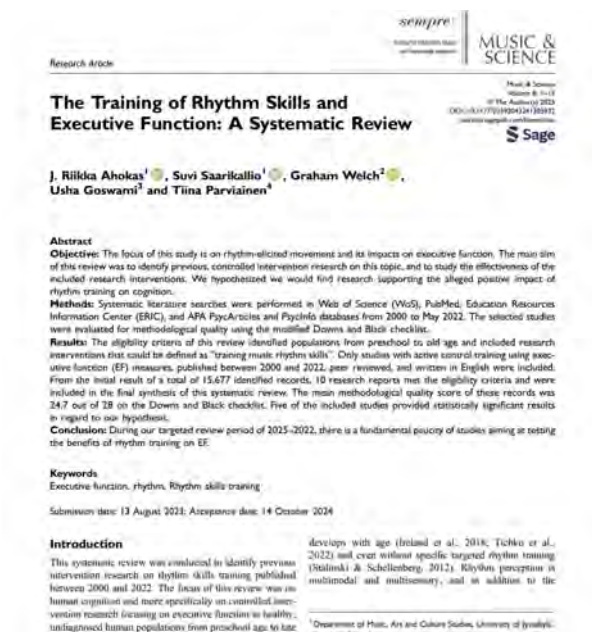
9 - Flyer for the Book Launch Credit: Dr Elizabeth MacGregor

Since the early twenty-first century, music education across the world has been shaped by neoliberal discourse extolling the benefits of music upon academic achievement, health and wellbeing, and social development. However, such benefits are far from universal; on the contrary, music-making often reveals our shortcomings and dependencies. This highlights an urgent need for music education to be reframed by an understanding of ‘musical vulnerability’: our inherent and situational openness to being affected by the semantic and somatic properties of music-making.

Drawing on existing vulnerability studies, this book evaluates how music-making can foster both positive receptivity and negative susceptibility, depending on its delineation of self-identity, social identity, and space, and its embodiment through aural receptivity, mimetic participation, and affective transmission. Through phenomenological, ethnographic research with teachers and pupils, it exposes how values espoused in the music classroom require the personal and interpersonal negotiation of conflicting musical expectations, identities, and abilities. It makes recommendations for music education policymakers, teachers, and researchers in diverse global contexts, suggesting the importance of developing ‘pedagogies of vulnerability’ in order to foster caring classroom music-making praxes that acknowledge music’s capacity both to heal and to harm.

Elizabeth MacGregor (elizabeth.macgregor@some.ox.ac.uk) is currently the Joanna Randall-Maclver Junior Research Fellow at Somerville College, Oxford. Her new book, *Musical Vulnerability: Receptivity, Susceptibility, and Care in the Music Classroom* will be released by Routledge in December 2024. For further details of her book, please visit <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003462279> or sign up to attend the book launch in Oxford on Friday 21 February 2025.

Newly Published: The Training of Rhythm Skills and Executive Function: A Systematic Review



10 - Picture Credit: J. Riikka Ahokas, Suvi Saarikallio, Graham Welch, Usha Goswami, and Tiina Parviainen

Abstract

Objective

The focus of this study is on rhythm-elicited movement and its impacts on executive function. The main aim of this review was to identify previous, controlled intervention research on this topic, and to study the effectiveness of the included research interventions. We hypothesized we would find research supporting the alleged positive impact of rhythm training on cognition.

Methods

Systematic literature searches were performed in Web of Science (WoS), PubMed, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and APA PsycArticles and PsycInfo databases from 2000 to May 2022. The selected studies were evaluated for methodological quality using the modified Downs and Black checklist.

Results

The eligibility criteria of this review identified populations from preschool to old age and included research interventions that could be defined as “training music rhythm skills”. Only studies with active control training using executive function (EF) measures, published between 2000 and 2022, peer reviewed, and written in English were included. From the initial result of a total of 15,677 identified records, 10 research reports met the eligibility criteria and were included in the final synthesis of this systematic review. The mean

methodological quality score of these records was 24.7 out of 28 on the Downs and Black checklist. Five of the included studies provided statistically significant results in regard to our hypothesis.

Conclusion

During our targeted review period of 2025–2022, there is a fundamental paucity of studies aiming at testing the benefits of rhythm training on EF.

Ahokas, J. R., Saarikallio, S., Welch, G., Goswami, U., & Parviainen, T. (2025). The Training of Rhythm Skills and Executive Function: A Systematic Review. *Music & Science*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20592043241305922>

Newly Published: Approaches:
An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy



11 - Photo Credit: Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music

The latest issue of *Approaches: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Music Therapy* (Volume 16, Issue 2, 2024) is now online!

Explore groundbreaking research and insights in music therapy here:

<https://journals.qmu.ac.uk/approaches/issue/view/35>

This special edition marks the journal's 15th anniversary—a milestone in advancing interdisciplinary dialogue in the field.

iMerc Research Seminar, January 2025

Guest Speaker: Dr Elizabeth H. MacGregor



12 - Photo Credit: Dr Elizabeth H. MacGregor

Elizabeth's Abstract:

Since the early twenty-first century, music education across the world has been shaped by neoliberal discourse extolling the benefits of music upon academic achievement, health and wellbeing, and social development. However, such benefits are far from universal; on the contrary, music-making often reveals our shortcomings and dependencies. This highlights an urgent need for music education to be reframed by an understanding of ‘musical vulnerability’: our openness to being affected by music-making—both positively and negatively—depending on its delineation of self-identity, social identity, and space, and its embodiment through aural receptivity, mimetic participation, and affective transmission. In this paper, I introduce my current postdoctoral study investigating experiences of musical vulnerability across three schools in the south of England, and partnering with music teachers in a collaborative action ethnography to co-construct context-specific ‘pedagogies of vulnerability’. I evaluate how such pedagogies of vulnerability are beginning to account for both positive and negative experiences of music-making in the classroom through extending compassionate care and fostering participatory praxis.

Dr Elizabeth H. MacGregor (elizabeth.macgregor@some.ox.ac.uk) is the Joanna Randall-Maclver Junior Research Fellow at Somerville College, Oxford. She has previously held posts with the Birmingham Music Education Research Group and the Sheffield Performer and Audience Research Centre. Her research into vulnerability, inclusion, and care in classroom music education has most recently appeared in *Research Studies in Music Education* and *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, and her first monograph will be published by Routledge in 2025. She is also the Assistant Editor for the journal *Research Studies in Music Education* and holds a Career Development Fellowship from the British Educational Research Association.

Speaker: Jenna Brown

Topic: Exploring Philosophy of Imagination and Singing Pedagogy



13 - Photo Credit: Jenna Brown

Jenna Brown (jenna.brown.23@ucl.ac.uk) is a UKRI Economic and Social Research Council funded doctoral student at UCL's Institute of Education, specialising in vocal pedagogy. She is a qualified voice rehabilitation specialist and vocal massage therapist and runs Bristol Voice Care. Jenna is also a choral conductor, and currently works with Bristol Youth Choir and

Exultate Singers, as well as providing vocal workshops and training for choirs and conductors across the UK. Jenna has recent publications on voice and choral pedagogy in the Journal of Voice, The Voice and Speech Review, Journal of Popular Music Education, Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice, and Australian Voice. She is also a writer for Music Teacher Magazine, where she writes resources on singing in schools. She has presented her research at numerous international conferences and in 2024 was awarded best presenter at the Pan European Vocal Conference. Jenna is an editorial board member for The Voice and Speech Review, Musica Scientiae, Journal of Voice, and the Cambridge E-Journal of Education. She is a visiting lecturer for the Voice Study Centre at the University of Essex, BAST, ESTA University of Chichester, and Vocal Health Education, where she is lead tutor and assessor on their Certificate of Inclusive Education.

Jenna's Abstract

Jenna's work explores how singing teachers, choral conductors and singers communicate. In particular, she is interested in how and why imagination and mental imagery are used as pedagogical tools and whether they are synthesised or in opposition with the more contemporary field of voice science. This presentation will provide an overview of key issues arising from some of her recently published work. The research presented set out to explore the 'Four Ws' of imagery in the context of voice and choral pedagogy: why, where, when, and how is imagery used? The data collected from this research has then been considered from the perspective of Philosophy of Mind. Practically, by applying of Lens Theory of Imagination to stock imagery, it has led to the development of further questions connected to relationality, truth and meaning. Theoretically, this has begun to address a research gap in vocal education, by attempting to connect voice pedagogy with the imagery debate in Philosophy. Through this exploration, Jenna is beginning to triangulate philosophy with pedagogy, neuroscience and psychology to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of mental imagery and imagination as learning tools.

Upcoming iMerc Research Seminar

Please note that our next research seminar will be held on 26th February 2025. 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

Professor Evangelos Himonides: e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk

Ms Eunice Tang: eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk