

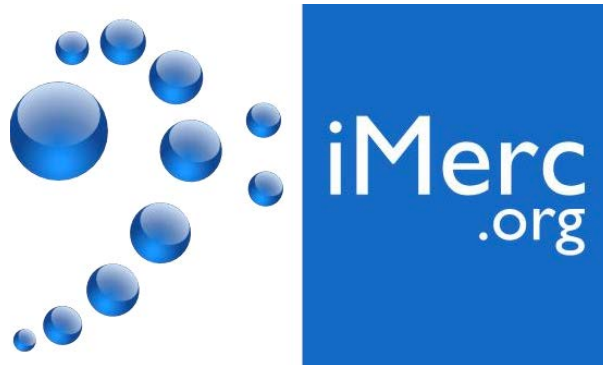
UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 15, March 2025

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, USA 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, 26th March 2025, 11am GMT via Zoom and in room 935 at the IOE. We are delighted to have Professor Adam Ockelford (University of Roehampton), Dr Stephanie MacArthur (University of Melbourne) and Dr Simon Høffding (University of Southern Denmark) as our guest speakers. Please join us by clicking the Zoom link [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

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Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, February 2025



1 - Presentation cover slide credit: Dr Elaine King

Dr Elaine King: Music for Living Better: How Stroke Survivors, Carers and Facilitators Experienced the STROKESTRA Community Programme

Dr Elaine King (E.C.King@hull.ac.uk) guided us to explore her recent study about the impact of the STROKESTRA Community Programme (SCP), a unique stroke rehabilitation initiative led by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with support from university music students and community volunteers. While music is widely recognised as a therapeutic tool, there has been little research on how community-based programmes like this truly shape participants'

experiences. This study aimed to fill that gap by speaking directly with those involved, uncovering how music fosters social connections, emotional well-being, and personal transformation.

The findings revealed that participants not only formed meaningful relationships but also rediscovered their creativity and built confidence through musical engagement. Many experienced personal growth, newfound motivation, and an improved ability to navigate life after stroke. The study highlights the power of community music programmes in helping people adjust to life changes in a positive and meaningful way, reinforcing the idea that music is more than just entertainment—it's a tool for healing and renewal.



2 - Presentation cover slide credit: Professor Nicola Shaughnessy, Dr Ruth Herbert and Dr Jacqueline Walduck

Professor Nicola Shaughnessy, Dr Ruth Herbert, Dr Jacqueline Walduck: Creative process as impact: The participatory play framework

Professor Nicola Shaughnessy (N.Shaughnessy@kent.ac.uk), Dr Ruth Herbert (R.Herbert@kent.ac.uk) and Dr Jacqueline Walduck (jwalduck@ram.ac.uk) introduced the Participatory Play Framework (PPF), a tool designed to evaluate creative engagement in participatory arts within diverse health contexts. While impact is often viewed as the final outcome, this framework shifts the focus to the process of participation itself. The PPF provides a structured way to identify and assess different modes of play within participatory arts and creative health settings, helping to capture the depth of engagement and its evolving nature.

By mapping types of participation through performative behaviors and experiential qualities, the PPF offers researchers a way to observe embodied engagement, social interactions, and the aesthetic aspects of creative expression. Drawing on insights from autistic performativity and ecological approaches to sense-making, it acknowledges how environments and social dynamics shape engagement. With potential benefits for both practitioners and participants, this framework serves as a valuable tool for understanding and enhancing creative participation in health and community settings.



3 - Presentation cover slide credit: Sandra Oberoi

Sandra Oberoi: The Music of Young People in India

Sandra Oberoi (sandra@harmonybangalore.com) examined how India's diverse musical landscape serves as a space for cultural negotiation, particularly among young people. Music-making has long played a vital role in shaping societies, balancing continuity with change. Historically, Indian music was shaped by regional and religious traditions, but the rise of digital platforms has significantly reshaped how young people engage with music. As urbanisation, globalisation, and cultural homogenisation continue to influence India's socio-political landscape, musical traditions have evolved to incorporate new influences while still maintaining their roots.

Focusing on Bangalore as a case study, the presentation explored what defines the music of young people in India today and how they use music to express their identities. It highlighted how emerging technologies and shifting cultural geographies have transformed musical practices, offering fresh perspectives on how tradition and modernity coexist in contemporary youth culture.

Invitation: SEMPRES Spring Conference 2025



The Sempres Spring Conference will take place at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) in Manchester, UK, on 9th–10th April 2025. This year's event will explore the theme **Intersections between Music Psychology and Education** and feature keynote speeches from Professors Karen Burland and Daniel Müllensiefen. In-person bookings close on 25th March 2025, while online registrations will remain open until 7th April 2025.

For more details, visit [HERE](#).

Newly published: Inviting a (Re)Orientation to "Musicking-as-Play" in Higher Music Education Performance Studies: Insights from Three Genre Performance Practices

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Inviting a (Re)Orientation to “Musicking-as-Play” in Higher Music Education Performance Studies: Insights from Three Genre Performance Practices


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February 2025


Published in *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 24 (1): 7–47 [pdf].
<https://doi.org/10.22176/act24.1.7>



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Abstract: This paper offers an invitation to higher music education communities to think differently about the significance of the connections between music and play. We highlight the many texts that articulate these connections and draw together a speculative ontological claim that all musicking is an enactment of play. In other words, we ask how “musicking-as-play” might be a catalyst and an orientation for pedagogic innovation in higher music education. Adopting Huizinga’s concept of a “play force,” this philosophical study reveals multifarious ways in which play is enacted *through* musicking, leading us to coin the new term “musicking-as-play.” “Musicking-as-play” recognizes, values, and nurtures the particular play force that manifests with/in music genre performance practices. We thematically explore play’s manifestations in the materiality, relationality and transgressionality of a selection of genre practices, specifically heavy metal, Western art music, and jazz. We put forward “Musicking-as-play” as a new concept that acknowledges the entanglement and interrelationship of materiality, relationality, and transgressionality as domains that are fundamental and present within acts of “musicking.” Subsequently, we speculate on what “musicking-as-play” might invite for higher music educators.

Please read the article [HERE](#).

Palmer, T., Burnard, P., & Burke, D. (2024). Inviting a (Re) Orientation to ‘Musicking-as-Play’ in Higher Music Education Performance Studies: Insights from Three Genre Performance

Practices. *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education*, 23(1), 58-79.

<https://doi.org/10.22176/act24.1.7>

Newly published: “Blind to the facts 2023”: exploring the experiences of professionals with visual impairment in the UK music industry

The screenshot shows the Taylor & Francis Online interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Browse', 'Search', and 'Publish' options, along with 'Login' and 'Register' links. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > All Journals > Creative Industries Journal > List of Issues > Latest Articles > "Blind to the facts 2023": exploring the ...'. The main header area includes the 'Creative Industries Journal' logo, a 'Submit an article' button, and a 'Journal homepage' button. A search bar is also present with the placeholder text 'Enter keywords, authors, DOI, etc'. The article title is prominently displayed: '“Blind to the facts 2023”: exploring the experiences of professionals with visual impairment in the UK music industry'. Below the title, the authors are listed: 'Claire Castle, David Baker, Stephanie Hoi-Ying Chan, Eunice Sin Ying Tang & Abi Baker'. The article's reception statistics are shown on the left: 45 Views, 0 CrossRef citations to date, and 0 Altmetric. The article's publication details are: 'Received 12 Mar 2024, Accepted 02 Feb 2025, Published online: 28 Feb 2025'. The article is categorized as a 'Research Article'. The abstract is visible, starting with 'This article expands on earlier research which explored the industry experiences of musicians with visual impairment (VI). Almost 30 years on, and with changes in social and educational policy and thinking on social justice and inclusion, this article revisits the topic. Funded by Vision Foundation, and commissioned by Baluji Music Foundation, this project explored the...'. The article is available in full text, and there are links for 'Figures & data', 'References', 'Citations', 'Metrics', 'Reprints & Permissions', 'Read this article', and 'Share'. A 'Related Research' section is also visible, featuring a link to 'Using thematic analysis in psychology' by Virginia Braun et al.

Abstract: This article expands on earlier research which explored the industry experiences of musicians with visual impairment (VI). Almost 30 years on, and with changes in social and educational policy and thinking on social justice and inclusion, this article revisits the topic. Funded by Vision Foundation, and commissioned by Baluji Music Foundation, this project explored the lives and careers of music professionals with VI and provides an employer/provider perspective on issues of access and inclusion in the industry. Findings from 11 semi-structured interviews with five self-described professionals and semi-professionals with VI, and six industry employers/providers, offers an ‘insider’ perspective on the topic. Transcripts were analysed through Analytic Induction. Descriptive statistics from a survey with 109 responses from active and aspiring professionals with VI, and industry employers/representatives with and without VI, provide additional context to qualitative findings. Results showed that professionals with VI considered their industry experiences to be affected by various factors, including: decisions surrounding the selection of opportunities due to dependent mobility and safety concerns; the availability of signed support; music learning approaches and the time required to acquire accessible scores; issues with networking and promotion; and additional costs. Solutions and existing support mechanisms are discussed.

Please read the article [HERE](https://doi.org/10.22176/act24.1.7).

Castle, C., Baker, D., Chan, S. H. Y., Tang, E. S. Y., & Baker, A. (2025). "Blind to the facts 2023": exploring the experiences of professionals with visual impairment in the UK music industry. *Creative Industries Journal*, 1–26.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2025.2464706>

Newly published: Book Review: Performing Music Research: Methods in Music Education, Psychology, and Performance Science

The screenshot shows the journal article page for "Book Review: Performing Music Research: Methods in Music Education, Psychology, and Performance Science" by Michael Bonshor. The journal is "Psychology of Music", published by SAGE. The page includes the journal's impact factor (1.6) and 5-year impact factor (2.0). The article is available for access, is a book review, and was first published online on July 27, 2024. The article is based on the book "Performing Music Research: Methods in Music Education, Psychology, and Performance Science" by Williamon Aaron, Ginsborg Jane, Perkins Rosie, and Waddell George, published by Oxford University Press. The article is in Volume 53, Issue 2, and has a DOI of 10.1177/03057356241261674. The article text is visible, starting with "As a supervisor on research-led postgraduate courses, this is the book that I have been hoping that someone would write. There are many excellent publications on research methods, which have been useful over the years but, so far, very little has been published specifically to support students and researchers in the field of music psychology, music education, and music performance science." The article also mentions that the book fulfils its aims to provide help for researchers in these disciplines to 'bring precision to the questions they pose, select methods that are appropriate for addressing their questions, and apply those methods in a systematic and rigorous fashion' (p. xii). The writing is accessible and well-suited for students and new researchers, with step-by-step guides to every stage of the research. The content of the book is also an excellent resource for more experienced researchers and supervisors, or anyone who just needs a reminder about some aspect of research in this area.

Introduction: As a supervisor on research-led postgraduate courses, this is the book that I have been hoping that someone would write. There are many excellent publications on research methods, which have been useful over the years but, so far, very little has been published specifically to support students and researchers in the field of music psychology, music education, and music performance science.

Bonshor, M. (2024). Book Review: Performing Music Research: Methods in Music Education, Psychology, and Performance Science. *Psychology of Music*, 53(2), 314-316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03057356241261674>

UCL iMerc Research Seminar, March 2025

Guest Speaker: Professor Adam Ockelford



4 - Photo credit: Professor Adam Ockelford

Adam's Abstract:

This presentation sets out the new 'Awards and Certificates in Musical Development' (ACMD) offered by Trinity College London (see [HERE](#)). The ACMD are based on the Sounds of Intent framework of musical development: www.soundsofintent.org. Open to all learners, from those with profound learning difficulties to those on the autism spectrum with advanced musical skills, these qualifications enable everyone to have their musical achievements and progress formally recognised. Preparation for the assessments can be made during regular music sessions, with achievement and progress continually assessed by the teacher or music leader.

Professor Adam Ockelford ARAM PhD FTCL (A.Ockelford@roehampton.ac.uk) is a leading international researcher on music and neurodiversity. He has published widely, including 20 books and hundreds of papers, and regularly lectures all over the world on music and the mind, in particular relating to those with exceptional musical abilities and needs. He is Professor of Music at the University of Roehampton, London; Founder and Chair of The Amber Trust, a non-profit company that supports blind and partially sighted children across the UK in their pursuit of music www.ambertrust.org; Founder and Chair of Sounds of Intent Charity, which informs and promotes inclusive music-making all over the world www.soundsofintent.org; and Secretary of SEMPRES (the Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research), which publishes three journals, an extensive series of books, and supports young researchers in developing countries www.sempre.org.uk. Adam has a TED talk with the musical savant Derek Paravicini, with whom he has worked for 40 years: '[In the Key of Genius](#)'. For more information, please see [HERE](#).

Guest Speaker: Dr Stephanie MacArthur

Topic: Uncovering children's experiences of emergent learning difficulties in the instrumental music studio



5 - Photo credit: Dr Stephanie MacArthur

Stephanie's Abstract:

When children commence instrumental music tuition, learning difficulties can emerge to disrupt predictable learning processes and impact musical development. However, children's experiences of learning difficulties, including how they present, are managed, and can be supported, are rarely examined in music research. In this presentation, Stephanie will share findings from her recent publication on children's learning difficulties. This research stems from her PhD project, which employed Participatory Action Research and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodologies to examine the lived experiences of fourteen 7-year-old beginner cellists for up to four years. Unexpectedly, half of the young learners encountered challenges, including memory and processing difficulties, impulse, attention and focus issues, intrusive synaesthesia, fine motor skill difficulties, dyslexia, and persistent anxiety. Stephanie will discuss how these difficulties emerged and were influenced by the children's motivations, self-perception, and the ratio of skill acquisition. She will also explore her reflexive pedagogical approach and the perspectives of parents. This study makes a

unique contribution to the literature by providing insight into children's experiences of emergent learning difficulties as they arise in the instrumental music studio.

Dr Stephanie MacArthur (stephanie.macarthur@unimelb.edu.au) is an Associate Lecturer in Music (Performance Teaching) at the Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne. A dedicated string educator and cellist, she has over 25 years of experience teaching in school and studio settings. Stephanie serves as the President and Teaching Artist Team Leader for the Pizzicato Effect, a community music education programme that offers free stringed instrument lessons to children who might not otherwise have access, helping to break down financial barriers to music education. She is a council member of the Australian Society of Music Education (ASME), contributing to the Victorian chapter. In 2022, Stephanie completed her PhD, a longitudinal study investigating the lived experiences of 14 seven-year-old children learning to play the cello. Her research examined the impact of early learning and diverse challenges on children's long-term musical engagement. Through her teaching and research, Stephanie is committed to deepening the understanding of young musicians' learning experiences and advocating for equitable access to music education.

Guest Speaker: Dr Simon Høffding

Topic: The intercorporeal, musical self



6 - Photo credit: Dr Simon Høffding

Simon's Abstract:

In this talk, I share some of the main findings from my 10-year collaboration with the Danish String Quartet (DSQ) - one of the world's most famous string quartets. Three of its four members have known each other for nearly 30 years and together they have played for at least 10,000 hours, making them the ideal case study for understanding what I call shared, musical absorption.

Analyses of "phenomenological interviews" with the DSQ reveal some of the principal mental structures supporting their communication and zone of shared musical absorption. Some of these consist in explicit simulation and mind reading, while others seem to point to an affective, auditive and bodily based form of sharing, which in phenomenology is referred to as "intercorporeity". Experiences with a heightened sense of intercorporeity seem to coincide with experiences of intense musical absorption.

In order to probe this musical intercorporeity, a RITMO-based research team recently completed comparative analyses of cardiac synchronization in a novice quartet and the DSQ. Playing identical music, the DSQ has a significantly higher degree of cardiac synchronization than the novice quartet. I investigate the implications of these analyses for our understanding of shared musical absorption and sketch ways forward for a democratic, open, embodied cognitive concert science.

Dr Simon Høffding (simon.hoffding@imv.uio.no) is associate professor at the Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics at the University of Southern Denmark and researcher at the RITMO Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Rhythm, Time and Motion, University of Oslo. He obtained his PhD from the Centre for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen in 2015 and has since held positions at the Interactive Minds Centre, University of Aarhus, the Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen and at RITMO. His main interests are in phenomenology, 4E cognition, bodily self-awareness, musical absorption, expertise studies, shared minds, and improvisation. He pursues these interests through interdisciplinary and mixed methodologies combining phenomenological analysis, ethnographic fieldwork and physiological experiments. This work is published in articles and edited volumes in e.g. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, and *Musicae Scientiae* and in his monograph, *A Phenomenology of Musical Absorption* (2019 Palgrave Macmillan).

Upcoming UCL iMerc Research Seminar after Easter

Please note that our next research seminar will be held in May 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>

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