

UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 18, July 2025

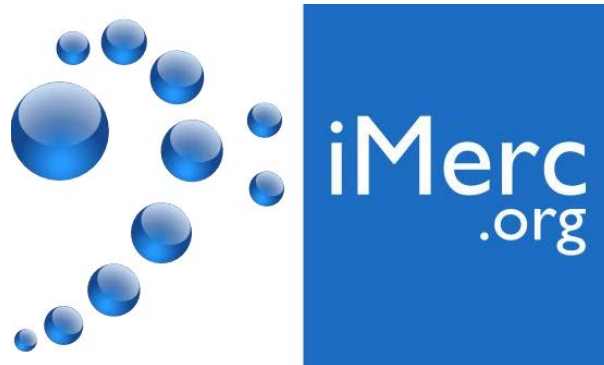
About us

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 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, 22nd October 2025, 11am BST via Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE. You're welcome to join us either in person or online, the Zoom link will be made available in September 2025. Everyone is welcome!

Please note that we have a special Sempre/iMerc student study day on Wednesday 26th November 2025 (details below).

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1. Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, June 2025



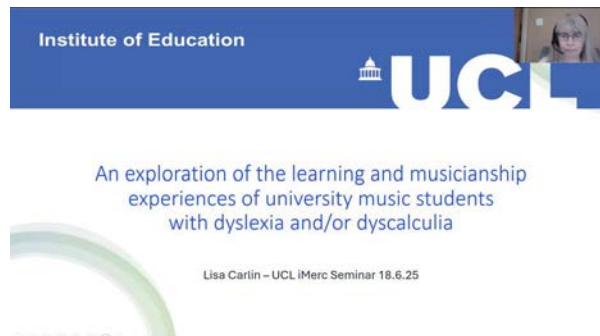
1 - From left to right: Front row: Dr Ross Purves, Dan Wang, Professor Graham Welch, Dr Susan Young. Second Row: Dr Melissa Brunkan, Stephanie Hoi-Ying Chan, Sandra Oberoi, Eunice Tang



2 - Presentation Cover Slide Credit: Dr Susan Young

Dr Susan Young: A Commentary on New Materialisms in Early Childhood Music Education

Dr Susan Young (susanyoung351@gmail.com) offered a compelling overview of New Materialist theories and their growing impact on early childhood music education. She outlined how these posthumanist-inspired ideas are reshaping thinking about materiality, agency, and the role of non-human forces in educational settings. Susan also raised important critiques, largely from Childhood Studies, that have yet to surface in music education discourse. These include concerns about a break from earlier materialist traditions, theoretical inconsistencies, and challenges in applying ideas like agency and decentring to children's activity. Her presentation invited deeper reflection on the implications of embracing these theories in music education.



3 - Presentation Cover Slide Credit: Lisa Carlin

Lisa Carlin: An exploration of university music students with dyslexia and/or dyscalculia and the possible impact on learning and musicianship: a mixed method approach

Lisa Carlin (l.carlin.16@ucl.ac.uk) presented research exploring how dyslexia and dyscalculia affect university music students' learning experiences. Using a mixed-methods approach—an online survey followed by in-depth case studies, Lisa identified common challenges in areas like rhythm notation, alongside a range of compensatory strategies students use to adapt and succeed. Her findings revealed that both individual strengths and supportive environments, including peer interactions, play a key role in overcoming difficulties. Lisa introduced a multi-theoretical “prism” framework to interpret varied student experiences and highlighted the need for greater institutional support. Her research not only informs educators, but also offers inspiration for SEND students navigating higher music education.



4 - Presentation Cover Slide Credit: Dan Wang

Dan Wang: Defining Music in Policy and Practice: A Qualitative Synthesis of the Music Zhongkao Trajectory in China

Dan Wang's (dan.wang.20@ucl.ac.uk) presentation examined the evolution of China's Music Zhongkao (high school entrance exam) policy through a qualitative synthesis of 30 policy documents and 90 academic sources. Focusing on national to school-level implementation, and using the city of Yancheng as a case study, the research traced the policy's development since its 2015 pilot. Through the ENTREQ framework, Dan explored how music is conceptualised and assessed in this high-stakes context. The study revealed a key tension between the creativity-oriented goals of national policy, rooted in Suzhi Jiaoyu (Quality Education), and more rigid, exam-focused practices at local levels. Findings highlighted

teachers' limited agency and called for more context-sensitive approaches that preserve music's expressive potential. This work contributes to wider discussions on educational equity, cultural relevance, and the role of the arts in standardised systems.

2. Student Voices Take the Stage: Lights Camera Score 2025



5 - Credits: Dr Gregory Boardman, Three Stones Media, English Chamber Orchestra, Calderdale Council



6 - Credits: Three Stones Media, English Chamber Orchestra, Calderdale Council



7 - Credits: Three Stones Media, English Chamber Orchestra, Calderdale Council



8 - Credits: Three Stones Media, English Chamber Orchestra, Calderdale Council



9 - Credits: Three Stones Media, English Chamber Orchestra, Calderdale Council



10 - Credits: Three Stones Media, English Chamber Orchestra, Calderdale Council

In June 2025, the *Lights Camera Score* project, led by our doctoral colleague, Dr Gregory Boardman, returned to the Victoria Theatre in Halifax for a truly inspiring day of student-led creativity. As part of an ongoing collaboration with CultureDale and the English Chamber Orchestra (ECO), Primary school students took center stage to perform alongside the ECO, as well as presenting original animated films with stories and music that they composed themselves.

Every element, from the narrative to the score, was imagined and created by the students, showcasing their voices, ideas, and talents. This powerful celebration of youth expression demonstrated how storytelling and music can ignite curiosity, build confidence, and foster a deep sense of community. The event proudly built on the success of its 2024 debut and reaffirmed the transformative impact of the arts in education.

[Watch *Lights Camera Score* at Victoria Theatre Halifax](#)

[Watch Seeds of Hope: Calderdale | Essex | Tower Hamlets](#)

Contact: Dr Gregory Boardman (gregory.boardman.15@ucl.ac.uk)

3. From India to London: Harmony International Educational Music Tour Highlights 2025



11 - At St. Paul's Cathedral. Credits: Harmony International, Sandra Oberoi



12 - All performers. Credits: Harmony International, Sandra Oberoi



13 - At Royal College of Music. Credits: Harmony International, Sandra Oberoi



14 - Concert. Credits: Harmony International, Sandra Oberoi



15 - Concert. Credits: Harmony International, Sandra Oberoi



16 - At Convent Graden. Credits: Harmony International, Sandra Oberoi

The last week of June 2025 was one of the most treasured and transformative weeks in this year for a group of young music students from three organisations in India, Harmony The Music School in Bangalore, International School Hyderabad, and La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow.

For nearly a decade, one of our doctoral student colleagues, Sandra Oberoi, through her work at Harmony International, has been curating meaningful and robust concert and educational music experiences for young people helping them discover a deeper love for the arts and supporting their curiosity in various streams on music. From June 23rd to 29th, she brought together 26 students, aged 11-19, to enjoy an immersive educational music tour in London.

The children enjoyed a day of Musical Theatre workshops with Musical Director of The Lion King on the West End, Simone Manfredi, swing/dialect coach, Sandile Gontsana, and

swing/dance captain, Stephanie Tsz Mann Lo. Following the workshops, they watched the matinee show and were invited to catch a glimpse of all the action backstage while 'Nala,' Merryl Ansah, with Chippy Duncan, head of Puppets and Masks engaged with the team in a time of Q&A. What an exciting day for many of the young students for whom this was their first musical theatre show!

Sandra organised choral workshops with two of London's celebrated choral leaders, Nav Arles and Camilo Menjora, and led one herself, inviting students to end the day with a wonderful public performance of all that they learned at the Bloomsbury Baptist Church. Also featured as performers at this special concert were young artists and students from the Royal College of Music and Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Tiana Oberoi (voice), Catherine Chang (piano), Rebekah Yinuo Tan (piano), Dominic-Lucian Drutac (violin), with Tiara Michelle Oberoi (voice) and Aleyna Mohanraj (voice). On another day, the students from India had a chance to visit these two conservatories and enjoyed extensive tours of the facilities, sat in on student recitals and practice sessions and interacted with students and faculty.

As part of their exploration and learning, the group also visited St Paul's Cathedral where they were led on a private tour of this iconic building, had an opportunity to learn more about the Choir School and listened to Choral Evensong seated near the choir pews. They also watched Alice in Wonderland ballet at the Royal Opera House, Beethoven's Fifth at the Barbican, and were part of an industry talk with young musicians in the industry. They visited the Natural History Museum, indulged in a British afternoon tea experience, visited iconic places around London and bought a few treats for themselves, and souvenirs for family and friends.

The children expressed how exciting, engaging and empowering this educational music trip was for them, offering them clarity on various aspects of music, art and culture, making it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many while creating some beautiful memories together with their friends.

Contact: Sandra Oberoi (sandra@harmonybangalore.com)

4. Cumberlandia: A Weekend of Folk, Community, and Connection (25th-27th July 2025)



17 - Credits: Cumberlandia, Dr Dave Camlin



18 - Credits: Cumberlandia, Dr Dave Camlin

Cumberlandia: A Weekend of Folk, Community, and Connection 25th–27th July 2025 | Rivendell, near Workington, CA14 1SZ

Cumberlandia is a weekend of folk music and dancing at the lovely Rivendell festival site near Workington, CA14 1SZ. A boutique festival with a maximum 500 people on site, it's a

celebration of local artists and culture with some special guests from further afield. Set in acres of countryside carefully landscaped by Alwyn & Joanne Braniff and friends over a decade, it's a little magical corner of the world where you can relax and be yourself in good company.

Cumberlandia is shaped by the research-led practice of Dr Dave Camlin, whose work explores music as a vehicle for community, co-creation, and ecological connection. Unlike traditional festivals that treat audiences as passive consumers, Cumberlandia invites everyone—audience members, artists, and volunteers—into a shared experience of making and belonging.

Rooted in Dr Camlin's academic inquiry into collective music-making and relational practice, the festival is a living experiment in cultural democracy: a self-organised, temporary community where music becomes a bridge between people, places, and the more-than-human world.

As writer Kater Relton beautifully puts it in her essay on the festival, *Cumberlandia embodies the idea that "when we make music, we make kin,"* offering a moving reflection on music's ability to deepen connection and presence.

Learn more:

www.cumberlandia.co.uk

[Read Kater Relton's essay](#)

[Get tickets](#)

Contact: info@cumberlandia.co.uk

5. Call for Papers: Postgraduate Research in Music Education Symposium 2025

The screenshot shows the Trinity Laban website header with 'EN' and 'MENU' links. The main navigation bar includes 'STUDY', 'STUDENT LIFE', and 'WHAT'S ON'. A dark blue banner features the title 'Postgraduate Research in Music Education Symposium' and the details 'Online' and 'Fri 31 Oct 2025'. Below the banner, an 'Information' section is visible. The 'CALL FOR PAPERS' section states that Trinity Laban's Department of Music Education is pleased to invite papers for sharing at their 6th annual Postgraduate Research in Music Education Symposium. This international event is designed to offer a forum for current or recent masters or doctoral researchers across music education and participation to present their dissertation or personal project studies in a collegiate and supportive environment. The invitation is open to current students or recent graduates from UK or international postgraduate programmes. This will be of particular interest to those taking or intending to take their masters research further into doctoral study, varied practice settings or wider dissemination. To the right, a sidebar contains event details: 'Fri 31 Oct 2025', 'Online', and '10:00 - 15:00'. A green 'Submit Proposal' button is present, followed by a 'How to Submit:' section.

EN ▾

TRINITY LABAN

STUDY STUDENT LIFE WHAT'S ON

Postgraduate Research in Music Education Symposium

Online ————— Fri 31 Oct 2025

Information

CALL FOR PAPERS

Trinity Laban's Department of Music Education is pleased to invite papers for sharing at their 6th annual Postgraduate Research in Music Education Symposium. This international event is designed to offer a forum for current or recent masters or doctoral researchers across music education and participation to present their dissertation or personal project studies in a collegiate and supportive environment.

This invitation is open to current students or recent graduates from UK or international postgraduate programmes. This will be of particular interest to those taking or intending to take their masters research further into doctoral study, varied practice settings or wider dissemination.

Event Details:

- 📅 Fri 31 Oct 2025
- 📍 Online
- 🕒 10:00 - 15:00

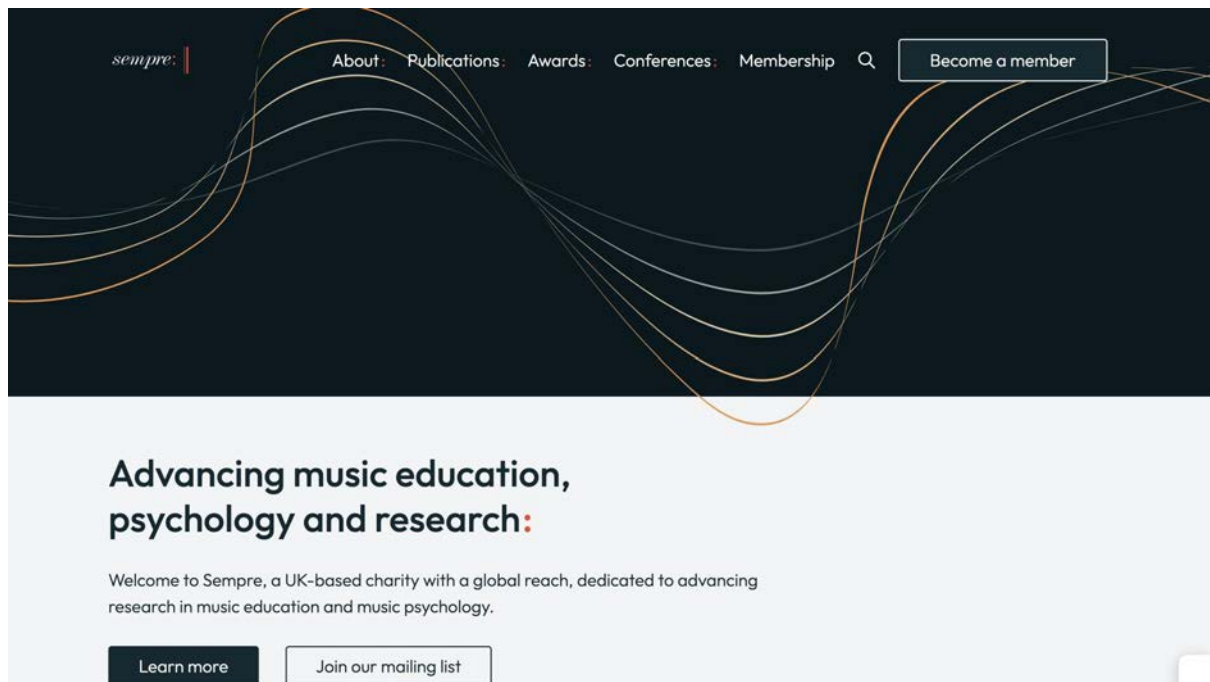
[Submit Proposal](#)

How to Submit:

Trinity Laban invites master's and doctoral researchers to present at its annual online symposium on 31 October 2025. Share your work on topics like inclusive practice, learner-led approaches, global perspectives, or music tech in education. Submit a 250-word abstract and short bio by 1 September 2025 to Dr Robert Wells (R.Wells@trinitylaban.ac.uk). It's free to attend and a great chance to connect with peers in a supportive setting.

[More info here.](#)

6. Call for Presentations: SEMPRES/ iMerc Student Study Day, 26th November 2025



The SEMPRES Autumn Conference will be a hybrid Student Study Day, taking place on Wednesday, 26th November 2025, from 11:00am to 2:00pm. The event will be held both in Room 938 and online, featuring a mix of student presentations and talks by invited speakers.

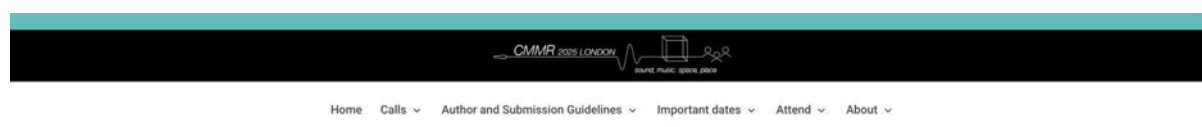
The event is open to all; doctoral students at any stage of their research, as well as those thinking of applying for doctoral study, are particularly welcome.

We invite proposals for presentations (15 minutes + 5 for Q&A) from doctoral students, on any aspect of music psychology or music education. Proposals should have the following structure (ideally on one side of A4):

- Name, institution, course of study + contact details
- Aims
- Methodological Approach
- Results
- Conclusion and discussion

Please submit your proposals to Eunice Tang (eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk), cc Professor Graham F Welch (graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk) by Wednesday 1st October 2025. We aim to be back in touch with applicants about the outcome by Friday 24th October.

7. Share Your Expertise: Submit a Tutorial for CMMR 2025



Call for Tutorial Proposals

The 2025 International Symposium on Computer Music Multidisciplinary Research (CMMR 2025) will be held at University College London's East London Campuses, from 3–7 November 2025.

We invite proposals for tutorials to be held as part of the first and last days of the symposium programme. Tutorials provide an excellent opportunity for researchers, practitioners, and educators to present teaching and learning content on topics relevant to the CMMR community.

Scope

Tutorials should be designed as interactive teaching and learning opportunities and should be of interest to a broad audience. As a guide, CMMR attracts a wide range of individuals from varied national and professional backgrounds. Represented disciplines include computer science and engineering; performance, composition and musicology; cognitive science and psychology; neuroscience and physiology; education; and design and interaction. Participants are drawn from various roles including established academics, post-doctoral and early career researchers; doctoral and graduate students; independent researchers and artists; industry practitioners and developers; and educators and accessibility advocates.

As a guide, previous editions of the symposium have included tutorials relating to various areas within: sound interaction and design theory; technical training in specific software or tools; strategies for musical/sound control, modelling and analysis; and scripting, algorithm or networking tools.

Call for Tutorials Proposal: CMMR 25

The 2025 International Symposium on Computer Music Multidisciplinary Research (CMMR 2025) will be held at University College London's East London Campuses, from 3–7 November 2025.

CMMR attracts a wide range of individuals from varied national and professional backgrounds. Represented disciplines include computer science and engineering; performance, composition and musicology; cognitive science and psychology; neuroscience and physiology; education; and design and interaction. Participants are drawn from various roles including established academics, post-doctoral and early career researchers; doctoral and graduate students; independent researchers and artists; industry practitioners and developers; and educators and accessibility advocates.

More information can be found here:

<https://cmmr2025.prism.cnrs.fr/call-for-tutorials/>

Tutorial proposals should use the templates available here:

<https://cmmr2025.prism.cnrs.fr/tutorial-submission-guidelines/>

8. New Podcast Episode: The Science and Soul of Singing, *Why Music Matters Now More Than Ever*



NEW PODCAST EPISODE - OUT NOW

The Science and Soul of Singing: Daisy Fancourt & Howard Goodall on why we need music more than ever

Discover the power of music in the latest podcast from the Sing Up Foundation, featuring renowned composer Howard Goodall and UCL's Professor Daisy Fancourt. In *The Science and Soul of Singing*, they explore how music supports mental health, builds community, and connects us on a deeper level, especially in challenging times. It's a rich, inspiring conversation about why we need music more than ever.

[Listen now on YouTube](#)

9. New Research Spotlight: Music Learning Among Retired Adults in South Korea

The screenshot displays the Sage Journals website interface. At the top, the Sage Journals logo is on the left, and a search bar with the text 'Search this journal' and 'Enter search terms...' is in the center. To the right of the search bar, there are links for 'Advanced search', 'I have access via: University College London', 'Access/Profile', and a shopping cart icon. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Browse by discipline' and 'Information for'. The main header area features the journal title 'Research Studies in Music Education' and the Sage Journals logo. Below this, the journal's impact factor is listed as 'Impact Factor: 1.6 / 5-Year Impact Factor: 1.9'. There are buttons for 'Journal Homepage' and 'Submission Guidelines'. The article title 'Exploring motivation for older adults in South Korea to engage in musical instrument learning after retirement' is prominently displayed, along with the author's name 'Jeehye Hwang' and a link to 'View all authors and affiliations'. The article is marked as 'OnlineFirst' and has a DOI link: 'https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X251338247'. Below the article title, there are links for 'Contents', 'PDF/EPUB', 'Cite article', 'Share options', 'Information, rights and permissions', 'Metrics and citations', and 'Figures and tables'. The abstract text is visible, starting with 'This study explored the motivations for older adults in South Korea to learn musical instruments after retirement. As the global population ages, interest in the dynamics of aging and the potential benefits of musical engagement in later life is growing. Although previous research has investigated the benefits of playing musical instruments, what motivates older adults to engage in musical instrument learning is understudied. This study uses interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyze interviews with 10 participants actively learning musical instruments at local community centers, deriving two group themes: (1) coping with life changes and (2) developing musical aspirations. The findings reveal that participants' motivations intersected with a life transition due to retiring from full-time work and entering older adulthood. They expected that learning and playing musical instruments at all levels would'. There are also two 'Ad served by Google' banners on the right side of the page.

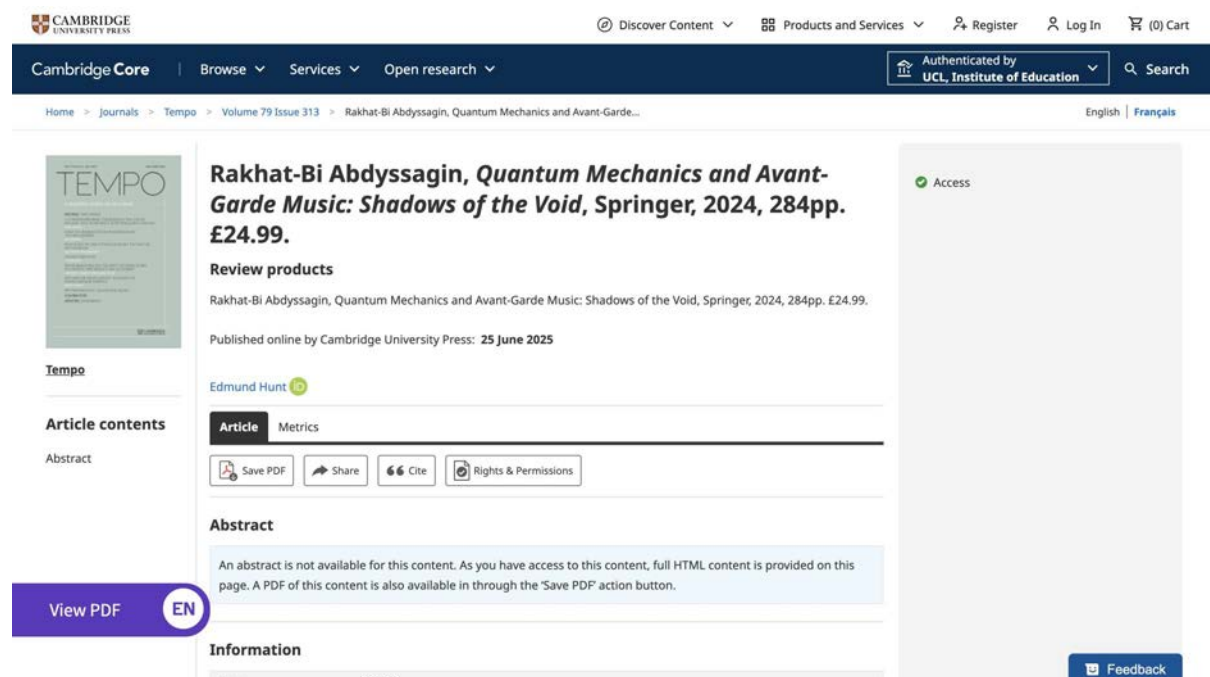
Dr Jeehye Hwang has just published an insightful new article in *Research Studies in Music Education*! Her research explores what inspires older adults in South Korea to start learning musical instruments after retirement. Hwang found that retirees are driven not only by a love for music but also by a desire to stay connected socially, boost their confidence, and keep their minds sharp. This exciting work provides great insights into how music education can support healthy aging.

You can read the full article:

Hwang, J. (2025). Exploring motivation for older adults in South Korea to engage in musical instrument learning after retirement. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 0(0).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X251338247>

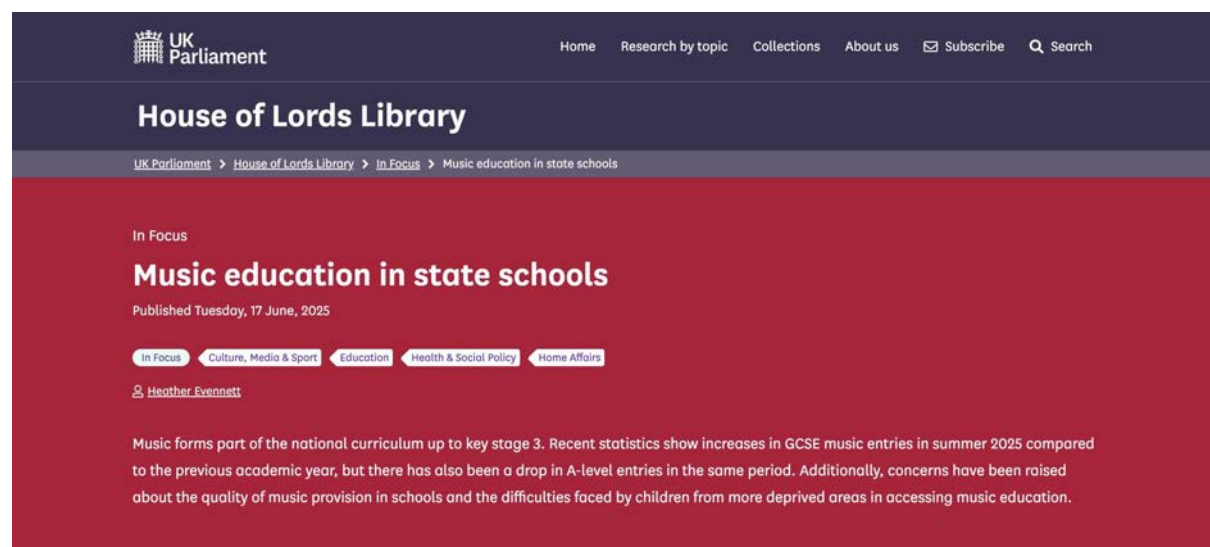
10. Recent Reviews of Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void



The screenshot shows the Cambridge Core website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Discover Content', 'Products and Services', 'Register', 'Log In', and a shopping cart. Below this is a dark blue header with 'Cambridge Core' and navigation options like 'Browse', 'Services', and 'Open research'. A search bar is on the right. The main content area shows a book review for 'Rakhat-Bi Abdyssagin, *Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void*, Springer, 2024, 284pp. £24.99.' The review is by Edmund Hunt and is published in the journal 'Tempo'. The review products section shows the book title and price. The abstract section states that an abstract is not available for this content. There are buttons for 'Save PDF', 'Share', 'Cite', and 'Rights & Permissions'. A 'View PDF' button is also visible on the left side of the page.

Two recent reviews of Rakhat-Bi Abdyssagin's *Quantum Mechanics and Avant-Garde Music: Shadows of the Void* (Springer Nature, 2024) may be of interest. Edmund Hunt provides a musicological reading in *Tempo* (Cambridge University Press), available [HERE](#), while Denis Noble discusses the work from a physics perspective in the *International Journal of Quantum Foundations*, accessible [HERE](#). Both reviews reflect on the book's interdisciplinary approach linking quantum theory and contemporary music.

11. Policy Watch: Music Education in UK State Schools



The screenshot shows the UK Parliament House of Lords Library website. The header includes the UK Parliament logo and navigation links like 'Home', 'Research by topic', 'Collections', 'About us', 'Subscribe', and 'Search'. The main content area is titled 'House of Lords Library' and features a breadcrumb trail: 'UK Parliament > House of Lords Library > In Focus > Music education in state schools'. The article is titled 'Music education in state schools' and is published on Tuesday, 17 June, 2025. The author is Heather Evennett. The article text discusses the national curriculum up to key stage 3, recent statistics on GCSE music entries, and concerns about the quality of music provision in schools.

A new House of Lords Library briefing highlights growing inequality in music education across state schools in England. Despite being part of the National Curriculum, access to music varies widely, with disadvantaged areas hit hardest. While Music Education Hubs aim to bridge the gap, funding pressures, teacher shortages, and accountability measures continue to undermine consistent, high-quality provision.

[Read the full briefing](#)

12. Upcoming UCL iMerc Research Seminar

Please note that our seminar series will begin again in 2025–2026 on 22nd October 2025. Please mark this date on your diary. If you're interested in sharing your work, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch. Thank you for all your continued engagement!

13. Congratulations!

We are delighted to share that three of our MPhil/PhD researchers, Hazel Baxter, Shike Guo and Zeinab El-Khateeb, have successfully completed their upgrade reviews in recent weeks! Congratulations to them and to everyone who supported their achievements.

14. 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