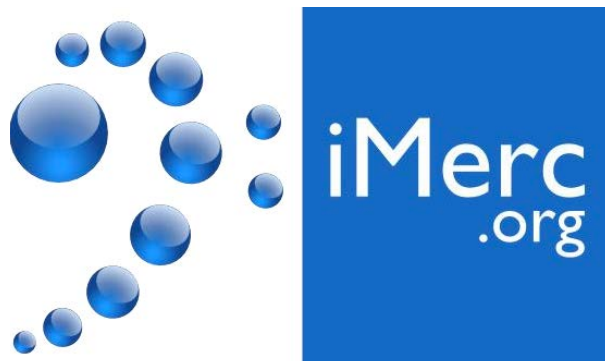




UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 19, October 2025

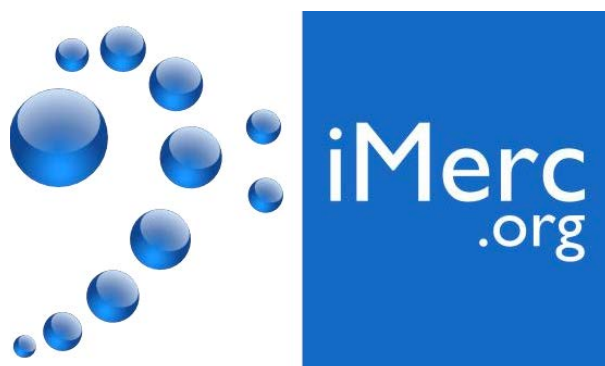
About us

Over the past 20 years, we have been developing the International Music Education Research Centre (iMerc) at the Institute of Education to celebrate and disseminate our extensive research in the field of music education, broadly conceived. In the beginning, we often held our research seminars over several days, such as in different European cities to allow our doctoral students to have more intensive support as a community, to listen to local researchers, and to share their ongoing research journeys. These 'Travelling Research Seminars' visited Ireland (Limerick), Spain (Barcelona), Italy (Bologna) and Sweden (Malmö) and helped us to establish our international profile. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, we have been meeting more regularly, both online and in person, to continue to share new research and insights related to diverse topics in music education. 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. In line with our mission, the monthly seminars continue to foster a sense of shared endeavour amongst colleagues who are based in the UK, across mainland Europe (such as Portugal, Germany, Greece, Skandinavia), Asia (China, including Hong Kong), Latin America, USA and Australia. Opportunity is taken each month to be informed of research news and various current

research projects, including opportunities 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 iMerc Sesearch seminar will take place on **Wednesday, 29 October 2025**, 11am GMT via Zoom and in room 943 at the IOE. We are delighted to welcome our guest speakers: Dr Mikael Pennanen (Åbo Akademi University), Dr Pia Bygdeus (Royal Swedish Academy of Music) and Dr David Johnson (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences). We will also hear from Eunice Tang, who will be sharing her doctoral research with us, having just submitted her thesis! We are pleased to invite you to join us either in person or online [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

In This Issue



1 - Credit: iMerc

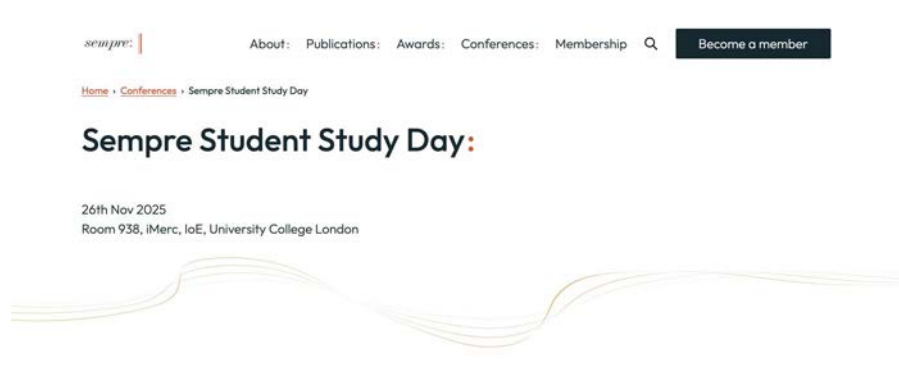
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1. *Upcoming SEMPRES/iMerc Student Study Day, Wednesday 26 November 2025*
 2. *Upcoming Event: Sustainability in Music Hubs, 13 November 2025*
 3. *Upcoming Event: Trinity Laban 6th Annual Research in Music Education Symposium, 31 October 2025*
 4. *Newly Published: Singing, Health and Wellbeing in Young Children*
 5. *Call for Submissions: Organised Sound Vol. 32, No. 2*
 6. *Call for Papers: ISME Research Commission Pre-Conference Seminar*
 7. *Call for Papers: Van Lawrence Prize 2026*
 8. *Call for Participants: Digital Technologies in Music Teaching*

9. UCL iMerc Seminar, 29 October 2025

10. Congratulations!

11. Contact us

Upcoming Sempre/iMerc Student Study Day, 26 November 2025

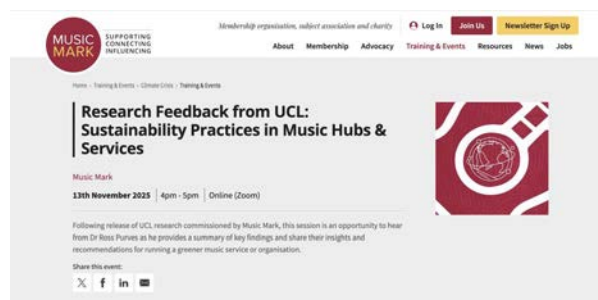


2 - Credit: Sempre

Please note that our iMerc seminar series will be held jointly with Sempre as the SEMPRES/iMerc Student Study Day on Wednesday, 26 November 2025, from 11:00am to 2:00pm. The event will take place both in Room 938 at the IOE, UCL and online, featuring a range of engaging student presentations. We encourage you to save the date and join us for this exciting session!

If you're interested in presenting your work at a future event, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to get in touch. Thank you for your ongoing enthusiasm and support! For more information on Sempre, its publications and awards, including support for students, check out <https://sempre.org.uk>.

Upcoming Event: Sustainability in Music Hubs, 13 November 2025



3 - Credit: Music Mark

You're invited to join Music Mark's online session, *Research Feedback from UCL: Sustainability Practices in Music Hubs & Services*, on Thursday 13 November at 4pm (UK time) via Zoom. Dr Ross Purves (r.purves@ucl.ac.uk) will present findings from the research commissioned by Music Mark and conducted by UCL, which explores how UK music hubs and services are responding to environmental challenges, what practices exist, what barriers are encountered, and what recommendations emerge. There will also be time for discussion and Q&A. The report and summary are already available online.

Book via [Music Mark's site](#) / [Event Link](#)

Upcoming Event: Trinity Laban 6th Annual Research in Music Education Symposium, 31 October 2025

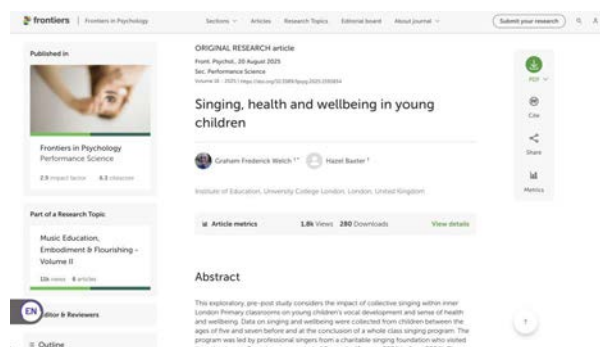


4 - Credit: Trinity Laban

Dr Robert Wells (R.Wells@trinitylaban.ac.uk) invites colleagues to attend Trinity Laban's online Postgraduate Research in Music Education Symposium on Friday 31 October, 9:45 am–5 pm. The event is free via Zoom and offers a valuable opportunity to explore current research across diverse areas of music education. Hosted by Trinity Laban, this sixth annual symposium provides a supportive forum for current and recent postgraduate researchers in music education and community music to share their work. Presentations will cover topics from instrumental and classroom teaching to participatory and community practice, bringing together an international network of educators and researchers.

Tickets are available via Eventbrite [HERE](#).

Newly Published: Singing, Health and Well-being in Young Children



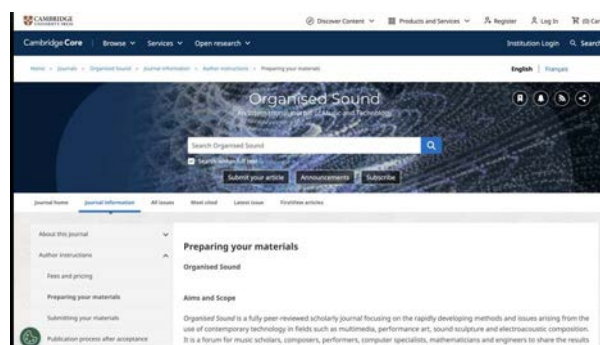
5 - Credit: Frontiers in Psychology

A new open-access article by Professor Graham Welch and Hazel Baxter has just been published in *Frontiers in Psychology*: "Singing, Health and Wellbeing in Young Children". The study explored the impact of a whole-class singing programme in London primary schools, finding significant improvements in children's singing skills and positive feedback on confidence and enjoyment.

Read the full article: [Frontiers in Psychology](#)

Welch, G. F. and Baxter, H. (2025) Singing, health and wellbeing in young children. *Front. Psychol.* 16:1595834. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1595834

Call for Submissions: Organised Sound Vol. 32, No. 2



6 - Credit: Cambridge University Press

Sonic Art and the Future of Education – Cross-disciplinary Perspectives

Organised Sound invites submissions for Volume 32, Number 2, a themed issue exploring how sonic art can shape the future of education across disciplines. The issue welcomes papers addressing collaborations between artists and educators, innovative pedagogies, inclusion, technology, and cross-curricular creativity in both formal and informal learning contexts.

Potential topics:

Submissions may engage with, but are not limited to, the following topics in relation to sonic arts and education:

- Collaboration
- Community-based initiatives involving the sonic arts that point to future directions in music education
- Innovative approaches to pedagogy using sonic art
- Sonic creativity and its role in education
- Acoustic ecology and the future of education
- Cross-disciplinary partnerships involving sonic arts in educational contexts
- Sonic arts and the STEAM curriculum
- Teacher education involving sonic arts projects
- Gender in sound and/or music education
- Democracy and inclusion in sound and/or music education
- The evolution of assessment in sound and/or music education
- Ownership and authenticity in sound and/or music education
- Extended reality (VR/AR/MR) in sound and/or music education

Publication Date: August 2027

Submission Deadline: 15 September 2026

Issue Co-ordinators: David Holland (d.w.holland@ucl.ac.uk) and Ross Purves (r.purves@ucl.ac.uk)

Submission details & author guidelines: [Cambridge University Press – Organised Sound](#)

Call for Papers: ISME Research Commission Pre-Conference Seminar



The ISME Research Commission Pre-Conference Seminar (20–24 July 2026, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario) invites full paper submissions of up to 3,000 words, along with a 400-word abstract. The theme is "Music Education Research in a Diverse and Uncertain World? Opportunities and Challenges." Accepted full papers (and their abstracts) will be published in the seminar proceedings, and authors may also be invited to present at the 37th ISME World Conference in Montreal.

Abstract deadline: 31 October 2025

For submission guidelines and more information, visit the ISME call for papers page linked [HERE](#).

Call for Papers: Van Lawrence Prize 2026

The British Voice Association (BVA) invites submissions for the prestigious Van Lawrence Prize, to be presented at the BVA Research Forum on Saturday 24 January 2026 (online). Those wishing to apply should submit the following by midnight, Monday 27 October 2025, to the BVA Administrator at administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk, marked *Van Lawrence submission*:

- An abstract of no more than 250 words (without your name)
- A brief biography of up to 100 words

Acknowledgement will be sent upon receipt.

Call for Participants: Digital Technologies in Music Teaching

Invitation to Support Research on Digital Technologies in Instrumental and Vocal Teaching

Helen Hines (helen.hines@ed.ac.uk), a violin teacher and music examiner completing doctoral research at the University of Edinburgh, is inviting all instrumental and vocal teachers to complete a short anonymous questionnaire on how digital tools are shaping music teaching across the UK. The study has full ethical approval, and participation is voluntary.

Take part: <https://shorturl.at/z9lWm>

More info : <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/digitaltech>

UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 29 October 2025



8 - Photo credit: Dr David Thorarinn Johnson



9 - Photo credit: Dr Pia Bygdeus

Guest Speakers: Dr Pia Bygdeus & Dr David Thorarinn Johnson

Topic: Sångkvart: Assessing the Impact of Daily Singing in Primary School Education

Pia and David's Abstract:

Group singing has historically been a core activity in compulsory music education in primary schools both in the Nordic countries and across Northern Europe. Exposure to high quality

singing instruction has been shown to support children's vocal development and studies suggest singing may have transfer effects on well-being and academic achievement in subjects other than music. Concerns have been raised in recent decades that singing in school music education is becoming less prominent. Large-scale singing education initiatives are currently underway in Sweden, Norway and Denmark to bolster school singing practices and promote broader participation in high quality vocal music education for all children. Research is needed to show how singing may be successfully integrated into the school day. The present study sought to assess the implementation of an integrated daily singing activity in Sweden for primary school children and to assess the impact daily singing activities may have on learning in music. Children in four randomly chosen schools (N= 250) aged 8-10 were offered a fifteen-minute daily singing lesson over five weeks in their homeroom classrooms led by their music teacher. Participating teachers developed their lesson plans according to an evidence-based framework for high quality vocal music pedagogy. Daily singing was shown to impact positively on student learning in music, and to strengthen relationships between student and teacher.

Dr Pia Bygdéus (pia.bygdeus@musikaliskaakademien) senior lecturer/ass. prof., researcher in music education, at Department of Artistic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Karlstad University/Ingesund School of Music, Sweden, research leader for Singing, health and well-being in school – a societal matter, and research secretary at The Royal Swedish Academy of Music, Sweden. Another ongoing research project for Bygdéus is Eric Ericson – musical knowledge development. Pia also works as a freelance musician; pianist, conductor, répétiteur, church musician, teacher and music producer. She moves musically freely between different genres, and enjoys working in cross-border projects, in chamber music, chamber ensembles, big bands, choirs as well as orchestras. As a conductor, Pia has conducted contemporary chamber operas, led big bands, orchestras, choirs, in various locations and different concert arenas. For Sveriges Radio P2 Live she has been active as a music producer for many years. Artistic and scientific education at the University of Gothenburg and Lund University, with research interests: musical learning, musical leadership, practical research and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Dr David Johnson (David.Thorarinn.Johnson@hvl.no) is Associate Professor of Music at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway. He is a co-founder of the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Music Education (DIME) Special Interest Group of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) and leads the Singing Maps initiative to support indigenous and traditional Nordic singing through music education. His research focuses on singing in music education. He serves on the scientific advisory board of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music's *Sjungande barn (Singing Children)* initiative.



10 - Photo credit: Dr Mikael Pennanen-Dahlbäck

Guest Speaker: Dr Mikael Pennanen-Dahlbäck

Topic: Technology and Elementary Vocal Training: Insights from a Doctoral Design-Based Study

Mikael's Abstract:

In this presentation, I will highlight some key stages of my doctoral journey in the field of paediatric singing pedagogy, focusing on the development and testing of a technology-facilitated vocal training programme for children. The work was motivated by a concern, shared by many music educators and experts, that Finnish schoolchildren's singing skills seemed less developed than might be expected, a situation likely linked to the lack of systematic vocal training in elementary (primary) schools and the limited confidence of many classroom teachers in teaching singing.

This raised an educational question of how we might nurture children's natural capacity for singing in ways that are both accessible and effective. At the same time, their vocal development could also be seen as a societal concern, given the well-documented benefits of singing for individual and communal well-being. To address these issues, I designed an artefact in the form of animated video-based singing exercises for Year 2 pupils. The study was conducted as an educational design research project, involving two rounds of classroom interventions with one test group and one control group. Alongside expert panel ratings of children's singing, I collected questionnaire data on self-efficacy and documented the perspectives of teachers and learners. The process was iterative, allowing the artefact to be refined between cycles, and it combined both quantitative and qualitative insights.

The results suggested that technology-based vocal training can support children's singing development, with notable improvements observed in the test group compared to the control group. At the same time, the study revealed gender-specific patterns in how children responded to the intervention, pointing to areas that require further attention. As the test population was small (fewer than 20 pupils), the findings should be interpreted with caution and viewed as indicative rather than conclusive. Such limitations are typical of doctoral projects, where time and resources often restrict the scale of classroom interventions. Importantly, the research also highlighted the need for teacher involvement, especially in guiding more complex aspects of vocal training.

In reflecting on this doctoral journey, I will touch on some lessons I have drawn about combining technology with pedagogy, the challenges of conducting design-based research in schools, and possible implications for music education. I will also offer a few reflections that may be of interest to doctoral students considering similar research approaches.

Dr Mikael Pennanen-Dahlbäck (mikpenna@abo.fi) is a University Lecturer in Music Education at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Åbo Akademi University, Vaasa, Finland, where he has worked since 2010. In his day-to-day role, he teaches music education to student teachers for primary school (Grades 1–6), supervises bachelor's and master's theses, and pursues his own research. He recently defended his doctoral thesis on technology-facilitated elementary vocal training, a design-based study exploring how animated video exercises can support children's vocal development. The full thesis is available online at: <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-389-095-4>

His research interests include children's singing pedagogy, vocal science, educational design research, and the role of digital tools in classroom music teaching. Alongside his academic work, he has professional experience as a singing teacher, choral vocal coach, and classical tenor.

Speaker: Eunice S Y Tang

Topic: An Exploratory Study of the Experiences of Autistic Students in Higher Music Education in England



11 - Photo Credit: Eunice S Y Tang

Eunice's Abstract:

The disclosure of disability among students in UK Higher Education (HE) is steadily increasing. In music, the proportion of students self-reporting a disability has risen from 14.3% in 2014/15 to 27.8% in 2023/24 (HESA, 2020; HESA, 2025). While inclusion is a guiding principle and formal support structures exist, the perspectives of autistic music students remain largely absent from academic discourse in Higher Music Education (HME). This doctoral research addresses this gap by investigating the lived experiences of autistic students in music, an area that has not previously received scholarly attention.

Drawing on narrative inquiry, four student accounts were collected and analysed, complemented by semi-structured interviews with twelve disability officers across Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs). The research examined how autistic traits were described by both students and staff, and how these informed institutional responses. Findings show that autistic music students experience distinctive strengths as well as significant challenges in their studies. However, these dual experiences are not adequately addressed by existing disability provision. Current support was found to be predominantly reactive and needs-based, with limited recognition of the unique capabilities and perspectives that autistic musicians bring. Provision also remained largely generic across universities and conservatoires, with inconsistencies before and after any official diagnosis.

The study developed two frameworks: Framework I: Strengths-Based Autism Inclusion (Theory & Design) in Higher Music Education (SBAI-TD-HME) and Framework II: Strengths-Based Autism Inclusion (Practice & Pedagogy) in Higher Music Education (SBAI-PP-HME). These frameworks, one theoretical and the other practice-oriented, advocate a shift away from deficit-based models of support toward subject-specific, strengths-based approaches. The research calls for a reconceptualisation of inclusion in Higher Music Education,

recognising and leveraging the distinctive contributions of autistic and neurodivergent students to enrich both their studies and personal growth through more empowering, responsive, and sustainable support systems.

References:

Higher Education Statistics Agency. (HESA) (2025). *Table-44- HE student enrolments by subject of study and disability marker 2014/15 to 2023/24*. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-44>

Higher Education Statistics Agency. (HESA) (2020). *Table 7- HE student enrolments by subject of study and disability marker 2014/15 to 2018/10*. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-7>

Eunice S Y Tang (eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk) is a musician–researcher whose work examines and advances inclusion in higher music education (HME). Her doctoral research at UCL investigates the underrepresentation of autistic musicians, advocating for their voices and experiences within HME. Alongside her research, she provides specialist one-to-one Study Skills and Strategy Support for autistic and ADHD students in higher education.

Eunice joined Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in 2024 as Lecturer in Music Education, contributing to the MA Music Education, MA Music Education and Performance, and MEd Music Education (Online) programmes. As Module Leader for *Music's Pedagogies*, a core module that spans the full academic year, she connects academic theory with pedagogical practice through multimedia assessments. She also leads Research Lab in Music Education and Participation Mentored Group, fostering inquiry-led and collaborative learning among MA and MMus students. In addition, she supervises Master's research projects and education placements focused on widening participation, and serves as a Generalist Examiner for BMus and MMus recital assessments across the Faculty of Music.

As a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Eunice contributes more widely to teaching and research as a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Nottingham's Department of Music, an Invited Speaker for the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA), and a member of the Coordination Team for UCL's International Music Education Research Centre (iMerc).

13. Congratulations!



12 - Credit: Three Stones Media



13 - Credit: Three Stones Media

Congratulations: Lights Camera Score Wins UNESCO ASPnet Award

We are thrilled to congratulate our doctoral colleague Dr Gregory Boardman (gregory.boardman.15@ucl.ac.uk) who led the Lights Camera Score projects, a collaboration involving schools across Calderdale, Essex, and Tower Hamlets, for being honoured in the UNESCO ASPnet “Seeds of Hope for a Better Future” competition. The winning entry featured animation, music, writing, and performances by children, and was praised by the distinguished jury as *“an exemplary cross-disciplinary project... with a clear focus on sustainability and the serious nature of the Seeds of Hope themes.”* This recognition highlights how imaginative, collaborative arts and music education projects can speak powerfully to global themes of sustainability, hope, and community.

For more details about the UNESCO award and the project, see the [UNESCO UK announcement](#) and the [Three Stones Media website](#).

14. Contact Us

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

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

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