One-day interactive conference for instrumental music teachers and performers

27 October 2018

The University of Sheffield, UK
Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to the Sound Teaching Conference 2018!
During the conference researchers of the Department of Music at The University of Sheffield will share research findings and explore how these can be applied to music performance and pedagogy in practice. This event will consist of interactive presentations and workshops, and an opportunity to share ideas and experiences in an informal setting.

Topics include communication and expression in choirs and instrumental teaching and learning; advanced skills such as timbre in piano performance and improvisation in a classical idiom; decision making and self-organisation in ensembles; performance confidence and anxiety.

We would like to hear your feedback on the conference content and workshops, as your ideas can inform future directions and applications of research. Collaboration with teachers and performers helps us to continue to develop and refine research questions and directions. Thus, research can inform practice and vice versa.

We hope you will enjoy the conference!

The Sound Teaching Conference Team,
Henrique Meissner, Renee Timmers, Shen Li and Nicola Pennill

Organising Committee
Henrique Meissner
Renee Timmers
Nicola Pennill
Shen Li

Conference Volunteers
Ioanna Filippidi
Katy Maichel Ordonez
Marita Moen
Practical information

The main conference venue will be at The Diamond Building, 32 Leavygreave Road, Sheffield S3 7RD - https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/maps/diamond, nearest tram stop: University of Sheffield). However, we will move part of the afternoon session to the Jessop Building (Department of Music) nearby The Diamond. Locations are shown in the map below.

The main conference venues are highlighted in squares; Nearby tram stops are marked as stars.

After conference drinks

You are very welcome to join us for drinks after the conference. We are going to meet up in the University Arms, 197 Brook Hill, S3 7HG Sheffield.

Other information

Twitter account: SoundTeaching_2018
Conference Website: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/music/sound-teaching

*More information about research at the Department of Music at The University of Sheffield can be found at www.sheffield.ac.uk/music/research/
## Conference Schedule

**Venue: Diamond Workrooms 1 and 2**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>9.30-10.00</td>
<td>Registration, coffee &amp; tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00-10.15</td>
<td>Conference opening – Henrique Meissner</td>
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### Expressiveness and communication

*Chair: Nicola Pennill*

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.15-10.55</td>
<td>Workshop 1: Teaching children and teenagers expressive music performance – Henrique Meissner</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.55-11.30</td>
<td>Workshop 2: Communicative Choir – Michael Bonshor</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.30-11.50</td>
<td>Coffee &amp; tea</td>
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### Performers' confidence and enjoyment

*Chair: Stephanie Pitts*

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>11.50-12.20</td>
<td>Workshop 3: Improving the performance experience: what can we learn from sport psychology? – Mary Hawkes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.25-12.55</td>
<td>Workshop 4: Teachers’ role in the enhancement of students’ performance experience – Elsa Guevara</td>
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<td>12.55-13.40</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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**Venue: Jessop Building, Department of Music**

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<th>Ensemble Room 1</th>
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<td><strong>Advanced skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning in context</strong></td>
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<td><em>Chair: Renee Timmers</em></td>
<td><em>Chair: Michael Bonshor</em></td>
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<td>14.20-15.00 Workshop 7: Visual communication of timbre and touch in piano performance – Shen Li</td>
<td>Presentation 1: Singing and signing with deaf and hearing-impaired young people – Gail Dudson</td>
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<td>Presentation 2: How music educators’ past experiences as students influence their current attitudes towards teaching – Cláudia Braz Nunes</td>
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**Venue: Diamond Workroom 1**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>15.10-15.30</td>
<td>Presentation 3: Musical learning for life – Stephanie Pitts</td>
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| 15.30-16.15 | **Sharing best practice**  
|            | *Chair: Henrique Meissner*  
|            | Coffee & tea                                                                             |
| 16.15-16.45 | **Music performance teaching, research and technologies**  
|            | Plenary discussion – Renee Timmers                                                        |
Abstracts

Teaching children and teenagers expressive music performance
Henrique Meissner
(Workshop 1, 10:15 – 10:55, Diamond Workroom 1 & 2)

How do young musicians (aged 8-16) learn to perform expressively, and how can teachers help their pupils to improve their expression in music performance? Some might ask, is it possible to teach pupils to play expressively? In my research I looked at these questions and investigated and tested methods for teaching children and teenagers expressive music performance. In a short presentation and workshop, I will share findings from these studies, and we will explore together how questions and dialogue between tutors and students are at the heart of teaching and learning expressiveness.

Communicative choir
Michael Bonshor
(Workshop 2, 10:55-11:30, Diamond Workroom 1)

During this workshop, there will be very brief explanations of some of Michaels’ research findings, and demonstrations of some of the practical exercises and activities that he has developed to help with confidence building and communication for singers. These include gentle relaxation, breathing exercises and postural work; musical team building exercises to encourage cohesion, co-operation and collaboration; and, of course, some singing. The workshop will be very interactive, with lots of opportunities for practical participation. This often descends into ‘structured silliness’ before the end of the session, but the whole workshop is designed to be fun, constructive and confidence-building for all participants.

Improving the performance experience: what can we learn from sport psychology?
Mary Hawkes
(Workshop 3, 11:50 – 12:20, Diamond Workroom 1)

Traditionally, performance preparation for musicians has focused on advice including ‘do your practice’ and ‘don’t be nervous’. Psychological skills training, commonplace in sport, shows that there is another approach to performance preparation. In my research, six piano teachers, including the researcher, investigated the benefits of deliberately teaching imagery, relaxation, positive self talk, goal setting, performance routines and simulation training. Findings showed that performance routines were the most effective strategy for both teacher and pupil. In this presentation the content, development and benefits of these routines will be discussed and explored.
**Teachers’ role in the enhancement of students’ performance experience**

Elsa Guevara  
*(Workshop 4, 12:25 – 12:55, Diamond Workroom 1)*

While anxiety is the most researched emotion in music performance, performances are often assessed as being joyful experiences. What factors may contribute to performance-related joy? A recent research investigated the last ‘highly enjoyable’ performance of 625 musicians. Notably, most performers attributed their joy in that performance to a sense of contribution and connection with the audience. A self-transcendent approach to performance and joy appeared to be associated. Moreover, both, approaches to performance and emotions, appeared to be socio-culturally shaped. These results have profound teaching implications as they suggest that teachers play a role in the way their students conceptualize and experience their performances.

**"The journey back home": mobilising natural improvisational skills in classically-trained musicians.**

Jonathan W. Ayerst  
*(Workshop 5, 13:40 – 14:20, Jessop Building, Department Music, Ensemble Room 1)*

Contemporary training in classical music generally prioritises technical accomplishment and deference to the printed score (an approach known as Werktreue) over composition and improvisation. As a result, classical musicians, intimidated by the concept of improvisation, and embarrassed by initial attempts, often feel alienated from creative music making. After an introduction in which Jonathan will detail some aspects of his own journey from interpretive performer to fully-engaged improviser, this workshop will invite participants to share their perspectives and impressions of improvisation, before exploring practical techniques and approaches by which musicians can begin to improvise on classical models and examples.

**Leadership and rehearsal in ensembles**

Nicola Pennill  
*(Workshop 6, 13:40 – 14:20, Jessop Building, Department Music, Ensemble Room 2)*

This workshop will explore experiences of teachers and performers working with ensembles, including themes of leadership and rehearsal methods. Examples from the working practices of the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO), widely regarded as one of the world’s leading chamber orchestras, will be used to illustrate the process. As a small orchestra without a conductor, the ACO’s distinctive style arises from the combination of strong leadership from its director and contributions from all members. Using a roadmap model which tracks practices and processes through stages of performance preparation, practical examples and
underlying principles will be explored, which can be adapted and applied in ensembles of different sizes and types.

**Visual communication of timbre and touch in piano performance**

Shen Li

*(Workshop 7, 14:20 – 15:00, Jessop Building, Department Music, Ensemble Room 1)*

In an experiment we examined the accuracy of timbre communication in piano performance and the role of visual information in this process. Three pianists were asked to play music pieces with ten touch qualities (bright/dark, sharp/round, tense/relax, light/heavy, dry/velvety) while 21 music students gave their evaluation of perceived timbre after watching/listening to either audio-only, video-only, or audio-video recordings. The results show that it is possible for pianists to communicate timbral intentions to listeners, and that both visual and auditory information contribute to this communication. This suggests that pianists should learn to communicate sound via bodily movements. We will explore the implications of these findings for piano teaching.

**Singing and Signing with Deaf and Hearing Impaired young people**

Gail Dudson

*(Presentation 1, 14:20 – 14:40, Jessop Building, Department Music, Ensemble Room 2)*

This presentation is based on a study with the Singing and Signing Choir at Doncaster School for the Deaf. The study explored the musical and social benefits of good quality music making for Deaf and Hearing Impaired (DHI) young people; the impact of effective practice in enabling DHI young people to participate in, and enjoy, creative music making. The study explored effective strategies for teaching DHI young people music skills of pitch, pulse, rhythm and expression. Additionally, the study investigated ways to create expressive, meaningful and musical signing. The presentation will be illustrated with video material and good practice handouts will be available.

**How music educators’ past experiences as students influence their current attitudes toward**

Cláudia Braz Nunes

*(Presentation 2, 14:40 – 15:00, Jessop Building, Department Music, Ensemble Room 2)*

The investigation of musical life histories is a major area of interest within the field of lifelong engagement with music. Research has shown that meaningful musical experiences have a strong impact on musical careers. However, there are fewer examples of researchers focussing on the lives of music teachers. This research reports findings from 26 life history interviews and 64 detailed questionnaires carried out with Portuguese music educators exploring their current perceptions as well as their musical life stories. Analysis of these
musical histories reveals a complex interaction between their past experiences as learners and their current attitudes towards music education.

**Musical learning for life**
Stephanie Pitts
*Presentation 3, 15:10 – 15:30, Diamond Workroom 1*

My research on musical life histories (Pitts, 2012) helps to reveal how foundations for a fulfilling musical life are laid in childhood, through the opportunities, encouragement and skills fostered in the home, school and beyond. Instrumental teachers often play a particularly strong role in developing young people's musical confidence and identity, and this presentation will consider examples of how this works well - and less well - for learners in their childhood and in later life. The benefits of musical instrument learning will be reviewed from the perspective of adults looking back at the musical highlights and regrets of their lives, and the case made for encouraging longer-term thinking in music education, to prepare children for lifelong musical engagement.

**Music performance teaching, research and technologies**
Renee Timmers
*Plenary Discussion, 16:15 – 16:45, Diamond Workroom 1*

This plenary discussion considers strands in performance research and their relationship to music education. What questions and approaches have been considered? How do they relate to issues that instrumental music teachers may want to see addressed and the resources they have? Is some discrepancy in objectives unavoidable and may it even work beneficially for knowledge development? How can greater alignment nevertheless be achieved? The plenary will consider research on performance expression, ensemble rehearsal, and performance anxiety, and a discussion of research methods, including action research and the use of digital technologies. The audience is invited to participate through an extended discussion and providing their responses to the discussed themes.