

OX

Musician

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EDITED BY

Laura Howorth

COVER IMAGE

Fanfare, the music galleries signature display designed and curated by Dr Bradley Strauchen-Scherer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

DESIGNED BY

The Graphic Bomb

The editor would like to thank all the students, staff, and alumni who have contributed to this magazine, as well as the University of Oxford Alumni Office and Development Office.



From the CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Greetings again and—for the penultimate time, as we get ever closer to our move to the new building (see the report from William Whyte on p.18-19)—from the Faculty of Music on St Aldate's in Oxford. I hope you have all had an excellent year!

As you can see from the pages that follow, the Music Faculty's staff, students, and alumni have kept themselves busy and thriving in many different spheres of endeavour relating, more often than not, to music. Reading through these articles and news items I am struck in particular by a recurrent theme—the very broad value of having studied Music at Oxford.

The discussion between Alice Angliss and Nick Barstow (p.11) about their wonderful careers in the pit orchestras of London's theatreland makes it clear that the broad education provided by the Oxford University Music course, in combination with the perfectly sized environment of Oxford as a city, enabled them to gain experiences inside and outside the curriculum that they don't believe a more narrowly specific training would have done.

Similarly, David Schweitzer (p.13) reflecting on a thriving

career in writing music for the moving image (film, TV, animation) notes that his solid grounding in so many different genres of music, offered through the Oxford music course, has given him the ability to operate agilely so that, as he says, his work is 'very diverse'.

In our wider culture, the idea that there might be significant value in a broad, solid educational grounding in a subject like music is often lost or considered ridiculously utopian in times when political discussions insist that education should become increasingly instrumentalised. (And if only the 'instrumentalization of education' meant that the word 'education' had been set as the text for some kind of esoteric orchestration exercise to be scored for a weird combo of Wagner tubas, harpsichord, and soprano. Wouldn't that be fun?!) But no. Instrumentalization here signals that education in general, and university education in particular, is deemed only worth the salary of the specific job for which it provides specific training.

Nothing wrong with that you may think. But this assumption leads to questions at open days, when

potential applicants and their parents or guardians are concerned about whether or not a degree in Music from Oxford will really fit the bill—or, more exactly, pay the bills. Those students who know they want to become composers, conductors, or performers worry about whether the Oxford course is the right one to lead to those things; and those parents who want their offspring to focus instead on a degree that will lead directly to a steady career with good earning prospects worry about Music as a degree subject altogether.

However, the contents here prove that studying Music at Oxford opens up so many pathways because of amazing diversity, range, and depth of the experience. Of course it can't cover everything, but, as our alumni show, not only does that not preclude going on to more specific training for particular careers but it actually facilitates entry into those more specific life chances by teaching the skills to tackle anything!

Elizabeth Eva Leach

PROFESSOR OF MUSIC AND
CHAIR OF FACULTY BOARD

Photo © Benedict Johnson British Academy

FACULTY *news*

Last August, the Bard Music Festival, held in New York State, celebrated the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams. Professor Daniel Grimley, Professor of Music and Head of Humanities, played a key role as co-scholar-in-residence. A subsequent book entitled *Vaughan Williams and His World* brings together a selection of specially commissioned essays on Vaughan Williams and was edited by Professor Grimley and Professor Byron Adams of University of California, Riverside. It has been published by the University of Chicago Press.

In July 2023 Professor Jonathan Cross was elected a Fellow of the British Academy for his distinguished contribution to research. In September 2023 he took up the position of Director and Senior Scholar in Residence at the Ertegun Graduate Scholarship Programme in the Humanities, which is a three-year secondment from his Faculty duties.

Magdalen College hosted the two-day conference 'Music and Diplomacy in the Long Twentieth Century' in February 2024. Co-venued by Dr Giles Masters (Music) and Dr Bethan Winter (History), this interdisciplinary event featured speakers from institutions including Freiburg University and the University of California, Berkeley, as well as participants from six different departments at Oxford. The artist Jasmina Cibic gave a public talk and screening of her film *The Gift* (2021, pictured), as well as a student workshop exploring cultural diplomacy, soft power, and the art collections of international organizations.



Dr Emma Kavanagh has been awarded a Séjour Scientifique de Haut Niveau Visiting Fellowship by the French Embassy in the United Kingdom. She will spend two months working at the Institut de Recherche en Musicologie, a cross-institutional research group hosted jointly by Sorbonne Université (formerly Paris IV) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Jacob Kingsbury Downs



Departmental Lecturer and Faculty Chair Dr Jacob Kingsbury Downs has been named a BBC/Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) New Generation Thinker for 2024. This scheme recognizes ten early career researchers in the arts and humanities, and offers the chance to present ideas to BBC Radio 4 listeners. It also provides training and support from the AHRC and BBC. Dr Downs's research focuses on the impact of new sound media on daily life, exploring contemporary listening habits and the reasons behind them.

The Revd Dr Matthew Cheung Salisbury, Director of Studies and Lecturer in Music at University College and Lecturer at Worcester College, was awarded The King's Coronation Medal in recognition of his involvement in the planning of the Coronation in 2023. As National Liturgical Adviser to the Church of England, Revd Dr Salisbury was involved in the revision of the Coronation rite itself, as well as the ways in which the wider Church of England marked the Coronation.

Dr Oliver Chandler, Senior College Lecturer in Music at Keble College and Stipendiary Lecturer in Music & Organising Tutor at Hertford College, has won the inaugural Adele Katz Early Career Researcher Award, established by the Society for Music Analysis in 2023-24. This award honours early career researchers who have made significant contributions to music analysis.

FIND OUT MORE

Keep up to date with news from the Faculty of Music at music.ox.ac.uk/news

BREWERIES, BARS AND BARLINES



Dr Luke Lewis is a Stipendiary Lecturer in Music at New College and a composer/arranger. He is currently writing a piece for the Three Choirs Festival and, after that, will move on to a new work for wind quintet and voice for Ensemble Renard. An article on Factory Records and Steve Martland is forthcoming.

One of the top priorities for all of us working in music—especially classical music—is to find new audiences. We expend great energy trying to get people into concert halls, but I often feel that we should focus more on moving out of the usual spaces and into ones where regular audiences do not typically encounter classical music. An inspiring example of this is the record label Factory. After releasing seminal albums by Joy Division and New Order, Factory began a classical

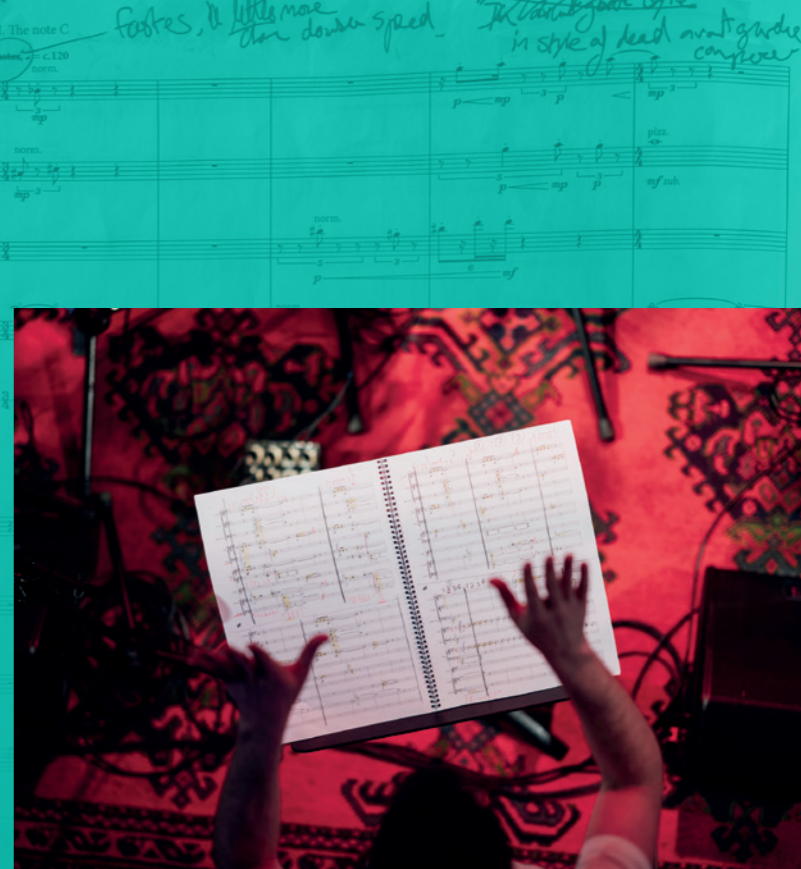
subdivision that marketed classical music to their existing post-punk audience. Label manager Tony Wilson provocatively stated that classical music was not just for ‘middle-class wankers in dinner suits’! A key player in this venture was the composer Steve Martland (1954–2013) whose mostly loud and punchy music was perfectly placed to bridge the genre divide. Moreover, his Steve Martland Band performed in unconventional venues, such as Manchester’s infamous

nightclub The Hacienda, to bring classical music, as he put it, ‘to the streets’. Inspired by this approach, the composer/violist Adam Possener (St Anne’s, 2020) and I sought funding from the Oxford Cultural Programme and Vaughan Williams Foundation to make our ‘Martland Hits the Club’ project. We aimed to revive Martland’s now neglected music, write new music inspired by his energetic style, and play it all in nightclubs and pubs. Our first concert had us at

the Tap Social Taphouse on Botley Road where we played just metres from beer kegs and stainless steel pipework, and our second at The Bullingdon on Cowley Road where we were listed in the diary between an indie pop band and a comedy night. Adam’s Komuna Collective—which includes alumnus Amalia Young (Wadham, 2021)—performed Martland’s string quartet *Patrol* (1992) and we recruited the students and alumni to play *Danceworks* (1993) featuring saxes, brass, strings and guitars. In addition to conducting, I presented a new piece for string quartet and electronics based on speech transcriptions of Martland’s final interview where his voice weaves in and out of

the quartet’s music. Adam’s new piece was inspired by cassette tapes about learning English that he found at his grandmother’s house. Struck by the disconnect between the simple, harmless phrases and their exaggerated expression by the English teacher, Adam sought to explore these tensions in a manner inspired by Martland’s vigorous musical language.

In the end, we received fantastic feedback from a diverse spectrum of Oxford residents who all experienced something new. There is much to learn from this kind of exchange, and it serves as a reminder to think more carefully about where we perform and how we can better serve our community.



Faculty members Eve Boulos, Nicholas Miller, Mar Umbert Kimura, Eva Fidler as well as old members Adam Possener, Danry Riley, Hani Elias, Joe Waymouth, Lucy Rathkey played in the band.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about Luke Lewis’s work at luke-lewis.com



Silken Harmonies

Bridging East and West Through Song at Oxford



Betty (Zhaoyi) Yan is a DPhil candidate in Ethnomusicology (Regent's Park College) from China, who is dedicated to introducing Eastern musical expressions to the Western academic world.

It was the night of the performance in the Holywell Music Room, March 2024. In the setting of this European-style music room, I stood under the chandelier, singing in traditional Chinese Han-style attire with long sleeves resembling water waves, transporting the audience back a millennium to ancient China. The flowing gowns, crafted from soft, delicate chiffon, were more than just clothing; they were a portal to the past. Joined by Jennifer, my collaborative pianist, we were performing three Chinese art songs composed by Ms Ning Zhang and programmed by Huishu Wang. This was a landmark moment for Jennifer and me as a soprano-piano duo to perform in traditional Han-style gowns here in Oxford, yet it was far from our first time bringing Eastern musical expressions to Oxford—a dream we have deeply cherished.

In collaboration with Jennifer, a Chinese-Indonesian pianist and an MPhil student in Music Performance (St. Hilda's College), we have forged a unique partnership. Our performances seamlessly blend Chinese art songs with Italian and German operatic pieces and Lieder, showcased on esteemed stages such as the Sheldonian Theatre, St Hilda's Jacqueline du Pré Music Building, Christ Church Cathedral, and others.

The integration of Chinese art songs into the Oxford music scene transcends mere performance, as music, a universal language, bridges geographical and linguistic divides, creating a deep connection with audiences. Sometimes, a Chinese art song resonates as profoundly as an Italian aria or a German Lied, despite their origins in different eras and cultures. For example, 'The Phoenix Hairpin (chāi tóu fēng 钗头凤)', adapted from a 13th-century Chinese poem, echoes the emotional depth of Western opera arias like 'Addio, del Passato' from Puccini's *La Traviata*, with common themes of doomed fate and unrequited love. By juxtaposing such pieces in our performances, we foster a cross-cultural dialogue that not only enriches the audience's experience but also showcases music's power to unify diverse worlds.

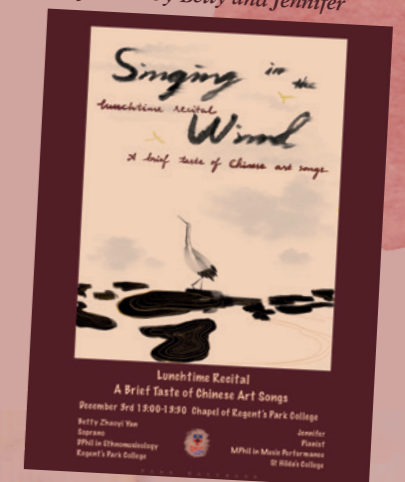
My academic research, which explores the cross-dressing roles in Chinese opera and their implications on contemporary stages, also adds depth

to this cultural exchange. During nearly a year of fieldwork in China in 2023, I travelled to eleven cities, conducting interviews, making observations, and gathering materials in theatres, opera troupes, training institutions, and other venues that feature Chinese opera. This ancient art form in the East holds many distinctions and divergences, fascinating yet complex enough that it may seem remote and esoteric to outsiders. However, significant parallels exist between Eastern and Western operas, revealing modernity hidden within ancient practices. I aim to uncover these connections and bridge the gap between different musical cultures. Throughout my fieldwork, I enjoyed engaging with local people about my experiences in Oxford, enriching my understanding and perspective. I look forward to sharing these insights with the academic community in Oxford, enhancing our appreciation of the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in global music cultures.

In the future, I will continue to weave a tapestry of musical narratives that transcend time and geography, in

collaboration with Jennifer and many other amazing colleagues. It is certain that our efforts will not only celebrate the rich heritage of Eastern music but also foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of its relevance in contemporary Western contexts. Through our artistry, hopefully, we will champion the ongoing dialogue between diverse cultures, proving that music, in its most beautiful form, knows no boundaries.

Poster painted by Betty and Jennifer



SKYSONGS

Composing a Contemporary Song-Cycle



Christopher Churcher is a second-year Music student at Lady Margaret Hall. He is a celebrated young composer, praised by David Hill as 'a remarkable talent', and has won over half a dozen national awards including the 2022 NCEM Young Composer's Award. Christopher's music has been commissioned and performed by some of Europe's leading choirs, orchestras, and chamber ensembles.

I think my favourite part of starting a new commission is the thrill of the unknown; the beginning of a new creative process begins. Last August, Iain Burnside approached me with the proposal of a new song-cycle. This article reflects on my experience of bringing that cycle to life.

My creative process is rarely linear, rather it is marked by series of breakthroughs. Three pivotal turning points stand out to me which defined the shape of the cycle. The first was pinpointing the title: *Skysongs*. Although the music itself bears little relation, the title is a nod to Meredith Monk's *Volcano Songs*. I love the way the title succinctly ligates music and nature. This title—*Skysongs*—shaped the cycle's overarching aesthetic, engaging in dialogue with the ether and atmosphere.

The second coincided with a break in Edinburgh shortly after Iain approached me with the commission. In tandem with beautiful walks along the Firth of Forth and Holyrood Park, I was there to see Scottish pianist

Fergus McCreadie and his trio live at the Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival. He was magnificent, playing at an intimate, wooden amphitheatre in Leith called the Pianodrome. I remember especially his performance of 'The Unfurrowed Field', commencing with a single, repeated note which blossomed into a complex array of exquisite textures and melodies. I found it utterly spellbinding; you can hear the impression of this gesture in my second song, 'A Short Story of Falling'.



The discovery of the eponymous poem for this second song was the third pivotal moment; finding a cohesive set of three texts was a challenge which loomed large whilst writing the cycle. Initially attracted to a few collections by Alice Oswald, who writes beautifully about nature, I ultimately found myself most drawn to 'A Short Story of Falling'. I love the poem's sense of freedom, its folksy couplet-form, and sensitive depiction of rainfall. Connected by the

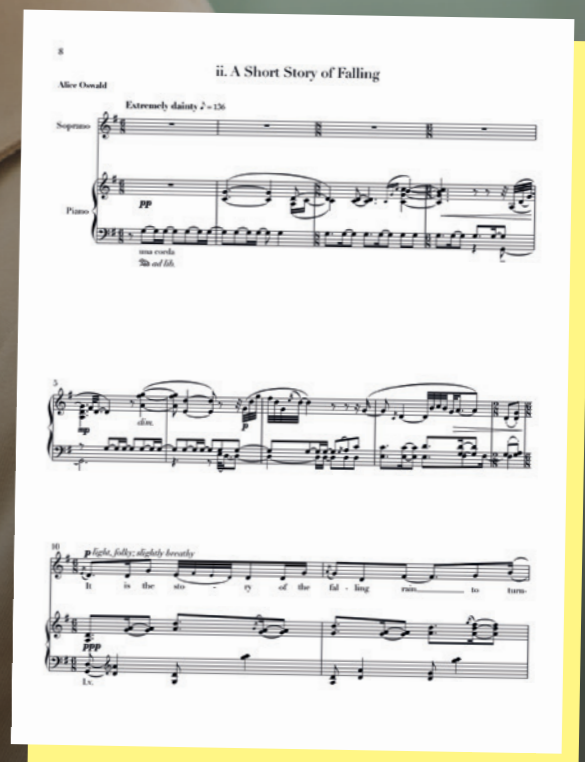
common thread of rain, I paired it with Ursula Le Guin's 'To The Rain' and Sara Teasdale's 'There Will Come Soft Rains', completing the trio.

The song cycle premiered on 14 April at the Ludlow English Song Weekend, where I was in residence as a composer. The cycle garnered warm praise, while the festival provided an opportunity for me to connect with leading British musicians like Roderick Williams and Elgan Llŷr Thomas. Serendipitously, I also had chance meetings with the music documentary producer John Bridcut and venerable music biographer Diana McVeagh. The festival emphasized to me the power of music to forge connection, as well as the transformative power of giving a platform to emerging artists like me.

Skysongs will be recorded by Harriet Burns and Ian Tindale this autumn for their forthcoming album on Delphian.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about Christopher Churcher at christopherchurcher.com



Alumni NEWS

Commissioned by the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, **Alexander Campkin** (St Catherine's, 2002) has written a song cycle for soloist, orchestra and chorus which was premiered in BBC Hoddinott Hall and on BBC Radio 3 in July. The work, titled *Sounds of Stardust*, sets music to three of his own poems inspired by the night sky.

Rose Champion (Hertford, 2018) has written an open-access article jointly with Professor Samantha Sebastian Dieckmann, which has been published in the *Journal for Intercultural Studies*. The article, entitled 'Building Bridges: Translating Refugee Narratives for Public Audiences with Arts-based Media', presents ethnographic research from *Journey: Bridging Cultures*, a project led by Dr Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey and Dr Toby Young, which worked

with school-aged youths with forced migration backgrounds to examine how narratives of forced migration are presented to public audiences.

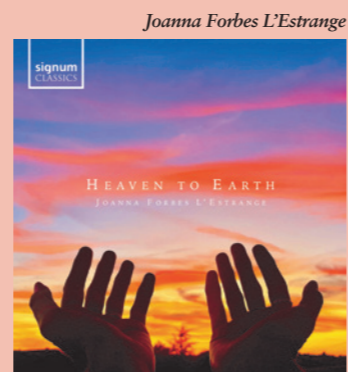
The University of Louisiana at Lafayette has announced **Dr Gwendolen von Einsiedel** (St Catherine's, 2017) as the Dr Tommy Comeaux Endowed Chair in Traditional Music. Dr von Einsiedel holds a DPhil in Music from Oxford, where her research focusing on contemporary zydeco music and Southwest Louisiana's trail ride scene was supported by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Award. She strives to connect different disciplines and communities through music performance, education, and research.

Alumna **Anna Lapwood** (Magdalen, 2013) has been awarded an MBE for services to music in the 2024 New Year Honours

List. Anna is an organist, conductor, and broadcaster, and holds the positions of Director of Music at Pembroke College, Cambridge, Associate Artist of the Royal Albert Hall, and Artist in Association with the BBC Singers.

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange (Hertford, 1990) has released a recording of her sacred choral music *Heaven To Earth* on Signum Records. The album, which was recorded by London Voices (conducted by Ben Parry) and produced by Alexander L'Estrange (Merton, 1991), comprises 21 tracks including anthems, introits, canticles, a mass setting, and a set of Preces and Responses.

The Lady of Satis House, a haunting operatic monodrama written by **Jacques Cohen** (Hertford, 1988), was released on the Meridian Records label in February 2024, with



the Tippett Quartet and soprano Marie Vassiliou. Inspired by the story of Miss Havisham from Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, the work was written for the Tête-a-Tête Opera Festival in 2012, the bicentenary of Dickens's birth, when it was cited by Mark Pappenheim in the Independent as 'opera pick of the week'. This latest CD of the chamber opera along with two pieces for quartet, the tone poem *From Behind Glass* (originally commissioned by the Piatti Quartet who premiered it in Oxford) and the suite of lullabies *When the Bough Breaks*, has met with great critical acclaim.

SEND US YOUR NEWS

We always like to hear from our alumni. If you would like to be featured in a future issue, please email oxfordmusician@music.ox.ac.uk



Alexander Campkin (photo © Kirsten McTernan)

Alumni

SEELEFORER



NICK BARSTOW (St Catherine's College, 2010) ALICE ANGLISS (St Catherine's College, 2011)

ALICE: The Oxford stork must have known something we didn't when it chose Nick as my 'college dad', and indeed when it chose his 'dad' (Ben Holder) the year before, as all three of us had our sights set on working in musical theatre by the time we each graduated.

NICK: In the early days of my career my answer to the inevitable question of 'where did you train' was usually greeted with a raised eyebrow. There are now several courses designed to funnel musicians into the West End, but I'm grateful every day for having taken something of a scenic route via Oxford. The way I think and feel about music as a whole is so informed by my time at the Music Faculty, I don't know what kind of musical director I would be without that experience.

ALICE: My moment of realization was spending the summer holidays after my second year playing percussion in *West Side Story* with the National Youth Music Theatre in a warehouse in Manchester, a production which blew both the organization's budget and my young mind. I returned with a fire lit in my belly, finally knowing what I wanted to do when I finished studying. I took advice from my percussion teacher at school to apply for a postgraduate course in London and began to make connections with those already working in the industry.

NICK: The drama and music societies at Oxford seed the idea of networking horizontally, rather than vertically. We're in the city with so many wonderful people, and through our time there we find people with whom we'll share our careers and lives together afterwards.

ALICE: Rather than seeking out the MDs and 'fixers' (who book the bands for West End shows) and hoping they will lift me up, meeting other musicians at the same stage as me and with similar goals to me has led to far more opportunities to climb the ladder.

NICK: I'm currently working on the West End transfer of Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *Next to Normal*, which we opened at the Donmar Warehouse in London last summer. It's a particularly dense score for a musical, almost sung-through and with a huge range of genres and textures all working to represent the story of a mother living with bipolar and complicated grief. It was through analysis classes with Dr John Traill that I realized how much joy I found in dissecting music, and this is an itch I find myself able to scratch daily in my work.

ALICE: My current job is drummer for the hit show *Six the Musical*. I'm incredibly proud to be a part of the changing face of West End pit bands, which just a few years ago were statistically 91% male and have almost never featured a woman on drums.

NICK: It's really lovely being able to look down the street from the Wyndhams Theatre to the Vaudeville (if you crane your neck hard enough) and know that, despite the years that have passed since Oxford, Alice and I have been empowered to stick to our chosen path and remain roughly 500 yards away from each other whilst doing so!



KARL LUTCHMAYER
(New College, 2017)

I arrived at New College in 2017 on a sabbatical from my role as senior lecturer at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in order to study for the MSt. Fascinated by modules that had been unavailable when I was a music student thirty years earlier, I soon resigned my position, switched to the MPhil, and followed it up with a PhD at Cambridge.

Studying in Oxford at a time when the decolonization of curricula was being discussed led me to challenge the practices of UK music exam boards in India, my family home. However, when I found that I wasn't being listened to, I started a company to create Indian content for online music exams, and after three years of intense work the new syllabuses were launched earlier this year in collaboration with the new Music Teachers' Board. The launch was so successful that BBC Radio 4 commissioned a documentary that was broadcast on 16 July.

I'll soon be moving to India in order to lead this and other education projects, but fortunately I'm still finding time to perform, and have just recorded a disc of Busoni's piano music for Chandos.



REBECCA SMITH
(Worcester College, 2005)

My favourite part of the music degree was finding out how string quartets were put together. Immersing myself in the languages of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven through tutorials with Professor Robert Saxton, he transferred his insatiable appetite for exploration to me. After postgraduate studies at the RNCM, I performed in various professional string quartets on violin and viola. Inspired by my role as the violinist of the Scarborough Spa Orchestra—the last remaining professional seaside orchestra in the UK—I launched my own palm court ensemble: the [Rebecca Smith Orchestra](#). My passion now lies within this gem of a genre, almost lost to time, but more than worthy of a revival. From Strauss waltzes to operettas by Franz Lehár, Ivor Novello musicals to Kreisler's salon pieces, the repertoire occupies a unique space between serious concert performance and music to accompany high teas and dinner dances, as was intended during its inception in the 1890s.

The palm court genre roared its way through the hotels of the West End of London in the 1920s and 30s, and catapulted to fame band leaders and violinists such as Albert Sandler, Tom Jenkins, and Max Jaffa. In 1924 the BBC radio series 'Grand Hotel' began broadcasting live performances from the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne and eventually at Broadcasting House. Thus began a long line of light classical violinists leading the BBC's Palm Court Orchestra until the 1980s. The last of these, Max Jaffa—by then a household name—took up his position as Musical Director of the Scarborough Spa Orchestra in 1986, a position he held for 25 years, cementing his status as the world's pre-eminent light classical violinist.

Like Max, I am inspired to keep the tradition alive: this time, bringing it back from Scarborough to London! I am using those same skills developed with Robert: the specific vehicle of expression may have changed, but the desire to communicate from the heart of the music remains unwavering.



BRADLEY STRAUCHEN-SCHERER
(Wolfson College, 1995)

For me, visiting the Bate Collection for the first time was like being a child on Christmas morning. By the time I arrived at Oxford to pursue my DPhil, I had played the natural horn for a number of years and had been a student on the historical performance course at the Royal Academy of Music, but I had never seen a museum devoted entirely to musical instruments before, let alone ones that could be played and accessed by musicians and scholars!

I knew the collection held archives too, including the papers of Reginald Morley-Pegge, a great scholar of the French horn. When I asked collection curator Dr Hélène LaRue if I could study them, she replied that they were uncatalogued and therefore not fit for browsing. After letting me absorb this disappointing news, she cannily stated that I could expedite access to the papers if I would catalogue them on Saturday mornings. Thus began my hands-on initiation into the world of museum work. Hélène became a mentor, dear friend, and colleague as I embarked on my museum career. My time at Oxford prepared me for the post of Deputy Keeper of Musical Instruments at the Horniman Museum in London, where I worked with 8,000 instruments from around the world. Curatorship appeals deeply to me because it marries research and writing with the creativity of exhibition work and my public facing activities as a lecturer at various universities and within the museum. I am now Curator in the department of Musical Instruments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where I led the renovation and reinterpretation of our five music galleries. Inspired by the Met's encyclopaedic collections, my work explores the intersections between music, instruments, art, and society. I am currently preparing a major special exhibition on musical instruments and the human body.



DAVID SCHWEITZER
(New College, 1997)

My eclectic musical background proved to be the perfect springboard for a subsequent career as a TV and film composer, and my years studying music at New College, Oxford were a key part of that. I had been in a band in my teenage years, playing guitar, singing, and writing songs full of teenage angst. I then started learning piano, became interested in classical music and wrote a requiem mass (also full of angst I suppose!) at age 16. During my time at Oxford, as well as learning a broad history of music and classical repertoire, I immersed myself in computer-based music and eventually wrote a dissertation on alternative methods of notating electronic dance music.

In my work as a composer over the last twenty years, it has been invaluable to have a grounding in lots of different genres of music. My work has been very diverse—I've scored hundreds of hours of drama, animation, and documentary, and have had to move between styles at the drop of a hat. On the projects I'm working on right now, some require full orchestral scores with live players (recorded in London or further afield), while others are entirely composed on the computer, or with modular or analogue synths. Most often it's a combination of all these elements.

My work has included films, such as the 2020 adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* with Anya Taylor-Joy; many award-winning documentaries including *9/11: One Day in America*, *Our Great National Parks* (with Barack Obama), *WWII: From the Frontlines*, *Escape from Kabul*, *The Reluctant Traveller*, *Elizabeth: The Unseen Queen*, and *Four Hours at the Capitol*; and over a thousand episodes of animation including *Charlie & Lola*, *Mike the Knight*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *Miffy*, and *Angry Birds*.

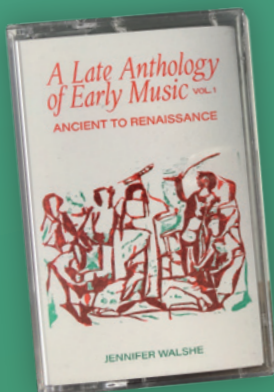
I have a lovely studio down the road from my house in SE London where I live with my wife and four teenage kids.



AI, ART, AND MUSIC



Professor Jennifer Walshe is Professor of Composition at the University of Oxford. Walshe's thoughts on AI and music can be read in detail in her essay '13 Ways of Looking at AI, Art & Music'.



As a composer, I've spent a great deal of the last decade thinking through the implications of AI for art and music. I've used it in projects like *ULTRACHUNK*, a collaboration with Memo Akten in which I perform with an AI-generated version of myself and *A Late Anthology of Early Music*, an album which uses machine learning to reimagine the early history of Western music. I don't view this interest as a purely 21st century phenomenon—I'm part of a long tradition of composers who have been interested in machine-aided composition, ranging from Renaissance polymath Athanasius Kircher and the Mozart-attributed *Musikalisches Würfelspiel* through to Sr. Harriet Padberg and George Lewis's 20th century experiments with algorithmic music-making and the human-computer relationship.

I view AI-generated music as currently being in its conceptual phase. By this I mean that at the moment, music made using AI is more often than not 'about'

AI, concerned as much with exploring what it means to use AI to make music as it is with sound. With the current proliferation of AI-powered tools such as Stable Audio, IRCAM's Rave and AIVA, it is clear that many musicians are interested in using AI for a wide range of purposes—to generate MIDI and raw audio, to make a trombone sound like a school of whales, to master tracks for release, or to make Frank Sinatra sing a cover of Guns N' Roses 'Welcome to the Jungle'.

Over the next few years, as these tools become more deeply embedded in many artists' workflows, AI will move out of its conceptual phase—it'll become so commonplace that its use will no longer be notable. Humans will continue to do what they always have done—be wildly creative. Given the huge expense of gathering data, setting up and training these tools, my concern is not artistic, but structural: how musical creation might come to be affected by the monopolization of

the market by a handful of huge corporations, who have the deep pockets to create sophisticated tools which become indispensable to many.

Until we have achieved Artificial General Intelligence—which may never happen, or might be as early as 2045, according to Ray Kurzweil—we can't experience whether a computer can be truly creative, because even the most artistically sophisticated AI working now is functioning within territory defined, coded, and trained for by its creators. Instead, I think it's perhaps more worthwhile to ask how these tools are made and who benefits most from them. How did the designers of these tools define creativity? What music did they deem important enough to train their systems on? What did they ignore?

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about Jennifer Walshe's work at milker.org/jenniferwalshebiography

A JOURNEY THROUGH SILENCE TO SOUND

What happens when we take an object, a musical instrument for instance, and explore how it can tell the stories of the lives of those who made it, shaped its past, sold it, played it, or listened to it?

I have been working on a book that explores the relationship between a cellist and their instrument, and what happens when that relationship is complicated, perhaps when player or instrument is lost or damaged. During the course of writing *Cello—A Journey Through Silence to Sound* (published by Bloomsbury), I travelled across Europe with my own cello, playing with many cellists, and having all sorts of adventures: from playing a cello that had been made into a beehive and finding out what happens when you play Bach to 40,000 bees, to helping to design and create a new hybrid cello, drawing on the designs of historic instruments to create something very new—a guitar-shaped, flat-backed cello that can be made flat pack but be of conservatoire quality. Teenagers in youth orchestras in Uruguay and Harlem, where financial deprivation prevents them having their own instruments, are now learning to make these new cellos. My adventures also took me near to the Ukrainian border on the day of the invasion. I was there to delve deeply into the fate of a great cellist, Pal Hermann, who had

been murdered in Kaunas by the Nazis in 1944, but I had the uncanny experience that another world war was unfolding around me. Through the book I trace four key biographies—Lise Cristiani, the first female cello soloist, and her journey across Siberia with the greatest Stradivari cello in existence, Pal Hermann, who had been hailed as 'the next Pablo Casals', but along with many Jewish musicians, has been erased from history. I walked in the footsteps of Anita Lasker-Wallfisch who, unlike Pal, survived life in concentration camps because she was a cellist, and I also investigated what happened when the Trieste Piano Trio were forced to jump from a burning ferry in a shipwreck during a tour in the 1960s.

Some of the stories in the book were reshaped for *Radio 3*, and I made a [further documentary](#) in which I played my cello at 2am in total darkness, drizzle, and ankle-deep mud in a secret woodland location in Sussex to duet with... nightingales! This marked the centenary of the cellist Beatrice Harrison playing with nightingales in her Surrey garden, the monumentally important first ever BBC broadcast from beyond the studio.

Alongside theatre director Tom Morris (of *War Horse* fame), composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad, and cellist Natalie Clein, I am currently using the book

to create a performance for cello, visuals, and spoken word, that will be premiered at [Wigmore Hall on 29 September](#). We are finding a language through which the stories can be told, between sound, text, and movement. An instrument—existing as a work of art, holding stories, and an object that moves, vibrates and sounds—is the perfect catalyst for exploring how musicology and life-writing combine to tell stories through music.

FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about Kate Kennedy at music.ox.ac.uk/people/dr-kate-kennedy



Dr Kate Kennedy is a writer, cellist, and BBC broadcaster. She is an Associate Member of the Music Faculty, Research Fellow in Life-Writing at Wolfson College, Oxford, and Director of the [Oxford Centre for Life-writing](#), which is an international centre for the discussion of biography, autobiography and the many issues surrounding the ways in which we approach the narratives of lives.



Student NEWS

Recent music graduate **Max Blansjaar** (St Catherine's, 2021) released his debut album *False Comforts* in June. The album was recorded in New York with producers Katie von Schleicher and Nate Mendelsohn, and has received support from BBC 6 Music and BBC Introducing. Max marked the release of the album with a UK tour over the summer. It is available to purchase on Bandcamp, and to stream everywhere.



Max Blansjaar

DPhil student **Yvonne Ile** (Jesus, 2022) released her EP *Sunflower Baby* in April under her alias Jael. The album includes the single 'Don't Hide' which won her the 2023 St John's College Kendrew Songwriting Prize. The EP, produced by David Thomas, is an ode to positivity, growth, and self-love.



Yvonne Ile

Juliet Merchant (St Cross, 2023), a current Composition MSt student, scored the soundtrack to a Hamo Bek-Nazaryan's *House on the Volcano*, which premiered at MOMA in January. This was commissioned by the National Cinema Centre of Armenia to celebrate the centenary of Armenian film. The film has been screened in multiple countries and the soundtrack has received excellent reviews from *The Guardian*, *Lossi 36*, and *Russian Arts and Culture*.

is writing music for several short films at the moment and recently composed the original soundtrack for an Oxford production of *Hippolytus*. Her new film scores were released on her music accounts in the summer.

Ariana Pethard (St Hilda's, 2023) won 'Best Original Score' at the Oxford University Short Film Festival Awards 2024 for 'Windows' and she recently performed her 'Main Title' solo piano arrangement of the score. A passionate composer, pianist, and singer, Ariana has performed at the Royal Albert Hall, composed the Shakespeare Anthem 2023, and has released several albums of her own compositions on her Spotify 'Ariana May', which have been featured on BBC Music Introducing. Ariana

The AI-based music generation platform SoulChord, involving **Kristy Huang** (Exeter, 2021), won the StEP Ignite 2023 student entrepreneurship programme. StEP Ignite brings teams of entrepreneurial students



Kristy Huang, SoulChord group

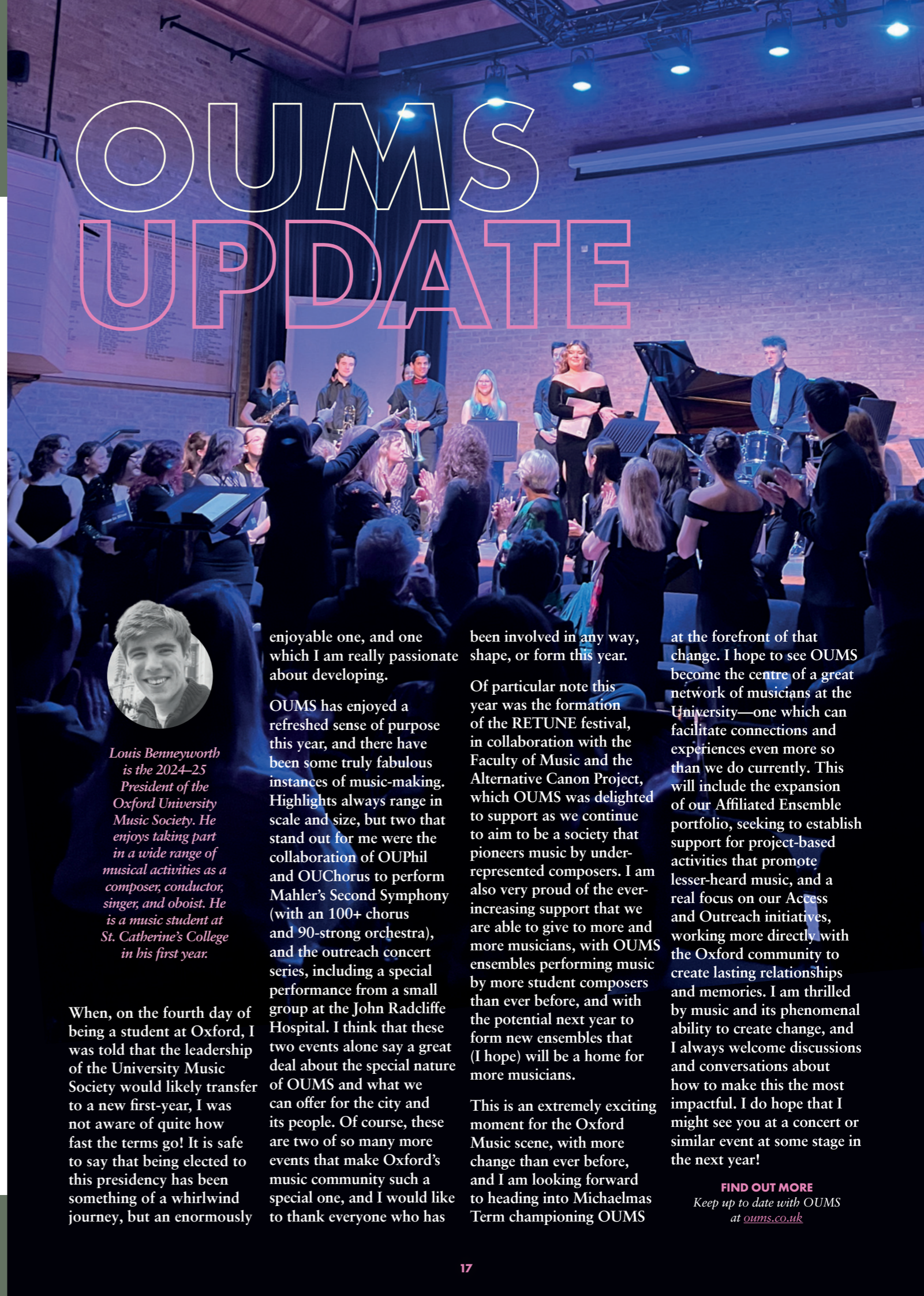
together to develop innovative business ideas. At the end of the programme, all teams pitch their business ideas to a panel of judges, and the winning team receives a cash prize to spend on taking the first steps in setting up the business they pitched.

The Oxford Student Opera Society, following the executive team's success of *Marriage of Figaro* last year, performed Mozart's *Don Giovanni* to great acclaim in both St Peter's College Chapel and the Sheldonian Theatre. Performed and produced by students, it provided a platform to help develop young opera singers, instrumentalists, and crew members as they move to the next stages of their career after their time at Oxford.

FIND OUT MORE

Keep up to date with news from the Faculty of Music at music.ox.ac.uk/news

OUMS UPDATE



Louis Benneyworth is the 2024–25 President of the Oxford University Music Society. He enjoys taking part in a wide range of musical activities as a composer, conductor, singer, and oboist. He is a music student at St. Catherine's College in his first year.

When, on the fourth day of being a student at Oxford, I was told that the leadership of the University Music Society would likely transfer to a new first-year, I was not aware of quite how fast the terms go! It is safe to say that being elected to this presidency has been something of a whirlwind journey, but an enormously

enjoyable one, and one which I am really passionate about developing.

OUMS has enjoyed a refreshed sense of purpose this year, and there have been some truly fabulous instances of music-making. Highlights always range in scale and size, but two that stand out for me were the collaboration of OUPhil and OUChorus to perform Mahler's Second Symphony (with an 100+ chorus and 90-strong orchestra), and the outreach concert series, including a special performance from a small group at the John Radcliffe Hospital. I think that these two events alone say a great deal about the special nature of OUMS and what we can offer for the city and its people. Of course, these are two of so many more events that make Oxford's music community such a special one, and I would like to thank everyone who has

been involved in any way, shape, or form this year.

Of particular note this year was the formation of the RETUNE festival, in collaboration with the Faculty of Music and the Alternative Canon Project, which OUMS was delighted to support as we continue to aim to be a society that pioneers music by under-represented composers. I am also very proud of the ever-increasing support that we are able to give to more and more musicians, with OUMS ensembles performing music by more student composers than ever before, and with the potential next year to form new ensembles that (I hope) will be a home for more musicians.

This is an extremely exciting moment for the Oxford Music scene, with more change than ever before, and I am looking forward to heading into Michaelmas Term championing OUMS

at the forefront of that change. I hope to see OUMS become the centre of a great network of musicians at the University—one which can facilitate connections and experiences even more so than we do currently. This will include the expansion of our Affiliated Ensemble portfolio, seeking to establish support for project-based activities that promote lesser-heard music, and a real focus on our Access and Outreach initiatives, working more directly with the Oxford community to create lasting relationships and memories. I am thrilled by music and its phenomenal ability to create change, and I always welcome discussions and conversations about how to make this the most impactful. I do hope that I might see you at a concert or similar event at some stage in the next year!

FIND OUT MORE

Keep up to date with OUMS at oums.co.uk



on anti-vibration pads and completely separated from the outside world. We intend for it to have a world-class acoustic and to look as beautiful as it sounds.

The whole building is due to open in time for Michaelmas term 2025. There will then be an interesting—and complicated—period of tuning the spaces, learning to use the technical equipment, and settling in more generally. But we hope to stage our first concerts in the first half of 2026 and I do hope you'll come to see how this extraordinary new building contributes to the musical life of the University and to Oxford more broadly.

Radcliffe Camera and is now topped off by a dome that was winched into place just after the Topping Out ceremony. As I write, in the first few weeks of June, the rest of the interior is being fitted out with rooms for teaching and research, music practice, and performance. The concert hall is also starting to take shape. Designed by the pre-eminent acousticians, Arup, it is a box-in-box construction: balanced

BUILDING UP:

Progress at the Schwarzman Centre



Professor William Whyte is the 'Senior Responsible Owner' for the new Humanities building project. He is also Professor of Social and Architectural History in the Faculty of History, and a Tutorial Fellow at St John's College.

Two years ago, I wrote in the Oxford Musician about the exciting news that the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities had been given planning permission. The largest building project ever undertaken by the University and the result of the largest gift ever given to Oxford—which now amounts to £185 million—this is a landmark in every possible sense.

Designed by the internationally renowned architects Hopkins, whose previous work includes the Glyndebourne Opera House, the Centre will not only house the Faculty of Music (along with six other Humanities faculties) and the Music Faculty Library (along with six other faculties' collections). It will also be the home of a suite of performance spaces, an exhibition space, and the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments. There will be a 500-seater concert hall, a 250-seater theatre, a

recital hall, cinema, and black box experimental performance space. Open to the public and designed to Passivhaus standards, the Schwarzman Centre will set a new standard for university buildings.

Since I wrote, construction has actually begun—and, more remarkably still, remains on time and on budget. We first broke ground at the end of January 2023 and began laying over 10,000 linear metres of piles to build the foundations. We marked rock bottom with a foundation ceremony in September that year, inviting Sholto Kynoch (amongst others) to perform in the shell of the future concert hall.

Once down, the contractors Laing O'Rourke began to build up, using what they call 'modern methods of construction' to move at pace. We reached the highest point, marking what's called 'topping out' in May 2024. Our guests were welcomed by the Oxford Gamelan Society as they arrived and then entertained by the Oxford University Jazz Orchestra with saxophonist Soweto Kinch as they reached the roof. So far, more than 10,000 pieces of stone and 140,000 hand-made York bricks have been used to form the façade.

At the heart of the building is an enormous new space. The Great Hall is the size of the

“Open to the public and designed to Passivhaus standards, the Schwarzman Centre will set a new standard for university buildings”



FIND OUT MORE
Keep up to date with progress at the Schwarzman Centre at schwarzmancentre.ox.ac.uk

A YEAR OF ACCESS AND OUTREACH



In October 2023, Georgie Moore joined the Music Faculty in the new post of Access and Outreach Administrative Officer, supporting our academic Access and Outreach Officer, Professor Samantha Sebastian Dieckmann.

When I arrived at the Faculty, I set to work supporting the ‘Music in the Community’ and ‘Music Education: Practice and Pedagogy’ papers. Through these modules, undergraduate musicians develop skills in facilitating community music sessions and teaching in classroom settings. Student placements range from leading singing workshops in HMP Long Lartin (with charity Sing Inside) to collaboratively writing song cycles with people living with dementia and their carers (with Turtle Song). Attending Turtle Song’s *Turtlepedial!* performance was a real Hilary term highlight.

The enthusiasm of both students and participants is clear to see in the Turtle Song photos on the facing page.

In a climate where music education is under intense pressure, developing the Faculty’s widening participation programme is key to achieving our Access & Outreach goals. Thanks to all those on Facebook who shared our survey, we rather unexpectedly garnered over 200 thoughtful responses from music teachers helping us inform our next steps. We identified that talented young musicians don’t always know

what studying music at A Level and beyond is like. Thus, the idea for Music Experience Day was born.

‘It was a brilliant opportunity for students to see where their Music can take them.... One student has now said they are considering University, and another student would like to go to Oxford. Thank you for helping our students be aspirational!’ Teacher, Great Western Academy, Swindon

We launched our pilot Music Experience Day in May, with 45 state school GCSE Music pupils in attendance.



(Photos on this page © Simon Hutchens)



(Photo Oxford Atelier) 20

The afternoon’s activities showcased some of the pathways that continuing their study of music may lead to. First, we looked at student life with a tour of Trinity College and a Q&A session with two Music undergraduate ambassadors, which explored everything from tips for avoiding instrument burnout to how financial support makes studying music more accessible. Next, Professor Dieckmann tackled what you might learn when studying Music at University. A sunny stroll to the Sheldonian Theatre followed, for a special open rehearsal of Strauss’s *Metamorphosen* and a Q&A with the innovative Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective (image left).

What’s next for Access and Outreach? At the time of writing, we are preparing for our outreach concert at St

Frideswide Primary School in East Oxford, celebrating the Music Education partnership. We are also finalizing the details for the Music UNIQ summer course. UNIQ is the University’s flagship access initiative for UK state school students in Year 12 and includes a free residential with tutorials, lectures, and practical workshops. Next year, we plan to continue developing opportunities for young music lovers to explore Oxford’s musical landscape.

ARE YOU A MUSIC TEACHER?

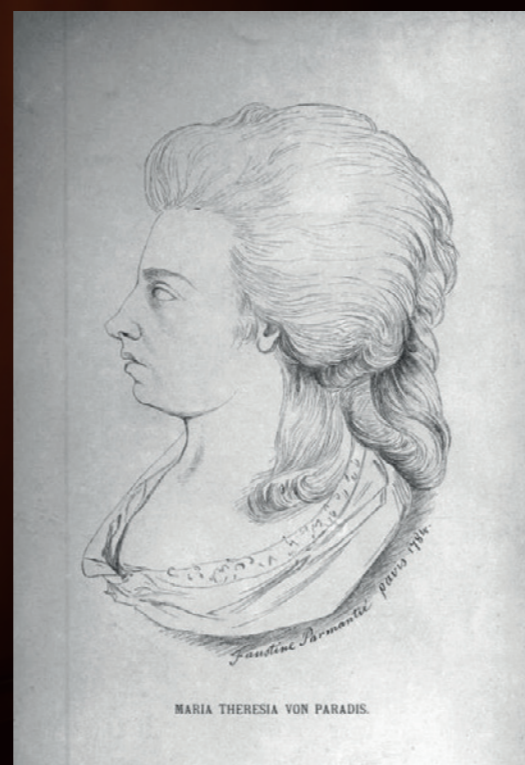
Get involved by signing up to our mailing list for termly updates about widening participation opportunities in Music, including updates from across the collegiate University. Find out more at music.ox.ac.uk/access-and-outreach



“IT WAS A BRILLIANT OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO SEE WHERE THEIR MUSIC CAN TAKE THEM”

SIGN UP TO OUR TEACHER MAILING LIST





Remembering MARIA THERESIA PARADIS



Judith Valerie Engel (Christ Church, 2020) is pursuing a DPhil in Historical Musicology and is an internationally acclaimed concert pianist. She was invited to give a series of lecture recitals across Austria over the summer break, performing and speaking about Maria Theresia Paradis and other women of the 18th and 19th century who contributed significantly to their music worlds.

2024 marks the 200th anniversary of Maria Theresia Paradis's death. If this is the first time you, dear reader, come across this name, you are in good company. In 2027 Ludwig van Beethoven will have the same anniversary. While there are already announcements for celebrating the upcoming Beethoven year, there is hardly any mention of, let alone events dedicated to, Paradis and her present anniversary.

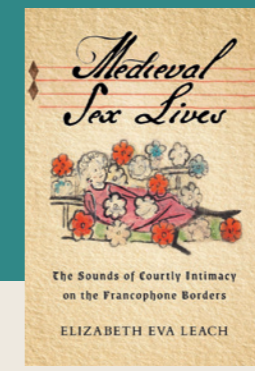
Maria Theresia Paradis was a central figure in the production of music in 18th century Vienna and wider Europe. She was active as a performer, composer, salonnière, and educator. Several newspaper reviews suggest that she was an exceptional performing artist, especially on the piano. Johann Ferdinand

von Schönfeld cites her as an artist 'famous in half of Europe'; indeed, she toured all across Europe in the 1780s. Her surviving keyboard compositions suggest she possessed a very smooth technique that made for a brilliant sound. Paradis enjoyed early fame as a child prodigy—a *Wunderkind*—on the piano and organ. She had also gone blind at the age of three. As she was an only child, she was not sent away to live with childless relatives, as was common in bigger families that lacked resources to look after a disabled child, but remained with her parents in Vienna. They saw to it that she received an excellent musical education, which she developed into a thriving career.

The socially accepted 'goals' for upper-middle

class women were first and foremost marriage and motherhood. These were the commonly agreed 'sources of happiness' for women at the time (or, as Valerie Solanas fittingly put it in her 1967 *SCUM Manifesto*, 'what males think they'd find fulfilling if they were female'). For Paradis, being a blind woman likely allowed her to avoid normative marital expectations, which would have entailed giving up on any musical ambitions. Paradis seemed, in the end, to have enjoyed the best of both worlds, pursuing music professionally and living in a marriage-like relationship with Johann Riedinger whom she met during her European tour.

FIND OUT MORE
Learn more about Judith Valerie Engel's work at music.ox.ac.uk/people/judith-valerie-engel



Publications & PRIZES

The recently completed [MALMECC](#) project (Principal Investigator: Professor Karl Kügle) celebrated the publication of its first monograph on 30 April 2024. The volume, published in open access by The Boydell Press, is entitled [Luxembourg Court Cultures in the Long Fourteenth Century](#). It is the first English-language volume with an exclusive focus on the multi-faceted cultural achievements of a powerful dynasty whose influence, in its heyday c.1400, stretched from England to present-day Romania and included the likes of Machaut, Froissart, and Wolkenstein among the luminaries in their cultural orbit.

Published in December 2023 by Cornell University Press, *Medieval Sex Lives* examines courtly song as a complex cultural product and social force in the early fourteenth century, exploring how it illuminates the relationship between artistic production

and the everyday lives of the elites for whom this music and poetry was composed and performed. Professor Elizabeth Eva Leach conducted an analysis of the Oxford Bodleian Library's Douce 308 manuscript to ask why the lyric tradition of 'courtly love' had such a long and successful history in Western European culture, and why the songs in the Bodleian manuscript would have been so important to the book's compilers, owners, and readers.

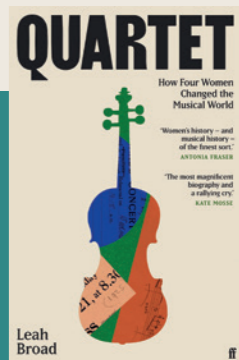
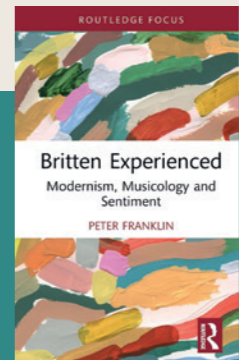
Moving beyond narratives of female suppression, and exploring the critical potential of a diverse, distinguished repertoire, the *Cambridge Companion to Women Composers*, edited by Emeritus Professor Susan Wollenberg and alumnus Professor Matthew Head, transforms received understanding of women composers. Organized thematically, and ranging beyond elite, Western genres, it explores the work of

diverse female composers from medieval to modern times, besides the familiar headline names. Professor Owen Rees has released two discs on the Signum Classics label. The Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford, Academy of Ancient Music, and an outstanding array of soloists joined forces in *How The Mighty Are Fallen* to breathe new life into the choral works of Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747). *Harmonies of Devotion*, recorded by early-music vocal ensemble Contrapunctus, is both an exploration of the Italian motet repertoire of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and a celebration of the devotion to this sacred repertoire displayed by English antiquarian collectors of the eighteenth century.

Emeritus Professor Peter Franklin argues in his book *Britten Experienced: Modernism, Musicology*

and *Sentiment* that for the Humanities to be really humane, writers must confront not only their own methods and aims, but also their practitioners, be they art historians, literary scholars, or even musicologists. Who writes the books we read about music that excites us? What part might the strange academic discipline of 'musicology' play in them? Is 'classical music' all about class? Such questions underpin this unconventional book. The book will be of interest not only to those studying Britten, but also to those intrigued by new forms of musicology, history telling, and autobiography.

Quartet: How Four Women Changed the Musical World by Dr Leah Broad has won the Royal Philharmonic Society Storytelling Award 2024, a 2023 Presto Music Books of the Year Award, and has been shortlisted for the Slightly Foxed Best First Biography Prize 2023.





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