

# UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 24, March 2026

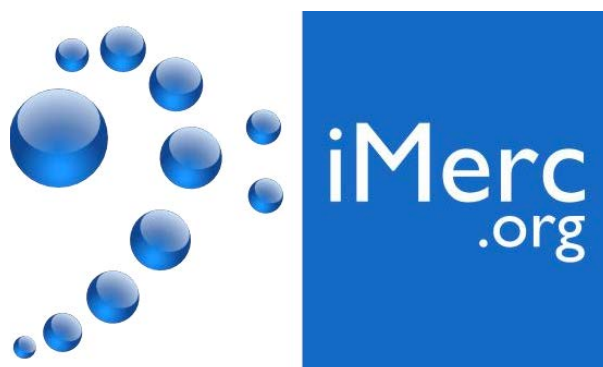
## About us

Over the past 20 years, we have been developing the International Music Education Research Centre (iMerc) at the UCL Institute of Education to celebrate and disseminate our extensive research in the field of music education, broadly conceived, and to hear about new research from colleagues elsewhere in the world. 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 and sense of community. 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 UCL iMerc Research Seminar will take place on **Wednesday, 25 March 2026**, 11am-1pm GMT via Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE. We are pleased to invite you to join us online [HERE](#) [Zoom link updated] or in person. Everyone is welcome!

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Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 25 February 2026



*2 - Credit: iMerc*



*3 - Credit: Dr Vicky Charisi*

**Dr Vicky Charisi: Digital Music-Making Processes and Interactions in Early Childhood: The Development of a Micro-Behavioural Framework**

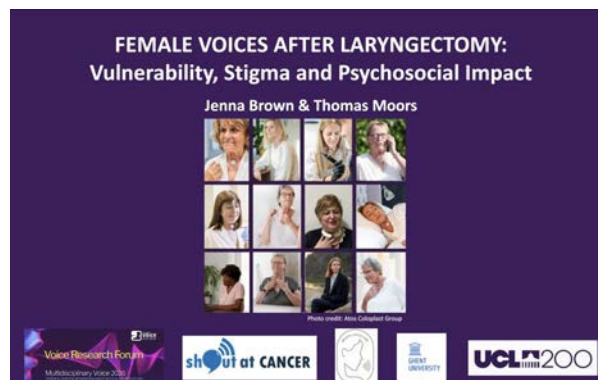
**Dr Vicky Charisi** ([vcharisi@cyber.harvard.edu](mailto:vcharisi@cyber.harvard.edu)) presented work from her doctoral thesis exploring how young children engage in self-directed music-making with digital technology. The study investigated the cognitive, social and emotional processes involved when children create music together using digital tools. Sixteen children aged five to seven worked in pairs

over three months using two graphical music-making environments, with sessions recorded and analysed.

A pilot phase informed the development of a framework of forty-five micro-behaviours across five themes. The main study used detailed microgenetic analysis to examine children's verbal and non-verbal interactions as musical ideas emerged and developed over time.

The findings highlighted three key processes: exploratory sound manipulation through playful experimentation; reflective reasoning as children evaluated and adapted their ideas; and deliberate planning when they organised musical structures. Three recurring strategies also supported creativity: visual–auditory coupling through the graphical interfaces, collaborative scaffolding between peers, and strong affective engagement that sustained motivation.

Overall, the study showed how cognitive, social and emotional processes interacted dynamically during digital music-making. The resulting micro-behavioural framework offered new insights into how musical creativity develops in early childhood and suggested implications for researchers, educators and designers of digital creative tools.



4 - Credit: Jenna Brown

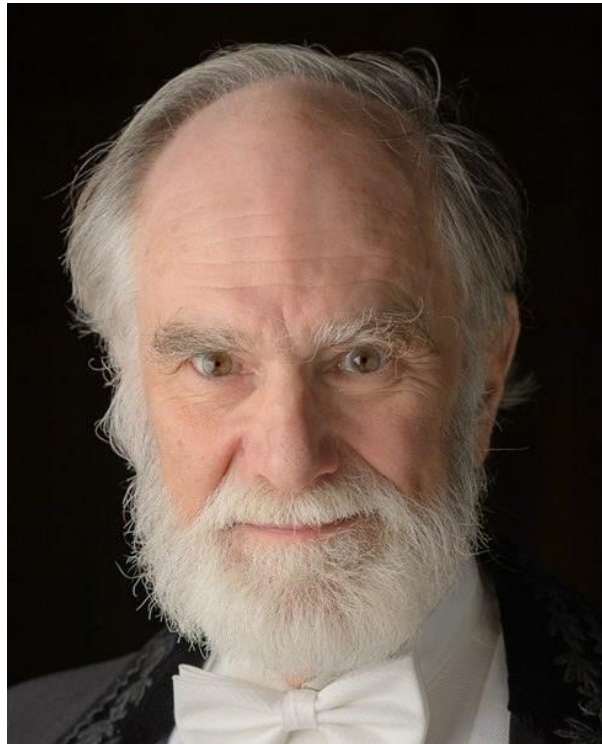
### **Jenna Brown: Female Voices After Laryngectomy: Vulnerability, Stigma and Psychosocial Impact - Thoughts for Music Educators**

**Jenna Brown** ([jenna.brown.23@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:jenna.brown.23@ucl.ac.uk)) presented part of her ongoing doctoral research exploring the gendered experiences of women following laryngectomy. While the procedure is more common in men, women often face amplified psychosocial challenges, including stigma associated with throat cancer, misgendering linked to low-pitched substitute voices, and the added pressures of caring responsibilities during recovery.

The study involved five women (aged 42–75) from the Shout at Cancer Laryngectomy Choir and used a feminist standpoint methodology combining an interactive workshop with a specialist singing coach and follow-up unstructured interviews.

Findings showed that altered voice and limited expressive range affected participants' professional and personal lives and, alongside negative social experiences, prolonged psychological adjustment. Participants described heightened vulnerability to discrimination and social exclusion, revealing how laryngectomy can make underlying gender inequalities more visible. Jenna's talk also highlighted implications for multidisciplinary care teams and the potential role of music educators in vocal rehabilitation.

## Happy Birthday to Professor Johan Sundberg!



*5 - Credit: Professor Johan Sundberg*

It is with great pleasure that we honour Professor Johan Sundberg's 90th birthday on Wednesday 25th March 2026, the same day as our March iMerc seminar. Johan is regarded as one of the world's leading figures in the science of the singing voice and was a Visiting Professor at iMerc for nine years (2002–2010), supporting and occasionally co-supervising a group of our former research students in their singing-related doctoral research (Evangelos Himonides, Gillyanne Kayes, Susan Knight, Tiija Rinta, Jenevora Williams, Yang Yang, Rebecca Moseley-Morgan). Earlier in his career, in 1979 Johan had been awarded a personal Chair (Professorship) in Music Acoustics at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and this is where he founded and led the music acoustics research group until his retirement in 2001. He is an Emeritus Professor at the KTH and his academic output continues to be extensive and influential in the psycho-acoustics of singing, music perception and music performance. Unfortunately, Johan is unable to be with us in March because he will be in Istanbul for the 16th PEVOC conference (<https://www.pevoc2026.com>) – the latest in a bi-

annual conference series that Gunnar Rugheimer and Johan initiated in 1995. Johan and I first met in 1982 in Rotterdam at a conference on singing and have been friends and collaborators ever since. Johan is a very special member of our iMerc community and we wish him a wonderful 90th birthday!

— Professor Graham Welch ([graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk))

## Newly Published: Ugly and Beautiful Voices: A Rebuttal of Saruhan's Critical Comments



6 - Credit: Professor Johan Sundberg, Journal of Voice

Professor Johan Sundberg investigates how playing wind instruments may affect the vocal tract and voice health of professional musicians. Using clinical assessments and endoscopic examination, the researchers analysed vocal symptoms and laryngeal changes in wind instrumentalists while playing. The findings show that many musicians experience vocal fatigue, voice changes, breathing difficulties and neck symptoms, with signs of vocal strain and mild dysphonia observed in a notable proportion of participants. The study highlights that the physical demands of wind-instrument performance place considerable pressure on the vocal tract, suggesting that professional players should be considered at-risk voice users and may benefit from greater clinical monitoring and preventive care.

Sundberg J. (2026). Ugly and Beautiful Voices: A Rebuttal of Saruhan's Critical Comments. *Journal of voice : official journal of the Voice Foundation*, S0892-1997(26)00015-9. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2026.01.016>

## Newly Published: The personal and professional identity of secondary classroom music teachers in England

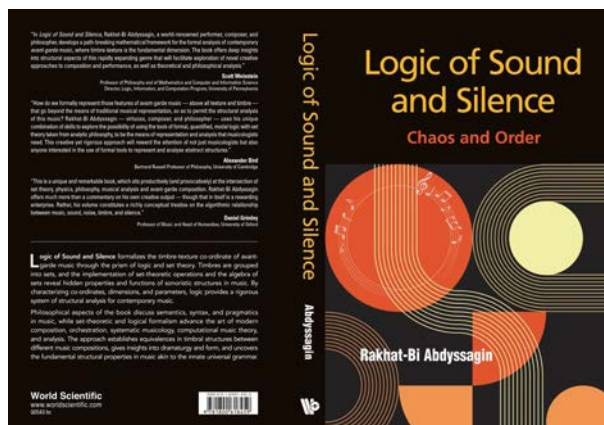


7 - Credit: Dr Christopher Dalladay, British Journal of Music Education

Dr Christopher Dalladay ([cdalladay@aol.com](mailto:cdalladay@aol.com)) explores how secondary classroom music teachers in England understand and negotiate their personal and professional identities. The study examines whether teachers primarily see themselves as musicians who teach or teachers who specialise in music, and how these perspectives shape their classroom practice and relationships with pupils. Drawing on survey data from music teachers across England, the research highlights the complex interplay between teachers' musical backgrounds, professional roles and educational contexts, suggesting that identity plays a significant role in influencing both teaching approaches and students' musical experiences in school.

Dalladay, C. (2026). The personal and professional identity of secondary classroom music teachers in England. *British Journal of Music Education*, 1–16.  
doi:10.1017/S0265051726100680

## Newly Published: Logic of Sound and Silence



8 - Credit: Rakhat-Bi Abdysagyn, World Scientific

[Logic of Sound and Silence: Chaos and Order](#), a new book by composer, pianist and our iMerc colleague Rakhat-Bi Abdysagin ([rahatbiabd@mail.ru](mailto:rahatbiabd@mail.ru)), has been published by World Scientific, offering an original interdisciplinary perspective on contemporary music. Drawing on ideas from mathematics, logic and philosophy, Abdysagin proposes a framework for understanding avant-garde composition through the timbre-texture dimension of sound rather than traditional elements such as pitch and rhythm. Combining theoretical reflection with insights from his own compositional practice, the book explores how structures of order, chaos and silence can shape musical form, opening new connections between music theory, philosophy and mathematical thought.

## Newly Published: Mayday Group Newsletter



9 - Credit: Mayday Group

The Mayday Group Newsletter highlights recent developments, opportunities and discussions in the field of music education research and practice. The latest edition shares news of calls for papers, new publications, conferences, and academic job opportunities, as well as updates from the Mayday Group's open-access journals *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* and *TOPICS*. As an international think tank dedicated to critically examining the purposes and practices of music education, the Mayday Group continues to foster dialogue among scholars, educators and musicians worldwide. The newsletter can be read [HERE](#).

## Invitation: Symposium of Somatic Sound Practices



10 - Credit: UCL

[Symposium of Somatic Sound](#) Practices will take place on 15 May 2026 at the Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL (Bloomsbury), bringing together musicians, composers, scholars and educators interested in the relationship between movement and musical performance. Organised with collaborators from the Netherlands, the event explores connections between playing and moving through the lens of the Laban/Bartenieff Movement System, a framework for movement analysis and somatic practice. The symposium will feature presentations, discussions and exchanges aimed at sharing research and creative practice in this emerging interdisciplinary field.

You are welcome to attend all day, 10-5pm, or for the performance sharing only, 4-5pm. Free to attend, please sign up to confirm your place: <https://play-as-we-are.eventbrite.co.uk>

## Invitation: London Interdisciplinary Music Research Initiative - Inaugural Workshop

2026-04

### **LIMRI Workshop: Interdisciplinary Conversations on Expert Performance**

Wednesday 29 April 2026, 2–6 pm

Hosted by C4DM at the QMUL Mile End Campus.

The first themed research event of LIMRI will be an afternoon workshop that explores the many ways we can understand *expert performance in music*. Bringing together researchers and practitioners from fields including performance science, design engineering, music computing, and recording practices, the event will invite diverse perspectives on how musical expertise is developed, expressed, studied, captured, and modelled.

The workshop will include 5 talks and a panel discussion, followed by an informal reception with (this is speculative) a surprise concert.

Invited speakers:

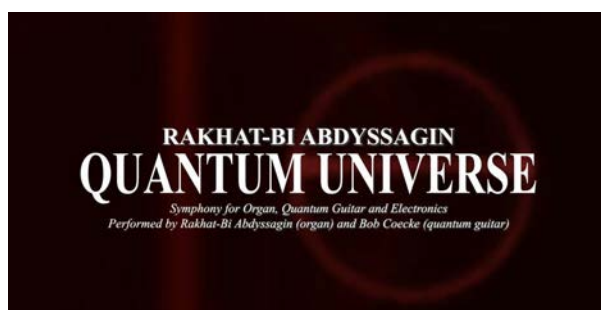
- [Prof Elaine Chew](#) (King's College London)
- [Prof Andrew McPherson](#) (Imperial College London)
- [Dr Amy Blier-Carruthers](#) (King's College London / Guildhall School of Music and Drama / Royal Academy of Music)
- [Dr Mira Benjamin](#) (City St George's, University of London)
- [Dr George Waddell](#) (Royal College of Music / Imperial College London)

11 - Credit: London Interdisciplinary Music Research Initiative (LIMRI)

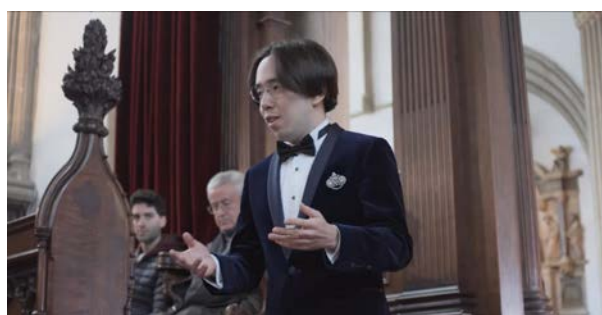
[London Interdisciplinary Music Research Initiative](#) (LIMRI) has launched, bringing together scholars and practitioners from universities across the city. Its first event, “Expert Performance”, will take place on 29 April 2026 (2–6pm) at the Centre for Digital Music (C4DM), Queen Mary University of London, Mile End Campus. The workshop will explore different perspectives on expert performance in music research and practice through presentations, a panel discussion, networking and live music, featuring speakers including Elaine Chew, Andrew McPherson, Amy Blier-Carruthers, Mira Benjamin and George Waddell. Registration is free but places are limited. More information: <https://dmrn-limri.github.io/workshop-expert-performance.html>.

Registration here: <https://forms.office.com/e/EdxFtn74xL>

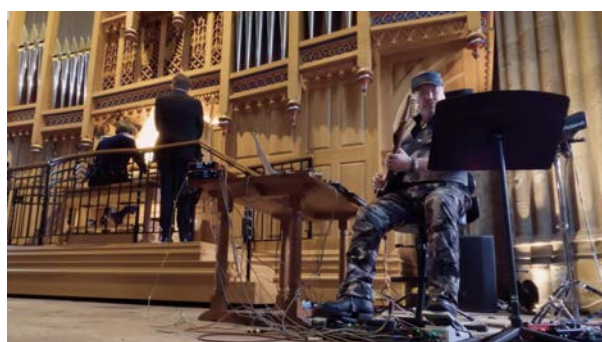
## Music Sharing: 'Quantum Universe' Symphony for Organ, Quantum Guitar and Electronics



12 - Credit: Rakhata-Bi Abdysagyn



13 - Credit: Rakhata-Bi Abdysagyn



14 - Credit: Rakhata-Bi Abdysagyn and Bob Coecke

A video recording is now available of the world premiere of our iMerc colleague Rakhata-Bi Abdysagyn's ([rahatbiabd@mail.ru](mailto:rahatbiabd@mail.ru)) *Quantum Universe* Symphony for Organ, Quantum Guitar and Electronics (2025), performed by Rakhata-Bi Abdysagyn and Bob Coecke at Merton College Chapel, Oxford, on 20 November 2025. The performance opened the Oxford Quantum Centenary Conference, hosted by the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Oxford as part of the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology 2025. The work features the quantum guitar, a new musical instrument developed in Oxford by Bob Coecke, and was presented with generous support from the John Templeton Foundation, with thanks to Merton College, Oxford.

The recording can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DI8BGqTuE0>.

## Music Sharing: Goodness of God (LIVE)



15 - Credit: Sandra Oberoi and Harmony Collective



16 - Credit: Sandra Oberoi and Harmony Collective



17 - Credit: Sandra Oberoi and Harmony Collective

A powerful live cover of the worship anthem “Goodness of God” has been released, recorded in concert in Bangalore, India, featuring our doctoral colleague Sandra Oberoi ([sandra@harmonybangalore.com](mailto:sandra@harmonybangalore.com)) with the Harmony Collective and The Harmony Chorus. Originally released by Bethel Music, the song has inspired millions of listeners worldwide, and this new performance offers a vibrant live interpretation highlighting the energy and spirit of the ensemble. The performance can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATPoByrnf3g>.

UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 25 March 2026

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*Guest Speaker: Bridget Whyte*



18 - Credit: Bridget Whyte

**Bridget's Abstract:**

With education and culture policy devolved across the four nations in the UK, how music education is funded, structured and delivered varies across the country. This presentation will provide an overview of the political, policy and societal developments which have had an impact on music education in and out of the classroom. England will be the primary focus of reflections on how provision has evolved over the past 30 years and the significant changes which are in progress following the change of government in 2024. However, there will also be a chance to hear about what is happening and what we can expect over the coming months and years across the rest of UK including how in Scotland the government have increased funding to support equality of access to instrumental learning, and in Wales how a National Plan was developed alongside a new National Curriculum which is transforming musical learning across the country.

**Bridget Whyte** ([bridget.whyte@musicmark.org.uk](mailto:bridget.whyte@musicmark.org.uk)) became CEO of Music Mark in 2017. She started her career at Arts Council England before going freelance, working with over 50 music & music education organisations including as a Strategic Advisor to the British Council, setting up and managing their World Voice Programme which supported the use of singing as a tool for learning in over 20 countries. As Music Mark's CEO, Bridget is in demand as a keynote speaker, advocate and advisor at a national and international level. In 2019/20 she was involved in the development of the English Model Music Curriculum and in 2021/22 she supported both the Welsh and English Governments in preparing National Plans for Music Education. In May 2024 she gave evidence at an Education Select Committee meeting on

Music Education Hubs and she meets regularly with government officials and a growing number of parliamentarians.

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*Speaker: Zhengyi Du*

*Topic: Investigating the Impact of Digital Technologies on Higher Education Students' Creativity and Musical Creativity: Focus on Project-based Learning and Chinese Cultural Heritage*

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*19 - Credit: Zhengyi Du*

**Zhengyi's Abstract:** This study explores how digital cultural heritage technologies can be integrated into a Chinese folk music course in higher education through a project-based learning approach. It further investigates how such integration influences students' creativity, musical creativity, and learning in Chinese folk music. Drawing on a mixed-methods design, the research was conducted through an experimental teaching programme involving 99 university students. The quantitative analysis indicates improvements in several dimensions of creativity, including fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, as well as aspects of musical creativity. Although measurable gains in subject learning outcomes were relatively moderate, students showed clear adaptation to the learning approach. The qualitative data

point to noticeable changes in learning processes. In particular, the integration of digital technologies with project-based learning seemed to support a richer understanding of Chinese folk music and to strengthen students' interest, appreciation, and motivation. From a theoretical perspective, the study revisits the Field within Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity by introducing a culturally informed dimension that reflects how traditional Chinese perspectives subtly influence musical practice. It also conceptualises digital cultural heritage technologies as interconnected learning resources that work collectively across different stages of creative learning.

**Zhengyi Du** ([zhengyi.du.20@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:zhengyi.du.20@ucl.ac.uk)) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Culture, Communication and Media at the UCL Institute of Education. She holds dual bachelor's degrees in Musicology and Law from Xiamen University, as well as master's degrees in Musicology from Xiamen University and in Cultural Heritage Studies from the UCL Institute of Archaeology. Her research focuses on creativity, technology-enhanced learning, and cultural heritage education. She has received several honours, including the China National Scholarship, the UCL Doctoral Scholarship in Digital Innovation, and the Chinese Government Award for Outstanding Self-financed Students Abroad. As an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA), she has been actively involved in interdisciplinary teaching. She previously worked as a postgraduate teaching assistant at UCL and at the Centre for Aesthetic and General Education at Xiamen University.

## Upcoming Seminar

Please note that our next UCL iMerc research seminar will be on Wednesday, 22 April 2026, 11.00-1.00 BST. Please mark this date on your diary. If you're interested in sharing your work, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch. Thank you for all your continued engagement!

## Contact Us

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

Professor Graham Welch: [graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk)

Professor Evangelos Himonides: [e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk)

Dr Eunice S Y Tang: [eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk)