

UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 27, June 2026

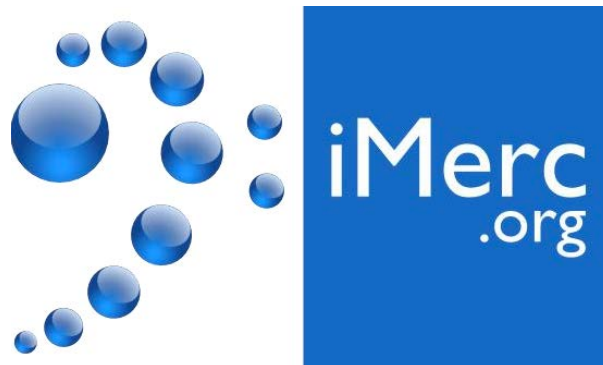
About us

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, 24 June 2026**, 11am-1pm BST via Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE . We are pleased to invite you to join us online [HERE](#) or in person. Everyone is welcome!

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Previous UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 20 May 2026



2 - Credit: iMerc

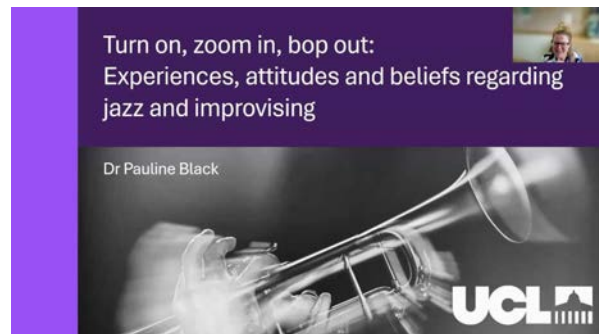


3 - Credit: Professor Ian Cross and Dr Neta Spiro

Professor Ian Cross and Dr Neta Spiro: Singing with Strangers: The Social Significance of Music

Professor Ian Cross (ic108@cam.ac.uk) and Dr Neta Spiro (neta.spiro@rcm.ac.uk) explored whether the social benefits of singing together depend on musical quality. The study was based on the idea that the primary function of making music together is to strengthen social bonds rather than to create a pleasing sound. While previous research has shown that group music-making can increase feelings of closeness, most studies have focused on formal, rehearsed musical activities. To investigate informal music-making, the researchers paired 162 same-sex strangers and asked them either to sing “Happy Birthday” together on first meeting or to play a cooperative card memory game. Both activities increased participants’ sense of connection, despite the singing lasting only around 30 seconds. Importantly, the quality of the singing, measured by how well participants sang in tune with one another, had no significant effect on the bonding outcome. The findings suggest that the social benefits of

singing together are largely independent of musical skill or performance quality, highlighting the importance of singing as a social activity that fosters connection, even in brief and informal settings.



4 - Credit: Dr Pauline Black

Dr Pauline Black: Turn on, zoom in, bop out: Experiences, attitudes and beliefs regarding jazz and improvising

Dr Pauline Black (p.black@ucl.ac.uk) presented findings from her ethnographic doctoral case study of a Scottish Secondary school jazz ensemble, conducted as part of a wider mixed-methods study exploring attitudes, beliefs and experiences of jazz and improvisation in UK Secondary schools. Drawing on observations, interviews and focus groups with students and teachers, the research demonstrated how an inclusive, student-centred approach enabled young people with varying levels of experience to develop improvisation skills, confidence and autonomy. The study highlighted the important role of responsive teaching practices and showed that online rehearsals successfully fostered community, belonging and participation while providing an accessible entry point for beginners and geographically isolated learners. Pauline argued that improvisation can support musical, social and emotional development, challenge traditional Western art music dominance in the curriculum, and broaden access to meaningful musical learning for a more diverse range of students.

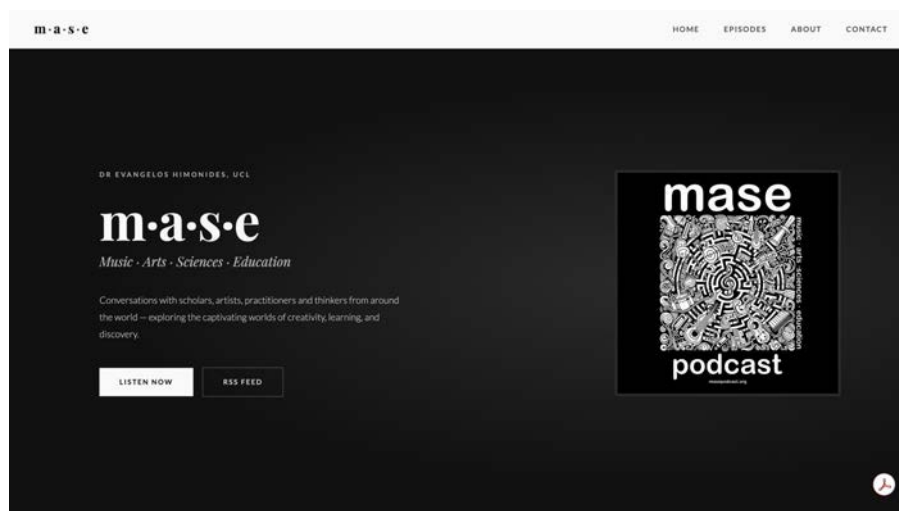


5 - Credit: Inès Chiaramonti

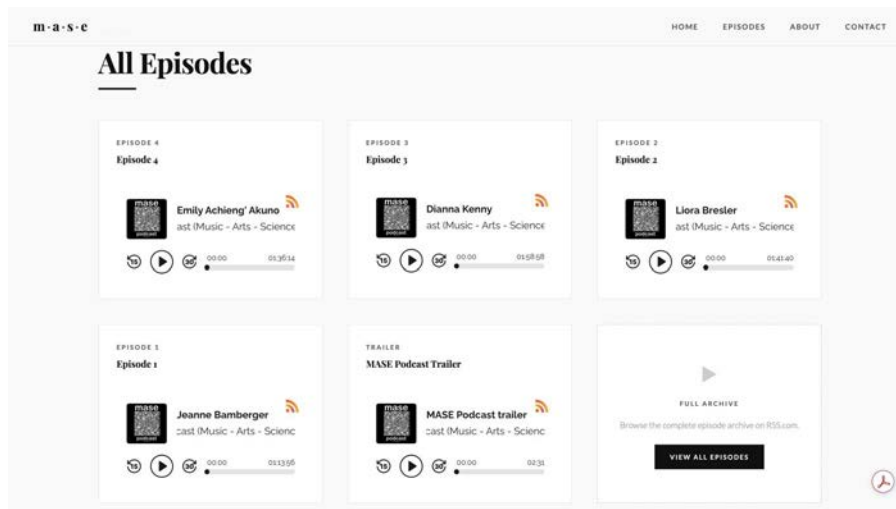
Inès Chiaramonti: Algorithmic Recommendation in the French Music Industry: Platforms, Cultural Policy, and the Limits of Governance for Artist Development

Inès Chiaramonti (ines.chiaramonti.21@ucl.ac.uk) presented her study exploring the cultural consequences of algorithmic recommendation systems on music streaming platforms in France, combining survey responses from 79 streaming users with interviews involving professionals from across the music and technology sectors. The study found that listeners often perceived themselves as being in control of their listening despite relying heavily on automated recommendations, while emerging artists faced challenges gaining visibility because algorithms tended to amplify existing popularity rather than create new opportunities for discovery. The study also highlighted how platform metrics increasingly influence creative and release strategies, how the visibility of French-language music is shaped by a complex interaction of algorithms, editorial curation and contractual arrangements, and how power and information remain unevenly distributed across the sector. Ines argued that traditional broadcast-era cultural policy tools are ill-suited to personalised recommendation systems and called for greater transparency, independent diversity audits and stronger oversight of recommendation outputs, while also addressing emerging challenges surrounding generative AI and rights management.

Newly Launched: m·a·s·e Podcast



6 - Credit: Professor Evangelos Himonides



7 - Credit: Professor Evangelos Himonides

The m·a·s·e (music· arts· science· education) Podcast is a new and exciting addition to the music education community, offering engaging conversations with influential educators, performers, researchers, and industry leaders. Covering a wide range of topics from teaching practice to emerging trends, each episode provides fresh perspectives and valuable insights for anyone interested in music education. For details, check out, <https://masepodcast.org/>

Contact: Professor Evangelos Himonides (e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk)

Newly Published: Compassionate care in disabled people's music engagement and learning



8 - Credit: Dr David Baker, BJME

Abstract:

This article discusses the musical engagement of disabled people given recent scholarship in care ethics. It considers how terms used to describe them frame the relational aspects of

care. Possibilities and challenges are examined for caring relationships in music teaching that involve: inclusive practice; vulnerabilities; reframing it towards reciprocal care; and the dangers of “benign neglect”. Hel’s “distributive justice” is also considered. The article concludes that disabled insiders’ authentic experiences might best serve as a platform for appropriate resources, policies and music education practices.

Baker, D. (2026). Compassionate care in disabled people’s music engagement and learning. *British Journal of Music Education*, 43(1), 5–17. doi:10.1017/S0265051726100734

Online Workshop: Maximizing the Impact of Mind and Body Interventions



9 - Credit: National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)

July 23–24, 2026 | 1:00–5:00 p.m. ET | Virtual Event

Join researchers, practitioners, and health professionals for a two-day virtual workshop exploring how, when, and why mind and body interventions should be adapted to better serve diverse populations, settings, and health conditions.

Hosted by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) in collaboration with other National Institutes of Health (NIH) Institutes and Centers, the workshop will examine a growing challenge in health research: determining when adapting evidence-based interventions can enhance effectiveness and real-world impact—and when it may add unnecessary complexity with limited benefit.

Participants will engage in discussions on key questions across the translational research pipeline, including:

- Why adaptations may be needed to improve intervention fit in specific contexts
- When adaptations are most appropriate during research and implementation

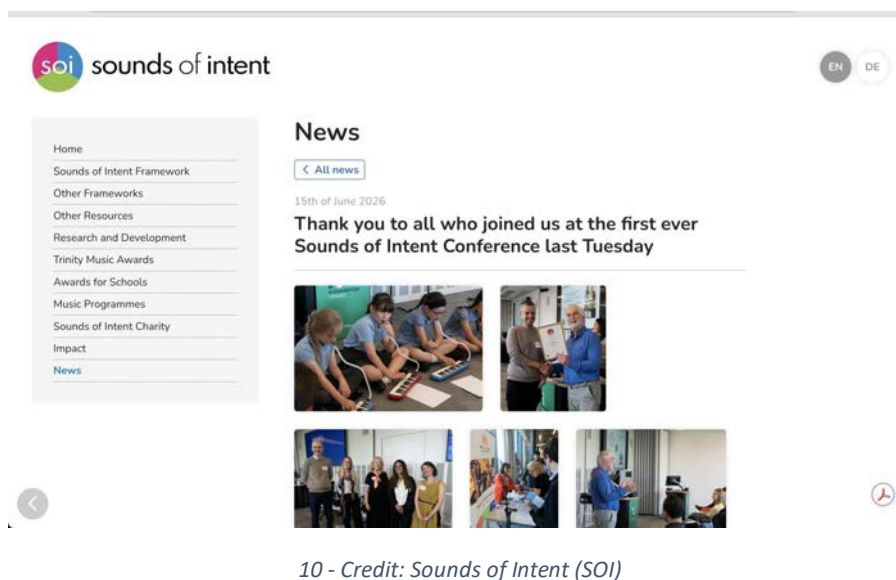
- How to balance scientific rigor, feasibility, and population impact when modifying interventions

While the primary focus is on mind and body interventions, the workshop will feature insights and perspectives from a range of disciplines.

The event aims to advance understanding of strategies that support the successful translation of evidence-based interventions into practice, ultimately improving population health and well-being.

For agenda details and registration information, visit the NCCIH website [HERE](#). If you experience registration difficulties, contact nccihevents@mail.nih.gov for detail.

Celebrating the First Sounds of Intent Conference



10 - Credit: Sounds of Intent (SOI)

We were delighted to see the success of the first Sounds of Intent Conference, held at the University of Roehampton on 9 June 2026. The event brought together educators, researchers, practitioners, musicians and advocates from across the sector to explore inclusive approaches to music-making and music education. The conference showcased a wide range of presentations, discussions and performances, highlighting both current research and practical innovations that support meaningful musical engagement for people of all ages and abilities. Delegates had the opportunity to exchange ideas, share experiences and build new connections within a vibrant and supportive community. It was inspiring to see so many people committed to advancing inclusion through music. Congratulations to the Sounds of Intent team and all those involved in organising such a successful and thought-provoking event.

For details including accessing the full-day's presentation recordings and slides, please read: [Sounds of Intent News](#)

Guest Speaker: Professor Francisco José Cuadrado

Topic: Tékne: Where Art Thinks and Research Creates



11 - Credit: Professor Francisco José Cuadrado

Francisco's abstract:

Tékne, the Research and Creative Arts Group at Loyola University, brings together a richly diverse community of researchers who are also musicians, game designers, actors, choreographers, psychologists, writers and fine artists. This plurality underpins the group's core aim: to explore the dynamic interplay between academic research and artistic creation through collaborative and practice-based methodologies.

This diversity enables Tékne to investigate how research and creation can mutually inform one another across a wide range of contexts, from neuroscience and social justice to spirituality and emerging forms of audience engagement. The group emphasises transdisciplinarity, hybrid languages, and critical approaches to art and technology.

Its research is articulated through three main lines: the relationship between art and human and social dimensions; critical reflection on artistic research methodologies; and the dialogue between art, technology, and audiences.

This presentation will highlight recent work and current project proposals under development, with a view to fostering dialogue and potential collaborations.

Professor Francisco José Cuadrado (fjcuadrado@uloyola.es) holds a PhD in Communication and works as a researcher and professor, as well as a composer and sound designer. Dr Cuadrado is currently a Full Professor in the Department of Communication and Arts at Loyola University, and serves as Co-Director of the Research and Artistic Creation Group “Tékne”.

His principal research area concerns the creation and perception of music and sound in media, with particular emphasis on how immersive music and sound can elicit emotion. Within this field, he has served as Principal Investigator (PI) of the BBVA Foundation–funded project 'The Unconscious Listening' and has coordinated the Erasmus KA3 research project Learning To Be. He also led the research and educational initiative Music and Talent, which explored the use of music as a resource for the cognitive, social and emotional development of school-aged children.

He has over 25 years’ professional experience as a composer, sound designer and music producer across film and television, museum and exhibition installations, multimedia work, theatre and dance. He has contributed to commissions and collaborations for organisations including Universal Music, TVE, Lotus Film, Nickel Odeon Dos, Flamenco Vivo Records, Acciona Cultura, the Halle Academy of Media Arts, the Barenboim–Said Foundation, the Andalusian Dance Centre, and Cámara Negra Teatro. His work has received national and international awards and recognition.

Recent projects include the cantata Oliver Twist; the latest edition of Proyecto Luna, premiered at the Teatro de la Maestranza; and the original score for the feature film El pezón de Elena (The Blue House Films).

Guest Speaker: Dr Caroline Caregnato

Topic: Music Composition on TARGET: Effects of a Pedagogical Intervention on Achievement Goals and Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction



12 - Credit: Dr Caroline Caregnato

Caroline's Abstract:

Drawing on principles from Achievement Goals Theory and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs from Self-Determination Theory, the TARGET model provides guidance for fostering students' motivation. During this mixed-methods study, we conducted a pedagogical intervention involving TARGET, music composition, one music teacher, and 162 high school students aged 14 to 19 from a Brazilian public school. Employing a quasi-experimental design, questionnaires, and quantitative analyses, we examined the effects of this intervention on students' adopted and perceived achievement goals and on the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs. Additionally, through a case study, participant observation, and qualitative analysis, we explained these effects by referring to particularities in the implementation of the TARGET model. Increases in all variables measured through the questionnaires were observed after the intervention. Despite some unexpected findings, positive results were connected to a successful implementation of TARGET's Task dimension. In other words, we found preliminary evidence that music composition activities may promote positive changes in students' motivation to learn music.

Dr Caroline Caregnato (ccaregnato@uea.edu.br) is a Brazilian professor and researcher. She holds a PhD in Music from Universidade Estadual de Campinas (2016), a Master's degree in Music from Universidade Federal do Paraná (2012), a Bachelor's degree in Music Education

from Escola de Música e Belas Artes do Paraná (2009), and a Bachelor's degree in Art Education from Universidade Federal do Paraná (2009). She is currently an associate professor at Universidade do Estado do Amazonas (UEA) and is a member of the institution's Postgraduate Program in Letters and Arts. She conducts research in the fields of Music Cognition and Music Education and, in recent years, has conducted research projects funded by public Brazilian agencies (FAPEAM and CNPq) and published in prestigious Brazilian and international journals with her colleagues and students from LACEM (Laboratory of Cognition and Music Education) at UEA. At present, she is undertaking a postdoctoral research project under the supervision of Professor Graham Welch at University College London, funded by the Brazilian agency CNPq.

Speaker: Dr Amy Johnston

Topic: Insights into the music development needs of generalist teachers in special schools: implications for SEND music-pedagogical practice



13 - Credit: Dr Amy Johnston

Amy's abstract:

Teaching music to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is an under-researched (Ockelford & Markou, 2012) but complex area of professional practice. Teachers require a combination of music subject knowledge and specialist SEND pedagogy to meet the coexisting nature (Ockelford, 2008) and increasing complexity (Salt, 2010; Carpenter, 2007; Pinney, 2017) of learners' needs. Despite this, there is a lack of mutual understanding of the training teachers require to teach SEND music effectively, with little attention paid to this within the professional and academic literature.

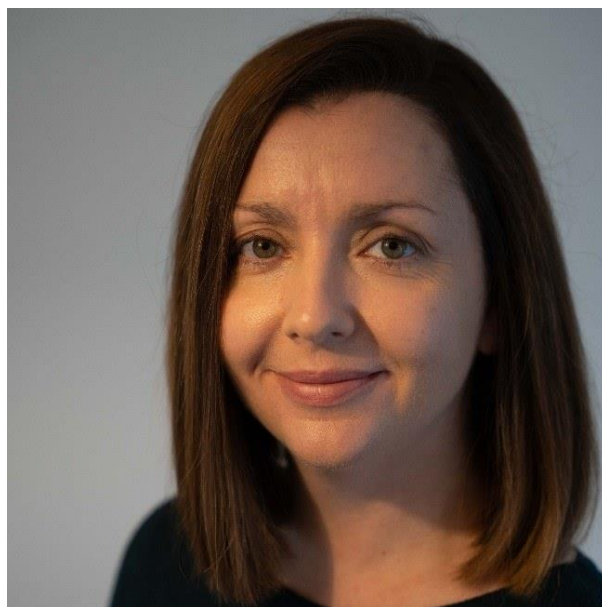
As a means of addressing this, my recent doctoral study examined the efficacy of a skills-based teacher mentoring model in SEND music (Johnston, 2023). The research involved four generalist (non-music specialist) in-service teacher participants from a Primary special needs school (GTSS) in the UK. The longitudinal case study utilised various data collection tools, including interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observations. Learner-centred theory framed decisions regarding the pragmatic nature of training and mentoring, as well as the analysis and reporting of data. Findings highlighted the importance of GTSS receiving domain specific, situated training and mentoring (Catalano, 2015; Lave & Wenger, 1991) from a SEND music specialist.

Today's presentation reveals what this training and mentoring looked like, exploring somewhat predictable connections with the music training of generalist teachers in mainstream schools, but crucially, identifying new links with early years music pedagogy (Bremmer, 2021) and with music training for early years teachers (Bainger, 2010; Barrett, Zhukov & Welch, 2019). The idea that music specialist teachers and early years music teachers could therefore play an equally important role in the music training and mentoring of GTSS is proposed, inviting further exploration of the potential interdisciplinary nature of the SEND and early years music education fields in terms of pedagogy, practice and professional development.

Dr Amy Johnston (ajohnston@kingsland.wakefield.sch.uk) is a SEND music specialist teacher and researcher based in the UK. She completed her EdD at the University of Reading in 2023, the focus of which was on evaluating the efficacy of a skills-based intervention on the readiness of generalist teachers in a special school to teach music. Amy has since shared findings from her doctoral research at a number of international music education conferences and has guest lectured at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Alongside Professor Adam Ockelford (Roehampton University) and Sarah McCarthy (Roehampton University/University of Surrey), she has secured funding from SEMPRES to investigate how targeted Continuing Professional Development (CPD) may be able to empower Teaching Assistants to draw upon their own musicality and established SEND pedagogy to design and facilitate meaningful music-making activities with children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). Amy is also currently the Headteacher of a large Primary special needs school and has previously worked as an Associate Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University in the areas of music teacher training and inclusion.

Speaker: Hazel Baxter

Topic: Draw-and-tell: Singing identities of seven-year-olds



14 - Credit: Hazel Baxter

Hazel's abstract:

This study explores the singing identities of seven-year-old children through a 'draw-and-tell' methodology. This was conducted as part of a wider independent evaluation of the VOCES8 Foundation's (V8F) long-term singing programme in an East London Primary school. The research aimed to investigate how a class of Year 3 children—who had participated in eighteen months of high-quality singing experiences led by the V8F—perceived singing both in- and out-of-school, and how these experiences shaped their emotional, social, and musical identities as young singers. The children first created drawings of themselves singing and took part in semi-structured individual conversations with the researchers. They then reflected on their singing experiences in focus groups following a whole-class singing session led by V8F. Analyses of the drawings and accompanying dialogue revealed that singing held emotional significance for the children, with the majority expressing happiness, excitement and confidence when singing. Six dimensions of the children's perceptions of singing appeared to contribute to their positive singing identities: singing is emotional; singing is performing; singing is learning; singing is social; singing is technology; and singing is everywhere.

Hazel Baxter (hazel.baxter@ucl.ac.uk) is the Foundation Subjects Lead and Lecturer on the Primary PGCE course at the IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. She designs and teaches the music foundation subject input for Primary PGCE students and leads the M-

Level music specialism module. Hazel is also a part-time doctoral researcher at UCL. Her doctoral research focuses on the need, role and legacy of professional development and mentorship programmes in music for Primary generalist teachers. Hazel's research interests also include singing and wellbeing in the Primary classroom, and climate change and sustainability education.

Upcoming Seminars

Please note that our UCL iMerc research seminar series will resume in Autumn Term. If you're interested in sharing your work in future, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch. Thank you for all your continued engagement, we really appreciate this. Have a good Summer (or equivalent) everyone wherever you are in the world!

Contact Us

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

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