



UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 29, September 2026

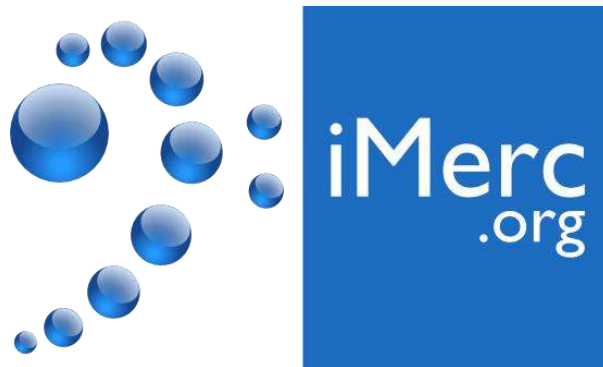
About us

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, North America (including the 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, 16 September 2026**, 11am BST via Zoom and, if you would like to come into London, in room 938 (9th floor), UCL Institute of Education. We are pleased to invite you to join us online [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

In This Issue



1 - Credit: iMerc

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1. *UCL iMerc Research Seminar, 16 September 2026*
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Guest Speaker: Dr Anthony Anderson

Topic: Classroom music teachers on the curriculum tightrope



2 - Credits: Dr Anthony Anderson

Anthony's abstract:

Classroom music teachers are precariously positioned. The curricula they create are intensely personal and designed for the young people they are working with. However, policy requirements at both school and state level can conflict with music teachers' vision of what music curriculum could be. This presentation will explore ideas about the nature of curriculum literacy and what this means for the classroom music teacher, both in theory and in practice. Drawing on academic literature and curriculum research, it will ask how music teachers can negotiate this learning environment. How do music teachers balance on the curriculum tightrope?

Dr Anthony Anderson (Anthony.Anderson@bcu.ac.uk) is Associate Professor in Music Education at Birmingham City University. He works on a wide variety of research projects

and publishes on music education regularly, with a particular specialism in music curriculum. Anthony is co-editor of *Learning to Teach Music in the Secondary School* and a regular keynote speaker at music education events. He is a former Head of Music and Performing Arts in Secondary Schools and worked as a classroom music teacher for 16 years.

Guest Speaker: Dr Marc R Thompson

Topic: Creativity, Interaction, and Embodiment in Musical Improvisation: Insights from Music Education Students



3 - Credits: Dr Marc R. Thompson

Marc's abstract:

Musical improvisation exemplifies collaborative creativity, integrating sound, gesture, and shared attention in real time. Despite its educational value, improvisation remains underutilized in music education due to curricular and assessment constraints. This talk will present an ongoing study that investigates how university students preparing to become music educators perceive creativity, interaction, and musical skill in improvised dyadic performances, and how these perceptions relate to their own experiences as creative practitioners.

Thirty Finnish university students in music education and musicology completed an online survey evaluating five motion-captured xylophone improvisations using eight perceptual scales. Performances were presented as point-light animations synchronized with audio recordings of non-idiomatic improvisations. Participants rated dimensions including creativity, interactivity, and risk-taking, and reflected on their own improvisational experiences.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed a single latent factor, General Performance Impression, accounting for 71% of the variance. This factor was correlated with eight motion capture features. Ratings were positively associated with movement quantity, directional

coordination, and rhythmic clarity, although none reached statistical significance. Qualitative findings revealed two contrasting experiential themes: *Creative Play* and the *Discomfort Zone*. Students from popular music backgrounds reported greater comfort with improvisation than those from classical backgrounds, while male students expressed more positive attitudes toward group improvisation.

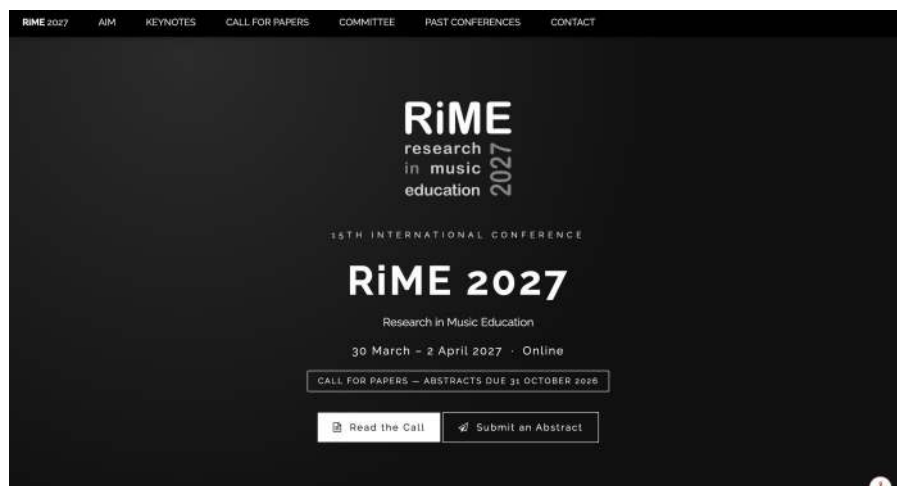
These findings demonstrate how embodied interaction and personal experience shape perceptions of creativity, offering insights for more inclusive and responsive music education practices.

Dr Marc R Thompson (marc.thompson@jyu.fi) received his doctorate from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2012. His doctoral research focused on embodiment in musical production and perception, comprising studies that explored the role of the body in musical activities including piano performance, conducting, and African dance.

Since 2019, he has been a Senior Researcher in the Department of Music, Art and Culture Studies at the University of Jyväskylä and is currently a member of the Finnish Centre of Excellence in Music, Mind, Body and Brain. His research focuses on embodied music cognition, interpersonal coordination in musical interaction, music technology, and music education. He also coordinates the International Master's Degree Programme in Music and Science, Finland's first officially bilingual (Finnish-English) master's programme.

His teaching includes the Master's Seminar in Music and Science, as well as undergraduate courses in music technology and music computing.

RiME 2027: Call for Papers



4 - Credits: RiME

RiME 2027: Call for Papers

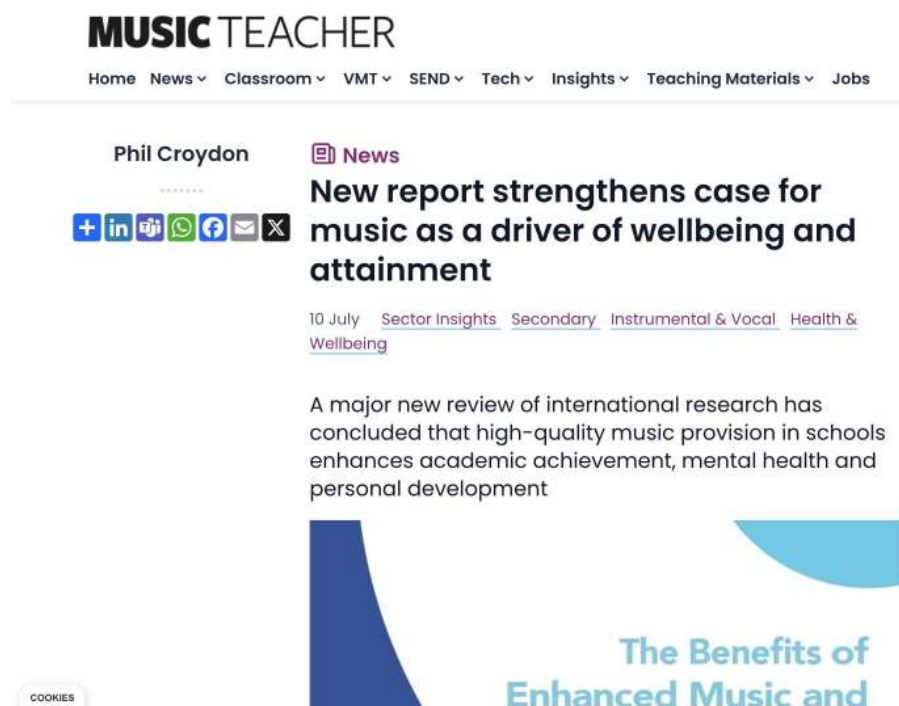
The 15th International Research in Music Education (RiME) Conference will take place online from 30 March- 2 April 2027, bringing together researchers, teachers and practitioners to share and discuss research across music teaching and learning.

The Call for Papers is now open, welcoming submissions on a wide range of areas including musical development, creativity, pedagogy, curriculum, equity and inclusion, technologies, instrumental teaching, teacher education and professional development. Practical workshops that connect research with practice are also particularly welcomed.

Abstracts of up to 300 words are invited for papers, posters, symposia and other presentation formats. The submission deadline is 31 October 2026.

Find out more and submit an abstract: [RiME 2027 Call for Papers](#)

The Benefits of Enhanced Music and Sport Provision



5 - Credits: Music Teacher Magazine, Hazel Baxter, Professor Graham Welch

The Benefits of Enhanced Music and Sport Provision

Hazel Baxter and Professor Graham Welch's report, *The Benefits of Enhanced Music and Sport Provision*, commissioned by the Neville Abraham Foundation, explores the contribution of enhanced music and sport provision to young people's wellbeing and educational attainment.

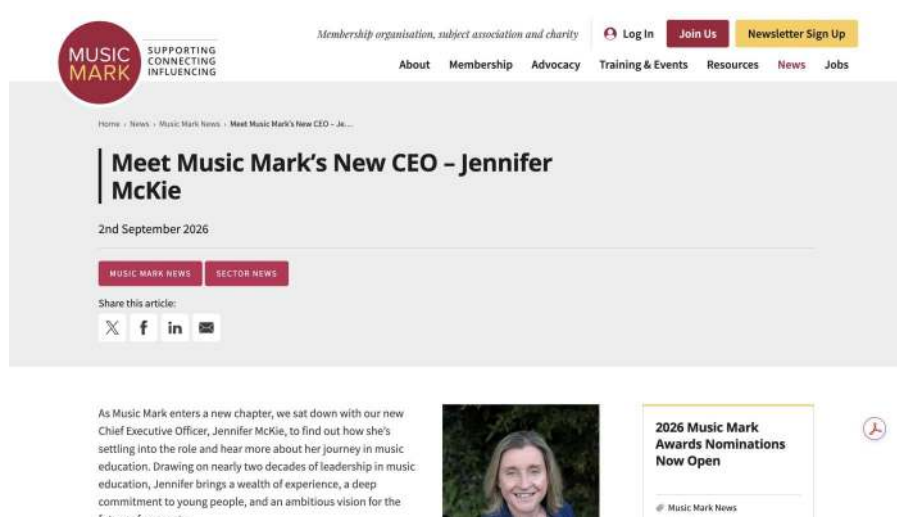
The report was featured on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune* programme and in *Music Teacher Magazine*, which reported on its findings and their implications for understanding the role of music in supporting wellbeing and attainment.

Read the article: [Music Teacher Magazine: “New report strengthens case for music as a driver of wellbeing and attainment”](#)

Read the report via UCL Discovery [HERE](#).

Contact: Hazel Baxter (hazel.baxter@ucl.ac.uk)

Jennifer McKie Begins as Music Mark CEO



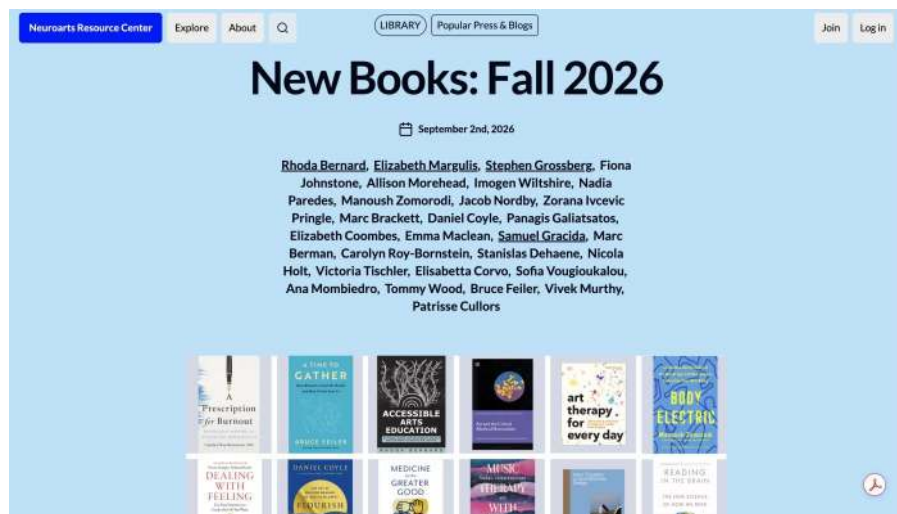
6 - Credits: Music Mark

Jennifer McKie has begun her role as Chief Executive Officer of Music Mark, following 19 years leading Lincolnshire Music Service and Music Hub.

In a recent interview with *Music Mark*, McKie reflects on her journey in music education, her first weeks as CEO, and her priorities for the organisation. She discusses the importance of ensuring that all children and young people have meaningful access to music, alongside plans to listen to and work with *Music Mark's* membership and the wider music education sector.

Read the interview: [Meet Music Mark's New CEO – Jennifer McKie](#)

Neuroarts New Books: Fall 2026



7 - Credits: Neuroarts

The Neuroarts Resource Center has released its New Books: Fall 2026 collection, bringing together recent publications at the intersection of the arts, science, health, learning and wellbeing. The collection is intended for researchers, practitioners, educators and artists, and highlights new ideas, research and applications across the developing field of neuroarts. Featured authors span a range of disciplines and perspectives, reflecting growing interest in the relationships between creative and aesthetic experiences, learning, health and wellbeing.

Explore the collection: [New Books: Fall 2026 – Neuroarts Resource Center](#)

Congratulations!



8 - Credits: Stage at the Lake



9 - Credits: Stage at the Lake



10 - Credits: Stage at the Lake



11 - Credits: Stage at the Lake



12 - Credits: Dr Gregory Boardman, English Chamber Orchestra



13 - Credits: Dr Gregory Boardman, English Chamber Orchestra, Stage at the Lake



14 - Credits: Stage at the Lake



15 - Dr Gregory Boardman with UNESCO Schools' Network ASPnet Coordinator Ann Beatty. Credits: Dr Gregory Boardman

Seeds of Hope Continues to Grow

In previous newsletters, we've detailed awards won by our doctoral colleague Dr Gregory Boardman's *Lights Camera Score: Seeds of Hope* projects. During August 2026, Gregory's team were delighted to see the work develop yet further, as project partner Calderdale Council in West Yorkshire launched a four-day festival: [Stage at the Lake](#).

Three years ago, the project consisted of a handful of primary school projects, but this year, thanks to the support of the UNESCO Schools Network, it developed into large-scale performances involving the English Chamber Orchestra, Northern Ballet, Halifax Choral Society and Grimethorpe Colliery Band.

Alongside performances at Shibden Hall, Halifax, the music of *Seeds of Hope* took on a new form, with pupils' narratives and themes transformed into community gardens. Premiered at Shibden Hall, the gardens will soon be transferred into communities around Calderdale.

Read article: <https://thetravellingtelegraph.com/proms-at-the-lake-a-century-of-shibden-set-to-music/>

Read blog: <https://threestonesmedia.co.uk/blog/>

Contact: Dr Gregory Boardman (greg.boardman@threestonesmedia.com)

Upcoming Seminars

Please note that our upcoming UCL iMerc research seminar series will be on 21 October and 25 November 2026. If you're interested in sharing your work in future, we'd love to hear from you. Please feel free to get in touch!

Contact Us

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

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