CLASSICAL MUSIC FUTURES
PRACTICES OF INNOVATION

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7. The Global Conservatoire: Towards an Integrated Approach to Developing Twenty-First-Century Artists

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This chapter introduces the 'Global Conservatoire', a new model for online teaching in Higher Music Education. We explore, from a UK perspective, how the future needs of contemporary conservatoires and their students might be met through an integrated approach that combines traditional conservatoire methods of learning and teaching with new online and transnational approaches. We set out the aims and guiding principles of the online Global Conservatoire initiative before examining some of the opportunities, risks and challenges presented by online asynchronous teaching. Throughout this discussion, and in order to fully contextualise our model, we examine the Global Conservatoire model in practice with specific reference to a pilot undergraduate course, *Music and Words*, designed and delivered by the Royal College of Music, London.

Reflections on Today's Environment for Conservatoire Learning and Teaching

Preparing Graduates for an Arts Profession in Recovery

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, musicians around the world experienced a sustained period of significant disruption and uncertainty. For many musicians, this called into question the viability of their career as a performer in traditional 'live' classical music settings, such as the

concert hall or opera theatre.[1] The already precarious nature of a career in the performing arts was amplified by the pandemic, prompting deep reflection in conservatoires about the skills, knowledge and experience future graduates will require to be sufficiently agile and resilient in their lifelong careers. Around the world, the professional musicians and music organisations who survived and thrived during the pandemic were those who could adapt their practice in innovative ways, exploit digital technologies and collaborate effectively with others, even when in-person interactions were unavailable to them.[2] As a result, the pandemic shone a light on the vulnerability of those conservatoire graduates who lacked the skills to adapt and, consequently, where there might be gaps in conservatoires' professional preparation.

The arguments for preparing conservatoire graduates to be innovative, entrepreneurial and versatile in their careers are not new.[3] For these graduates it has long been the case that portfolio careers are

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1   Susanna Cohen and Jane Ginsborg, 'The Experiences of Mid-Career and Seasoned Orchestral Musicians in the UK During the First COVID-19 Lockdown', *Frontiers in Psychology* 12:645967 (9 April 2021), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.645967; Nicole Canham, 'Background Music: Using Narrative Inquiry to Explore the Hidden Aspects of Musicians' Career Development', *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 20:4 (December 2021), 146–70, https://doi.org/10.22176/act20.4.146.

2   Shams Bin Quader, 'How the Central Sydney Independent Musicians Use Pre-Established "Online DIY" to Sustain Their Networking during the COVID-19 Pandemic', *The Journal of International Communication* 28:1 (2 January 2022), 90–109, https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2021.1989703; Ties Van De Werff et al., 'Missing the Audience. Online Musicking in Times of COVID-19 / Missing the Audience. Online Musicking in Times of COVID-19', *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy / Zeitschrift* Für *Kulturmanagement Und Kulturpolitik* 7:1 (1 July 2021), 137–50, https://doi.org/10.14361/zkmm-2021-0107; Josephine Caust, 'Sustainability of Artists in Precarious Times; How Arts Producers and Individual Artists Have Adapted during a Pandemic', *Sustainability* 13:24 (8 December 2021), 13561, https://doi.org/10.3390/su132413561.

3   Peter Renshaw, 'Lifelong Learning for Musicians: Critical Issues Arising from a Case Study of Connect', *Lifelong Learning in Music*, n.d., https://research.hanze.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/12420030/06_1_.pdf; Dawn Bennett, 'Utopia for Music Performance Graduates. Is It Achievable, and How Should It Be Defined?', *British Journal of Music Education* 24:2 (July 2007), 179–89, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051707007383; Helena Gaunt et al., 'Supporting Conservatoire Students towards Professional Integration: One-to-One Tuition and the Potential of Mentoring', *Music Education Research* 14:1 (March 2012), 25–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2012.657166; Brydie-Leigh Bartleet et al., 'Preparing for Portfolio Careers in Australian Music: Setting a Research Agenda', *Australian Journal of Music Education* 2012 (2012), 32–41.

the dominant career model.[4] Such a career today will almost certainly involve some elements of international collaboration or touring and the use of digital technology, whether for promotional activities, artistic production, teaching or communication. With the emergence of AI technologies, and the challenges these bring to concepts of creativity, the importance of digital fluency in classical musicians' lives will grow exponentially in the coming years. Yet conservatoire curricula can be slow to change and entrenched hierarchies, which tend to privilege analogue modes of performance, do not map well to a fast-moving global and digital world. Following the pandemic there is even greater urgency for conservatoires to 'design programmes that offer a more rounded education linked to both developing employability as well as expert skills'.[5]

Music and Words, the online undergraduate module discussed in this chapter, seeks to align with this contemporary professional landscape by expanding students' understanding of audiences for art and culture. This online elective module was created for undergraduate students in response to what we determined was a specific gap in the preparation of the conservatoire student – namely the ability to speak and write about music with conviction and persuasion and act as advocates, especially through digital means. The module supports students to communicate effectively about their musical practice through writing and speaking activities that reflect real-world audience interactions for musicians, for instance writing interactive programme notes, accessible online concert introductions, or engaging scripts for music broadcasts. These 'outward facing' activities encourage students to reach out beyond the practice room, reflecting on the evolving professional world and situating themselves in the dual position of listener/viewer and performer.

In this chapter we unpack the ways in which *Music and Words* supports conservatoire students to rise to the challenge of presenting and framing

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4   Brydie-Leigh Bartleet et al., 'Building Sustainable Portfolio Careers in Music: Insights and Implications for Higher Education', *Music Education Research* 21:3 (27 May 2019), 282–94, https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2019.1598348; Lotte Latukefu and Jane Ginsborg, 'Understanding What We Mean by Portfolio Training in Music', *British Journal of Music Education* 36:1 (March 2019), 87–102, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051718000207

5   Kate Gee and Pamela Yeow, 'A Hard Day's Night: Building Sustainable Careers for Musicians', *Cultural Trends* 30:4 (8 August 2021), 338–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2021.1941776 (p.351).

their working practice in a world that is in digital flux. In so doing, the module addresses a key element of the future of conservatoire training, that of contextualising practice in emerging digital cultures.

Global Perspectives in the UK Conservatoire

The immense value of intercultural learning experiences for music students is well recognised.[6] International exchange, the exposure to new cultures, divergent ideas or practices and international networking can grow confidence, communication and employability. As Vassiliki Papatsiba notes:

> Mobility involves encounters and confrontation with differences, requiring a broad range of individual adaptive responses, and also encouraging their renewal. Hence, mobility would maintain individuals in a state of awakening akin to the acquisition of new competences and new knowledge.[7]

Moving one step further, such encounters can equip students with the confidence and awareness to navigate increasingly complex social, cultural, and political contexts for performing artists today, as recognised by Bartleet et al.:

> [...] intercultural learning experiences can also bring students new recognition of their own cultural subjectivities; a better awareness of the social, political, economic, cultural environment in which they operate as musicians; heightened recognition of privilege and the concomitant responsibilities it brings, including as a musician; and greater recognition of their identities not only as citizens in their local communities or nations, but as global citizens.[8]

6   Catherine Grant, 'Developing Global Citizenship in Tertiary Performing Arts Students Through Short-Term Mobility Programs', 2018, https://doi.org/10.18113/ P8IJEA1915; Brydie-Leigh Bartleet et al., 'Global Mobility in Music Higher Education: Reflections on How Intercultural Music-Making Can Enhance Students' Musical Practices and Identities', *International Journal of Music Education* 38:2 (May 2020), 161–76, https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761419890943.

7   Vassiliki Papatsiba, 'Making Higher Education More European through Student Mobility? Revisiting EU Initiatives in the Context of the Bologna Process', *Comparative Education* 42:1 (February 2006), 99, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060500515785

8   Bartleet et al., 'Global Mobility in Music Higher Education', p. 174.

In a post-Brexit and post-pandemic environment, this type of cross-cultural and socially engaged learning seems more important than ever, but also more fragile. Both Papatsiba and Bartleet focus on the traditional model of international mobility – physical travel – but it is important to acknowledge the growing awareness of carbon emissions and sustainability issues for today's artists, particularly in relation to touring. It is, therefore, unlikely that increased international travel between partner institutions is the answer. Instead, is it possible that UK conservatoires can offer such 'encounters and confrontations' with cultural diversity in a more accessible, sustainable, online environment, harnessing digital technology to enhance students' intercultural awareness and global competencies? While it may seem a radical proposition for conservatoires, increased socio-cultural connectivity in the classical music curriculum is long overdue.

In this global context, the module *Music and Words* offers students an opportunity to navigate and structure intercultural awareness, enabling them to articulately explore and express their individual artistry and find a voice with which they are comfortable communicating their creativity. The module implicitly critiques and contextualises the notion of artistic citizenship, scrutinising the concept of artistry and global culture in ways that require students to understand how to present their work to an international audience.

The Global Conservatoire: A Model for Online Learning

In response to our global and digital world, today's conservatoire students now require expertly designed courses for their professional development, that complement their practical activities while preparing them for an evolving, and potentially volatile, future. To prepare them for this future, students will require access to more inclusive, globally informed and progressive learning experiences that expand their horizons beyond their home institution. As small and specialist institutions, often with fewer than a thousand students, it is logical for conservatoires to pool their resources and technologies to develop such courses.

Launched in 2021, the Global Conservatoire is a consortium built on the digital expertise of four world-leading conservatoires: the Royal Danish Academy of Music; the University of Music and Performing Arts,

Vienna; the Royal College of Music, London; and Manhattan School of Music in New York City. By combining online experience, digital resources and unique subject expertise, the four institutions are building a set of conservatoire-specific online courses to explore best practice in online transnational education in the performing arts. The project sets out to optimise online teaching for a conservatoire environment, enabling it to occupy a significant, credited position in the curriculum while complementing traditional, face-to-face provision.

The overarching aims of the project are:

- To consolidate and develop the online teaching practices that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, focussing on the specific needs of today's conservatoire students;

- To pool the expertise of four conservatoires, each with their own teaching and research strengths, with a view to

  - i) sharing best teaching practice in online course design, delivery and assessment;

  - ii) expanding student access to a wider range of subject areas and international perspectives on music-making;

  - iii) developing shared models for conservatoire staff professional development;

- harnessing combined online learning and teaching capabilities to foster global artistic citizenship in our students;[9]

- developing a global online learning community distinguished from other online communities of practice by its core values in artistic innovation, inclusion, collaboration and excellence;

- co-curating a conservatoire-specific online learning and teaching framework, and associated professional development training, informed by these core values. This is designed to disseminate the lessons of the project beyond the four founding institutions.

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9   David Elliott, 'Artistic Citizenship, Personhood, and Music Education', in *Giving Voice to Diversity in Music Education: Diversity and Social Justice in the Classroom*, ed. by Lisa DeLorenzo (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 13–35.

Rather than *replacing* traditional models of conservatoire teaching, such as the one-to-one lesson, masterclass or practical workshop, Global Conservatoire modules complement and enhance these existing models of delivery. This ideal, where online and face-to-face practices co-exist in the conservatoire in a non-hierarchical learning culture, is an ambitious goal, but one that could transform how we conceive of conservatoire education.

Such ambition requires institution-wide input from managers, teachers, learning technologists, administrators and IT staff in all four institutions. The initial phase of this project has been supported by a two-year Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Grant, which provided essential start-up funding for staff training, course development, technical support and research-led evaluation.

The undergraduate module *Music and Words* was delivered in autumn 2021 as the initial, pilot module of this transnational project. In configuring this course to align with the Global Conservatoire goals set out above, concepts of internationalism and transnationalism informed the materials as well as the teaching. It is inevitable that as we discuss these concepts with our students, who join from different parts of the globe and from contrasting disciplines and cultures, we scrutinise the digital potential that the world around us affords.

Furthermore, one of the underlying curriculum design principles of this course is the concept of generative thinking; we acknowledge that knowledge is not constructed purely by one individual – rather, in a digital world more than ever before, joint thinking and collaborative relationships in virtual spaces can and will influence the development of a project.

Designing Online Transnational Courses for the Conservatoire

Online learning and teaching in conservatoires are not new. Before the pandemic, projects using high-speed network technology such as LoLa and Polycom had facilitated international performance projects at a distance, with the Global Audition Training Programme a particularly innovative example of distributed teaching that provided students with

international artistic perspectives.[10] However, such technologies, even today, are highly specialised and require extensive technical preparation and support, while projects may benefit only very small numbers of students. Due to their ad hoc and specialised nature, projects are rarely formal or credited elements of degree programmes.

Historically, there has been some resistance in conservatoires to adopting digital learning technologies, such as virtual learning environments, videoconferencing or distance-learning programmes.[11] This is perhaps understandable due to the traditional emphasis on practical, embodied learning experiences in the conservatoire teaching environment and indeed the music profession more broadly. However, the pandemic created a situation in which the adoption of digital learning was essential in *all* areas, including the performance core, traditionally the domain of 'hands-on' delivery. This digital pivot was helpful in normalising online teaching and learning for conservatoire students and staff alike. It foregrounded unequivocally what was possible using digital technology in the conservatoire precisely because staff and students had no choice but to explore what was possible.

This moment presented an ideal opportunity to integrate online teaching on a permanent basis but now, as we emerge from this emergency era, there is a growing sense that online teaching has been tainted with scepticism about quality, effectiveness and 'value for money'.[12] Online learning offers significant benefits for student learning, not least in accessibility, flexibility and the development of self-regulated learning. We therefore propose that having acquired myriad digital skills at pace, it is time for conservatoires to move beyond the state of 'emergency

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10   Cleveland Institute of Music, 'Distance Learning Kicks off the 2016-17 Global Audition Training Program', 11 October 2016, https://www.cim.edu/aboutcim/ news/distance-learning-kicks-2016-17-global-audition-training-program.

11   Evangelos Himonides and Ross Purves, 'The Role of Technology in Music Education in the 21st Century in the United Kingdom: Achievements, Analysis and Aspirations', in *Music Education in the 21st Century in the United Kingdom: Archievements, Analysis and Aspirations*, ed. by Susan Hallam and Andrea Creech, Bedford Way Paper Series (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 2010), pp. 123–40; Gaunt et al., 'Supporting Conservatoire Students towards Professional Integration'.

12   Charles Hodges et al., 'The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning', *Educause Review*, March 2020, https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/ the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning

remote teaching' into a more considered and strategic phase for online course design and delivery.[13]

The pandemic highlighted that online teaching can be delivered effectively using more accessible technologies. This too is not new: MOOCs have existed for over a decade, and platforms such as Coursera and FutureLearn are well established. However, with the exception of Berklee College of Music, conservatoires have generally been slow to occupy the online distance learning space. MOOC providers deliver on a large scale, often to many hundreds if not thousands of students. While the Global Conservatoire draws on some of the delivery methods used in MOOCs, such as the use of a VLE platform for asynchronous delivery, the pedagogical aims of the project are quite different. The courses are only available to partner students (i.e. conservatoire learners within the consortium) and the classes are limited to small numbers, which is relatively rare in online delivery.[14] There are still questions about whether the Global Conservatoire initiative is truly 'global' in outlook when access to the modules is so exclusive, and all four partners are Western institutions (albeit with very international student bodies). This reality must be recognised as we seek to develop culturally inclusive courses and communities. Nonetheless this bespoke approach is designed to address conservatoire students' learning needs, and it also goes some way to addressing the concerns about reduced quality and high levels of attrition in large-scale MOOC environments.[15] The challenge however is that these courses are costly to design and deliver, which raises questions about their long-term sustainability.

Each Global Conservatoire course is limited to a small group of students, usually around five students from each of the four partner institutions, and is led by an expert teacher based at one of the institutions. The small cohort size of twenty to twenty-five students means that teachers can get to know their students more quickly, establish rapport

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13 Ibid.

14 JISC, *Student Digital Experience Insights Survey 2020/21: UK Higher Education Findings*, March 2021, https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8318/1/DEI-P1-HE-student-briefing-2021-FINAL.pdf

15 Sara Isabella de Freitas, John Morgan, and David Gibson, 'Will MOOCs Transform Learning and Teaching in Higher Education? Engagement and Course Retention in Online Learning Provision: Engagement and Course Retention in Online Learning Provision', *British Journal of Educational Technology* 46:3 (May 2015), 455–71, https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12268

and construct a sense of 'presence' or 'being there' in the digital realm.[16] This approach aligns with the traditional conservatoire ethos of nurturing the individual student and their personal needs. The aim is to provide a more personalised approach that mirrors what students would expect in a face-to-face setting. With a small cohort, teachers have the capacity to give students individual feedback, comments and tutorial support. Likewise, students are more likely to establish connections with their peers, a vital ingredient to cultivate students' cultural awareness and global outlook.

Shared Principles for Online Learning

An important starting point of the project was that all four partners shared an international outlook and had prior experience of working together on other projects, including distance learning projects as well as student and staff exchanges. This ensured that we commenced work with a common set of values and shared aims for development. During the planning year 2020-21, the project management group discussed and refined these values, settling on a set of five overarching learning aims for the Global Conservatoire. These are to develop students':

- digital fluency;
- skills in remote collaboration;
- awareness of international arts practices;
- application of an entrepreneurial mindset;
- global citizenship and social inclusion.

The above learning aims build on Bridgstock and Hearn's conceptual model of four 'metacapabilities' for successful careers: disciplinary agility; social networking capability; creative enterprise; and career self-management.[17] However, these themes are repositioned in a contemporary international context where cultural awareness, global

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16   Rosemary M. Lehman and Simone C. O. Conceição, *Creating a Sense of Presence in Online Teaching: How to 'Be There' for Distance Learners*, 1st ed., Jossey-Bass Guides to Online Teaching and Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

17   Ruth Bridgstock and Greg Hearn, 'A Conceptual Model of Capability Learning for the Twenty-First-Century Knowledge Economy', in *Handbook on the Knowledge Economy. Volume Two*, ed. by David Rooney, Greg Hearn, and Tim Kastelle (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2012), pp. 105–19.

citizenship and digital communication are in the foreground. This approach aligns with Carey and Coutts' proposal for a transformative pedagogical approach, characterised by a 'shift in focus from discipline-specific knowledge and skill acquisition only, to developing students' social responsibility, leadership, and entrepreneurial capabilities. [...] students are challenged to expand their understanding of global topics'.[18]

The Global Conservatoire portfolio is curated with these principles in mind, with module subjects (and teachers) selected for their potential to realise this vision. In addition, the structure, content and assessments of each module are designed to maximise these broad learning aims. Rather than bespoke technology or platforms, it is the way in which these shared *values* are embedded into the GC learning and teaching framework and, furthermore, the way in which these values are *realised* online in partnership with students, that distinguish this project from a variety of other online teaching projects. The technology itself is viewed as a facilitating tool rather than a pedagogical driver.

With four different partners, each bringing their own learning culture, it is important to develop a robust pedagogical framework approach that can maximise engagement and active learning, but also do so with some consistency. Practically, the Global Conservatoire must strike the right balance between consistency of experience and the distinctive environment offered by the delivering institution. These include values, inclusion and learning principles as well as platform experience. Moving from 'resources' to 'activities' and ensuring teachers feel confident and equipped to design their courses in this way is also a testing challenge for the teacher.[19] Designing modules that enable a consistent and sustained student experience that resonates with Lourdes Guàrdia and Marcelo Maina's model of online pedagogy as being motivating, agile and situated is yet another of the more complex challenges that teachers face.[20] With *Music and Words*, these challenges are addressed directly

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18 Gemma Carey and Leah Coutts, 'Fostering Transformative Professionalism through Curriculum Changes within a Bachelor of Music', in *Expanding Professionalism in Music and Higher Music Education: A Changing Game*, ed. by Heidi Westerlund and Helena Gaunt, 2022, pp. 42–58.

19 Chrysi Rapanta et al., 'Online University Teaching During and After the Covid-19 Crisis: Refocusing Teacher Presence and Learning Activity', *Postdigital Science and Education* 2:3 (October 2020), 923–45, https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00155-y

20 Lourdes Guàrdia and Marcelo Maina, 'FUTURA - Next Generation Pedagogy. IDEAS for Online and Blended Higher Education', *The Envisioning Report for Empowering Universities* (2018), 28–30.

since this module focuses specifically on a deeper understanding of artistic citizenship and its location within individual artistry.

Asynchronous Learning in the Conservatoire

The first set of Global Conservatoire courses are based on a series of asynchronous learning units, supported by three synchronous contact points with learners. Synchronous contact usually takes the form of a ninety-minute 'live' class on Zoom. This blended approach offers some practical benefits, such as overcoming time zones and reducing timetabling challenges between institutions. However other benefits of asynchronous learning include deeper and more meaningful engagement with the subject matter.[21] Effective design of asynchronous learning also facilitates rich peer-learning encounters, which can cultivate an online 'collaborative spirit'.[22] Offering students the flexibility to engage with the course as and when it is convenient is especially important to students in the intensive learning environment of a conservatoire, where students have complex and demanding schedules. Indirectly this flexibility and ownership over the time and place for one's learning may assist with student wellbeing and accessibility.[23]

The role of asynchronous online learning in cultivating diverse artistic communities of practice has been explored by Szram and van Gammeren.[24] Although they focussed on the diversity of musical genres among students, the Global Conservatoire project extends

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21   Shirley Bach, Philip Haynes, and Jennifer Lewis Smith, *Online Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2007); Anna McNamara, 'Flipping the Creative Conservatoire Classroom', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (19 February 2021), 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2020.1864462.

22   Andrea Schiavio, Michele Biasutti, and Roberta Antonini Philippe, 'Creative Pedagogies in the Time of Pandemic: A Case Study with Conservatory Students', *Music Education Research* (12 February 2021), 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2021.1881054

23   Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day* (Eugene, Or: International Society for Technology in Education, 2012); Schiavio, Biasutti, and Antonini Philippe, 'Creative Pedagogies in the Time of Pandemic'; JISC, *Student Digital Experience Insights Survey 2020/21: UK Higher Education Findings*.

24   Aleksander Szram and Dario van Gammeren, 'Embracing Diversity: The Role of Asynchronous Online Learning in Building Musical Communities', *Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal* 3:2 (n.d.).

this to international cultural perspectives. This includes diversifying course offerings to include musicians and repertoire traditionally under-represented in classical music conservatoire curricula; the study of non-Western musics, interdisciplinary studies and other research specialisms. As two examples, Royal College of Music students now have access to modules in African American Music History and Dance for Musical Theatre, taught by international experts based at Manhattan School of Music.

A fundamental theoretical framework behind the design of *Music and Words* is that of 'affordances' as explored by Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis in their work on transformative e-learning ecologies.[25] The emergence of a strong digital culture for musicians affords opportunities in developing and enhancing students' artistic voices. *Music and Words* is designed to encourage confidence in students' abilities to move away from their instruments and their comfort zones toward conceptualising themselves as artists in society. The module materials are selected with a view to elevating their articulation of practice and artistry within a supportive environment. Discussion boards, group work, synchronous and asynchronous peer interaction are critical for the creation of a meaningful community of practice.

The synchronous workshops presented an opportunity to participate in a collaborative environment which, though online, nonetheless provides students with a powerful but intimate landscape in which to explore concepts that translate differently across cultures. As Resta and Laferrière have argued, 'Technology-supported collaborative learning in higher education represents a confluence of trends: the development of new tools to support collaboration […] and the need to create more powerful and engaging learning environments.'[26] Within this context, the approach to module design and content is to enable inclusion of all ideas, diverse as they may be, from our international student body with a view to modelling and articulating ideas that explore internationalism and transnationalism as it is applied to contemporary artistic work.

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25 Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, eds., *E-Learning Ecologies: Principles for New Learning and Assessment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

26 Paul Resta and Thérèse Laferrière, 'Technology in Support of Collaborative Learning', *Educational Psychology Review* 19:1 (22 February 2007), 65, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-007-9042-7

Uncovering Hidden Complexities in the Online Conservatoire

The 'Iceberg' of Administration

Before considering course subjects, online platforms, technical support and teachers, operational challenges have included making decisions on credit transfer, quality assurance, institutional regulations, term dates and establishing clear lines of communication. The shared model of online delivery across four international partners adds a layer of complexity which should not be underestimated, an iceberg beneath the surface of online teaching. As Dewey and Duff note: 'International engagement involves extensive bureaucratic procedures and administrative red tape that is a burden to the faculty member'.[27] Online delivery might appear to provide a streamlined and convenient solution that could strip out much of the bureaucracy required for traditional exchange experiences, but the administrative infrastructure to align registry, quality and regulatory processes for shared credit-bearing courses is significant. Establishing shared protocols that are understood by all partners is vital and continues to be an area of development. We have discovered that true alignment between all institutions is not possible: the Global Conservatoire cannot and should not dictate individual institutional calendars and processes. Instead, flex is built in wherever possible. As an example, modules can be delivered and assessed within a delivery 'window' to accommodate four different academic calendars. In addition, strong communication between dedicated points of contact in management, administrative and technical areas enables focussed decision-making and planning. Robust communication and clearly defined responsibilities will not be limited to the start-up phase of the project; this will be required continuously to maintain the highest quality of student and staff experience.

It is important that this operational infrastructure is as 'invisible' as possible so students can focus on their learning. Providing a seamless experience for the students, both in terms of administration and the

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27   Patricia Dewey and Stephen Duff, 'Reason before Passion: Faculty Views on Internationalization in Higher Education', *Higher Education* 58:4 (October 2009), 497, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9207-z

learning platform, requires significant investment of time and resources, including policy development. This might appear burdensome (and costly), but one reward of this endeavour is that the distributed community of administrators, teachers, technicians and managers connected by email, Zoom and biannual in-person Erasmus meetings is beginning to form a strong community of practice. Through co-curation and collaborative learning, the project is delivering a unique form of cross-cultural staff development.

Dissonance and Hierarchies in the Extended Conservatoire Environment

The focus on asynchronous delivery with limited synchronous contact represents a very different learning experience for students who are accustomed to traditional models of conservatoire teaching. Arguably the 'Covid' academic years of 2019-20 and 2020-21 will have prepared students for online working, but nonetheless adaptation is required to meet the expectations of this mode of learning, especially the emphasis on independent learning and student-led activity. As a result, there is a risk of students experiencing a 'dissonance' between their 'typical' conservatoire experience and the Global Conservatoire experience. The asynchronous environment demands a very different type of engagement to face-to-face practical activities, and this dissonance may be amplified by learning from an unfamiliar teacher, with new classmates and in a learning and teaching culture that is quite different to one's home institution. Here, at the intersection of digital, transnational and conservatoire education we encounter an especially complex environment for learning and teaching. During the design phase, each Global Conservatoire teacher must recognise how unfamiliar the online learning environment will feel to students and equally the range of experiences that students will bring to this environment.

A teacher designing a Global Conservatoire course, therefore, needs to consider multiple layers of student experience and expectations that could impact on student motivation, understanding, contribution, commitment and performance. One must reflect on why students have chosen this course and what their experience of online learning is. It may be that not all content is suitable for effective online pedagogy. Virtual

learning environments are critical within this context because this frames the community of practice that students will inhabit. Within this space, the module's identity takes its shape, teachers share knowledge and students build professional relationships that are both challenging and rewarding. Teachers must therefore consider how best to utilise this space to create a tangible and responsive community. Within this space in *Music and Words*, teachers were available to chat during virtual office hours, and this mitigated a sense of isolation that some students, who may struggle with self-regulation, might feel. As much as possible we avoided assigning work that engaged students but with limited pedagogical purpose. Even if the temptation is to replicate the in-person experience online, teachers observed that this kind of assigned work just for the sake of occupying student time was not a solution that would enhance the student experience. Nor would it provide students with a sense of progress or achievement. Indeed, one of the challenges of designing such a course is for the teachers to precisely separate material that is completely new from that which is implicitly known or that which students can acquire from each other. Short videos were created by the teacher to introduce new material, supported by visual aids as appropriate. The teacher's primary aim in this instance was to engage with the students, and to enable them to form a connection with her. Although this connection might not have been made in real-time, it was a relevant connection nonetheless and certainly familiar to students who use social media in similar ways. For this course, the teacher kept the videos short, under seven minutes, and ensured that follow up activities were interactive, either through discussion boards or peer-led tasks.

Another thorny issue is that of assessments and what is already familiar to students. Language has the potential to become a barrier if teachers are not sufficiently reflective and responsive to the levels and needs of students in their online classes. Is English their first, second or third language? What are their accessibility needs? And how equipped are they to follow a module that relies on an independent trajectory of self-regulated study? Careful attention must be paid to these considerations to minimise dissonance and maximise inclusion in the learning environment.

Integrating Design Principles into Content

How we make music today, the way our students are exposed to it, the very paradigm of 'Musicians as Makers in Society'[28] forces us to reimagine our relationship with our audiences, particularly when performances are being livestreamed. Godlovitch has characterised such a broader view of performance in terms whereby the 'performer-listener axis [carries] more weight than the performer-composer pair.'[29] This proves to be a concept that both intrigues and concerns students, partly, it would seem, because they are at times unaware of how the technology is constructing the performances in real time, and partly because they are not getting the feedback or energy from the audience being present. Studies demonstrate that much of the work done in the teaching studio and the practice room at times focusses on the sharing of embodied knowledge that may be taken for granted by the teacher, and eagerly absorbed by the student.[30] Ultimately, the conservatoire tends to rely on the apprenticeship model of learning. Individual tuition is considered the main model for teaching with Gaunt characterizing it as an 'indispensable, intense and intricate' part of instrumental and vocal learning.[31] *Music and Words*, by nature of its content and design, challenges these ideals, and equips students with the tools necessary to be fully engaged as music makers in contemporary society.

In our view, the role of the teacher in this module is firstly to curate the content and support the students' conceptualisation of the artistic and increasingly digital world they inhabit, to enable them to evaluate

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28 Helena Gaunt et al. explore this new paradigm in 'Musicians as "Makers in Society": A Conceptual Foundation for Contemporary Professional Higher Music Education', *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (3 August 2021), 713648, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713648

29 Stanley Godlovitch, *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 50.

30 Sam Duffy and Patrick G. T. Healey, 'Music, Speech and Interaction in an Instrumental Music Lesson: An Ethnographic Study of One-to-One Music Tuition', in *Language, Music and Interaction*, ed. by M. Orwin, C. Howes, and R. Kempson (College Publications, 2013), pp. 231–80; Lilian Simones, Franziska Schroeder, and Matthew Rodger, 'Categorizations of Physical Gesture in Piano Teaching: A Preliminary Enquiry', *Psychology of Music* 43:1 (January 2015), 103–21, https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735613498918

31 Helena Gaunt, 'One-to-One Tuition in a Conservatoire: The Perceptions of Instrumental and Vocal Teachers', *Psychology of Music* 36:2 (April 2008), 230, https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607080827

their role within it and then to mediate it through the selected topics covered in the seminars and workshops. McWilliam's model of the teacher as 'meddling-in-the-middle' has been influential for negotiating the balance between encouraging peer learning and creative risk-taking throughout the seminars and workshops, which often draw directly from the students' creative work. Inevitably, the teacher will use their experience to understand not only the relationship between the digital arts and education, in a swiftly shifting pedagogical landscape, but also to look at ways of enabling the students to make connections between the tools they have already encountered in their practice with those they are unfamiliar with. Given the nature of the subject area explored in this module, consideration also needs to be given to the introduction and prior exposure that students may already have had to the tools, devices, technologies and platforms explored on the module. In deconstructing this, teachers have an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how peer culture and contemporary society has contributed to their conceptualisation of specific technology.

In keeping with the ethos of the Global Conservatoire project, when designing materials for this module, the teacher harnessed the potential of the digital to provide new opportunities for expression, employment and differentiation in a rapidly evolving sector. Through a series of seminars and hands-on practical workshops, students explore a range of techniques, approaches and technologies to develop and sustain their artistic vision. The module materials explore distinct ways of communicating about music in spoken and written form by familiarising them with the contexts in which this might be experienced. This entails developing an awareness of how musicians approach each of these modes when communicating about music. Utilising modelling and predictive methods, we explore creative writing as a means of self-expression, and critique and analyse the writings of others once we have the tools with which to complete such a task.

Challenging Insularity

While conservatoires are often criticised for their insularity, the Global Conservatoire project is designed to extend our institutional outlooks to global perspectives that are aligned with the needs of twenty-first-century

musicians. As such, the project represents a concerted, collaborative effort to embed transformative global citizenship in today's conservatoire curricula.[32] Our reflection on the module *Music and Words* illustrates how the online learning environment can be an ideal vehicle for nurturing global artistic citizenship. Here, teachers worked in partnership with an international cohort of students to explore concepts that are critical to the development of young artists in a conservatoire environment. Furthermore, the teachers had the additional opportunity to be part of a supportive transnational community of practice that fostered the values of inclusion and diversity across global cultures.

Nonetheless, the Global Conservatoire model is at an early stage. Already we have seen significant challenges emerge. These include practical obstacles, such as administration, communication, financial investment and the demands on staff time, through to pedagogical and cultural challenges including inclusive course design for diverse cohorts, aligning different institutional learning cultures and addressing negative perceptions of online teaching in the conservatoires. On this latter point, considering current discourses around online learning being 'poor value' or a temporary 'stopgap' during a time of crisis, it will be important to avoid Global Conservatoire modules being perceived as the poor relation of 'conventional' conservatoire modules. Long term, we hope that a fully-fledged online Global Conservatoire model will become an equally valued part of the learning fabric of conservatoire study. We must avoid unhelpful binaries such as the notion that online learning is for academic study and face-to-face teaching for practice-led study, by ensuring that Global Conservatoire modules recognise artistic practice in their design and delivery and encouraging teaching staff to embrace the model. In order to work through these challenges, the next step will be to understand the student and teacher experience of this online model through robust qualitative research, quantitative data-gathering and critical evaluation.

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32   Jennifer Mellizo, 'Music Education as Global Education: A Developmental Approach', *TOPICS for Music Education Praxis*, July 2019, http://topics.maydaygroup.org/articles/2019/Mellizo_2019.pdf

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