

PLAY

**The
Guildhall
School
Magazine
2020**

4 *Behind the Scenes*
The Hidden Art
of the Repetiteur

6 *Leading the Charge*

10 *Masterclasses*

14 *Cover Version*

20 *The Interview*
Shabaka Hutchings

24 *From the
Beginning*

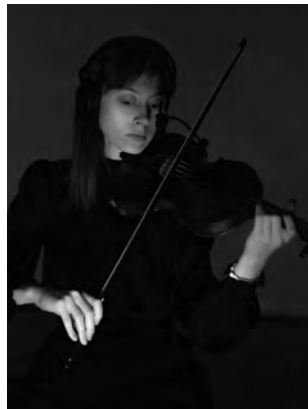
30 *Then & Now*
Connie Cha



32 *Research Works*
What might we
mean by Artistic
Citizenship?

34 *Friends Reunited*

36 *Creative Careers*
Ieva Vaiti



38 *Your latest School
news and stories*



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**GUILD
HALL
SCHOOL**

Welcome to the latest edition of PLAY

As I write this message, the world is navigating through an unprecedented period of time. This edition of PLAY was written at the start of 2020, but the publication was delayed while the School dealt with the impact of Covid-19. It's great to be back in touch with you, our valued alumni community, again now.

In March, as a result of lockdown, the School closed its doors for one of the first times in its 140-year history, and our students and staff quickly adapted to a new world of remote teaching and learning. Our students continued with their lessons in kitchens, living rooms, and sometimes even cars, spread across the world. They have shown themselves to be true artists in society, and we couldn't be more proud of them.

The world is facing a time of rapid change. In the last few months, the Black Lives Matter movement has catalysed us to undertake a period of intense self-reflection. Black alumni and students have shared their experiences of racism encountered during their training. These experiences are shameful and as a School it is clear we need to do better. The School is developing an institution-wide plan to address and dismantle racism in our School, which you can read more about at gsm.d.ac.uk/antiracism. We will share the action plan with our alumni so that we can report on our progress in the coming months – please sign up to our alumni emails if you'd like to be kept informed.

I hope you enjoy this edition of PLAY, where we go back to the beginning to relive the auditions of some of our alumni, we talk to our community to find out how the arts are leading the charge in tackling sustainability, and we interview one of the UK's most eminent jazz musicians, Shabaka Hutchings (Clarinet 2007).

I wish you and your loved ones the very best during this period. Please get in touch with your own news and successes for the next issue of PLAY.

Best wishes
Lynne Williams
Principal



BEHIND THE SCENES

THE HIDDEN ART
OF THE REPETITEUR



There is a magical moment before an opera opens – and it’s at the first dress rehearsal when costumes appear, the set is up and a performance comes together, all thanks to repetiteurs like Nathan Harris

It’s just as well Nathan Harris (Repetiteur, 2018) has no wish to be the star of the show – because, as it turns out, no one is paying attention to him. In fact, most people wonder what exactly it is that an opera repetiteur does.

“It’s not a great career for someone who needs to be the centre of attention,” he laughs. “You have to be content to be a cog in a large machine. But I love playing the piano, and I never had the temperament to become a soloist. I don’t feel the need to take a bow centre stage.”

He’s being modest, of course. The repetiteur may work behind the scenes,

but the role is crucial. These skilled musicians help opera singers learn their parts, acting as a replacement for the orchestra in rehearsals by accompanying the singers on the piano and repeating sections of the music to help hone the performance before it is taken to the stage. In practice, Harris attends almost every rehearsal, setting the rhythm and running performers through their parts. “And, yes, people only notice if you mess up,” he says.

‘Harris attends almost every rehearsal, setting the rhythm and running performers through their parts’

Each day’s work is determined by how close the company is to performance. Sometimes he has to play through the whole three hours from start to finish. “That’s hard, bearing in mind a long piece for piano would constitute half an hour.” At other times, he’ll be asked to repeat a short part over and over. “That’s when I begin to feel like a jukebox,” Harris says. He also assists with the training of cover singers, and helps leading performers to rehearse.

Although Harris works closely with opera singers, he doesn’t buy into the ‘diva’ cliché. He explains: “To be a good performer, you have to amplify your personality – that’s fundamental. Your body is your instrument, and you need a sense of self just to do your job and maintain artistic integrity.”

Before lockdown, he was working at the London Coliseum with the English National Opera, where performers were limbering up for forthcoming runs of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Luisa Miller*. “It’s testament to how well prepared I was that ENO’s rehearsal space feels exactly like another Guildhall space – it’s the same feel, the same atmosphere.”

While Harris’s job requires him to learn a version of the full score refined for the piano – during rehearsals, the conductor might call on Harris to play the part of an oboe or cello, for example, and this keeps him on his toes – these versions are, he says “invariably flawed”. It’s down to him to interpret; his rendition must sound authentic. “That adds a creative



element; every repetiteur has his or her version of a piece.”

By offering a dedicated Master’s, Guildhall has helped put the profession on the map, says Harris. And that’s important, because, despite having studied at the universities of both Michigan and Chicago, until relatively recently he didn’t even know the job of repetiteur existed. “There aren’t many of us, though I believe numbers are growing.” He now has a greater understanding, too, of what it’s like to be a conductor – he practised at Guildhall, “and it helped to demystify the role”.

‘Being an opera repetiteur is collaborative, exciting and demanding’

Being an opera repetiteur is collaborative, exciting and demanding, Harris says. But can he ever really enjoy an opera he has rehearsed every day for months? “If I’m not needed in the pit or backstage, I try to attend a few of the shows as an audience member. It takes a couple of live performances, but eventually I can sit back with relief and enjoy it. Opera packs a lot of drama into a few hours. It’s the most beautiful way to tell a story: acting, stagecraft, the costumes, the scenery, the beauty of the music. Every production is different; an opera never gets old.”

LEADING THE CHARGE

Lights, camera... sustainability action? When BAFTA encouraged guests at this year's awards ceremony to consider 're-wearing' or hiring an outfit, it was yet another clear indication that responding to the climate emergency is not just down to environmentalists and politicians. The arts world also shares the obligation to act.



Take Abigail Graham, for example, director of the recent Guildhall production of *Earthquakes in London* at the Milton Court Theatre. She is fully committed to the idea that the arts have the power to change attitudes – and believes that “our climate crisis is a direct result of a colonial and capitalist mindset. The non-naturalistic production choices that designer Sarah Beaton and I made when designing *Earthquakes in London*, and the staging choices the company and I have been making, all have that in mind.”

The play, written by Mike Bartlett (of TV’s *Doctor Foster* fame), switches between 1968 and 2525, telling the story of three sisters’ dislocated lives while their dysfunctional scientist father predicts global catastrophe. “The rehearsal process was deliberately egalitarian to reflect that it’s up to all of us to rise up and speak truth to power,” explains Graham. “Working with the next generation of artists and stage managers, my aim was to empower them to unpick how these ideas intersect with the climate emergency.”

At Guildhall, Dave Muncey (Trumpet 2019), and 2019/20 Student Union President, knows his members back the push for greater sustainability. “It is the young voice leading on climate change, and Guildhall students feel really passionate about the emergency. They are looking to the institution to support them.” So, he was delighted to see Guildhall jump 60 places in the 2019 People and Planet League, an independent listing of UK universities ranked by environmental and ethical performance. It was also the highest-ranked among UK drama schools and conservatoires.

This success is largely due to the work of Charlotte Lythgoe, Continual Improvement Manager, Sustainability, working across Guildhall School and the Barbican Centre. “Since I started the job in 2017, the major focus has been on energy consumption, water and waste,” Lythgoe explains. “Simple things – changing all the lightbulbs to LED, scheduling heating and cooling systems on a weekly basis – make a big difference. And since 2018 we have been able to procure 100 per cent renewable electricity, working with the City of London.

“A holistic approach to sustainability is a ‘no-brainer’ for Guildhall’s management. The major reason we scored so much better this year was due to our carbon savings. We save energy, which helps the environment, but we also save money, which can then go into other areas.”

An important consideration is to offer ways in which students can live sustainably – starting with the way they eat. Muncey’s particular pride is the cafe’s Green Room, where vegan and vegetarian options are always available. “We are encouraging vegan food throughout the School. We put up stalls in the foyer handing out free bites to students and staff to get them to try it.” Disposable plastic cutlery is no longer used in the canteen, students receive a discount for bringing their own drinking cups, and there is a plan to ban all plastic glasses at the bar.

“We are encouraging vegan food throughout the School.”

Another step is encouraging cycling through a new lockable indoor bike shed, with bicycle maintenance and repair tools available for free. Then there is paper waste. Muncey says: “Sheet music means a lot of printing. The paper is recycled, but now there are music-reading apps on the market with page-turning capabilities. Through the IT department, the Union hopes to allow students to borrow laptops with the app installed.”

Second-year BMus classical violist Georgia Russell will be first in the queue. “At least musicians never throw away any instruments – we just pass them on. I am driven by the need to protect our environment, and I am also passionate about making classical music more accessible to young people. Weirdly, it turns out the climate emergency is a way to do just that.”

As Creative Outreach Officer for Orchestra for the Earth, Russell runs workshops to discuss ways in which young people can become more involved. Before a candlelit performance of Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas* to mark Earth Hour last March, the workshop concluded with an open discussion led by Worldwide Wildlife Fund on how we as individuals can help build a sustainable future. “We get along people who can relate to the issue, but not necessarily to classical music. Then they enjoy that as a bonus.” And, through an association with the US-based Eden Reforestation Projects, a tree is planted for each ticket sold.

**The climate emergency
environmentalists and
world also shares**

Russell became aware of Orchestra for the Earth before coming to Guildhall, as her family live in Oxford, where the orchestra's founder and artistic director John Warner studied at St Peter's College. Still in his 20s, the conductor says he woke up to climate change in his teens. "I am an outdoorsy person and I want to inspire an understanding and love of nature. That is inextricably linked with the need to protect it," says Warner. "I realised as a student that music has a long history of engaging people with important issues. You only have to look back to Live Aid. Music can move and inspire you, yet classical music doesn't attract a young audience. At Orchestra for the Earth we are changing that demographic by highlighting the climate emergency."

Alongside passionate commitment, Manuela Rey-Alvarez, Costume Technician in Production Arts and a member of the Sustainability Committee at Guildhall, points out that economy has long been the habit in theatre. "Sets are recycled, equipment maintained rather than replaced, costumes reused," she says. One of her tasks is to teach students on the costume pathway how to break down costumes, showing how to experiment with dye or just retaylor and refashion.

While Rey-Alvarez often shops at high street stores for contemporary costumes, she will always try to adapt or reuse them for future shows by adapting the material or adding period details. With between three and 5,000 costumes in stock at any one time – not to mention countless accessories such as shoes, handbags, scarves and belts – efficient management is vital for sustainability.

"At the end of each show we hold a 'strike'," says Rey-Alvarez. Costumes that she and her colleagues feel are unlikely to be in demand in future are sent to support environmental charities or placed in the large recycling bin provided by SCOPE, the charity for equality for disabled people. Large pieces of fabric are donated to the props department to be made into hangings or tablecloths. "We have not got enough space to keep everything."

She is excited about a recent idea put forward by final-year Technical Theatre Arts student Eluned Banfield. "She suggested we collaborate to pass on unwanted costumes in the Union swap shop. I am trying to cut down on my 'fast fashion' purchases so this will be a great way to get students involved."

To encourage such collaboration, Lythgoe recently set up an informal sustainability group to back up the official steering group, a joint initiative with the Barbican. "We are seeing more and more interest in the way we link our strategy to our sustainable development goals, and this will provide a forum for anyone with concerns or ideas to get in touch, be they the catering contractors, teaching staff or students. As another way forward, we are considering paying sustainability wardens to have eyes on the ground," she says.

"Sustainability is much more important than just what we do in this building"

But, Lythgoe concludes: "Sustainability is much more important than just what we do in this building. One of the great things about working at Guildhall is that I can help inspire the next generation of professionals in the arts to be more sustainable in their lives." Graham agrees: "I hope that when the next generation of artists go into the industry, they can make informed choices about how they want to work and what work they want to make," she says.

Russell says the work of groups such as the Orchestra of the Earth shows the power of combining great classical music with important messages on the climate emergency. "And we've found that when someone in their 20s – like our artistic director! – comes up with a good idea in support of a sustainable future, people rarely say no."

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d politicians. The arts
the obligation to act.

If you would like your very own sustainable Guildhall School tote bag and keep cup, email us at alumni@gsm.ac.uk and we'll pick five lucky winners!

If you thought your first masterclass was stressful, spare a thought for the student who, in 1885, performed Chopin's Sonata in B Minor for Liszt – pioneer of the masterclass form and, by all accounts, a harsh critic. "That was definitely not played, but skewered," he announced to his (anonymous) pupil – and the audience. "If you have no ears to hear, why do you play the piano? With whom did you study that?" Ouch.



masterclass



CLASSES

But despite these unpromising beginnings, masterclasses have become increasingly common across the performing arts. Research from Guildhall has found that they play a central role in instilling the methods and values of musical training, and contribute to the rigorous formation of talent. But opinions on masterclasses vary, as Guildhall researchers Marion Long, Andrea Creech and Susan Hallam (along with former staff member Helena Gaunt) discovered in their *Conservatoire students' experiences and perceptions of instrument-specific masterclasses*. “Expert professional musicians advocate that certain thinking skills can be modelled through the master-apprentice model, yet its critics argue that independent learning,

interaction and creativity are stifled,” the researchers write.

Masterclasses certainly have a wider role, over and above turning out brilliant performers, says Innocent Masuku, a tenor and Love-MacDonald scholar currently studying on the Vocal Masters programme. He has only positive memories of his first time in the spotlight, at a class given by Professor Barbara Hill-Moore at Tshwane University of Technology, in his home country of South Africa. “It was the first time I was taught while there were other people sitting watching, learning from my experience. And I was being taught by someone who knew what was happening in opera outside South Africa, where it is not so much part of the culture as it

is in Europe or London. That was a beautiful thing.”

Masterclasses are by no means a one-size-fits-all option: they operate at different levels, offering different benefits depending on who is giving them, says Armin Zanner, Head of Vocal Studies. Those given by eminent performers, for example, offer the opportunity for students to engage with someone who is working on the international stage and who brings a level of experience they might want to attain.

But high-level teachers from other institutions might offer something different: a chance to compliment or challenge the way a performer works on a daily basis. “And rather than giving insights into the world of the performer, they are more likely to reveal new ways of thinking,” says Zanner. “Often, teachers will sit in a masterclass and think, ‘I say that in every lesson with this student!’ But often it’s necessary to have something said in a different way, or reinforced.” They are also, as Masuku experienced, vital to outreach – one of the reasons Guildhall offers masterclasses with the Seoul Arts High School in Korea, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Tokyo College of Music.

For actor and director Jamie Bradley (Acting 1998), masterclasses are also a way for both teacher and student to learn. “I think what I’m very attracted to is that masterclasses are a form of generosity. Someone who’s both willing to share a glimpse into what they’re working on but who also doesn’t perpetuate this sense that there’s some kind of magic solution – because, actually, it’s all just work. The most inspirational people are very attuned to the things that they don’t know, and the things that they’re still exploring.”

What the student gets out of the masterclass is also down to the quality of the teaching. Long, Creech, Gaunt and Hallam’s 2014 research points out that the organising institution should play a role in considering both the master teaching and preparing the student, particularly in light of their findings that female respondents were more likely to find a masterclass “intimidating and unfriendly” than male ones.

“It is intimidating, as you are in a very vulnerable state,” says Masuku, who



Innocent Masuku

cites preparation as key to calming his nerves. “Intimidation is the nature of a masterclass, but it is also very helpful.

You can stop and think, which you can’t do when you are performing. You can switch off and ignore the audience: you can just focus on the professor and the music. Because I am an optimistic person, when I walk on that stage, I have a mental conversation with myself that says I am going to learn something here, that being in this vulnerable position is worth it.”



Armin Zanner

Liszt’s abrasive style is by no means an aberration. Well-known star teachers have been famously very tough on students in masterclass settings, says Zanner, but he prefers those with a more positive style. “I don’t think we learn well if we are publicly humiliated. The art of teaching is to find a balance between encouragement and appropriate criticism. There might be some students who take humiliation, go with it and fight back, but, in general my philosophy would be that a master teacher should come from an appropriately critical perspective. It’s their job to help.”

As artistic director of the Franz Schubert Institute in Austria, offering a summer series of masterclasses with high-level teachers, Zanner has observed many different and equally effective ways of working. “There are teachers who are real superstars in their field, but whose way of working is very specific,” he says. “They’ll analyse every note in detail. Then there are those whose vision of music comes across in the masterclass through the broad sweep of their ambitions for the structure of a whole piece.”

He cites a masterclass that Canadian soprano Karina Gauvin gave at Guildhall last year as a particularly special occasion. “She was so able to be herself. When she demonstrated, the room lit up,” he says. “The energy that she offered to the student

“It’s about saying yes, going with the flow and trying things, experimenting, taking risks in the moment, and ensuring you’re really open to the ideas and advice that’s given,”

through her demonstrations and her gentle cajoling brought everyone to another level. And it showed everybody in the room – including those who were not actively performing – just what it takes and what it means to be working at that level.”

But masterclasses can also be a more fluid experience, says Bradley, who recently directed *Provok’d* at Guildhall School, a drama where Restoration comedy collides with rap and hip-hop. “In the past, I haven’t related to the idea of a masterclass, because of it being about the status of someone who has a mastery of their art form. But with my teaching, I’m at an interesting point where I’m trying to remove the sense of hierarchy around these things.”



Jamie Bradley

He recently took part in an Erasmus project where teams from conservatoires from across Europe had to think about encouraging entrepreneurship among students. “I loved it because the premise was that everyone has to start from a

point of learning,” says Bradley. “So, we had to remove that thing that you have as a teacher where, often, you ask questions that you know the answer to. For me, the most important or most exciting things happen when there’s a genuine question or need from the facilitator. It’s about an exchange. I think the most exciting moment is when both parties can be surprised.” Rehearsing *Provok’d*, Bradley asked the actors to write a rap from the perspective of their character: a challenging and exposing exercise that proved to be a great success. “And that started from a perspective of not knowing what the hell was going to happen.”

Zanner also agrees that the modern masterclass is about far more than simply absorbing. “It’s about saying yes, going with the flow and trying things, experimenting, taking risks in the moment, and ensuring you’re really open to the ideas and advice that’s given,” he says. “And then afterwards, it’s for you to decide what was useful – what resonated and what didn’t.”

There’s a certain safety in being a student in a conservatoire setting, Bradley believes, which can allow students to “just sit back”. “And the difficulty with that approach comes when they graduate into the highly competitive artistic industries. But it’s changing: artists are questioning what they can offer. That seems to me to be really healthy. It’s part of why people are engaged with artists and why those artists get work. It’s to do with values, who they are and what they’ve got to say, as well as what they can do. I think it’s an exciting moment.”

Do you remember your first masterclass? Or have you had a particularly memorable one since? We’d love to hear about your experiences – good and bad! Email alumni@gsm.ac.uk.

COVER VERSION

Making work your own – whether you're the second person or the two hundredth person to step into the hot seat – is an art form of its own. We speak to Guildhall alumni and staff on the challenges of making a new interpretation, faithful to the original but also faithful to yourself.

One of the challenges facing anyone trying to recreate an existing work is how to remain loyal to an original while creating a wholly new performance. How do you manage the audience's expectations and keep them on your side?

As the man with the baton on BBC's flagship show *Strictly Come Dancing*, musical director Dave Arch (Piano, 1984) has probably covered every genre known to musiciankind. But it doesn't lessen the challenge of recreating well-loved songs for dancers and a new audience on a weekly basis.

"It's not about what I want, or even what the dancers want – it's what the audience wants," he says. Briefed by the producers and dancers beforehand, Arch says he then "does his best", writing parts for all the instruments of his 15-piece band. Some songs are easier than others. "In the 2019 series, I had to do a piece from *Carmen*, which is a full orchestral score, so that was tricky with my line-up. Another time I had to turn Elton John's *Your Song*, which is in 4/4 time, into... a waltz, which is 3/4 time. I also did the well-known football song *Three Lions* as a tango, which was interesting!"

One of the challenges facing anyone trying to recreate an existing work is how to remain loyal to an original while creating a wholly new performance. How do you manage the audience's expectations and keep them on your side? For Arch, it is vital that he really understands the original. "You have to get inside the style, get to know it. You have to recreate the spirit of the song rather than copy it." But the good thing about adapting an established song is that you have a lot to go on. "If someone is choosing to do a song again, it's because it's strong in some way," he says. "It might be the melody, or the hook. You've got something to work



Dave Arch on the set of *Strictly Come Dancing*

with that has worked in the past. I like transplanting – being given a new song and making it sound old, or Latin American. The key is to make it sound as though it's 'meant'. It's subliminal, but if you get that wrong you will be criticised."

The challenges of adapting well-known works are many, then, but the rewards can be great. Vice Principal and Director of Drama at Guildhall, Orla O'Loughlin, recently directed students in a radical reimagining of classic Greek play *Antigone* (the performance of which was cancelled due to Covid-19), and says the key is to find the right balance between "reverence and latitude". "You have a

massive responsibility to honour the original," she says. "But you must give yourself permission to explore it. You're allowed to wrangle with classic texts. You can honour them for their beauty and for the truth they hold that is eternal, but also make them your own."

The first thing you need is a good reason for retelling the story, she says. "What do these characters have to tell us about our lives today? *Antigone* is a story about war, inherited family trauma, sisterhood, about where the power lies in society, about the state versus the individual, about rising up and speaking out. These themes feel pertinent to being alive today."

“You have to be in the service of the music, which is a universal way to tell a story. It’s about distilling something from the original and improvising on that. It’s asking yourself, what is making me feel this way?”

O’Loughlin and writer Stef Smith departed from the original, however, in making *Antigone* and her sister Ismene the protagonists, rather than her uncle and brother. This is part of the reason for revisiting the story, she says. “The world has changed very quickly, and our industry is at the forefront of that. On a global scale, we’re no longer accepting the status quo. These days we ask ourselves: ‘Who is telling the story – and for whom?’” *Antigone* will be performed in traverse, without the gods. “To us, the gods were the least interesting part of the play, and the humans were the most interesting. Some people might say, well, it isn’t Greek tragedy then – and maybe for the purists it isn’t. But that’s allowed. In fact, I’d argue that today such intervention and re-contextualising is vital.”



Thibault performing at the Silk Street Music Hall with the Horton Chamber Orchestra

Composer and pianist Thibault Charrin (*Music*, 2016) agrees that “sincerity, not narcissism” is the way to bring the audience with you. He says: “In classical improvisation, you need to give the impression that you are discovering the score along with the audience, and, for



Orla O’Loughlin during rehearsals of *Antigone*

that, you have to know it inside out.” But you also need to put something of yourself into it. “You need a driver, an idea, a narrative structure. As a musician you’re shaping sound in time, and you need something damn convincing, something that your audience can relate to. Anything random or that you’re not feeling won’t work.”

But putting himself into the music is something he only realised he was allowed to do while he was at Guildhall. Growing up in France, “it wasn’t encouraged”, he says. “Aged 11, I would be playing Schuman and I would diverge a bit. I found it boring just to

play what was on the page. I took it to the teacher and said, ‘I kind of prefer mine.’ The teacher said to my mother, ‘He will never be a musician if he carries on like that.’”

“At Guildhall, Professor David Dolan talked about classical improvisation, and I was intrigued; I had no idea what that was. I volunteered to get up and improvise Chopin’s *Black Key* studies. Dolan asked me to ‘reduce it’ then ‘make it my own’. At first, I gravitated towards the original score but then I found if I kept the structure and harmonic rhythm, removed notes and added my own, it actually worked.

HONOUR
THEM FOR
THEIR BEAUTY
& THE TRUTH
THEY HOLD,
BUT ALSO
MAKE THEM
YOUR OWN

Orla O'Loughlin

THE QUICKER
YOU GET TO
THE ESSENCE
OF IT AND
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BAGGAGE,
THE BETTER

Nicholas Gleaves

“Then, Dolan said, ‘Look at all these composers – they stole everything!’ He demonstrated how entire passages composed by Liszt had been copied note for note by Debussy. It was one of the most fascinating lectures I ever had.” Charrin discovered that not only was classical improvisation “a thing”, but that it was a route back to the feeling he’d had when he was a child. “I always wanted to feel somewhat removed from the real world. That’s when I felt I was really ‘playing’ an instrument, not following a score, just playing.” Tapping into this feeling is how you tell a story for the audience, he says. “If you’re using performing as a display for itself, you’re just trying to be interesting. You have to be in the service of the music, which is a universal way to tell a story. It’s about distilling something from the original and improvising on that. It’s asking yourself, what is making me feel this way?”



David Dolan

Actor Nicholas Gleaves (Acting 1991) agrees. “It’s when you read a script and you think, ‘Christ, that’s me!’” he says. “It’s when you feel something in your



Nicholas Gleaves as
The Demon Headmaster

chest, and then you don’t let anything get in the way of that connection.” It happened when he read the CBBC adaptation of *The Demon Headmaster* by Gillian Cross – in which he takes the title role. “I read it and couldn’t stop laughing. I thought, why is it that I have to play this terrible character who is so consciously winding up these kids? But my mouth was watering.”

He watched some of the 1990s TV adaptation, but then “read the script and took it from an original place. The quicker you get to the essence of it and exorcise any baggage, the better, and you have to hope the context facilitates that.” It helps to perform a classic in a contemporary setting, for example. “I played Macbeth in modern dress, in Scotland but not ‘the’

Scotland. I hadn’t done much Shakespeare either, and the director liked that.”

But, really, any performance is about getting to the heart of the story, whether it’s an original story or an old one, he says. “The job of an actor is to read the words and try to find a character those words can live in. I played Macbeth as a soldier, an everyman, a normal guy who falls into the deepest, darkest part of the human psyche.” In Chekhov’s *The Seagull*, as Trigorin, Gleaves found himself contemplating love, theatre, age-gap relationships and mother and son relationships. “You can have a healthy disregard for tradition but deep respect for the piece. Stories that teach us about who we are will always be around, and they deserve to be told again and again.”



THE POWER OF

JAZZ

**Shabaka Hutchings
(Clarinet 2007)
talks to us about
being a key leader
of London's current
jazz renaissance.**

It's summer 2019. The Park Stage, Glastonbury. The crowd, packed in tightly together, stretches as far as the eye can see, and the Sons of Kemet are in full flow with their mixed jazz and African set. Saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings is lost in the moment. "At some point I opened my eyes, and I literally couldn't see where the people ended," he says. "There's a magic to playing on a big stage with a crowd like that – it's an incredible experience."

Hutchings, one of the UK's most eminent musicians on the international jazz circuit, talks in awed tones about the experience. But he admits he is equally inspired by the kind of venues in which the vibe is more one of respectful silence than raucous appreciation. "A really pristine concert hall, where no one speaks, the acoustics are amazing and the only sound is the one you are making can push you to great heights. It puts you into a state of mind just as transcendental as a raging festival audience. I'm a big advocate of just playing the music."

On stage, Hutchings, now 35, shows the total focus and energy he had as a student at Guildhall, where he studied classical clarinet. An award-winning performer with three successful bands and a thriving solo career, he's one of the pioneers of a thriving homegrown jazz scene that is emerging from the margins to smash stereotypes and reach younger audiences.

It hasn't happened by accident – his work ethic is exhausting. At Guildhall, he thought nothing of playing regularly for up to nine hours a day, a dedication he'd shown at an early age. Born in the UK, he moved with his mother to Barbados when he was six and stayed until he was 16. There he learned the clarinet, finishing his grade eight exams by the time he was 14. "An invigilator would come once a year from England. I really enjoyed the process – once I'd practised and got a piece under my fingers, I could begin to add a level of emotion."

Hutchings returned to the UK with his mum and spent his sixth form at grammar school in Birmingham. Unlike most 18-year-olds, he didn't hanker after travel during a gap year. "I just played the clarinet every day. I knew what I needed to do. I'm an only child, I'm used to being on my own, working – it's what I enjoy. I might have had the odd lesson, and then I'd spend the next four months or so practising."

If he had any doubts about embarking on a musical career, his mum convinced him. "Everyone was telling me that being a musician was not a proper way to earn a living. She said, 'Do whatever you need to be happy, so long as you are fully committed.'"

He remembers there was what felt like an artificial distinction between classical and jazz music at the time. "I chose a classical curriculum because I thought it would give me the best opportunities for training and performance. My aim was to learn, it wasn't about what kind of musician I would be afterwards."

Classical musicians of the time were fearful of improv, Hutchings remembers. "They thought it was something innate, a question of closing your eyes and making something up,

"A big part of my time at Guildhall was hanging out and meeting people in the jazz community. Regardless of social activities, you still have to get up the next day and practise."

and that they couldn't do it because they didn't have a 'jazz spirit' or whatever. But being in the jazz world, I could see it was just a matter of picking up the principles, the rules, the vocabulary associated with it. It was a musical technique you could learn."

However, during his first year at Guildhall it all went wrong. The intensity of his practise caught up with him and he was no longer able to play. "I had a complete embouchure breakdown – the muscles in my lips just gave up. It got to the point where I couldn't play for more than five minutes without air escaping from the side of my mouth." He had to forget his technique and then rebuild it bit by bit. "As a black man, my lips are bigger, so it wasn't just a case of 'Do it like this'. But I had an amazing teacher, Joy Farrall, who was with me for the whole four years. The process of building back my technique was fundamental for me mastering the technical side of classical music."

Happily, Hutchings made a full recovery. He reimmersed himself in his craft, attending daily jam sessions and enjoying the creative drive of his similarly music-obsessed housemates. "You don't have a normal social life. A big part of my time at Guildhall was hanging out and meeting people in the jazz community. Regardless of social activities, you still have to get up the next day and practise."

He left Guildhall, he says, as a classically trained musician who could play jazz and improvise. One of his first gigs was touring with jazz legend Courtney Pine, and, since leaving, he's largely stuck with the saxophone – his second instrument at Guildhall – as it better suits stage performances. Nearly four years after leaving the School, he quit a part-time teaching job. "If I was going to be a musician, that's how I wanted to support myself, I couldn't have a 'crutch'. And it worked out."

Described in reviews as a "serial collaborator", Hutchings is involved with three distinct bands, two of which played at Glastonbury last year. Before Covid-19, he was due to tour in Mexico and the US with Shabaka and the Ancestors, a group he formed with South African musicians, and he is releasing a new album (to follow their debut album in 2016).

Before going into the studio, he sent his band compositions in advance. “We don’t have the luxury of regular rehearsals, so you almost have to learn your part like a classical piece before you go into the studio.”

In any case, as Hutchings points out, it is on tour, playing night after night, that members really gel. “You begin to understand their musicality – performing allows you to break out of that awkwardness of the first musical encounter. No music gets created in a vacuum.”

Last year, he completed more than 100 gigs in 10 “quite crazy” months – most of them with his band the Comet Is Coming. During his last gig of the sell-out UK tour, the band filled the Shepherd’s Bush Empire. “That’s like an acknowledgment of lots of hard work.” But he says he does enjoy playing the smaller venues, “where there’s no barrier between performers and audience – I don’t like a big gap”.

If 2016 Mercury Prize nominee the Comet Is Coming is described by critics as a mix of jazz, psychedelic rock, acid and electronic, his other group – Sons of Kemet (Kemet is an ancient name for Egypt) – is different again. A celebrated quartet that were pretty much sold out on their last UK tour, the band comprises Hutchings’s sax, a tuba and, unusually, two drummers.

Winning a MOBO for best jazz act in 2013 proved to be a turning point for the band, whose sound bridges the gap between traditional Caribbean influences and contemporary London. Back in Barbados, Hutchings remembers music and carnival being a big part of his life. “Many people there were dedicated to music – all kinds, not just one genre. We were all trying to learn as much as we could, and that attitude stayed with me. I didn’t ever think too far into the future, but I’m really happy where I am.”

Jazz has found new audiences in the last 15 years, he says, among younger people with fewer preconceptions. But what matters more now is the image a band projects – its visual appeal. “The whole artistic package is more important – that’s not a criticism, it’s just reality. If people are put off, for example, by the image of guy in a suit on the back of a classical album, it might prevent them finding the beauty in the music.”

With so much work to choose from, does he have a favourite? Hutchings says if he had to choose, it would be a composition he wrote a couple of years after he left Guildhall, when he was selected as a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist. “The orchestral piece I wrote as a result was the product of a whole year of work. I’d had no formal training before that. It’s one of the things I’m proudest of and I guess I’d like eventually to do more of it.”



From The Beginning

AUDITIONS. *A rite of passage for every Guildhall School student and graduate. The rush of adrenaline before your name is called. The terror as you forget your line, miss your cue or fluff your answer. All of that forgotten when you receive the call that changes everything – you secured a place at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.*

Where were you when you found out you got in, where did you wait before and how did you get to the School? We spoke to five Guildhall students and alumni to find out the highs and lows of their audition, and photographed them at a place that means the most to them.

We'd love to hear about your Guildhall audition, share your story using #MyGuildhallAudition on Twitter or Instagram and our favourite will win a Guildhall Alumni mug!

Andy Nyman is an actor, writer and producer. Since graduating from Guildhall School in 1987, Andy has co-created and starred in the stage show-turned film *Ghost Stories* and was recently nominated for an Olivier for his role in the West End production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. In his spare time, he creates magic shows with Derren Brown.

37 years ago I got off at Moorgate Station to audition at Guildhall School. I'd only been to London on my own about three times previously, all for drama school auditions that I failed. The second I alighted here I felt at home, the same happened when I entered the School. I just remember everyone being so friendly. Compared to other auditions, it felt like Guildhall truly wanted to see the best out of me.

My first audition was a blur, when I look back I think, I was seventeen, it was a lifetime ago. I just remember being so nervous, as well as excited. When I was invited back to the recall weekend, I thought I was part of the kids from *FAME*, it was so exciting being around these incredibly talented people. I can't

actually remember what pieces I did in my audition, but I do know I sang the theme from the TV show *Fireball XL5* as my song, and I think they thought I was insane!

The second I alighted here I felt at home, the same happened when I entered the school. I just remember everyone being so friendly. Compared to other auditions, it felt like Guildhall truly wanted to see the best out of me.

I didn't stay at the end when we were put into groups to tell you who had got in or not, I didn't have the bottle. So to find out if I'd got a place, I had to call the following Monday. I went into my parents' room which was about the only private space in the house. I knew if I used the phone in the kitchen my mum would have been hanging off my shoulder shouting 'WELL?'. I also knew that if I didn't get in I was going to be in tears, so I just wanted to have some private time. I rang in and David Cox said that I had been offered a place and I would be getting a letter tomorrow. I was shaking, I was absolutely thrilled. I went downstairs to my parents and there was much elation.

If I was to go back and audition again, I wouldn't do anything differently. I can remember so clearly, getting the train to London, and before going into my audition I would always listen to Dexys Midnight Runners for a good pump of northern soul that would get me in a good mindset for the audition.

I think the policy that Guildhall have just bought in about lowering the Acting audition fees is absolutely superb. I recently looked in my prospectus and for me to audition in 1984 it was £20, so for it to be £35 now is brilliant. It's a really impressive, inclusive move forward.

I don't come through Moorgate very often, but if I do I immediately feel 17 again. I still get a bit nervous coming through, I even get the odd bit of butterflies when I stand on the platform. I'll always be so grateful to those three years and everything I learnt there.



Ke Ma is a current Doctoral Researcher at Guildhall School, exploring Chinese musical styles in modern piano compositions. Ke is also an accomplished pianist, and was introduced to the piano at the age of three by her grandfather.

I knew I wanted to study in London, and Guildhall stood out because it offered different varieties for doctoral degrees. As well as a PhD you could also study a DMus, which is collaborative with performance, so that's what drew me to Guildhall.

When I came to the Open Day, after initially getting very lost in the Silk Street corridors, I got to see the amazing research department in Milton Court, and the concert hall which is wonderful and so modern. I then found out that if you study here as a research student you can use the concert hall for sound projects, I was sold! The building reminded me of Juilliard.

I remember meeting Zara, the administrator for the research department. She was so warm and friendly which helped as I was so nervous on the day. I'd prepared how to answer the questions but you never know what they're going to ask you, and if they're going to make your interview difficult or not. But as soon as Zara gave me a big smile, I calmed down and I felt ready for what was to come.

The interview went well. I hadn't done any other interviews at conservatoires before so I didn't know what to expect, but it seemed to go smoothly and they didn't give me a hard time which was a relief. I got to talk about my plan if I studied here and how I was going to conduct my project.

I didn't need to do a performance for my interview, but I did have to do a recording to show the pieces that were related to my research. I did all Chinese pieces, because my research is about how Chinese piano solo pieces have been composed. One of the recordings was a live performance I did with an orchestra in China at the Yellow River Concert Hall, which was in my home town so that meant a lot to me. The other piece I played was by

Chengyee who is Chinese born and has now moved to America. I played her piece in London for my piano teacher's birthday, she asked for that song especially so it was wonderful to be able to do that for her. After my interview, I hung out with some friends from Guildhall, as I already knew people who were studying piano here.

I was in Milton Keynes staying with the family of one of my students when I found out I got into Guildhall. I was practicing and when I received the email, I jumped out of my flat and ran next door to where my student and her family was. They knew I'd applied to the School so I was jumping out my door shouting 'I got in!' They were so happy for me. I told them before my parents!

I then called my parents and nobody answered! I so desperately wanted to share the news with them and a few hours later they finally saw and congratulated me on the new start of my life.

I never thought I would do research, I thought I wanted to be a pianist on the stage, but I think if you want to know your repertoire you need to do your research about it too, and you also need to find the unique repertoire you can play and you can interpret.

I chose to have my photo in Milton Court, as it's where everything started for me at Guildhall. I love this building and the atmosphere here, it's so open to everybody.





As well as the interview, we did a few activities throughout the day. These were different tasks to gauge how well we worked in teams, and to investigate how we were as a person. There was a lighting challenge where they put equipment out and we had to match labels to them. They also took us to the tech lab and showed us some amazing sound equipment. Rather than testing us or letting us play with it though, they taught us about it all. It was great to be able to get something out of the interview day. I thought I'd just be coming to give my pitch, but to take some new learning away from it too was really cool.

When I was called in for my interview, my palms were so sweaty and I went to shake one of their hands and just thought 'this isn't good!' Apart from that, the interview went really well. I brought my portfolio with me, so I had the chance to talk through my work and qualifications. They asked really interesting and engaging questions too, which again gave me the opportunity to talk about my experience and what I was hoping to get out of my time at the School.

I was at school when I got the call to tell me I'd got in. We were about three minutes away from opening the school musical. It was from an unknown number and I almost ignored it, but I picked up and it was the Head of Theatre Technology Andy Taylor, who informed me I'd got in. It was a brilliant experience to then be able to go into a room of people who actually understood what this whole world is.

I picked to have my photo by the famous -2 sign of Milton Court because this area by the café reminds me of how informal and welcoming the day was. We weren't locked in a stuffy room somewhere counting down the hours until it was your interview. They filled your time usefully and this was where it was all centred round, so it's great to be able to come back here where it all started.

The interview day was great because I had the opportunity to speak to so many people without any pressure. It wasn't just ten minutes in a room with three people you'd never met before, you had a whole day talking to everyone and showing them who you really were. It was a completely different experience to any interview day I'd done before.

Matt Dean is a final year student on the Theatre Technology course at Guildhall. Rather than an audition, Production Arts students take part in a day of activities, including lighting tasks and an interview.

I knew instantly that Guildhall was my top choice when I came to the Open Day, before I'd even done my interview or applied. The facilities blew everyone else completely out

the water, especially Milton Court, it was so far above anything I'd ever seen before.

The open day was run by students which was great as you could ask questions and get real answers from people who knew what they were talking about. I'd been to open days where there were no students at all, so it was great at Guildhall to be able to feel the sense of community straightaway.

I arrived at 10am, and I was told immediately not to expect to leave before 5pm. Looking back, it was certainly setting a precedent for my time at Guildhall. Most other places I'd been for interviews you were in and out within an hour!

Ella De Jongh is a soprano studying on the Opera Course at Guildhall School. Ella first got involved with music when she was 11 years old and has wanted to study at Guildhall since she was 13. So much so, Ella auditioned five times.

I remember ordering the Guildhall prospectus aged 13 and I said, 'I'll go there one day'. It was the only institution I wanted to be at. Looking at the alumni who came out of the vocal department, I knew I wanted to be one of them.

My first impression when I arrived was that it was a concrete jungle. However, it was strangely majestic and the most magical stuff happens inside, so you grow to love the concrete. It was the only college that I ever walked into and just felt really at home and comfortable. It's a very special place.

At my fifth and final audition I met a girl called Lara who was my steward. All I wanted from that day was a second round, I couldn't even dare to think about the idea of getting a place. I came out of my audition and Lara gave me the letter and I just burst into tears and she gave me the most enormous hug. When I started in September, she remembered who I was and we've been friends ever since.

I had to prepare six pieces for my audition. I did some Mozart just because my teacher told me to, some Vitellia which was actually my teacher's role that she did at Glyndebourne. I did a piece of *Gloriana* by Britten which is about Elizabeth I, which I then got a scene in my second year from that same opera. I had a French piece, 'C' by Poulenc, which I still love. I give that to my private pupils, it's got a very special place in my heart. I also had to do a piece of German which I absolutely hated at the time, but having done lots of German last term in the Opera Course I now adore it.

In my second round, I did Britten's *Gloriana* again because it's really unknown and not done very often (which is terrifying!). It's hard to count and I had this one entry that I could never get right and in my audition I missed my cue. I bought my own pianist and she covered for me, and afterwards she said 'Ella did really well, just tell her to learn to count!'

I remember getting the email that said I got in, I was at home and I was about to teach a lesson. I hadn't told anyone I was auditioning because I didn't want to tell people I hadn't got in again. When I got the email I just cried, I phoned my mum who didn't answer so I phoned my dad who also didn't answer, and I eventually got through to my singing teacher. She was so excited but my pupil was at the door so I couldn't celebrate, I had to put a lid on it for a couple of hours which was very strange!

The following night, I went to dinner with my parents, and we shared a bottle of champagne that my mum had been given and was saving for a special occasion. I still have the cork from that bottle.

Auditioning is the most unnatural thing in the entire world. I try and treat every one as a performance. If they like me then great, and if they don't, there's nothing I can do about it. This is who I am, and this is what I can offer you.

I chose to have my photo outside room 234 as that's where Lara gave me my second round letter. It was where I found out I got what I wanted, but not what I ever thought I would get.



Guildhall Online Evening Courses

This autumn we are offering a wide variety of exciting courses online across multiple art forms, taught by Guildhall's expert teachers, experienced alumni and skilled guest tutors.

We have introduction to acting and creative writing courses, music production and vocal arranging courses and a brand new course in association with Barbican on the history of Brutalist architecture. If you're looking to try something new, develop your skills, or simply have fun then be sure to book a place!

For more information and bookings, visit our website: gsmd.ac.uk/shortcourses

**GUILD
HALL**
SCHOOL



THEN & NOW

Connie Cha (Acting 2011) knows that an acting degree can take you anywhere – even, as in her case, to business school.

I left Guildhall thinking, “Right, now I’m going to begin a lifelong career in acting”. Funnily enough it didn’t quite turn out that way. My first job out of Guildhall was a low-budget, independent horror film (Paul Hills’ *The Power*) filmed on location in Norwich; it was a really fun time. But I realised then that it would be a difficult lifestyle, one which perhaps wasn’t compatible with my personality. I love to be busy and suddenly having spare time on my hands between auditions hit me hard.

Quite quickly, I made the decision to move on from acting and joined Deloitte to qualify as an accountant. It was a lump-in-my-throat moment, but in hindsight I’m glad I made it. The academic in me loved absorbing new information from excellent mentors and managers and after I qualified, I wanted to broaden my horizons further, so I joined the MBA course at the Saïd Business School in Oxford.

What the MBA offered couldn’t have been more different from Guildhall where we’d been a close-knit group of 25, spending a hundred hours a week on the same concrete corridor, either rehearsing or learning lines. At Oxford, I was part of an enormous institution with 355 classmates of 55 different nationalities, spending a hundred hours a week in lecture theatres or libraries, either reading or writing essays. Both were intense experiences and I loved them in different ways.

Whilst at Oxford, a group of classmates and I started a company, Taxforward, to help creatives manage their tax – actors, artists or musicians typically say they don’t understand their taxes and I understood that feeling all too well. Although our venture wasn’t ultimately successful, it was an incredible learning experience of communicating a vision, building a technology platform and raising just under £250,000 in start-up capital from friends, family and private investors.

After Taxforward, I joined the finance team of the sleep wellness company, eve Sleep Plc. So many job specs ask for candidates who have an ability to present and persuade. I’m naturally shy, but my time at Guildhall gave me tools to convey a message directly whilst remaining authentic and personable. I think this is important in finance because everyone expects the message to be number-crunchy or dull, when in fact it’s probably the most business-critical message in the room!

‘the teaching at Guildhall was formative and plays a part in how I think about and build my career.’

Looking back, the teaching at Guildhall was formative and plays a part in how I think about and build my career. If you took yourself too seriously, the teachers

brought you gently back to earth. In my third year, when it began to feel as if we were jostling for the same jobs, one teacher (Danny McGrath) told me gently there was room enough for everyone. It was at Guildhall that I learned I needed to be exactly who I was and not try to push myself into a mould.

The greatest thing Guildhall gave me are some truly special friends. We’ve followed different paths post-Guildhall, but when I get to see friends in films or plays, I have the greatest respect and pride for their achievements.

‘The best part of my job now is looking after my team and being responsible for ensuring they feel part of a great project on a daily basis – much like a director spelling out a vision for their cast.’

The best part of my job now is looking after my team and being responsible for ensuring they feel part of a great project on a daily basis – much like a director spelling out a vision for their cast. And as a new member of SEDOS, an acting society based in the City of London, I’m happy to have recently been cast in an amateur production of *Ophelia Thinks Harder* – happy, albeit nervous to tread the boards again!



What might we mean by Artistic Citizenship?

Our Vice Principal & Director of Music, Jonathan Vaughan, grew up in a mining town in the Midlands, studying at the local comprehensive. He is forever grateful for the free instrumental lessons he had as a child; a free provision to which he owes his entire career. This also gave him a passionate belief in social justice, and the democratic right of all young people to access music. We caught up with him as he embarks on his first year of Doctoral studies at Guildhall.

At Guildhall, I am always conscious of the tremendous tension that exists between the need to maintain the very highest standards of excellence (in order to remain globally competitive), the need to continue to provide training in the canonical traditions of the standard repertoire (in order to prepare students for an industry that, generally speaking, remains staunchly traditional in its tastes) and the need to become ever more vibrant and relevant by engaging with broader, traditionally underrepresented parts of the community. This is of course deeply challenging, but I take the view that if we do not grapple with this challenge we will become ever more irrelevant to the societies we serve. We cannot simply remain a cathedral to the elite.

The UK has suffered decades of cuts in its music provision, which make it virtually impossible for those from less privileged backgrounds to achieve entry to a music conservatoire. The Government's position on funding will not change in the foreseeable future. We therefore need to find alternative ways to address issues of social inequity. One way to do this is to train artists differently and I believe that this would benefit the School in three ways. Firstly, and most importantly, it would give our students their own socio-artistic voice; enabling them to define their own lives and curate projects that contribute intelligently to the discourse on

the social and political landscape around them. Secondly, it would help them to realise the power of music to achieve transformational change for others and thirdly it would improve access, to institutions like ours, for those in underrepresented communities.

The purpose of my Doctoral studies therefore lies in examining how conservatoires might, despite their privileged status, play a more effective role in addressing the inequality of music provision and foster greater transformational change in young lives.

Perhaps even more importantly, I believe that we have a civic responsibility to our students for them to temper their maturing artistic voice with their own ethical and political identities. Artists of the future will increasingly be expected not only to have the skills to work in diverse socially engaged settings, but will also need to curate their own work driven by their own beliefs and ideologies. It is this question of Artistic Citizenship and how it is conveyed within the institution that has led me to my research question.

But what do we mean by Artistic Citizenship? The word 'artistic' often conjures up romantic images of musicians as mysterious, isolated and often tortured souls. Popularly these individuals have an extraordinary level of musicianship and a highly evolved emotional language. They trade in sophisticated masterworks and are adept at navigating the most complex of musical forms. But artists also occupy a particular space in time and history and are therefore inextricably linked to culture, society, politics and economics.

The idea of citizenship originally developed around the need for people to unite around shared values and common principles to the benefit of their wider communities. In its largest constituent group, we would call this a 'nation'. Of course, not all citizens share the same idea or belief systems. In reality, they occupy a multidimensional landscape which includes personal beliefs, cultural, social, emotional and ethical principles which flex with time and their community's circumstances.

Jonathan Vaughan



So it was this collection of ideas that led me to my research question:

How do conservatoires effectively combine 'Artistic Citizenship' with performance excellence education, in order to create next generation artists, equipped and willing to:

- i) Intelligently engage with the current dialogue around ethics, social justice and wellbeing
- ii) Define their own lives as 21st Century Artists in Society

Answers on a postcard please!

Friends Reunited



KATE JOHN & GEMMA TONGE

“We were really close from early on. We came with no preconceptions and were open to absorbing new ideas.”

It’s been 20 years – and a whole lot of graft – since they first met at Guildhall, but Kate John and Gemma Tonge still enjoy a drink and a chat together. And now that they both lead departments at the National Theatre, they acknowledge they’ve come a long way from the days when the “meek little Welsh girl” (John) and the “starstruck theatre lover from Wigan” (Tonge) first found their true home away from home.

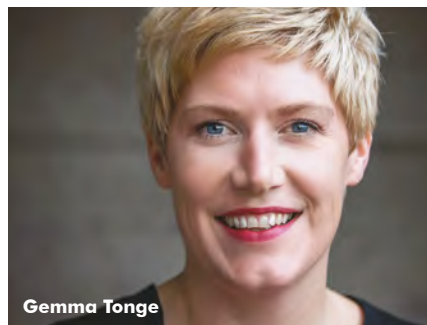
“Back home, I’d been the odd one out,” remembers Tonge (Stage Management and Technical Theatre, 2002). “I was always the kid on stage at the panto. I was transfixed by set changes – one minute we’d be in a forest, the next in Mother Goose’s kitchen. For the first time at Guildhall, I felt I fitted in, I was in the gang.”

Their friendship grew over a mutual love of opera, shared productions – including Rimsky-Korsakov’s *The Snow Maiden* – and gatecrashing each other’s parties. “We found our feet together,” says John (Stage Management and Technical Theatre, 2001). “We were really close from early on. We came with no preconceptions and were open to absorbing new ideas.”

Both went on to successful freelance and in-house careers: John with the Welsh National Opera and Tonge at Opera North. Their paths crossed a few times – returning to Guildhall to talk to students, and, most glamorously, in New York while John was touring with Sir Matthew Bourne and Tonge with Sadler’s Wells.

Stage management and set design can be challenging. Tonge once had to organise the lighting of 361 candles during a production of *Macbeth*. And as a stage manager, John oversaw a travelling opera set in a baked bean factory. “I’ve not been able to look at a can of beans ever since.”

Now they’re under the same roof, with John as Head of Construction and Tonge



Gemma Tonge



Kate John

as Head of Company Management. They sit in meetings together, occasionally work on the same productions, and sometimes share a drink at the end of the day. “We regularly ask each other’s opinion,” says John. “We can chew the fat, share gossip, talk over issues. Having that alliance is just wonderful.”

“We have a trust, a shorthand that takes time to build with new colleagues – we can leapfrog that process,” says Tonge. “We’re close in age and both bold, confident women, quite happy to speak up. It’s lovely to have that support.”

John cares deeply about opening opportunities to people who wouldn’t dream of working at the National, and looks after the NT’s apprentices in carpentry, metal and scenic art. Last year, she met NT patron the Duchess of Sussex, who came for a chat with the new trainees – “One of my proudest moments,” she says.

Coming from a working-class mining family, John was perhaps not your typical drama school applicant. She says she wouldn’t be where she is were it not for a teacher who urged her to stage manage a school production of *Bugry Malone*. “Not every school child will have access to a teacher like that – it’s our duty to help make this accessible.”

They both owe Guildhall a debt, says Tonge, and not only for the friendships they made. At that time, it was the only school to mix experience in both drama and music, she points out, and it’s still rare. “You’d work on everything, from plays to dance to full-scale opera.”

“It gave us a catapult into the industry,” says John. “If you work hard, you may be able to make your own way, but Guildhall offers graduates a fantastic platform and opportunities to explore their passion. The power of that should never be underestimated.”

Ieva Vaiti

Ieva Vaiti (Electronic Music 2018) is a composer, producer, artist and educator. She tells PLAY how two days are never the same and why tackling gender inequality brought her back to teach the Music Production Summer Course at Guildhall.

Growing up in Lithuania, I trained as a classical violinist from a young age, becoming interested in music technology when I was 16. Guildhall was highly recommended by a few teachers I really respected, and I had heard the Electronic Music course was very open minded, so I trusted it would give me the creative freedom I wanted. I also liked the links to the Barbican Centre and being within the brutalist architecture.

After graduating, I wasn't sure in which direction I wanted to go artistically. I got a day job in sound engineering, an area that at Guildhall I discovered I was quite good at. That gave me some time to build up an artistic voice, as well as make crucial contacts in the industry that helped me generate my own work; which is a mixture of things - from producing music for more commercial projects, through to scoring films and developing my own projects.

I've been involved in many exciting festivals as a music artist, including the Richmix Takeover Festival 2017, Sound Unbound Festival 2017, Roundhouse CircusFest 2018 and many more. I've also performed in the UK and Europe under my pseudonym Pikel, and I've been a resident artist with Fatima Al Qadiri at Both Sides Now, Manchester.

My profile in music production led me to a conversation between the Electronic Music department and students at Guildhall on how to improve the gender balance in the industry. Education is a great way to increase participation for people from underrepresented backgrounds, because it

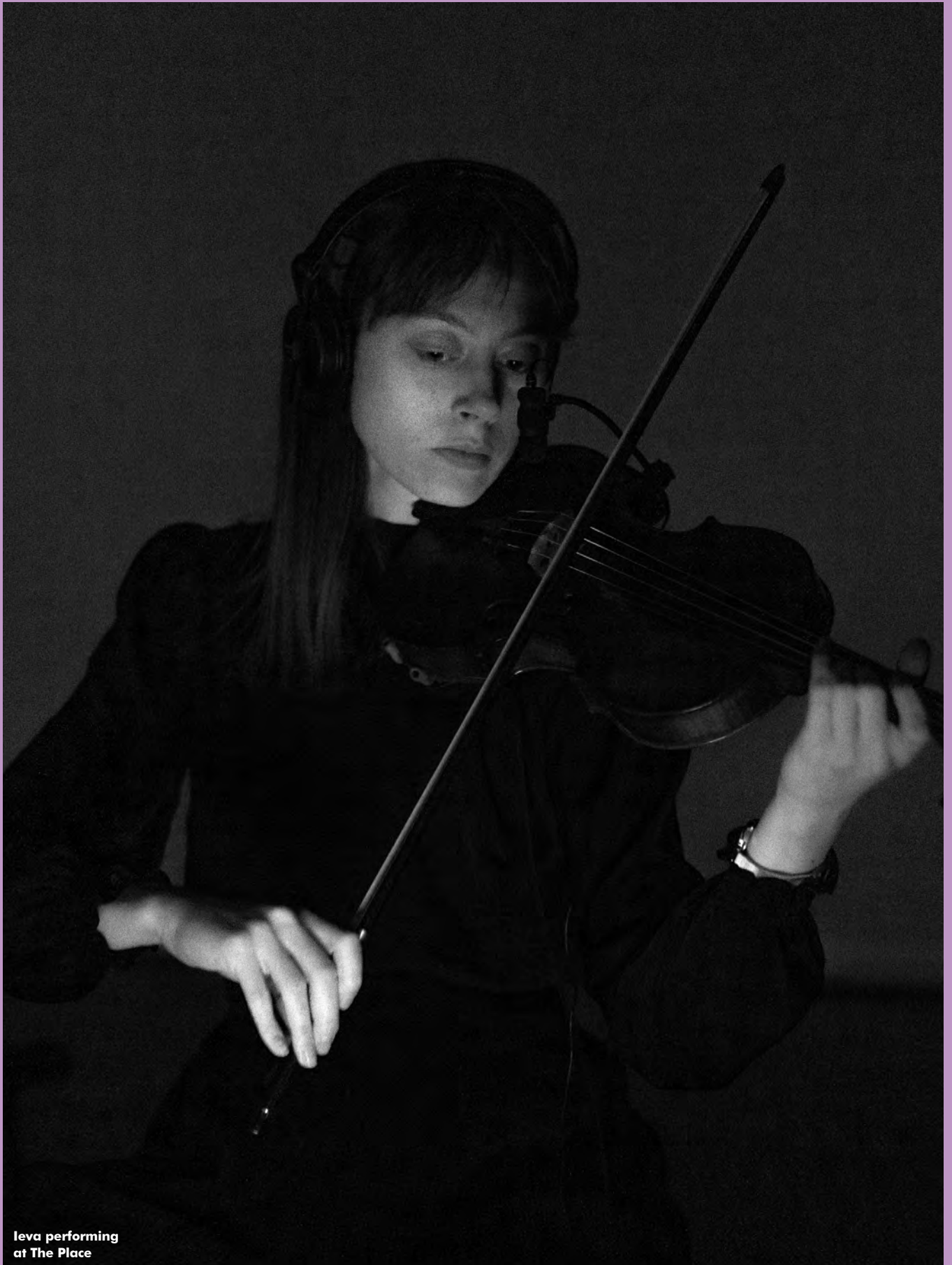
provides a pipeline for the industry to recruit from and helps to challenge and change perceptions. I had been involved in education within other establishments for a few years and Guildhall had all the resources and support I needed to run the Music Production course - so it made sense to come back and teach at the place that had given me the opportunities and training I needed to get into the industry.

I really enjoy teaching the Music Production Summer Course. On a day-to-day basis, you don't always get to talk about your practice in great depth, so I really get a buzz out of sharing my skills with different people. I also find students' work really inspiring and how everyone responds to the same projects differently. A lot of the time, the aim isn't to make a professional producer out of everyone - instead the course is about increasing musical awareness and providing people with transferrable skills.

When I'm not teaching, I have been developing my own multimedia collective - which involves dance, animation and music. We collaborate to make new works and perform in unusual spaces. Our last performance was at The Place theatre, London - which was really special as it was our performance in a theatre space - until now we have been performing in warehouses and clubs!

Honestly, after graduating from Guildhall I really didn't know what to expect for my career. But I worked hard and learned that a full time career in music is possible, even if you have few or no connections in the industry at the start. There is so much content being made on a daily basis and there is definitely a need for new voices in the art crowd. Artistically I wanted to do a variety of things, which is what I'm doing now. There's definitely a lot more goals I am yet to achieve, but Guildhall has equipped me with the skills to do those things.

*Find out more about our Short Courses at Guildhall School
gsm.ac.uk/shortcourses*



Ieva performing
at The Place



School news

Guildhall School stages a digital opera double bill

During lockdown, 100 artists across 14 countries and four continents staged Guildhall School's digital opera double bill, with all components of the productions created from home and showcased in a 3D virtual Silk Street Theatre.

From home, the opera's cast and chorus captured and filmed their own performances under the virtual direction of director Olivia Fuchs and movement director Victoria Newlyn, which were then edited by the filmmaker Karl Dixon. Guildhall School instrumentalists recorded their parts for a multi-track recording of the orchestral scores co-ordinated by conductor and Head of Opera Dominic Wheeler.

The project integrated work by more than 100 artists from the Opera, Production Arts, Vocal and Music departments, as well as Guildhall Live Events – a new department set up to act as a conduit between the entertainment industry and Guildhall School.

"Whilst the process has certainly been a healthy challenge, it has also been exciting and eye-opening. We feel that the students' enthusiasm and commitment to telling stories meaningfully in such difficult circumstances transcends all the challenges they've faced, and makes us proud to share their work with everyone," said Dominic Wheeler, Head of Opera at Guildhall School.



School news

Guildhall School's Research department helps Kingston University nursing students working through Covid-19 pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a set of drama-based resources have been put together through a collaboration between Guildhall School and the School of Nursing at Kingston University.

News in brief

Andy Lavender joined Guildhall School as Vice-Principal and Director of Production Arts in August, after three years at the University of Warwick

Guildhall School appoints distinguished movement director and theatre choreographer **Diane Alison-Mitchell** as Head of Movement.

Guildhall School halves Acting audition fees, making it the most financially accessible one-off application/audition fee of the major drama schools

Deborah Lincoln appointed Chair of Guildhall School Trust, a registered charity which supports students and projects at the School

Guildhall School ranked in UK top 10 universities and as top conservatoire for overall student satisfaction in NSS 2020.

Graduating students gave a 90% overall satisfaction rate for their time spent at the School in the National Student Survey 2020, putting Guildhall in the top 10 UK universities for overall student satisfaction, with an 88% overall satisfaction rate for teaching across the School and an 89% overall satisfaction rate for academic support.

The free online learning materials came as a result of a partnership between the institutions, inspired by the nurses Dr Alex Mermikides, doctoral programme leader at Guildhall School, met while her brother Milton was treated for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. They were put together digitally for the first time as part of a research initiative due to the coronavirus crisis, which has seen teaching move online.

Undergraduates going out to practice during the pandemic have access to the Drama out of a Crisis online pack, which offers tips, videos and podcasts on how to manage unexpected situations, how to cope with a new environment, learning new routines quickly and building relationships with colleagues quickly.

School news

Guildhall School of Music & Drama announces its Autumn Season of events, which will all be delivered digitally and free of charge

From late-September 2020, online audiences will be able to enjoy a mixture of live broadcast and pre-recorded content from across all School departments, created, performed and filmed at Guildhall School with the required social distancing.

Music events include the rescheduled Gold Medal final – the School's most prestigious prize, this year celebrating instrumentalists – and a Guildhall Symphony Orchestra programme of Missy Mazzoli, Janáček, and Sibelius conducted by Jessica Cottis.

Drama productions include a new version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Suba Das, and a devised piece entitled *Pod* created and directed by Jamie Bradley and Vicki Igbokwe, developed with the Company.

All content will be available to watch online, for free, via Guildhall School's website gsm.d.ac.uk/autumn_2020



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As a Patron you will be richly rewarded with performances across the breadth of the School's artistic disciplines. We invite you to witness artists in training and enjoy a fulfilling rapport with Guildhall staff, students and fellow supporters.

For more information about becoming a Patron, please contact: Emily McNeillis, Development Officer (Individuals), emily.mcneillis@gsmd.ac.uk