

# Welcome to the Music Department Lockdown Newsletter

Two months ago, we were all at school, enjoying the successes of nearly two terms' hard work. We were enjoying the warm afterglow of pride in our concerts at the South Bank Centre (now available to [watch online](#)), looking forward to the climax of the Spring Term with events including the Jazz Concert, the SIM concert, and the concerto competition finals. We were preparing revision plans for public exams, and rehearsals for concerts in the Wigmore Hall, London churches, and Cadogan Hall; not to mention composition projects, an overseas tour and festival appearances.

The abrupt halt to all these plans is desperately hard for everyone. Musicians especially need to be together, to hear

each other, to produce a sound in an acoustic for each other, and to experience things in the moment, live. Despite the cliché about teenagers being forever on their phones, we are not designed to be alone, making music on a screen, with headphones. Furthermore, music schools do not prioritise IT infrastructure: we buy pianos and marimbas before subscribing to virtual classroom software.

It is therefore remarkable that students and staff have managed to adapt so successfully, almost overnight, to this temporarily changed world. I know that this has required a lot of support from families too, and I would like to thank everybody – teachers, students, support staff and

family members – for helping to facilitate such a productive term.

This newsletter gives a glimpse of what has been going on in each department. Please check out our social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#)) for latest films and news.

We will come back even stronger as soon as we can. We have had an extensive and very competitive online audition process for new students, and look forward to welcoming everybody to the school when the site re-opens.

**Paul Hoskins,**  
*Director of Music*



# PURCELL ONLINE

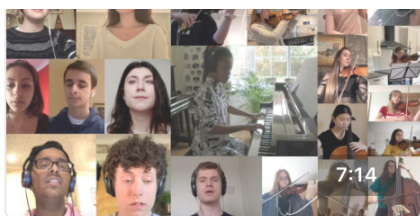
Whilst at Purcell, students share a common bond in their passion for music with a community boasting creativity and mutual support. With this in mind, we have launched a brand new area on our YouTube channel to showcase the work of our incredible students: **Purcell Online – *space for student sounds***. Purcell Online will feature exciting performances plus debuts of new original works and arrangements!

Having only launched on May 7th 2020, Purcell Online has already been a great success. Purcell students have been working hard producing incredible projects and performances which have captivated our audience.

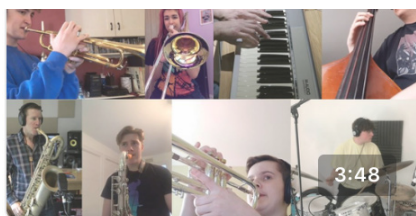
The first student submission from Zara Williams in collaboration with 17 other Purcell students has reached over 5,500 views across the School's social media accounts and each subsequent video met similar positive feedback.

The Audio Ident Competition that went alongside the launch added another opportunity for student involvement with the result being a beautifully composed piece of music by first-study composer Sasha Scott.

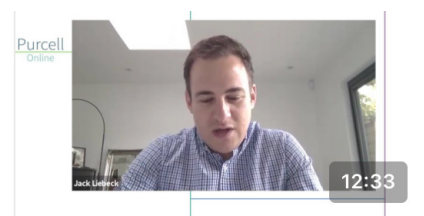
Purcell Online is a growing platform where the content will expand as the term continues with a variety of lectures, masterclasses, interviews and performances



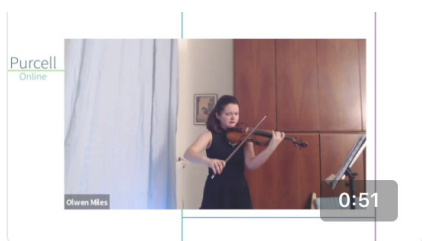
Billie Eilish - When the Party's Over/Lovely - Purcell Students in...



Four - Miles Davis (arr. Lorenzo Morabito) - Purcell Jazz Ensemble



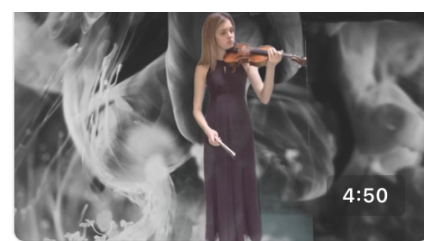
Jack Liebeck - In conversation with Charles Sewart



Jack Liebeck Online Masterclass - w/ Purcell student Olwen Miles



Scriabin Etude Op.8 No.12 - Performed by Rhys Concessao



No Time to Die - Billie Eilish - Performed by Ella Richardson

Keep up to date with everything Purcell Online:



# ACADEMIC MUSIC

During this half term of remote learning, students in all year groups have continued with their respective programmes in Academic Music. This has included lessons in Music History, Analysis, Composition, Aural, Theory and Harmony. These lessons have been delivered using a variety of methods including scheduled lessons on Google Classroom, 'live' lessons and video lectures. The department has also secured free access to aural and musicianship

programmes Auralia and Musition for all students for the duration of the summer term. Teachers in the department have also been collating evidence and preparing predicted grades and rankings for Year 10 IGCSE and Year 13 Pre-U results, which will be submitted, in line with CIE and Ofqual regulations to the exam boards after the half term break. Next half term, Year 12 students will be choosing their options for the Pre-U Personal Project and Special

Topic elements and Year 11 will be set work to prepare them for the start of their Pre-U course in September. Year 12 students have also been asked to complete their Pre U Composition by the end of the summer term. Every week we see the students, either individually or in small groups on zoom to discuss their progress.

**Mary-Kate Gill,**  
*Head of Academic Music*

## Composition Projects

### Years 6, 7 and 8

Comp Comp is a project where each year group in the Lower School chooses a theme, composes music and performs everything in a special concert directed and run by themselves. This year the project will run online. The groups are assessed on their preparation, collaboration, effort and final product. The adjudicators will be the Year 12 First-Study Composers (who are all ridiculously enthusiastic about this)!

Year 6's project is focused upon musical portraits of unusual animals. They are writing pieces for their own instruments (cello, saxophone, violin and piano). Year 7's project is about reimagined fairy tales in contemporary settings. Year 8's project is about an apocalyptic rose, but this theme is evolving due to the impact of the lockdown.

### Year 9

Although we have been forced to shelve our exciting Blue Charter/ROSL/Puppet making project, we have been working with Year 9 on a special project for the lockdown, called 'Soundscapes Around Us'. Year 9's were asked to listen to and if possible to record a soundscape, either in their own homes or in somewhere accessible to them during their isolation at home. We then discussed in lessons how to create a piece of music from the soundscape. This will be performed by Year 9 students at some point towards the end of next term. We played them musical examples of soundscapes ranging from Beethoven to Charles Ives. They are mostly making excellent progress on their compositions.

### Year 10

At the beginning of term, we collected in as much of their IGCSE work as possible and assessed them as requested by the examination board. In Week 2 we launched a special lockdown project for Year 10 as well. It is called "Music to Reflect Our Time". The aim of the project is to compose a piece of music, reflecting the personal thoughts and feelings of each student during the lockdown. We have suggested that the music they compose might be a tribute to someone who has either suffered from COVID19 or has done something remarkable during the lockdown. We played them lots of musical examples including Elgar, Arvo Part, Schnittke, Bach, Ysaye.....Although they have only just started properly upon this project, there is a lot of enthusiasm and they are sending us through some very interesting ideas and sketches.





## KEYBOARD DEPARTMENT

The piano is perhaps the most difficult instrument for online learning. Teachers are constantly experimenting with new platforms and interfaces to improve the quality of the sound, and we are getting used to the absence of piano tuners! We are running more

piano classes, with fewer students at each one, online. We are organising the pianists into groups to curate their own recitals; they choose their own particular theme, and will present and perform live online during the penultimate piano classes of term. In

addition, piano assessments will take place this term, with students submitting recordings between now and the end of June.

**William Fong,**  
*Head of Keyboard*

## JAZZ DEPARTMENT

The Jazz Department has been very busy in Lockdown, in addition to all jazz teachers giving online lessons the jazz ensembles have been recording multiscreen performances of jazz standards and student arrangements, available to view on the

School's YouTube channel. Each student records their part in isolation, then all the videos are collated, edited and mixed together.

The Jazz Department is also in the midst of producing a special video featuring Purcell

Jazz alumni, as a celebration of the successful careers our students graduate to. Watch this space for more information on the special guests featured in the video.

**Simon Allen,**  
*Head of Jazz*

## BRASS, PERCUSSION, HARP & VOICE

Our smaller departments are also busy with lessons and classes. **Ruth Molins** has run

classes for trombones and tubas, and virtual trumpet club has started up again with **Tony**

**Cross.** Masterclasses are being arranged for the second half of term for all departments.

# STRINGS DEPARTMENT

Ever since The Purcell School closed its doors on 17th March we have all had to adapt to a very different way of life and study. In the String Department, with 73 students spread across the globe from Hawaii to China and Australia, the challenges of maintaining a quality learning experience have been great. It is a great credit to students and their teachers that such a high level of work has carried on at this time, displaying the resilience and creativity of our young musicians.

Whilst we have felt limited, and at times frustrated by the possibilities (or lack of) of Zoom, the situation has given rise to surprising and perhaps unexpected opportunities for learning. Suddenly, finding more time available with less distraction has led to more focussed and detailed work, the possibility of practising more calmly with longer-term goals enables more thoughtful consideration of what we are doing. For one, I have been revisiting the Bach solo Sonatas and Partitas, in particular the Fugues which have previously been given insufficient attention, “rather too hard and needing more time” was always an excuse for putting off work on these amazing and complex works.

Today's technology enables one-to-one lessons to take place in a way unthinkable even ten years ago, however playing live in ensembles sadly cannot happen. Students have been hugely inventive in creating collages assembling separately recorded tracks to produce remarkable performances. However, spontaneous interaction together with the discipline of reading and instinctively understanding your role in an ensemble are qualities which

are difficult, if impossible, to develop in an online situation. In order to fill some of this gap, we have put together a series of classes and lectures which will hopefully provide different but valuable inspiration.

Last week we had a highly thought-provoking class by violinist, Jack Liebeck offering particular insight into methods of practice. Today sees the first of three lectures by musicologist and broadcaster, Richard Wigmore on the quartets of Beethoven, representing the three periods of his life.

Other classes coming up include:

Wednesday 20th May -

**Benjamin Nabarro**, Violin

Tuesday 2nd June - The

second **Richard Wigmore**

lecture on the Beethoven's three Razumovsky Quartets, op.59

Wednesday 3rd June - **Stephen**

**Doane**, cello (Professor Eastman school of Music).

Tuesday 23rd June - the third and final Richard Wigmore lecture on Beethoven's “late” quartets op.127 onwards.

*Classes by members of the Endellion and Dante Quartets, dates tbc.*

All classes and lectures are presented live on Zoom and also recorded. They will be available to view in part, or in full, at [Purcell Online](#).

I remain hugely grateful to all our wonderful teachers for their extraordinary dedication to supporting the work of the string department. I also have the greatest admiration for the tremendous work being achieved by students in my department at this time. Keep going!

**Charles Sewart**,  
*Head of Strings*

# COMPOSITION DEPARTMENT

For composers, a lockdown of this kind can have benefits as well as drawbacks. This has certainly been the case with our first-study composers, who have all been highly enthusiastic and proactive in their efforts to keep things going during the lockdown.

## Weekly Composition Lessons

Composition lessons are running smoothly and regularly. Students and teachers are all using Zoom (some had to learn how), which enables them to share screens, listen to music and annotate scores.

## Composition 'Zoominars'

I am delighted by the success of our Composition Zoominars! These have been run on my own system (I use Zoom Pro) which enables me to have any number of people in a meeting for any length of time. It has also been very easy to get professionals to come and give seminars. To date we have worked with:

- 1) **Robert Saxton** and Oxford PHD student **Carol Jones** to run a special 'lockdown' project for the composers based upon space, time and latency.
- 2) **Jake Downes**, who led a wonderful seminar called 'Music, Sound art, bodies and spaces' to support the project by Robert and Carol.
- 3) **Alex Paxton**, composer and improvising trombonist, whose crazy, off-the-wall seminar entitled 'My Midi Alter-Ego', which was much enjoyed by all.

4) **Brias Elias** continued his series of presentation training workshops for our composers, teaching them how to present their own work to audiences articulately and effectively.

## Middle and Lower School Zoominars

**Phil Dutton** has been running these on Mondays with a group of students with talent for composition, including our two younger first study students.

We are also planning concerts and special online outreach training events throughout the second half of term. One of these will be **GO COMPOSE ONLINE** run by our excellent first study composers and instrumentalists in **Years 12 and 13**. The students have

already been shadowing and observing some of the existing workshops run by professionals which will help them to run their own projects later on. Go Compose Online is a one-day 'kickstarter' composition project for young people who wish to learn how to compose, and are stuck at home during lockdown.

We are hoping to run a **COMPOSITION INDUCTION AFTERNOON** on Zoom for our new composers and the students have many ideas for this!

**Alison Cox**,  
*Head of Composition*







## WOODWIND DEPARTMENT

The students have been wonderfully engaged and proactive, both individually and collectively. The weekly Woodwind Class has been a good opportunity for the whole department to get together on zoom.

In the first week we welcomed guest Performance Coach **Jessica Mogridge**, and she led a wonderful session entitled “lockdown limbo”. Students worked in “breakaway rooms”, shared thoughts and made their own “Wheel of Life”; we will run a follow-up session towards the end of next term. The following week we had a somewhat noisy group improvisation session, and got underway the first of our whole group video/recording projects. This is entirely student led by Eva Serksnaite (Production Editor) and Alex Franklin (Mahler 1 excerpt arranger), with further recordings led by Lydia Cochrane and Chelsea Becker and others to come later in the term.

Individual instrument classes have been really varied and led superbly by staff. Flautists have been taking part in

Abigail Burrows’ eFlute Festival 2020, with masterclasses and workshops; with Sofiia Matviienko winning first prize in the Syrnix Competition.

Oboists have been hard at work with on line group scales and exercise sessions, and there have been weekly online “surgery” slots where Melanie Ragge listens to students uploads, writes feedback and is available for questions. James Turnbull has continued the inevitable but crucial reed making classes! Clarinettists have performed in an orchestral excerpts class with Izzy, and had a Q and A session with legendary clarinettist **Anthony Pay** on Zoom - complete with a boxwood clarinet demonstration. The bassoonists have been playing along to piano backing tracks with Graham Hobbs, kindly recorded and delivered by our amazing pianist Debbie. Sax classes have included a great

listening session with students presenting “lockdown island discs” tracks of their choice for discussion.

After half term the recorder players will be treated to former Purcellian **Daniel Swani** giving a recital and Q and A session. The whole department will be engaging in a comparative video listening exercise based on their instrument’s chamber repertoire. **Ian Wilson**, recorder player and Head of Woodwind at Eton College, will be delivering a class to all our Woodwind students entitled “Music editors - truth and lies”.

The combination of time to reflect, listen, practise more and be creative in new ways is providing our current motivation.

**Joy Farrall**,  
*Head of Woodwind*