

Crescendo

The Official Magazine of The Purcell School for Young Musicians

May 2019



INSIDE PURCELL: LET'S TALK MUSIC TECH

Discussing everything from the benefits of going digital to the importance of teaching

SITTING DOWN WITH SIMON ALLEN, HEAD OF JAZZ

Renowned within and outside the School, we dive into the Jazz department

GOING DIGITAL: LIVE AT LUNCHTIME

Thank you to all staff and students involved in launching our live concerts!

INSIDE PURCELL: LET'S TALK MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

We sat down with our Music Technology department to discuss everything from the benefits of going digital to the importance of teaching at Purcell

The Music Technology department is passionate about the latest recording and computer technology being used creatively.

Aidan Goetzee (Head of Music Technology), who has been with Purcell since 2001, worked as a freelance flautist and teacher before moving into full time teaching 25 years ago. Before this, he studied at the RCM, Guildhall and in Paris on several scholarships.

“When I started working in the 80’s, I did some studio work and then later when I was working with the London Contemporary Dance and the Lindsay Kemp Company, I saw first-hand the creative possibilities of the technology when combined with traditional acoustic instruments. It seems to me that this was how the future was going to be.

I was also involved in small theatre and film productions where I would be recording a single track and would then see it transformed by the composer and engineers into a huge sound scape. I was fascinated by the possibilities of these processes and decided to pursue a Master’s Degree in Music Information Technology. Along the way, as well as the creative side, I became intrigued by the theoretical underpinning of the subject.”

Tom Bell (Music Technician) studied Music Production at Newcastle University and Leeds College of Music whilst also being an avid musician. Originally playing the trombone, he moved to percussion along with playing guitar and bass. As an electronic producer, Tom has achieved releases on commercial labels, one of which gained airtime on BBC Radio 1Xtra and Rinse FM.

“Coming from a family of classical musicians, I was the first to branch out into commercial and ‘popular’ music. From a young age I found myself not just listening to my favourite album on repeat, but also wondering how they were made. When studying GCSE’s I got my first taste of music technology, which led me to pursue it at A Level, and from then on I know it was what I wanted to do.”

Music Technology has been available to students at A Level at The Purcell School since the late 90’s. Whereas the traditional ‘music’ course focused on classical composers and notational literacy, music technology was designed to combine a study of popular music and recording techniques.

Students can now learn audio engineering techniques, production skills, electronic

composition, scoring film music, arranging and an understanding of studio technology and acoustics.

A big change came in 2017 when, due to pressure from the music industry and universities, the subject was relaunched as a separate course of study to music; a timely recognition of the particular skills and knowledge that the subject demanded.

“Today, you just cannot escape the technology being an essential skill for the contemporary musician. Through computers a huge amount of knowledge and skill is available at your fingertips. We are in such a different world to when I was a student at the RCM in the late 70s and we cannot just give students what we learned; this does not equip them for the future. At the RCM I used to walk past the mysterious ‘Electronic Music Studio’ everyday – none of us knew what went on in there and rarely heard the results of its work. And remember, there were no such thing as computers for everyday use back then!

Today’s audio software draws on a very long history of audio engineering and acoustic theory. Consequently the user interface are incredibly complex. It can be so easy to think that because you



have the latest Mac and Logic software sitting on your table it is easy to use. Musicians need guidance through these amazing sonic tools if they are to use them effectively. From personal experience I know how important it is to feel confident with the technology.

I remember recording for a local radio station once and the engineer had not a clue where to position the mics for our ensemble; he was clearly a bit thrown but at the time I did not have the knowledge or experience to be able to insist on changes to the way he did things. I like to think that my students, even when working as purely musicians, will be better aware of the techniques and processes being used to capture their performances so that they can make informed comments to engineers and producers.”

“I’m a firm believer that every single musician should have at least a basic grasp of tech skills. In the current online world where marketing yourself is more pertinent than ever, being able to put together simple yet high quality recordings/videos of yourself playing online can massively boost your presence, and might ultimately give you the edge over others. With the technology becoming cheaper and more accessible by the day, there’s no reason not to! Music Tech is a subject in which you get out of it what you put in, regardless of technical ability or skill. We have had students who start in AS having barely touched a computer, and they go on to get an A* in the A Level only 2 years later. As long as you keep an open mind and are willing to put in the extra work, anyone can do it. What

is also good is that the more technically adept students will go out of their way to learn about the more complex side of tech, which is always very interesting for both myself and the students.”

The importance of Music Technology in today’s curriculum is becoming increasingly apparent. The UK is one of the world’s most competitive and diverse digital music markets, with around services catering for all different kinds of music fans and musical genres. According to analysis by the BPI, based on data from the Official Charts Company, audio streaming accounted for almost two thirds of music consumption during 2018. Furthermore, according to RAJAR, the number of UK adults who listen to a podcast each week increased from 3.2 million

(7 per cent of adults) in 2013 to 5.9 million in 2018 (11 per cent of adults). This increase is across all age groups, but the steepest growth in the past year was among 15-34 year-olds. Revenues from all UK music segments, including streaming, downloads, physical sales, performance rights and synchronisation (use of music in film, TV, ads and games), grew by 3.1 per cent in 2018, leaving the UK as the biggest music market in Europe.

“Today there are jobs being created which we could not have imagined a decade ago. Invariably they involve skilled use and knowledge of technology. With the right skills, musicians can be part of this – there are many more things that musicians can be involved in beyond

solo recitals and orchestral performances whether it be sound production, film music, music for games, mixed media etc. Music tech offers students insights into the music industry beyond the confines of their instrument.”

One of highlights of each year for the Music Tech department are the Sound Image Movement concerts of which the next is taking place on Thursday 4th July here at the School.

“The Sound Image Movement concerts are a real highlight. I set these up back in 2010 after the demise of the Film Course. I made a promise to myself at the time that we would try to do something new or different in each concert, that they would provide an outlet for the type of work not found in

any of our other concerts and that student input would be fundamental. We have had music with film, with theatre and with live dance, orchestral rock scores and every variety of avant-garde weirdness. I have been told that we are the only specialist music school that present these kinds of concerts where we see students not only getting to grips with a wide range technology but are also involved in the technical staging (which is huge) and theatrical presentation.

The Delegates, a successful band run by Purcell alumni, Sam Every and Seth Tackaberry, launched themselves out of the SIM concerts and are now recording and producing their own work. Jacob Collier, of course. He came back to give a demonstration and

fascinating talk at the school last year. If ever there was an inspiring example of the union of creativity and technology it is Jacob. It has been great for us to know that he premiered his split-screen close-harmony arrangements (which got him noticed by Quincy Jones!) at the SIM events. Mica Levi is now a successful film composer, whose scores are transformed by her incredible music technology skills. I remember her asking me to help her record a printer (... yes, the sound it makes!) for one of her compositions.

She was the first to present live-mixing to film in the SIM concerts. Quim Badia Arumi is now a very successful film composer, frequently found directing sessions at Abbey Road. A music technology student, he initially hated the subject, went on to study piano at the RCM but after studying for a masters in film composition in Barcelona became a hugely knowledgeable and skilful user of the technology (in fact, he spent some time working at Spitfire Audio, creators of the finest sample libraries) as was in evidence when he visited the school a couple of years ago to demonstrate the tremendous sampling skills he used in his film scores.

Several other students have gone on to be successful film composers; one of the most notable being Dru Masters, sound designer and composer for The Apprentice.”

The Purcell School is grateful to be able to offer opportunities for our students to explore

music outside of performance. Recently (thanks to the Music Tech department), this had included the launch of a series of live streamed concerts; ‘Live at Lunchtime’! This means no matter where you are, as long as you have access to the internet, you have the pleasure of watching our magnificent students perform.

This term the School has live streamed three concerts with performances from multiple Purcell soloists, Purcell’s Flute Ensemble, our Percussion Duo, Purcell’s String Quartet (who performed an original composition ‘Tiger Teeth’ written by Sasha SURNAME) and Purcell’s Jazz Quartet.

“Livestreaming is a fantastic way to build hype and engagement around anything! The ‘magic’ of live gives an elevated level of excitement that normal videos fail to compare to. The streams are a chance for our students to be seen on a global stage and is good experience as live streaming feels very different to a regular concert – and in most cases more nerve-racking! With the advent of online media becoming ever more relevant, most of our students will undoubtedly perform in concerts that are livestreamed in their careers after the school. Another bonus is that once the livestreams are finished, they instantly become regular videos that can be shared around and used for competition entries, auditions etc.

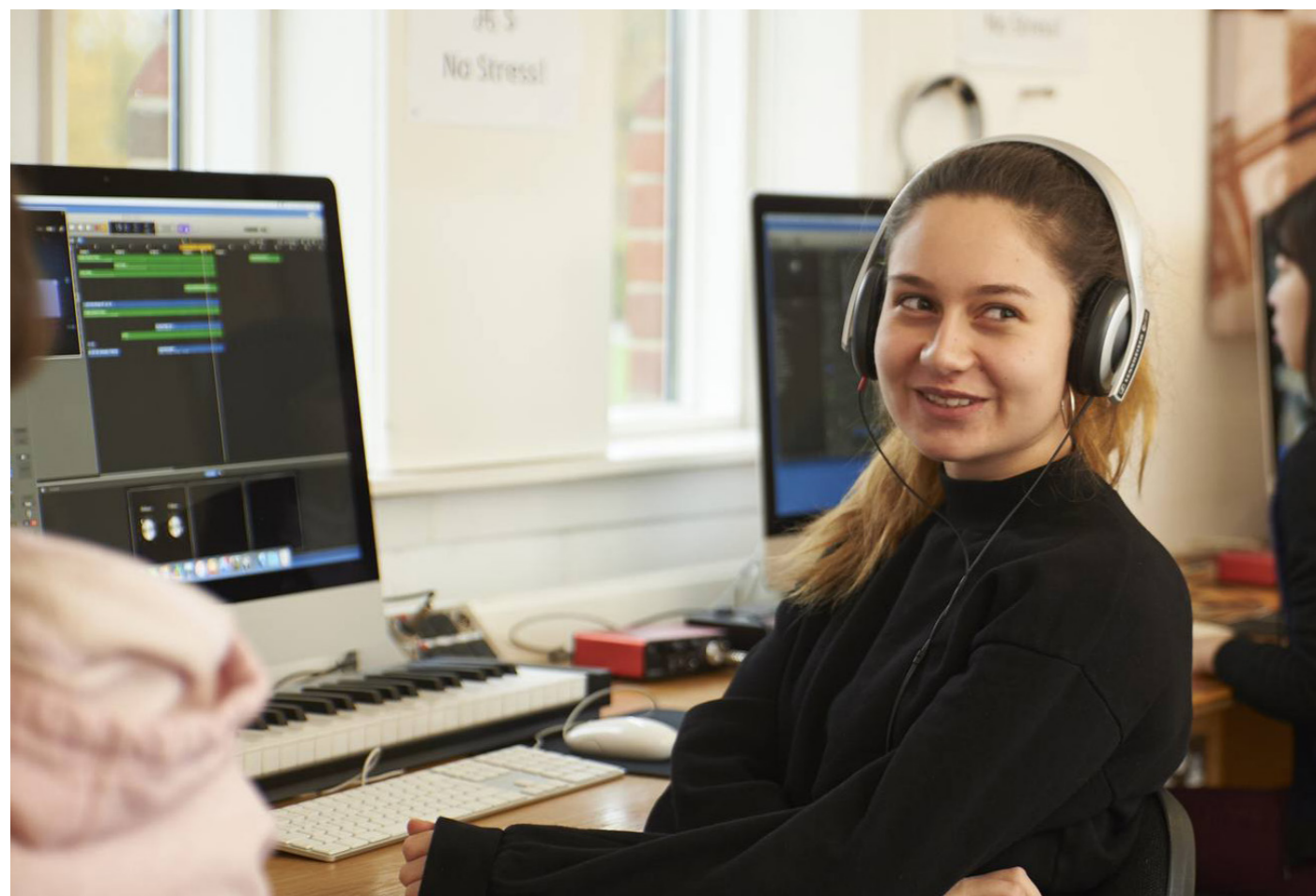
Live streaming is a fantastic window into the school and really lets parents, alumni,

prospective students or really anyone across the world get a feel how our school works, and the standards that we uphold. The growth we have seen already on our channel with our first three livestreams has been amazing, and I can’t wait to see what the future holds with many more to come!”

Our ‘Live at Lunchtime’ concerts, which have already amassed over 2,500 views online, will continue in the Summer Term. Previous ‘Live at Lunchtime’ concerts can still be viewed on the School’s YouTube channel and Facebook page.

On behalf on The Purcell School, we would like to say a special thank you to Simon Kingsbury.

“The livestreaming project has only been allowed to flourish thanks to the enormous help of our Network Manager, Simon Kingsbury. Simon is a fantastic and essential asset to both our tech department and the whole school, and he is definitely the unsung hero behind all that we do here, thanks Simon!”



SITTING DOWN WITH SIMON ALLEN, HEAD OF JAZZ

Jazz is an established and flourishing department at The Purcell School. Renowned within and outside the School, it comprises an inspirational team of experienced teachers and performers who are uniquely placed to oversee the development of creative musicians.

The department is a great gateway into studying Jazz at conservatoire level, and students from the Jazz department regularly achieve considerable success. In 2016, for example, first study jazz trumpeter Alexandra Ridout won the prestigious BBC Young Musician Jazz Award, and jazz students are often sought after as members of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO) and the National Youth Jazz Collective (NYJC). Recent graduates of the department include the multiple Grammy Award winning jazz pianist and composer Jacob Collier, Kit Downes, Jake Labazzi and Seth Tackaberry.

Leading the School's Jazz department since 2014 is saxophonist and composer Simon Allen. Simon began his career with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and the Pendulum Jazz Orchestra, performing alongside the likes of Jazz Stars Art Themen, Gerard Presencer, Jamie Cullum and Peter King. After being a winner in the Daily Telegraph 'Young Jazz' competition, and a finalist in the 'Young Jazz Musicians of the Year', Simon gained a place at the Royal Academy of Music, and was selected to join UK drummer Clart Tracey's acclaimed Quintet, winning

further awards and touring the UK over 7 years.

Simon is also a member of the Laurence Cottle All Star Big Band, and works with Colin Towns Mask Orchestra for the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the Matthew Herbert Big Band, touring around Germany, China, Belgium and Poland. He has appeared at major UK venues and festivals including Ronnie Scott's, the Barbican and Brecon Jazz Festival, and worked with an astonishing array of top musicians from the jazz and pop world. Between 2005-2013 Simon was featured in the late Stan Tracey CBE's various groups, and is featured on his final two quartet recordings, as well as octet and big band album releases. Simon appeared on Jools Holland's "Later" TV show performing a track from the album "Senior Moment".

Outside of jazz, Simon leads a horn section which among others has backed Phil Collins, Eric Clapton and Paul McCartney. He has recorded and played live with Robbie Williams, Beverley Knight, Katie Melua, Jamie Cullum and many others. He is featured on the soundtracks of Tim Burton's "Alice in Wonderland" and Sujoy Ghosh's "Aladdin", and in 2014 played for the

Strictly Come Dancing UK arena tour.

Simon has been involved in education since 2002, holding a range of positions from peripatetic instrumental teacher to Artist in Residence, teaching music and music technology GCSE and 'A' Level, and leading improvisation workshops. Having been Head of Jazz at the Purcell School of Music for 5 years, Simon is also Jazz and Pop course tutor at Barton Peveril College near Southampton, specialising in preparing young musicians for entry to Conservatoire. Simon is also a visiting tutor at Trinity Laban Conservatoire and the London College of Contemporary Music.

With exciting developments happening for the Jazz department, we sat down with Simon for a 'QnA' session where we talked about his time at Purcell and what Jazz means to him!

What was it about Jazz that you were drawn to at such a young age?

My passion for jazz started when I joined the Berkshire Youth Jazz Orchestra aged 15. The opportunity to play with other musicians and the excitement of interacting



and improvising together drew me in. Jazz incorporates so many 'styles' of music and requires a musician to understand harmony, groove, improvisation, ensemble playing - these are vital foundations to most musical genres.

You have been running the Jazz department at Purcell for 5 years, what are some of your best moments from teaching at the School?

The look of shock on the face of all our workshop and concert guests when they hear our jazz students!

Our gig at the prestigious 606 Jazz Club, and taking jazz students on a UK tour with my own band was a very proud moment for me. Exposing jazz audiences to the young talent

we have is invigorating. Our big band concerts are always a highlight too.

What do you love about teaching?

It's a challenge that I gladly embrace. Everybody approaches improvisation in a slightly different way, and it's really interesting working with students to find their best approach.

I love sharing my passion for music and my methods for learning. I love seeing students' playing and musicianship develop, being a part of that is a privilege.

Purcell is a place where young like-minded musicians can share and grow together. A lot of our students come from schools where being skilled in

music made them the minority student, so seeing them able to share their passion for music with people of their own age is wonderful.

Recently Purcell's Jazz Quartet took part in the School's 'Live at Lunchtime' series, why do you think this was important for the students and the School?

The "real life" scenario of preparing for a concert that can be enjoyed over and over again. Also, the opportunity to look back over their performances is invaluable to the students' learning process as musicians. It also gives the School a truly international platform, and the opportunity to show the world what wonderful musicians we have.

COMING UP

LOWER SCHOOL SOLOISTS
Tuesday 4th June - 13:00
St. Mary's Church, Watford
Admission is free

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOLOISTS
Wednesday 5th June - 19:00
The Purcell School, Recital
Room
Admission is free

LOWER SCHOOL SOLOISTS
Tuesday 12th June - 19:00
The Purcell School, CP Hall
Admission is free

LEES CHAMBER RECITAL
Sunday 16th June - 15:00
The Ballroom, Lees Court,
Shelfwich Lees, Faversham,
ME13 0NQ
Programme to include Schubert
and Rachmaninoff
Tickets: £15 including
champagne. To reserve tickets
call 01923 331109 or email
concerts@purcell-school.org

HERTS FESTIVAL OF MUSIC
FIRST IMPRESSIONS:
COMPOSING FOR PIANO WITH
FLORIAN MITREA
Thursday 20th June
The Purcell School, CP Hall
Composer Masterclass -
11:00 - 13:00
Piano Masterclass -
15:00 - 17:00
Tickets: £15
hertsmusicfest.org.uk

CHAMBER ENSEMBLES AT ST.
JAMES' PICCADILLY
Friday 21st June - 13:00
St. James' Church, Piccadilly
Admission is free

WOODWIND & SINGERS' SOIREE
Monday 24th June - 18:30
The Purcell School, Recital
Room
An early evening soiree, with a
selection of music performed by
the School's singers and wind
players
Admission is free

COMPOSERS' CONCERT
Tuesday 25th June - 19:00
The Purcell School, Recital
Room
An evening of new music
written by The Purcell School
composers
Admission is free

CHAMBER ENSEMBLES AT
WIGMORE HALL
Wednesday 26th June - 13:00
Wigmore Hall, London, W1U 2BP
Featuring performances from
Purcell's Percussion Duo,
Piano Trio, Wind Quintet and
Saxophone Quartet
Tickets: £10 (Transaction fees
apply) wigmore-hall.org.uk

JAZZ ENSEMBLES WITH
BRANDON ALLEN
Wednesday 26th June - 19:00
The Purcell School, CP Hall
The Purcell Jazz Ensembles
perform with tenor saxophonist
Brandon Allen
Admission is free

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 26th June, 13.00

Featuring performances from Purcell's
Percussion Duo, Piano Trio, Wind Quintet
and Saxophone Quartet

wigmore-hall.org.uk



GET IN TOUCH

General Enquiries - School Office
01923 331 100
schooloffice@purcell-school.org

Concert and Ticket Information
concerts@purcell-school.org

PR & Communications / News
publicity@purcell-school.org

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The Purcell School
Aldenham Road
Bushey, Hertfordshire
WD23 2TS

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