

Crescendo

The Official Magazine of The Purcell School for Young Musicians

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WELCOME TO THE END OF TERM ISSUE OF CRESCENDO

As the Autumn Term comes to a close we look back on some of the recent highlights

THE LOCKDOWN LOWDOWN: WITH PAUL BAMBROUGH

A catch up with Purcell's Principal to reflect on the unprecedented last 9 months

ART STUDIO HIGHLIGHTS

Featuring a range of artworks from students across the School

WELCOME TO THE END OF TERM EDITION OF CRESCENDO

As 2020 comes to a close, we look back on some of the highlights from the second half of term ...

STUDENT NEWS

This autumn, Year 10 Composer **Maddy** received both an [AYM Award \(Awards for Young Musicians\)](#) and a [Future Talent Award](#), which will allow her to create new pieces and perform them, all being well, in early 2021. Maddy also won a [BBC 30 Second Composition Challenge](#) for a piece on the pedal harp called *Rainbow Over Mountain*, which was performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra's harpist Louise Martin.

Guitarists **Maddie** (Year 11) and **Ashton** (Year 10) became recipients of [Alhambra International Scholarships 2020-21](#) this term. The programme requires the highest certified playing level of applicants outside of further education (university or conservatoire), and Maddie and Ashton represent 2 of the 10 scholarships available worldwide.

Year 13 cellist **Yena** won a Gold Award at the [3rd New Talent British International Youth Music Competition](#).

Year 13 oboist **Chelsea** and Year 10 oboist **Rhea** reached the Finals of their respective age categories in this year's [Sound Espresso Global Competition](#).

Year 9 pianist **Adrian** took part and triumphed in three virtual music festivals this term. He received First Place in the 'Sonata Movement under 19yrs' and the 'Bach under 17yrs' categories at the [Woking Festival](#). He was also awarded First Place in the 'Baroque (Open)' category, and secured Second Place in the 'Classical Sonata Movement (Open)' at the [Maidstone Festival](#). Lastly, he prevailed in the [Sutton Festival](#) taking First Place in 'Classical Period 15yrs and under'.

ALUMNI NEWS

Two former Purcellians **Paul Andrew Philbert** (timpanist) and **Nicholas Daniel** (oboist and conductor) were both recognised for their services to music and awarded an [MBE](#) and [OBE](#), respectively, in the [Queen's Birthday Honours List](#).

Multi-instrumentalist and alumnus **Jacob Collier** received three nominations, including 'Album of the Year' for *Djesse Vol. 3*, in the [63rd GRAMMY Awards](#).

Recent Purcell leaver **Sofiia Matviienko** won a Gold Award at the [3rd New Talent British International Youth Music Competition](#).

Purcell alumna and BBC Young Musician **Lara Melda** released

her debut album, an all-Chopin disc, through [Champs Hill Records](#) (available on Amazon, Spotify and Apple Music).

Classical soul pianist and alumnus **Alexis Ffrench** has released a [brand-new festive EP](#) just in time for the holiday season (available on Amazon, Spotify and Apple Music). *Home* features solo piano recordings of seasonal favourites 'O Holy Night', 'Feliz Navidad', and 'Happy Xmas (War Is Over)', as well as two original pieces entitled 'A Time for Giving' and 'Simple Gifts'.

Welsh harpist, arranger, composer and Purcell alumna **Catrin Finch** performed a stunning rendition of 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas' as part of a virtual concert for [WaterAid UK's Future on Tap](#) appeal.

STAFF NEWS

Composer and Purcell teacher **Daniel Fardon** won an [Ivor Novello Composer Award 2020](#) in the Small Chamber Category for 'Six Movements' for String Quartet. The piece, commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society, premiered at the [Wigmore Hall](#) last year and was performed by the [Bloomsbury Quartet](#).

THE LOCKDOWN LOWDOWN: IN CONVERSATION WITH PAUL BAMBROUGH

As the term came to a close, *Crescendo* caught up with Purcell's Principal Paul Bambrough to reflect upon the extraordinary and unprecedented last 9 months

Despite the inevitable challenges of life and education in a COVID world, are there any aspects of the last 9 months which you will take forward into the School's future?

Yes, definitely, and there were a number of things that we had already planned to do which became escalated as a result of the first lockdown. We had always intended, for example, to progressively move into the Google Suite and begin using the Google Educational packages – this would have taken place over a number of years, however, instead of just a fortnight! – and, although still very new, staff are already seeing the benefits of Google Classroom, particularly of having a central repository for materials which students can access with ease. The introduction of a virtual learning environment for the whole school has been a real positive.

The other huge benefit has been the growth of our online presence. When we hit lockdown, I glibly said that we were going to need some kind of online concert hall to continue to showcase our work. Purcell Online was born out of that need, and has developed in ways we could only have hoped for thanks to the explosion of content received from students and the hard work of our staff.

Purcell Online has also provided an increasing window

into the School which we didn't have to the same extent before, and one that we will continue to grow even when our usual concert work resumes.

Circumstance forced us to adopt a new remote programme for running parent consultations. We have had three so far, all of which have had significantly higher parental engagement than any of our previous consultations. This, of course, is due to the large number of Purcell parents who live abroad or at a great distance from the school. The success of the remote programme has, however, opened up the possibility of our offering a mixed mode for future parental consultations – face-to-face (in person) consultations for those who can get to School, and face-to-face (virtual) conversations for those who are unable to travel.

We have seen a great many virtual and infrastructural developments in the past 9 months, and it will be particularly exciting to see what these will enable us to do in the future. We have recently, for example, launched The Purcell School Online Composition Academy, which means that there is a group of students who, to all intents

and purposes, are Purcell students for this academic year but who we are not meeting face-to-face. I think there is an opportunity here for us to develop other online short courses, and to initiate new virtual relationships with different groups of people and artistic partnerships with international institutions. Because we have been forced to develop an online infrastructure, learn new skills and widen our knowledge, it has given us the confidence to try something new and a little less shy of experimenting – the possibilities for Purcell are very exciting!

The period has undeniably brought out some of the best of The Purcell School, particularly in terms of how the community have supported each other, adapted to the restrictive measures and continued to innovate. We have also been incredibly privileged to have had live music in School every day. When this has been denied to most people, in most places, it is something for which I will always be grateful.

The School has changed quite a lot as a result of the pandemic. Do you have a favourite improvement?

I think what is important is not so much how the School has changed but how it has not changed. Throughout lockdown and this term of restrictions, we have remained true to our core value of providing high quality musical experiences for our talented youngsters by enabling access to instrumental provision. At the height of lockdown, we were delivering nearly 400 hours a week of one-to-one

instrumental provision online. I believe that we have been the only specialist music school to do face-to-face (in person) instrumental teaching this term. The fact that this has been achieved so successfully, despite the restrictive measures and second lockdown, is something I want to really celebrate. In some ways, I am more proud of the things that we haven't but could have lost, than the things

that we have gained. We must, however, always remember that there are things that we have lost. I cannot claim that this has been a period without casualties but we have retained the essence of who we are during a time when it could have been all too easy to lose sight of that.

What was your most memorable moment from the first lockdown?

The thing which sticks most in my mind, and there are three things in total, is having to make the hugely painful and difficult decision to shut the School on 17th March. This was slightly in advance of the national lockdown but was something which I felt, with absolute certainty, was inevitable. It was a moment when I really felt the whole responsibility of the School resting on my shoulders. The decision turned out to be universally welcomed – it allowed many students to get back to their home countries and potentially stopped people within the school community from falling ill – but at the time it was hugely controversial.

The second most memorable thing about lockdown, more positively, was Daily Listening. It was a kind of mad, random idea which occurred to me very early on. I said to the Director of Music “do you think that it would be a good idea if I

just started to put something out each day with a piece of music attached?”, and “I’ll maybe do it for a week and then I’ll hand it over to you and other members of staff for a week”. But, of course, it didn’t end up being that. From the feedback I received, it grew into an incredibly appreciated and unifying call to arms. I loved the idea that at some point during the course of the day, everybody in the school community might virtually come together to share the experience of listening to that day’s piece. It was wonderful to hear what students and staff thought of my selections. Students told me that they sat down with their families each day to listen to Daily Listening together, some members of staff reminisced about having played particular scores I had chosen with the Philharmonia, and others remembered having worked with the great artists whose works I had picked. It was a really lovely

way to feel connected with the school community, during a time when we were all disparately connected to our laptops. My only regret is that it didn’t occur to me sooner to call it Lockdown Listening!

The third significant memory was the task and the sense of responsibility of coming up with a plan to enable the School to reopen and function whilst keeping people safe. There was a lot of guidance from the government but ultimately that plan had to come out of my head. I remember very clearly coming back to school and watching some very happy boys playing basketball on the court, and thinking whether they stay well or become ill is down to me. Of course, that’s not actually true. It’s down to everybody but that’s how it felt. The fact that we have got to the end of term with only one positive COVID-19 test result amongst

the student body, and that the few from members of staff originated from external sources, makes me feel hugely proud of everybody's efforts to keep each other safe and well.

I constantly think back to that moment of those boys playing basketball and I remind myself of that responsibility. That is why we cannot be complacent, and must constantly adapt

and respond to the changing picture.

What are you most looking forward to in 2021?

Ultimately, I am looking forward to the time when we can all relax and just enjoy being in the school together without this cloud being over the place. To the normality of the usual comings and goings of the school – to senior boarders being able to get off site, and parents being able to come back into the school to hear their children play in concerts.

I also cannot wait to hear the School Symphony Orchestra again. Whether that be to ourselves in the CP Hall, hacking through a Tchaikovsky symphony just for our own

amusement, or in some concert scenario, to be able to hear the orchestra play would be a real symbol that we are emerging from this period. That's not to say that any of the other music making hasn't been amazing but that there is something very symbolic about a Symphony Orchestra within an institution. So, however it occurs, I will be delighted to hear that for the first time.

I am also looking forward to the moment when our Year 13s are able to take their next step because, under these circumstances, that is a real

watershed moment. Whether they go to conservatoire or university, the fact that they are able to do so speaks of the work that has been done by their academic teachers, their pastoral support and the musicians who have helped shaped their musical path. It is the combined efforts of all of those factors that will enable our Year 13s to stand on our shoulders and take that very important next step. There is nothing that symbolises the collective effort of the school more than the moving on of a year group. It will be a real moment of celebration.



ART STUDIO HIGHLIGHTS

Purcell's Art Technician Robin Williamson gave us an insight into the stunning artworks our students have been creating over the Autumn Term

This term, **Year 6** have been painting self portraits in the style of Julian Opie, and exploring textures and patterns through the printing of collograph(esque) fish plates.

Year 7 have been studying the style and process of artist Eric Carle, best known for his classic picture book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Using the same technique as Carle, they have produced their own animal illustrations and supporting stories to make small books.

Year 8 have been focusing on drawing skills, including perspective drawing and self portraits using charcoal. They are also learning about watercolours and have been

using the medium to create studies from nature.

In addition to developing drawing skills such as close up and sustained pencil drawings, **Year 9** have been working with zentangles.

Year 10 have spent the term making collograph prints of insects, and are currently working with etchings. They practised the technique by producing artist copies, and have now progressed on to creating their own still life self portraits. They are doing this by etching items which they feel represent them as a person. The etchings will be printed next term.

Year 11 are working on their own personal studies, with a range of directions including drawing, digital drawing and painting.

Year 12 started the term drawing still life objects in charcoal, and made particular progress with the study of skulls. They then went on to copying lino prints of existing artists' work before creating their own larger lino prints from the subject matter of their choice. They are now painting with oil paints.

Year 13 are developing their own, self directed art projects. These include painting, photography, clay and pottery and stitching.



Yu-Wei's (Year 10) collagraph print



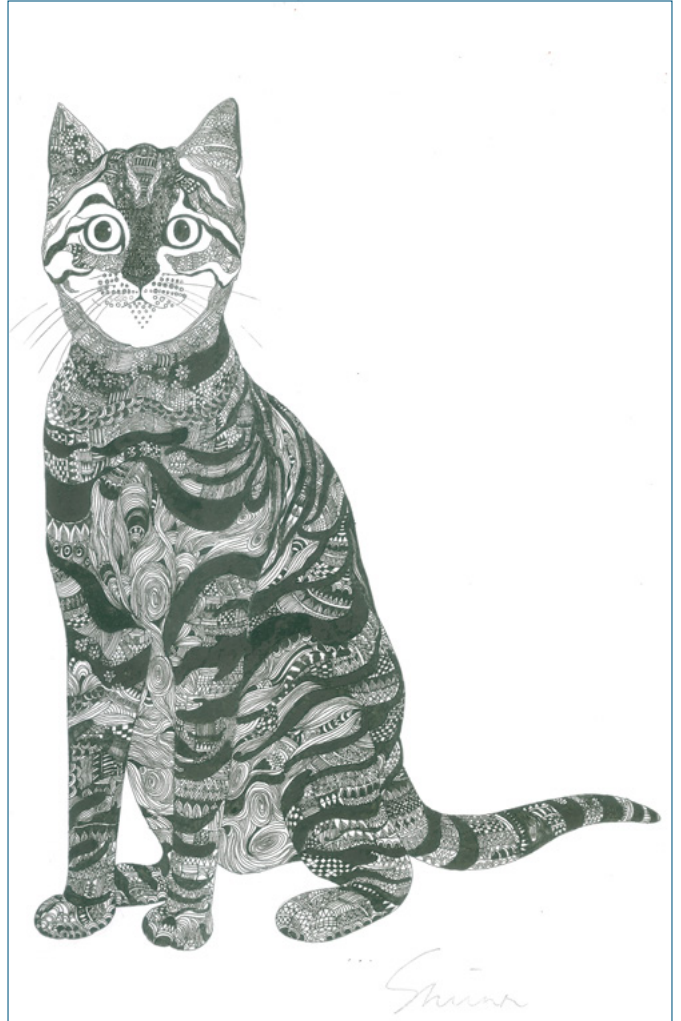
Fiona's (Year 11) digitally drawn portrait



Ireh's (Year 7) pangolin in the style of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* illustrator Eric Carle



Saule's (Year 6) Julian Opie inspired portrait



Shiwen's (Year 11) fineliner pen drawing



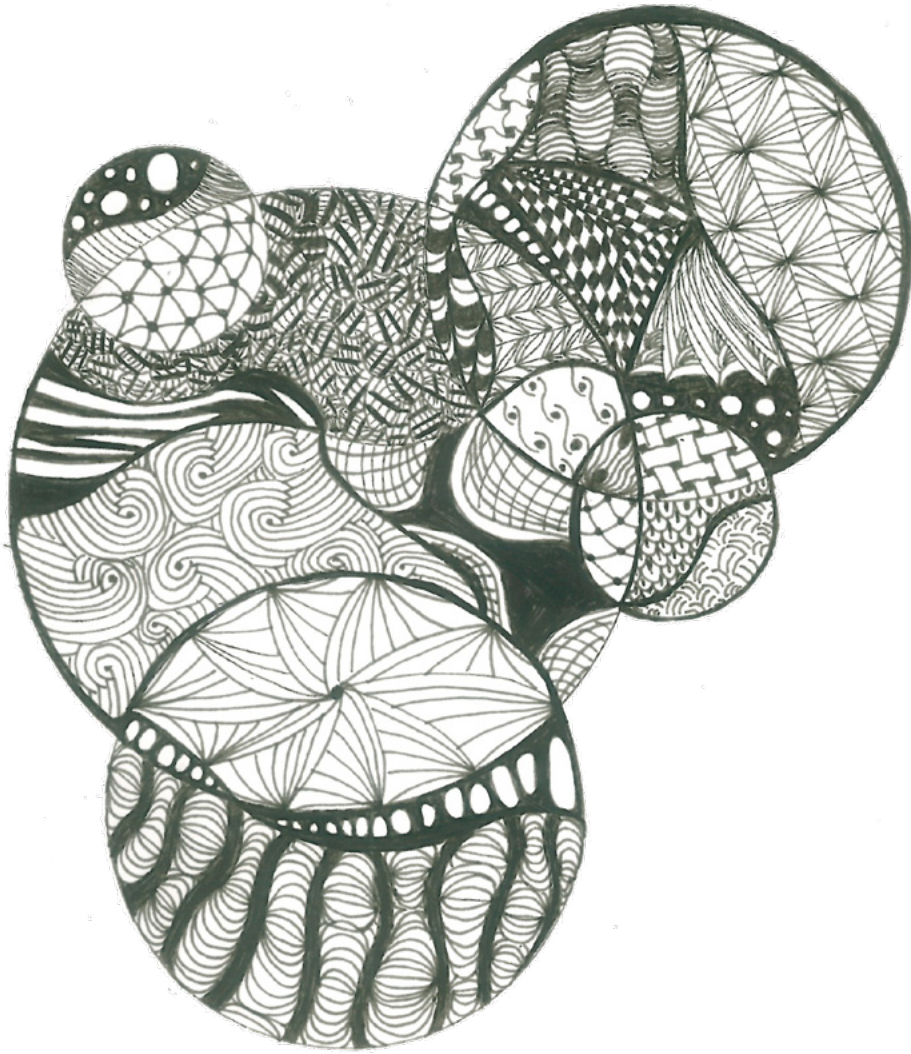
Eric's (Year 12) study in charcoal



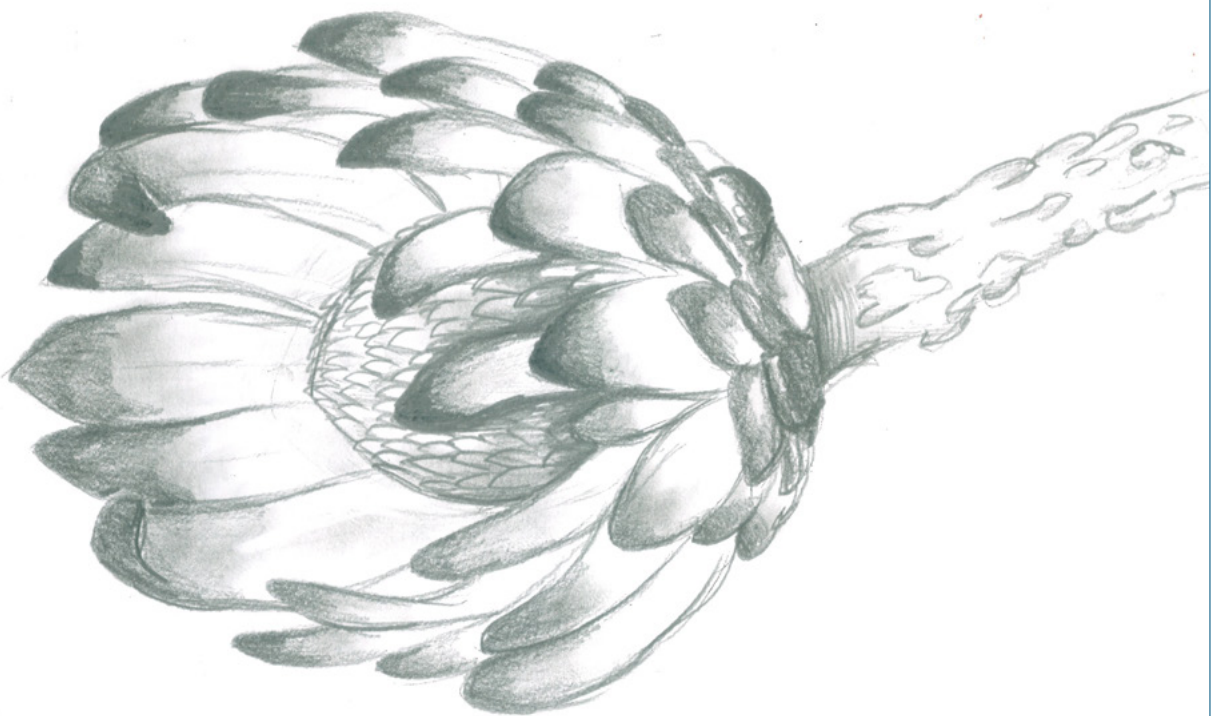
Mina's (Year 10) collagraph print



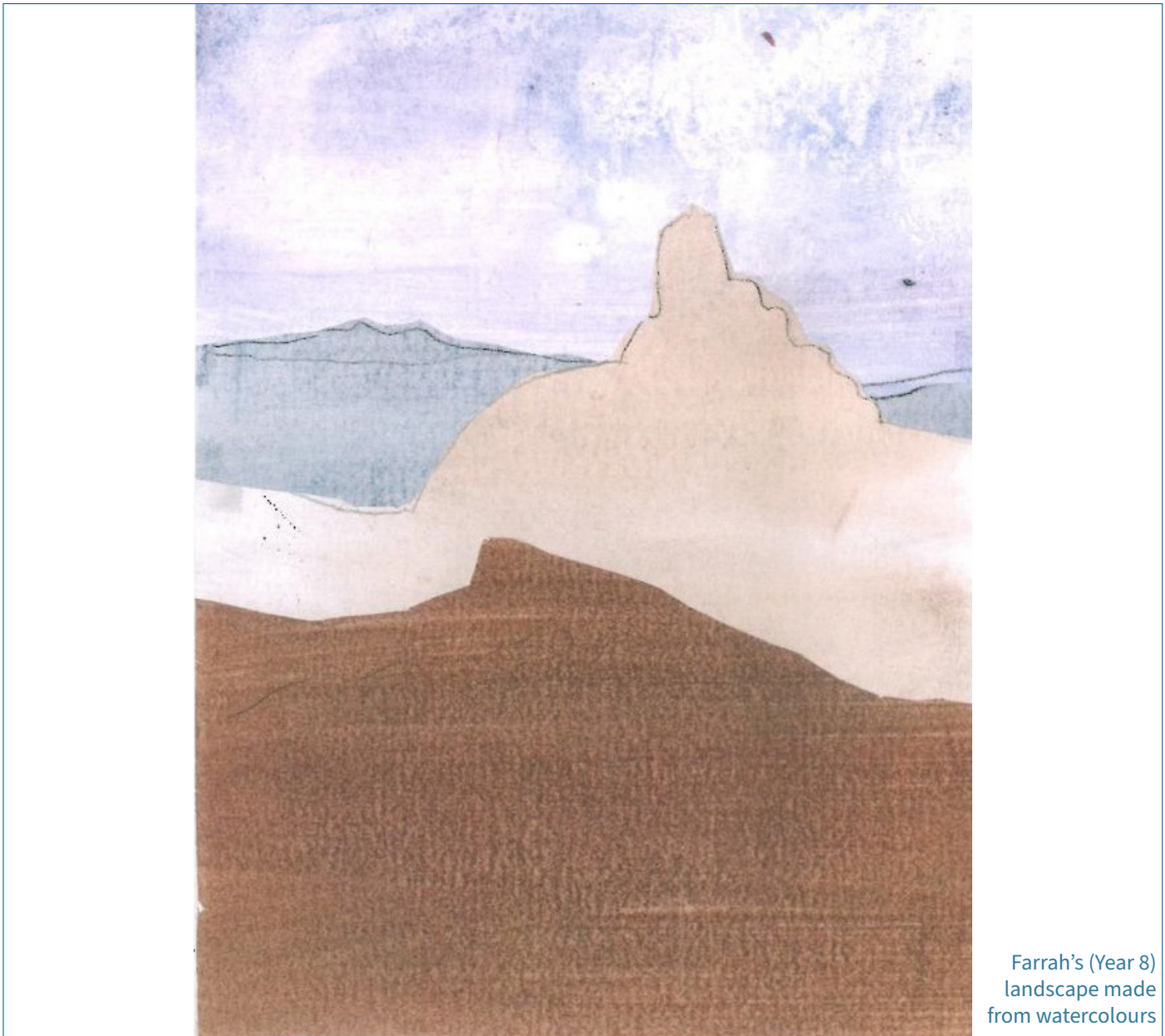
Dorian's (Year 12) landscape scene using lino printmaking



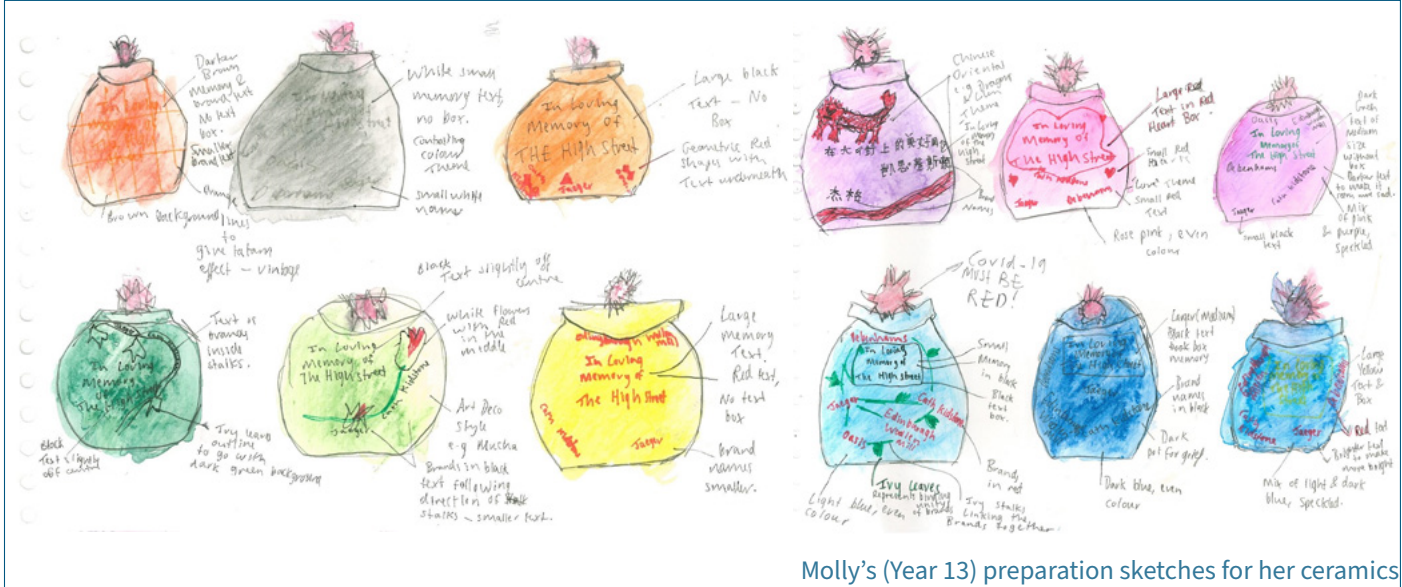
Pheobe's (Year 9) zentangle drawing



Paulina's (Year 9) flower study drawing



Farrah's (Year 8) landscape made from watercolours

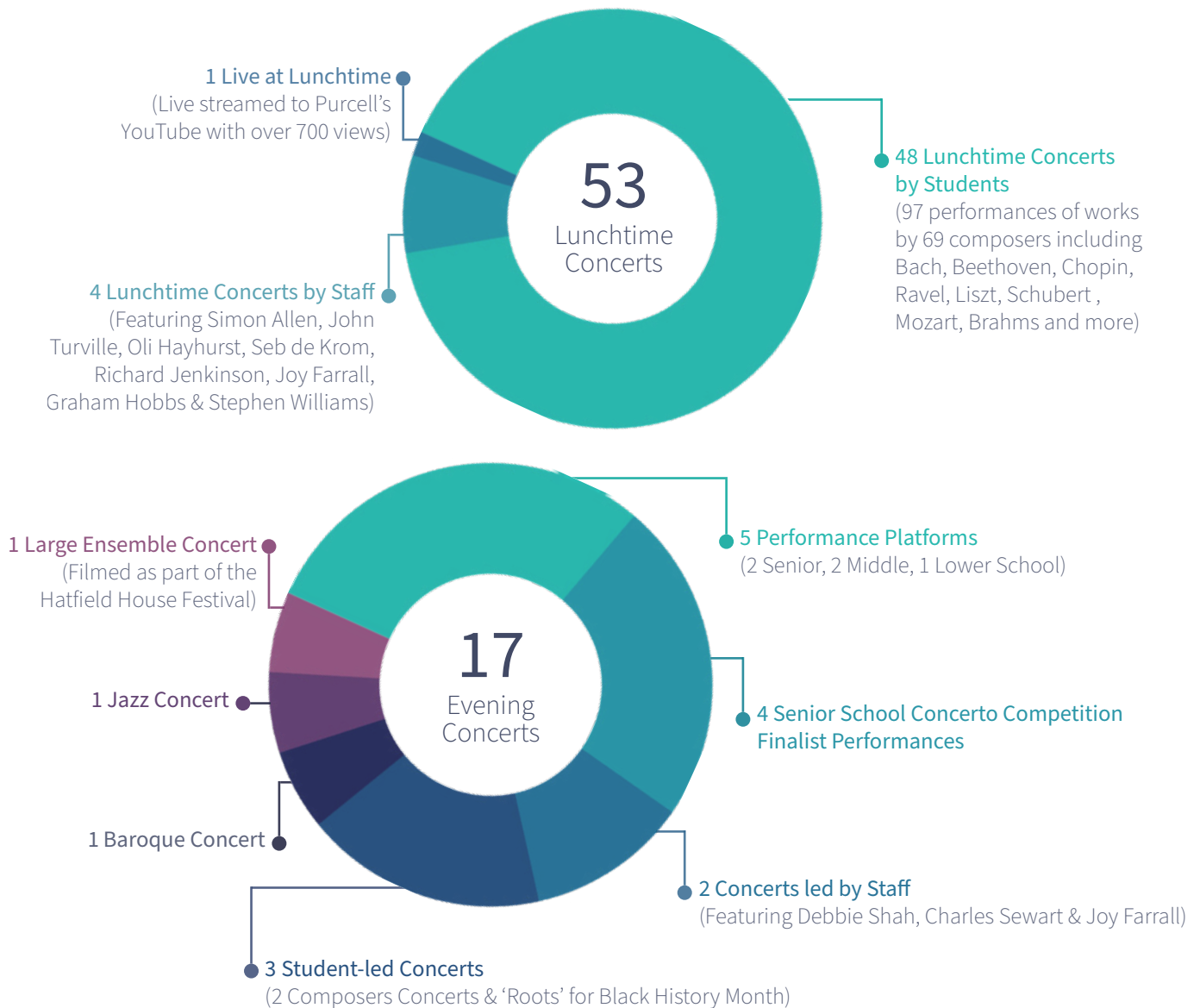


Molly's (Year 13) preparation sketches for her ceramics

AUTUMN TERM CONCERT ROUND UP

We have been incredibly fortunate that live music has remained an intrinsic part of school life this term, despite the necessary restrictions.

Students and staff have performed a staggering 70 concerts this term. Of the 160 students in Year 9 and above, 130 have performed in at least one concert or performance class. It is an achievement that we are hugely proud of and grateful for.



Many of our concerts are available to watch via Purcell Online:

