



Purcell's campus



Principal Paul Bambrough

as head of jazz, which he has held since 2014. 'In my performing career I've talked to many colleagues who have expressed concern about where the next generation was going to emerge from. Chris Draper – our new drums tutor and one of London's best pit and session drummers, currently drumming on *Hamilton* – says that he always likes to approach talented students when he needs cover for a show, but that it's become harder and harder in recent years. So, we hope that giving our students the best possible training will also help the industry in the long run.'

He continues: 'While I'm not particularly keen on the term "portfolio career", that

Beverley Knight and Sir Tom Jones; and Jacqui Hicks – who is already a member of the jazz staff – has years of experience in the pop world, most notably with Shakatak.' (Allen is far too modest to talk about his own career as a saxophonist; he has played with the likes of Paul McCartney, Phil Collins, Robbie Williams, and Eric Clapton.)

Covering all bases

One attractive element of the new department is that its teaching will also be on offer to existing Purcell pupils on different courses, thereby providing new opportunities for musicians of different backgrounds to work together. 'Our current

Both Bambrough and Allen are adamant that although aimed at musicians not previously catered for at Purcell, the new pathway will demand no less of its pupils. 'The admissions criteria will be the same as for all other students – yes, we expect a certain level in the audition, but that is only ever part of it. What has their journey been? What potential can we see? And when they get to the school, they will receive three hours of principal study tuition every week – which is more than most conservatoires offer – as well as a whole host of relevant second-study options, not to mention excellent all-round academic teaching.'

For all students

Additionally, Bambrough is keen to stress that the school's already extensive range of bursaries and other financial support will also be open to students on the new course. 'We are one of four schools in England that receive funding from the Department for Education's Music and Dance Scheme (MDS), which allows us to make awards that are totally means-tested, on a sliding scale depending on a family's needs. Of the 190 students across the whole school, only a handful pay full fees; 143 are supported by MDS, the majority of whom pay very little. For those who are ineligible for MDS funding, we have a separate bursary scheme, meaning that everyone, without exception, still gets the full Purcell experience.'

'It's an issue more generally with the classical music industry, but we really believe that we provide an "elite" musical education in the right sense of the word – one that is world-leading and available to gifted young musicians, whatever their circumstances.'

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“Ever since we announced the new course, we've had so much 'hidden' talent come out of the woodwork”

breadth of skills and the ability to swap easily between different modes of working is crucial in our industry. In a typical week I might be in the studio one day, arranging a standard for big band the next, and then finish it off in the pit for a West End show – and several of our new tutors were originally conservatoire-trained but then established their careers in commercial music.'

Allen is particularly excited about the 'dream team' of tutors recruited to lead the new course. 'As well as Chris, we have Daniel Drury as our electric bass tutor – he's played with Jarvis Cocker and the James Taylor Quartet, as well as on the West End for *Mamma Mia!* and *Kinky Boots*; Adam Goldsmith is one of the busiest session guitarists in the UK, and has played for

students are already incredibly excited about it,' Bambrough explains. 'Ever since we announced the new course, we've had so much "hidden" talent come out of the woodwork – pupils who, even after spending hours each day on their principal study and practice and rehearsals, sit in their rooms with a guitar or write songs at the keyboard or jam together with their friends in the evening.'

'In fact, that's something that we particularly pride ourselves on; having such a wide array of talent working together under one roof – we can support our students' ideas and bring them to life. Where else could a composer or an arranger write something for a string orchestra, and then have one ready right there to play it the next day?'