



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Department  
of  
Music.

12 October 2019, 11.00 – 16.15

Department of Music,  
The University of Sheffield, Leavygreave Road,  
Sheffield, S3 7RD, UK

**Sound Teaching**

**Workshops for Teachers on Expression,  
Communication and Creativity in Music Performance**

12 October 2019

University of Sheffield, UK

## **Welcome**

We are delighted to welcome you to the Sound Teaching Workshop 2019!

Here in the Department of Music at The University of Sheffield we research many aspects of music performance, psychology and education. During the day, we will be sharing some of this research, and together we will explore ways it can be applied to music performance and teaching in practice. We have planned a mix of interactive presentations and workshops, with the aim to create a unique opportunity to share ideas and experiences in an informal setting.

The programme includes sessions on teaching and learning of expressive performance; communication and decision making in ensembles; improvisation skills in Western classical music; communicating abstract concepts through sound and body; perspectives on teaching expression and creativity in music performance. We hope these sessions will provide useful starting points for discussion and reflection on these and other related topics.

We would like to hear your feedback on the workshops, as your ideas can inform future directions and applications of research. Collaboration with teachers and performers helps us to continue to develop and refine research questions and directions. In this way, research can inform practice and vice versa.

We hope you will enjoy the day!

The Sound Teaching Conference Team,

Renee Timmers, Henrique Meissner, Nicola Pennill, Jonathan Ayerst, and Shen Li

## **Organising Committee**

Renee Timmers

Henrique Meissner

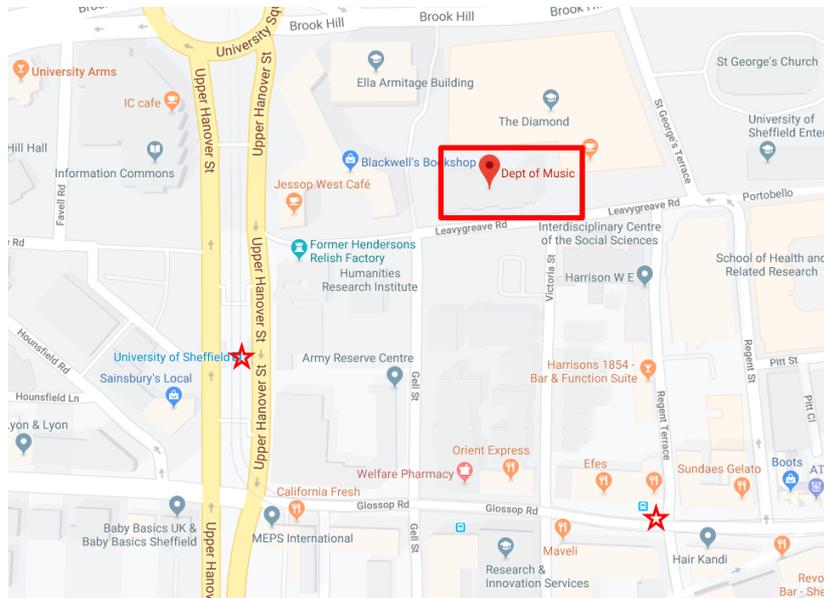
Nicola Pennill

Jonathan Ayerst

Shen Li

## Practical information

The workshop venue will be at the Jessop Building (Department of Music), 34 Leavygreave Road, Sheffield S3 7RD <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/maps/jessop>, nearest tram stop: University of Sheffield). Locations are shown in the map below.



The workshop venue is highlighted in *squares*; Nearby tram stops are marked as *stars*.

## Other information

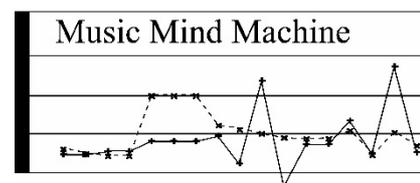
To register: <https://bit.ly/2kNLU9C>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1153436691514414/>

Workshop Website:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/music/research/research-conferences/sound-teaching-workshops-expression-communication-and-creativity-music-performance>

\*More information about research at the Department of Music at The University of Sheffield can be found at [www.sheffield.ac.uk/music/research/](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/music/research/)



## Workshop Schedule

10:30 – 11:00	Tea & coffee
11:00 – 11:10	<b>Welcome</b> - Renee Timmers
11:10 – 12:00	Workshop 1: <b>Improvising in Western classical repertoire</b> - Jonathan Ayerst
12:00 – 12:50	Workshop 2: <b>Communicating abstract concepts through sound and body</b> – Shen Li
12:50 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 14:50	Workshop 3: <b>Dialogic teaching for expressive music performance</b> – Henrique Meissner
14:50 – 15:40	Workshop 4: <b>Communication and decision making in ensemble rehearsal</b> – Nicola Pennill
15:40 – 16:15	Plenary discussion: <b>Perspectives on teaching expression and creativity in music performance</b> - Renee Timmers
16:15	Close

## Abstracts & Biographies

### *Improvising in Western classical repertoire*

Jonathan Ayerst

*(Workshop 1, 11:10 – 12:00)*

Research background:

Why don't more classical musicians improvise? Often, musicians trained in classical styles feel they must 'emigrate' to a different genre such as jazz to explore this most fundamental musical activity! Yet, in spite of a general divorce in the practice of classical music between creative work (i.e., composition) and interpretive work (i.e., the performer) since the mid-nineteenth century, many musicians feel the need to bridge this divide and explore techniques of improvising upon classical models. Assimilating these techniques may also be useful for teaching environments, for encouraging children who enjoy improvising and whose motivation for learning music is primarily creative. However, to engage with learning the skills of improvisation, individuals often need to overcome feelings of shame and embarrassment; also to develop new, conceptual ways of perceiving music in which the scores of classical music can be used as examples or models for further improvising.

Workshop Aims:

The principal aim of this workshop to explore ways of deconstructing simple classical piano pieces as models for improvisation. These techniques can then be used as a basis for encouraging students to engage with improvisation, from which they can develop their own skills. In addition, I will explain how to overcome prevailing ideological thinking about music, inherited from the 19th century conservatoire, which often prepares musicians both cognitively and emotionally not to improvise.

**Jonathan Ayerst** is a professional organist, pianist and choral conductor. He is currently working with the contemporary music ensemble Remix Ensemble of Porto, Portugal, where he also directs the vocal ensemble Capella Duriensis. In 2015 Jonathan graduated as an MA (Distinction) from The University of Sheffield, (thesis "Who wants to improvise a fugue?"), and in 2016 was awarded the Charles Alan Bryars Organ Scholarship by The University of Sheffield to commence a PhD entitled "A psychological study of classical improvisation: with special emphasis on learning techniques."

***Communicating abstract concepts through sound and body***

Shen Li

*(Workshop 2, 12:00 – 12:50)*

**Research background:**

The teaching/learning of 'timbre', 'tone quality', or 'piano tone' is acknowledged as a crucial aspect in a piano lesson; however the teaching and learning process, strategies, and the relevant motor and mental skills have not been fully revealed and explained. It is still unknown about how teachers and students communicate abstract timbral concepts (e.g. round or sharp sound) via the body and the sound. Additionally, piano timbre has been defined as a technique-subcategory of study areas in the instrumental teaching and learning. This research argues that the awareness and development of expressive tone quality is not only associated with technical skills; instead, it is interacted and mapped onto other types of skills.

**Workshop aims:**

This workshop concerns the production of piano tones in a piano lesson and its relevant teaching strategies. Research findings from three empirical studies in my PhD project will be shared with teachers. The central aims of the workshop are: (1) to explore teaching strategies in a piano lesson in the teaching and learning of abstract timbre concepts (e.g. round sound, bright sound); (2) to understand various categories of verbal instructions that help students to understand abstract timbre concepts.

**Shen Li** is a PhD student on the psychology of music programme at the Department of Music of The University of Sheffield. Her research background is piano performance (BA) and psychology of music (MA, MMUS). She is currently working with Dr Renee Timmers. Her research project is about the perception and production of piano timbre, especially the conceptualization process, communication, and learning/teaching issues related to piano timbre. Her doctoral project is funded by the Chinese Scholarship Council.

***Dialogic teaching for expressive music performance?***

Henrique Meissner

*(Workshop 3, 14:00 – 14:50)*

**Abstract:**

Expression is at the heart of music making, and therefore expressive performance instruction is a crucial aspect of instrumental teaching. How do young musicians (aged 8-16) learn to perform expressively, and how can teachers help their pupils to improve their expression in music performance? In an action research project, my colleagues and I looked at these questions and investigated methods for teaching children and teenagers expressive music performance. In this workshop, I will share findings from my research, and we will explore how questions and dialogue between tutors and students supported by aural modelling are at the heart of teaching and learning expressiveness. It would be useful to bring an instrument to this workshop. A piano is available for pianist.

**Workshop aims:**

The workshop will start with a summary of my research findings on teaching young musicians expressiveness. The main aim of this workshop is to explore how questions and dialogue can be used for teaching expressive music performance. Additionally we will look at the role of aural modelling in the teaching and learning process.

**Henrique Meissner** is an Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Sheffield and tutor at the Prins Claus Conservatorium in Groningen, coaching postgraduate students undertaking practice-based research. Henrique studied recorder at the Utrecht Conservatoire and has extensive experience as an instrumental tutor. Her doctoral project at The University of Sheffield, *Teaching young musicians expressive performance: A mixed methods study*, was supported by a scholarship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK. Her research interests are related to instrumental learning and teaching, performance expression, and young musicians' development.

***Communication and decision making in ensemble rehearsal***

Nicola Pennill

*(Workshop 4, 14:50 – 15:40)*

**Research background:**

Ensembles are essentially groups of people who are engaged in the shared activity of music-making. Taking this perspective shines a light on some of the interpersonal dynamics involved in rehearsal. It is not well understood how a musical group without an appointed leader negotiates and arrives at a shared understanding, as expressed nonverbally in a musical performance. This research shows how small ensembles move through stages of group work, and how these dynamics converge as performance approaches.

**Workshop aims:**

This workshop focuses on two main areas relating to ensemble rehearsal dynamics. It aims to: (1) raise awareness of some of the 'hidden' ways that ensemble members communicate e.g. as well as talking, use of gestures, timing of interventions, and musical timing. (2) to explore how groups use methods of communication differently as they approach performance. Referring to real-life examples and research data, participants will have the opportunity to consider how the group rehearsal interaction framework arising from this research relates to their own experiences and understanding of the rehearsal process.

**Nicola Pennill** has recently completed her PhD at the music department at The University of Sheffield, jointly supervised with the School of Management and the University of York. With a background as a musician and in management consulting, her interest in ensembles is rooted in group dynamics. Supported by an AHRC scholarship, Nicola's research on coordination and organisation in chamber ensemble rehearsals was part of a White Rose College of Arts and Humanities research network on ensemble performance.. Nicola plays the saxophone and oboe, and especially enjoys performing in chamber ensembles.

***Perspectives on teaching expression and creativity in music performance***

Renee Timmers

*(Plenary Discussion, 15:40 – 16:15)***Background**

What does it mean to be expressive in music performance and in what ways is performance from a notated score creative? These are complex questions that may find little explicit discussion in music teaching practices. Nevertheless, both teachers and students may hold implicit beliefs about what an expressive performance is, and how this may be developed in music performance. Administration of a simple questionnaire with statements about expressive performance indeed showed varying patterns of responses: while for some expression is primarily related to emotion, others relate it to stylistically appropriate performance, or an excellent technique (Bonastre et al., 2017). Comparison across students in Spain and the UK further highlighted the influence of institutional context and educational systems on the beliefs that students hold (Bonastre et al., 2019). In an experimental study, we demonstrated that links to creative exploration offer a further opportunity for skilled and expressive performance to be developed (Timmers et al., 2012).

**Discussion**

In the plenary discussion, we will bring together the perspectives on expressivity and creativity in music performance underlying the Sound Teaching workshops as well as discuss participants' own perspectives and experiences. Central to the workshops are notions of embodiment, constructionism, dialogue, verbal and non-verbal interaction. A common thread seems to be the alignment of concepts, body, and musical intentions within a process of real-time enaction. Participants will be invited to consider how they combine concepts, bodily movements, technique and musical (sonic) intention to work on expressive and creative performance. We will then open the floor to broader discussion, including consideration of whether expression and creativity are best left implicit within teaching context, or whether explicit consideration is useful with students, specifically at particular stages or contexts of learning.

**References**

- Bonastre, C., Muñoz, E., & Timmers, R. (2017). Conceptions about teaching and learning of expressivity in music among Higher Education teachers and students. *British Journal of Music Education*, 34, 277-290.
- Bonastre, C., & Timmers, R. (2019). Comparison of beliefs about teaching and learning of emotional expression in music performance between Spanish and English HE students of music. *Psychology of Music*, 0305735619842366.

Timmers, R., Sadakata, M., & Desain, P. (2012). The role of visual feedback and creative exploration for the improvement of timing accuracy in performing musical ornaments. *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 30(2), 187-204.

**Renee Timmers** is Reader in Psychology of Music at The University of Sheffield. She was educated in the Netherlands, where she obtained an MA in Musicology and PhD in Psychology. Her work includes publications on expressive performance of music, expression and perception of emotion in music, interactions between cognition and emotion in music, and cross-modal experiences of music. She is co-editor of the volumes *Expressiveness in music performance: Empirical approaches across styles and cultures* (OUP, 2014) and *The Routledge companion to music cognition* (Routledge, 2017). She directs the research centre *Music Mind Machine in Sheffield*, which aims to promote interdisciplinary research of music cognition combining theories and methods from music, psychology and computer science. She is President of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (ESCOM).