

Music and Parental Wellbeing Symposium

PROGRAMME

Royal College of Music, London 22-23 July 2025











Contents

Welcome	3
Dedication	4
Symposium team	5
Practical information	7
Venue and online streaming links	7
Registration	7
Symposium rooms and locations	8
Refreshments	8
Sensitive topics	8
Internet access	8
Information for presenters and audience	9
Accessibility and inclusion	9
Photography and video during the event	9
Toilets and baby changing facilities	10
Environmental statement	10
Health and safety	10
Joining the Alliance	11
An evening walk	11
Students and early career researchers	11
Evaluating the symposium	11
Additional notes for delegates	11
Programme information	12
Summary symposium schedule	12
Expanded programme with contributors and abstracts	12
Day 1: Tuesday 22 July	13
Day 2: Wednesday 23 July	27
Contributor information and biographies	42

Please note that this programme is presented in a clear, easy-to-access format. Please let us know if you require a large print version or an AI translated version. Thank you.



Welcome

A very warm welcome to the Music and Parental Wellbeing Symposium (MPWS) 2025. We're delighted that you're with us and excited for the next couple of days.

The idea for this Symposium came several years ago, when we were writing a funding application for what became our Music and Parental Wellbeing Research Network. Since then, our Network has grown to over 270 members from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, and Oceania. The shared interest, commitment, and community that we have built together is very special. Thank you for being part of it.

As you'll see in the following pages, we have a full, diverse, and fascinating programme. We hope that you have a stimulating, enjoyable, and inspiring time, whether you're joining us online or here at the Royal College of Music, London.

Rosie Perkins and Katie Rose Sanfilippo Co-Chairs, MPWS 2025



Dedication

We would like to dedicate this Symposium to Dr Philip B Sanfilippo II – a caring doctor, passionate musician, and loving father. Read more about his life <u>here</u>.



Symposium team

Co-Chair: Rosie Perkins

Rosie is Professor of Music, Health, and Social Science at the Royal College of Music, London and honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Medicine at Imperial College London. She is a researcher and educator specialising in music and wellbeing and has a particular interest in how music can support parents. Her <u>edited volume</u> on this topic was published by Oxford University Press in summer 2024. Rosie lives in Greater London with her husband and two children, and outside of work enjoys reading, hiking, theatre and music, and spending time with friends and family.



Co-Chair: Katie Rose Sanfilippo

Katie Rose is a Presidential Research Fellow at the School of Health and Medical Sciences and a member of the Centre for Healthcare Innovation Research at City St George's, University of London. Her research focuses on how arts-based approaches and interventions can be scaled-up, spread, and sustained more equitably in the UK and globally, with a focus on resource-constrained settings. She works with various policymakers, charities, and health organisations to promote maternal mental health in educational and health policy agendas. Originally from California, she lives with her partner in London and enjoys travelling to new places, trying new foods, and going to the theatre.



Alliance Coordinator: Debi Graham

Debi is a final year doctoral candidate at the Royal College of Music, London, supervised by Professor Rosie Perkins and Dr Jessica Pitt. Her PhD research explores how music can support parental mental wellbeing especially during persistent baby crying. She is particularly focused on translating research into practice — in creative and accessible ways — to benefit families on the ground. Debi has two grown daughters and lives near Nottingham with her beautiful rescue cats, Dahlia and Daisy. She enjoys spending time with her family, hiking, music, and a really good veggie curry.



Alliance Event Coordinator: Michael Durrant

Michael is a PhD Candidate in Performance Science at the Royal College of Music, London. His research focuses on health promotion in the performing arts, investigating how health is conceptualised across the sector together with evaluations of current health promotion initiatives. Alongside his doctoral research, he also coordinates the *Healthy Conservatoires* project, which aims to support environments that promote and enhance the health and wellbeing of performing artists, and the *Health, Economic, and Social Impact of the Arts (HEartS)* project, which explores the impact of the arts and culture on health and wellbeing, from individual, social, and economic perspectives. Michael lives in London with his wife and outside of work enjoys swimming, reading, and spending time with family.





Alliance policy advisor: Philippa Alway

Philippa is a collaborative and strategic external affairs, policy and campaign adviser, dedicated to influencing policy making to build a more just, healthy and sustainable world. She has worked both as a consultant and in-house within think tank, sector body and charity settings across public affairs, policy development, report writing, event organisation, stakeholder relations, media relations and digital media. She has experience in a variety of sectors, including education and skills, tech, and food and farming. She is currently Senior Policy Adviser at UCAS and works with academics at the Royal College of Music and City St George's, University of London. Philippa lives in Bristol and is a keen yogi, foodie, and traveller.



Symposium assistants: Cobi Ashkenazi, Philippa Booth, Ananya Panwar

Symposium stewards: Esmee Loughlin, Lexi Moon, Gyaan Bhuyan, Anna Lepki, Harry Nim

With special thanks to our external advisors on the Symposium selection committee, Julian Knight and Maddalena Miele, and to our expert steering group: Alain Gregoire, Maddalena Miele, Tiffany Ortiz, Charulatha Mani, Julian Knight, and Mark Ettenberger.

With grateful thanks to the RCM community supporting this event, including Directorate, Research Office, Centre for Performance Science, Studios, Performance & Planning, Facilities, Library, Marketing and Communications, Secretariat, and Imperial College Catering.

Please note that the information in this pack is subject to change. The most current version will be available via our website, so we recommend you check regularly

www.musicandparentalwellbeing.org/mpws-2025



Practical information

Venue and online streaming links

Venue: MPWS is held at the Royal College of Music, London (RCM) and online. The RCM is located on Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BS. For more information about getting to the RCM, please visit this page on the RCM website.

Online joining links: Online delegates can join using the links below. The links will live stream the two rooms being used during the Symposium, with opportunity to interact via a question-and-answer function.

22 July – Performance Hall:

https://youtube.com/live/LIAuUuSy7EE?feature=share

22 July - Performance Studio:

https://youtube.com/live/ qfkaFRg4o4?feature=share

23 July - Performance Hall:

https://youtube.com/live/bWhg-5oOSxM?feature=share

23 July – Performance Studio:

https://youtube.com/live/ojQybWSiDAw?feature=share

Online presenters: For those presenting online who have submitted pre-recorded videos, we will share a separate joining link for your session that will enable you to join us live for the question time/discussion. Please expect this link via email in the days before the Symposium and only use it for the session in which you are presenting.

Registration

Registration will open at 9am on Tuesday 22 July. On arrival at the RCM, please make your way into the main entrance foyer (a ramp and lift are available, please see Accessibility below). There you will be greeted by the Symposium team at the registration desk and be able to collect your Symposium lanyard which will provide access to the symposium venues. Please always wear your lanyard.

The registration desk will be open at the following times: Tuesday 22 July, 9am-11am Wednesday 23 July, 9am-11am

Outside of these times, if there is no one at the registration desk, please make your way to the Performance Hall to locate a member of the Symposium team, who will be identifiable via their pink lanyards. The RCM front desk, located in the main foyer, will be able to direct you to the Performance Hall, which will also be well signposted.



Symposium rooms and locations

The main base for the Symposium is the RCM Performance Hall. This is situated in the sub-basement and accessible via the atrium stairs and lift.

The second room, used for parallel sessions, is the Performance Studio. This is situated in the basement and accessible via the atrium stairs and lift.

All refreshments will be in the RCM Café, South Side, which is situated on the ground floor. Accessible WCs are located on the basement level via lift. A cloakroom for small items is also available on the basement level.

Signage will assist you in locating the different Symposium spaces.

Refreshments

Tea, coffee, and water will be available during registration periods and break times in the RCM Café, South Side. A light sandwich lunch will be available during lunch breaks, also in the RCM Café, South Side. Please take the time to review all potential allergens clearly on display.

Please ensure that you wear your Symposium lanyard during coffee and lunch breaks.

The RCM café, located on the ground floor, will also be selling light refreshments from 9am-3pm. There are many cafes and restaurants near to South Kensington and Gloucester Road tube stations, each a 10–15-minute walk or short taxi ride from the RCM.

Sensitive topics

Given the topic area of the Symposium, sensitive topics including those related to mental health and loss will be covered during the event. We ask contributors to remain mindful of this and, where possible and appropriate, to signpost any sensitive topics in advance. Attendees are always welcome to step out of a session at any time.

Internet access

Free wifi can be accessed during the event as follows:

Network name: RCM Public

Password: none but you will need to add your details to access the wifi

We cannot guarantee good wifi access. There is no data coverage in the lower levels where the Symposium rooms are based. We suggest downloading the programme and summary schedule in advance for easy access. These can be found below:

Summary schedule <u>HERE</u>
Easy access summary schedule <u>HERE</u>
Full programme **HERE**



Information for presenters and audience

We gently ask that all presenters keep to time. Chairs will give a signal with five and two minutes to run and politely ask you to wrap up to allow us to stay on schedule.

Audio visual and presentation equipment is available in all rooms. Please be ready to set up for your session in the preceding break and bring your presentation on a USB stick or drive. Please don't rely on streaming or on internet access for live presentations. If your session is pre-recorded, the Symposium team will play your video.

We are an international and diverse group with many different backgrounds, languages, and cultures represented. This is such a strength for our shared work in the field of music and parental wellbeing. We are aiming for a warm, welcoming, and respectful symposium for everyone attending. Please keep your questions to presenters short, kind, and supportive.

Accessibility and inclusion

Please find accessibility information on <u>this page</u> of the RCM website. This includes details of the ramps, lifts, and other services available. Please leave seats at the front of each room for those with access needs.

There are quiet spaces available to delegates, please follow the signs or ask event stewards to direct you.

Please find links below to two free AI apps which we hope can support delegates who require live captioning and/or live translation into other languages. Other apps are available depending on your phone operating system. Whilst we cannot guarantee the quality of these apps, they are used at many UK conferences.

Live captioning

Live translation

Please take seats in the front rows of the Symposium rooms to help these apps work best for you. We suggest downloading any apps and testing them well in advance.

Please feel free to bring what you need to feel comfortable during the event, such as ear defenders, ear plugs, fidget toys etc.

Photography and video during the event

Please note that official photographs may be taken during the Symposium. Please inform us when you register if you <u>do not</u> wish to be photographed. Please do not take personal photos on your phone during the event without permission of those featured, and please turn off the flash function. Please note that videoing is not permitted throughout the event.

We hope to take a full group photo at the front of the RCM at the end of Day 1, at around 18:10. Please listen out for the announcement which is programme (and weather) dependent. We would love you to join us for this memento of our time together!



Toilets and baby changing facilities

There are accessible toilets on the ground floor, lower ground, and basement levels. Baby changing facilities are available within the accessible toilets on the ground floor, as well as on Level 3 and in the basement. These are all accessible via the lift – please see signage.

Environmental statement

This event has been organised in keeping with the <u>RCM's Environmental and Sustainability Policy.</u> We have minimised paper and printing for the event. Delegates are welcome to bring their own reusable travel cups and water bottles, and are invited to use the recycling facilities at the RCM.

Health and safety

Please familiarise yourself with the health and safety information below. More information can be found at this page of the RCM's website.

Emergency / Medical Assistance:

In an emergency, please alert event stewards or call Reception Security on (+44) 0207 591 4315.

You are welcome to wear a mask during the Symposium. London has experienced hot weather in recent weeks, please stay hydrated and take breaks whenever you need if temperatures are high. The Symposium has a relaxed dress code, please wear whatever is comfortable.

Fire safety and Evacuation procedure:

On hearing the fire alarm sound

- 1. Evacuate the building, leaving all things behind and closing all doors behind you
- 2. Follow the directions of the fire wardens and proceed to the assembly point
- 3. Do not re-enter the building until instructed to do so by the incident controller.

Assembly Points: follow the event stewards who will guide you out of the building. The assembly point is Callendar Road, Imperial College.

Useful contacts:

First Aid: Alert stewards or call Reception Security on 0207 591 4315.

Nearest Hospital with A&E Department: <u>University College Hospital</u>, 250 Euston Road, London, NW1 2PG

Emergency Contacts:

Fire: 999

• Ambulance: 999 (or 111 for non-urgent medical assistance)

Police: 999

Food safety:

The Symposium is a nut-free event owing to a serious allergy – *please do not bring any nuts with you under any circumstances*. If you need to, please take care to check the allergens and dietary information listed alongside all event food and please make sure you bring any allergy medicine. Please note, however, that we cannot guarantee that event food is free from allergens. We can provide a full menu on request. Our catering is supplied by Imperial College London.



Minimal background noise:

Please be sensitive to delegates around you and keep background noise to a minimum where possible. Please make use of the designated quiet spaces whenever needed and at any point during the event.

Joining the Alliance

The Symposium proudly marks the launch of the Music and Parental Wellbeing Alliance, and we invite everyone to join! Owing to data protection rules, previous members of the Music and Parental Wellbeing Research Network *are not automatically transferred* to the Alliance membership. Please complete the short registration form to continue receiving our communications at: https://musicandparentalwellbeing.org/members-2/register/

An evening walk

Following the close of the first day of the symposium on Tuesday 22 July, there will be an optional and informal walk in Hyde Park (weather depending). This walk is accessible via the ramp in the RCM foyer and pavements and paths through this beautiful green space. Please meet Debi Graham, who is leading the walk, at 6.15pm in the RCM foyer. A gentle meander past Queen Victoria's statue, Kensington Palace, and the ice-cream van will end back at the front of RCM in around an hour.

Students and early career researchers

Students and early career researchers are warmly invited to meet each other informally over lunch on Tuesday 22 July. Please meet in the RCM Café, South Side and look out for Katie Rose Sanfilippo between 12.45-13.15. We hope that many introductions and connections can be made throughout the event.

Evaluating the symposium

We are committed to the anonymous evaluation of all alliance events. Please complete <u>this survey</u> which should take no more than five minutes. Thank you!

Additional notes for delegates

Items are left in the RCM cloakroom at your own risk, and please note that large items of luggage cannot be accommodated. Please note that delegates are responsible for their belongings at all times and should not leave them unattended.

Please take all due care moving around the RCM building and report any concerns regarding safety and/or security to event stewards as soon as possible.

Infants and children must be supervised at all times and are the sole responsibility of their parent/carer(s) during the event.

Please check food allergens if this applies to you and let the Catering team know directly of any concerns. We cannot guarantee that there is no risk of cross-contamination.

Funding for this symposium was made possible by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Royal College of Music, London (RCM), and the Society for Education, Music, and Psychology Research (SEMPRE). The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the official policies of these organisations, nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or



organisations imply endorsement. The Symposium team cannot take any legal responsibility or liability for errors or omissions.

Programme information

Summary symposium schedule

The summary schedule for MPWS is available <u>HERE</u>. We have chosen to be a paper free event to support environmental sustainability. A plain and easy-to-access version of the schedule is <u>HERE</u>. If you require this information in a different format, please notify us as soon as possible at: team@musicandparentalwellbeing.org

Expanded programme with contributors and abstracts

Please find below the expanded programme which includes full contribution information. So much to choose from!



Day 1: Tuesday 22 July

09:00 Coffee and registration (RCM Foyer and Café, South Side)

10:00 Welcome and introductions (Performance Hall)

Opening welcome, James Williams, RCM Director

Welcome from the Co-Chairs, Rosie Perkins and Katie Rose Sanfilippo

Short performance, Susanna Davis (voice, RCM) and Franco Barzelatto (piano, RCM)

Edvard Greig – Grandmother's Minuet, Op.68, No.2

Mel Bonis - Un Soir, Op.77

Florence Price - To My Little Son

British soprano **Susanna Davis** is a Siow-Furniss scholar and a Josephine Baker Trust artist under the tutelage of Dinah Harris studying at the Royal College of Music. Roles include *Cendrillon* by Massenet with Fife Opera and Jou-Jou in the RCM's production of Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. Susanna has also performed as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* by Mozart and as Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* for RCS and RCM Opera Scenes. Last autumn she covered the lead role in RCM's Opera Studio production of *Les Illuminations* by Britten. Her recording with the *Cohen Ensemble* singing Jacques Cohen's "Love Journeys" for *Meridian Records* will be released soon. Susanna has been selected to appear in Masterclasses with Louise Alder, Edith Wiens, and Jonathan Lemalu and has performed two world premieres of contemporary works by Tom David Wilson: *Kirschenbaum Songs* in the Cathedral of the Isles in Cumbrae and *Sherburn Field* in Durham.

Franco Barzelatto commenced his private piano studies at the age of 10 years old. He later joined the Music Institute of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago de Chile, where he studied with renowned professor Mario Alarcón Canales. Currently he is a student at the Royal College of Music in London where he studies with professor Danny Driver. He has performed multiple times in venues in Chile and in Switzerland. In 2020, seeking to deepen his knowledge of opera, he began studying orchestral conducting with Maestro Pedro-Pablo Prudencio, resident conductor of the National Opera in Chile, learning and extensive repertoire of operas such as La Traviata, Die Zauberflöte, Don Giovanni, and La Bohème. He has participated in orchestral and opera conducting courses with Maestro Eduardo Browne, graduate conducting student at Juilliard. He studied Italian opera interpretation with Chilean soprano Yaritza Véliz Aquea, learning scenes from La Bohème, Le Nozze di Figaro, Die Zauberflöte, Otello, and others. He has participated in conducting and repetiteur masterclasses with Maestro Roberto Rizzi-Brignoli, covering repertoire from Giuseppe Verdi. In 2022 he worked as a repetiteur and opera coach for the world premiere of Chilean composer Sebastián Errázuriz's opera Patagonia at the Teatro del Lago, conducted by Rodolfo Fischer and directed by Marcelo Lombardero.



10:30 Welcoming practice example (Performance Hall)

Music at Heart: A community singing group for mothers Penny Osmond, Sarah Abusebah, Ayozie Pollendine, and Vanessa Stansall

This presentation shares the work of the Music at Heart project, from the point of view of both music practitioner and (former) participant mother. Music at Heart is a participatory singing group for mothers with perinatal mental health issues and their babies. Weekly sessions are facilitated by two music practitioners in a community setting, with participants referred from NHS perinatal teams. It is intended as a safe space where any form of participation in music can be a healing one, whether singing, listening, or simply being, and we celebrate the mothers' own voices as the most important for their babies. We sing simple songs, add harmonies, over time bring in suggestions of songs from mothers' own backgrounds, and create new songs together, personalised to the mothers and their babies. Participating mothers have found that they benefit from being part of the group as they experience: feeling accepted and being 'themselves'; bonding with and support from other mothers; relaxation and rest; purpose and motivation. We will share how one mother experienced this and how the practitioners facilitated the group to support this. We also review some of the challenges and logistical considerations we have faced when doing this work, and some strategies and supportive factors. The presentation contributes to understanding of music and parental wellbeing by bringing together lived experience and our learned perspectives on effective practice in this context which we hope will be relevant and useful to others considering or working in this field.

10:50 Break and discussion time (RCM Café, South Side)

Poster 1 | Sarah Hadley, Involving parents in interactive music-making sessions: Opportunities and considerations

This research focuses on three key areas: the value of maternal emotional well-being, the role of singing as a communicative and supporting tool, and the challenges mothers face in normalising imperfections in caregiving routines.

11:15 Parallel Session 1

All parallel sessions will take place in either the Performance Hall (Room 1) or the Performance Studio (Room 2)

Room 1 | Performance Hall

Chaired by Claire Flower | 15-minute contributions

Georgina Aasgaard and Vicky Charnock

Supporting parental wellbeing through collaborative songwriting in neonatology

This presentation highlights a person-centred approach designed to enhance parental wellbeing in the neonatal unit at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool. As a Cellist, Music and Health Practitioner with 17 years of practice in the hospital, I explore how collaborative songwriting can support mothers recovering from traumatic births, parents coping with emotional exhaustion, and newborns needing soothing, while encouraging parent-baby bonding. Using my cello and voice as primary tools, I collaborate with parents and caregivers alongside their newborns, taking time to listen to their stories and experiences. Together, we explore sounds and improvise in an environment of beeping sounds and critical care, allowing for person-centred care. Equipped with a notebook and phone, we capture



ideas inspired by baby and parent responses—movements, heart rate changes, smiles, eye contact, and conversations. These interactions guide improvisations, resulting in co-created songs that are recorded and shared with families. Launched in November 2022, this project draws from Carnegie Hall's Lullaby Project and builds on a ten-year partnership between Alder Hey NHS Foundation Trust and Live Music Now. It forms part of a broader Arts and Health Programme established in 2006 including music, dance, visual arts, animation, film making, photography, and more. Now co-delivered with another musician, the project also fosters peer learning and supervision, underscoring the importance of specialised training and support for practitioners working in these contexts. By amplifying the voices of parents with lived experience through songwriting, this project examines how music practitioners can foster collaborative creativity in sensitive NHS settings.

Dennie Wolf, Emily Gann, and Kerry Wilson Lullaby project in evolution: Towards social connection

The Lullaby Project originated over a decade ago at Carnegie Hall in recognition of the profound role that music can play in the lives of young families. In the project, musicians work with caregivers to write an original lullaby for their children. A first wave of projects focused on how songwriting could impact caregivers' individual well-being, notably their agency, capacity to observe and reflect their children's individuality and growth, and their conceptions of the power and dignity of the emotional work they do. However, as we all have come to understand the powerful role of social connection in human flourishing, lullaby projects are evolving to reflect the ways in which human development is rarely simply individual. Becoming a parent often brings the challenges of isolation and loss of earlier social activities and ties. Thus, when musical collaboration offers caregivers support networks, a sense of belonging, along with being seen and heard, that conjoined experience creates wellsprings of health, well-being, and resilience for entire families. This presentation explores how three different lullaby projects (Live Music Now in the UK, Connecting the Dots through Music in Australia, and the REACH Lab in the US) are each evolving to center a dual focus on individual experience and social connection. Together, the three speakers will each describe how we are learning to design, implement, evaluate, and research Lullaby Projects in ways that create networks of social bonds between families, artists, evaluators and researchers. We will share how this re-orientation is having surprising and fruitful consequences for how we all work.

Hannah Foakes, Sara Lee, Jake Tilley, and Chris Stones Highlighting the collaborative achievements and learnings of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Irene Taylor Trust in the criminal justice sector

The Lullaby Project, a collaboration between the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Irene Taylor Trust, offers a powerful example of how music can positively impact both parents and their children. This innovative programme engages adults from a range of backgrounds in the creation of personalised lullabies, fostering creativity, self-expression, and wellbeing. The process involves a multistep approach: Participant Engagement: parents or grandparents facing challenging circumstances are invited to share their stories, dreams, and aspirations. Collaborative Composition: the team work closely with the participants to translate these personal narratives into musical compositions, ensuring that each lullaby is a unique reflection of the individual. Recording and Performance: lullabies are professionally recorded, providing participants with a tangible and lasting product of their creativity. Implications for Parental Wellbeing: Emotional Connection: The process of creating a personalised lullaby strengthens the bond between parents and children, fostering emotional intimacy and understanding. Stress Reduction: Engaging in creative activities, such as listening to music or participating in music-making, can help reduce stress and anxiety, promoting mental and emotional wellbeing. Social Support: The Lullaby Project creates a supportive community where parents can connect with other mums and dads and share experiences, reducing feelings of isolation. The Lullaby



Project demonstrates the profound impact of music on parental wellbeing. By providing opportunities for creative expression, emotional connection, and social support, this initiative highlights the potential of music. It offers a valuable model for incorporating music into interventions aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of parents and their children.

Alice Marshall and Matthew Vale

Tender Steps: Composing grief – the role of original music in addressing parental wellbeing after baby loss

This contribution will explore the central role of music in Tender Steps, a dance film that raises awareness of babyloss, particularly in how the original score was created as an integral part of the choreographic process. The score, developed by Matt Vale in close collaboration with Alice Marshall, the film's choreographer and creator, serves as a sonic representation of her personal journey through grief following babyloss. The film was part of Babyloss Awareness Week; designed to evoke both emotional reflection and public awareness on this sensitive issue. The focus of this contribution is to highlight the collaborative process behind the creation of the score, which was shaped by Alice's lived experience. The lullaby that forms a central part of the composition was crafted by listening to her personal reflections on loss, with each musical element symbolising different phases of grief. This original score became the backbone of Tender Steps, guiding the choreography and serving as an emotional anchor for both the dancers and the audience. It was delivered as an audio-visual journey for parents who have experienced loss, and for broader audiences to deepen their understanding of parental grief. This contribution adds to our understanding of music and parental wellbeing by demonstrating how music, particularly an original score deeply rooted in personal experience, can become a vital medium for processing grief. The composition in Tender Steps highlights how music, like movement, can create space for emotional healing, providing both solace and awareness in the context of babyloss. Watch here: https://youtu.be/01xxMxpVHaQ.

Room 2 | Performance Studio

Chaired by Debi Graham

15-minute contributions

Lisa Williams and Katrina Ash-Burnham Tunes, chill, and chat

Tunes Chill and Chat is a new community-based music therapy group for those with children with non verbal or communication difficulties. It serves to support the parent/carers of such children and to assist communication pathways through play and music rather than focussing on speech. Our presentation will discuss setting up, running and an overview of group session. It will include evidence base for music therapy as an effective communication means for speech and also assisting bonding and attachment between parents/carers and their child. Our presentation will include a lived experience presentation for the benefit of music therapy intervention on a non verbal child and the implications and positive outcome for bother child and mother, including improving maternal mental health and related parenting outcomes. We will finish with a focus on how we can move this project forward, and offer this intention in EYFS settings further increasing reach for those families who are unable to attend such a group through ill health, disability or anxiety.



Jessica Pitt and Sophie Fox Time and space as matters of care

This presentation considers the care for music-arts practitioners who work in socially-engaged, community-based practice with parents and very young children. We focus on a Youth Music funded project that offers a flexible and adaptive model of professional development for emerging artists to work with experienced artists and very young children and their caregivers. A 'playday' for emerging artists opens the inquiry with an experiential, open-ended, day-long event allowing individuals to be curious, explore and experience a different time-space-zone that is beyond words, and what might be considered 'typical' ways of working with young children with music. Experiencing immersive musical play transports the artists to different realms of understanding, and regular sessions with families offer time and space for the artists to develop areas of practice they are interested in. By working alongside an experienced artist there is reflection and learning week by week over each year-long iteration. This approach asks experienced artists to 'hold the space' for the unfolding relationships, giving time and space to reflect, listen and discuss as part of the caring practices that enable a supportive creative and playful learning environment. Time and space are notions that do not always accord with project outcomes, numbers of participants and high rates of delivery. Emerging themes indicate care for families and artists needs time and space to evolve. Time for the artists to get to know one another, time to find threads of interest, time to get to know families, and time and space to be playful musically.

Gail Macleod and Rachael Perrin Space to play in early parenthood

As an organisation with joy and care at its core, Soundcastle have never shied away from understanding the flip side of life when wellbeing comes under pressure. Our approach fiercely adheres to our role as musicians rather than therapists, and in doing this we have found another space, where music-making holds a non-verbal safe space for family togetherness, relaxation and creativity. Soundcastle has been delivering Musical Beacons in diverse community settings since 2012. These sessions have always been a space for very young children and their adults to create, play and connect. Soundcastle has assembled a wealth of practical understanding of supporting parental and practitioner wellbeing through action research, programme evaluations and now, a research project with Birmingham City University. Soundcastle Co-founders Gail Macleod and Rachael Perrin will share examples of practice, parent perspectives and practitioner autoethnographic research to unpick how a community music session for children in early childhood can become a mechanism for supporting parental wellbeing in early parenthood. Musical Beacons is a programme which thrives in hidden and unloved community spaces. Honouring the context that often leads parents to a stay-and-play, Soundcastle facilitators have honed a responsive yet ritualistic approach that gives space for all the adults in the room to breathe, connect and be open to the possibility of play. In this magical space, between an egg shaker and a ukulele, we would like to share how making space for free(er) play can lead to improved wellbeing for all the adults in the room.

Karen Diamond, Seana Kerr, and Laura Feeny Connecting through song

The aim of this project was to encourage parents to sing more with their children so that both could benefit from its positive effects by training staff working in Sure Start projects on how and why singing is important. Parenting is challenging and parents regularly feel anxious, stressed and overwhelmed by responsibilities of childcare and day-to-day living. Singing has proven mental and physical health benefits, and the attachment of both generations benefits from a simple, instant, no-cost



intervention; where carers can be assured that they are simultaneously enhancing their child's brain development and have a tool to 'get through' sticky moments in the early years.

Save the Children and SureStart projects partnered with speech and language therapists and music therapists to design the research and deliver training in staff workshops. Practitioners learned why singing is important, the ease with which it could be embedded into everyday practice and were given access to specially created resources e.g. 12 short videos demonstrating key messages. As trusted family intermediaries, staff were able to share the positive effects singing can have and the research found that parents were more likely to try the approach themselves, because the source of information was a trusted party. Through parent interviews and focus groups parents said they liked singing because they could see the joy in it, the difference it made to their babies and how they felt calmer themselves in heated moments. Being able to enjoy the richness in individual moments meant that it was something they would continue.

12:45 Lunch break and discussion time (RCM Café, South Side)

Poster 2 | Debi Graham, Dusty PhD to kind musical support for parental mental wellbeing: Notes from FirstMusic

This poster reflects on the process of turning an ongoing PhD research project directly into musical resources to support parental mental wellbeing. Highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of rapid translation into practice during the research process, this poster includes: creating a parent-friendly vehicle (FirstMusic) to disseminate research to parents and the practitioners who support them, turning research evidence into creative, kind, and appealing bite-sized ideas, music, and activities for parents via their smartphones, disseminating ideas with relevancy and sensitivity to rich and diverse cultural contexts, how to equip "non-musical" practitioners to share the ideas as part of their ongoing practice with parents including examples from Nottinghamshire County Council's Family Hubs workforce and Nottingham City Council/NHS Healthy Little Minds service, how this approach may facilitate ongoing supportive contact for research participants who choose to subscribe, and implications for future research. FirstMusic was inspired by UNICEF's Internet of Good Things, simple data-light webpages designed for smartphones sharing free parenting resources. With potential to offer free data via various providers, this model removes many of the barriers to accessing high-quality supportive information. As such, this poster is one example of how it may be possible to share important music and parental mental wellbeing messages directly with parents and practitioners putting the power in their hands 24/7 via their smartphones. Including translations into 30+ languages, FirstMusic may also show promise for reaching parents who are isolated by a wide range of factors including geography, language, cultural norms, and structural barriers.

Informal optional opportunity for students and early career researchers (ECR) to meet each other – please look for Katie Rose Sanfilippo in the RCM Café, South Side, from 12.45 to 13.15.



13:45 Keynote 1 (Performance Hall)

Professor Lauren Stewart with Jaliba Kuyateh and Dr Bonnie McConnell

The Chime Project in discussion: Community health intervention through musical engagement for parents and their families in The Gambia

Chaired by Katie Rose Sanfilippo

Perinatal mental health problems affect up to one in five women worldwide and are a particular challenge in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) where they can be at least twice as frequent as in higher income countries. It is thus of high priority to develop new low-cost, low-resource, non-stigmatising and culturally appropriate approaches to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression perinatally, for the benefit of both mother and child. Music-centred approaches may be particularly useful in The Gambia since a range of musical practices that specifically engage pregnant women and new mothers already exists. In this talk, Lauren will discuss the partnership building approach within the CHIME project (Community Health Intervention through Musical Engagement), qualitative findings relating to the lived experience of perinatal mental distress in the Gambia, and outcomes relating to a feasibility trial that underpin a planned Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) that is in preparation. In addition, a video of an interview by Dr Bonnie McConnell with Jaliba Kuyateh will be played, discussing his role as a musician in health communication and promotion in The Gambia. Lauren will discuss the collaboration with him and musician Martin Lyrix King, in which new songs were written to specifically engage men in the process of supporting their wives during pregnancy.

Prof Lauren Stewart, School of Psychology, Roehampton University, has a background in cognitive neuroscience. She has conducted research into the perception, learning and performance of music, and the application of music to support health and wellbeing. She is currently co-leading the CHIME project (Community Health Intervention through Music Engagement), which focusses on culturally embedded musical practices and their role in supporting perinatal mental health, both in the UK and in Africa.

Jaliba Kuyateh is a Gambian musician, known internationally as the "King of Kora". He plays music that mixes the sounds of this traditional West African stringed instrument with modern pop beats. Part of a family of musicians, his music has helped to bring the kora to an international audience in a career spanning over 30 years. Kuyateh previously worked as a schoolteacher and is known for his charity work with children. He has been an advocate for accessible healthcare in The Gambia and was made a UNICEF National Goodwill Ambassador for the country in 2006 and received an honorary fellowship from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2023.

Dr Bonnie McConnell, Associate Professor at the Australian National University, researches music's influence on health, identity, and social change in Africa and Australia. With a PhD in ethnomusicology from the University of Washington, she has conducted extensive fieldwork in The Gambia. Her book *Music, Health, and Power* earned Honourable Mention for the Society for Ethnomusicology's Nketia Prize.



14:45 Parallel Session 2

Room 1 | Performance Hall

Symposium | Building the evidence base for group singing for PND: Breathe Melodies for Mums and the SHAPER-PND trial

Chaired by Pui Sze Cheung | 15-minute contributions

Lorna Greenwood et al.

Breathe Arts Health Research: Translating research into practice to improve parental mental health and parent-infant bonding through song

Our aim is to share how Breathe Arts Health Research's evidence-based group-singing programme for postnatal depression - Breathe Melodies for Mums - has evolved and scaled since it was first piloted in 2017 to reach over 1000 new parents experiencing postnatal depression. Breathe were the first organisation to translate "Music and Motherhood" research by RCM and Imperial College London into practice, developing a delivery model for group singing for postnatal depression in co-design with participants and singing leads that puts accessibility, inclusivity and mothers themselves at the heart. Specialist singing leads use an international repertoire of simple songs in a range of different languages, challenging the group artistically through the teaching of rounds and harmonies across 10weeks, whilst providing tools to soothe and connect with baby through song. The programme has been adapted for delivery in various settings: in the community, in hospitals, online and internationally through a training partnership with the WHO. The programme is also being piloted to reach new dads experiencing symptoms of paternal postnatal depression in Southwark. Breathe have built the evidence-base for group singing for postnatal depression further through participation in KCL's SHAPER (Scaling Health Arts Programmes: Implementation and Effectiveness Research). Hear more about the programme's evolution, followed by contributions from KCL and UCL presenting SHAPER's findings on the clinical, cost and implementation effectiveness of the programme.

Rebecca H. Bind, Tony Woods et al.

The clinical, cost, and implementation effectiveness of Breathe Melodies for Mums singing intervention for new mothers with postnatal depression and their babies: the SHAPER-PND clinical trial

Background: Postnatal depression (PND) affects at least 13% of mothers. Group-based mother-baby activities are shown to have a good uptake, and singing can improve maternal mental health. The SHAPER-PND trial analysed the clinical effectiveness of a 10-week singing intervention for mothers with PND and explored the cost and implementation effectiveness of the programme.

Methodology: 199 mothers experiencing postnatal depression (EPDS score>10) were randomised into either a 10-week singing intervention (M4M), or a control group (community mother-baby activity). Mothers were reassessed for depression at week 6, week 10, and again 4 and 8 months later. Mothers also filled in questionnaires about their activity (Acceptability of Intervention Measure, Intervention Appropriateness Measure, Feasibility of Intervention Measure). Finally, costs to run M4M were estimated.

Results: Mothers in both groups experienced a decrease in depression by week 10; however, mothers in the M4M group continued to improve 4 and 8 months later, while mothers in the control group plateaued after week 10. Furthermore, mothers in the M4M group rated their activity more acceptable, appropriate, and feasible as an intervention for PND. Finally, costs to run M4M in the community were found to fall well within the range of other treatments for PND. Conclusion: Overall, we found that the M4M intervention is clinically effective for PND and has longer-lasting antidepressant effects than community activities for mothers and babies. Moreover, mothers



rate M4M to be a better intervention. Finally, M4M is a cost-effective intervention, altogether suggesting it is a good investment to the NHS and/or local authorities.

Alexandra Burton et al.

A qualitative exploration of active ingredients and mechanisms of action of the Breathe Melodies for Mums singing programme for mothers experiencing postnatal depression

Background: Creative health interventions can help alleviate anxiety and depression, with studies showing that singing is particularly effective for supporting the mental health of new mothers. We evaluated the clinical effectiveness of Breathe Melodies for Mums (M4M) and found improvements in postnatal depression (PND) symptoms at 9-month follow up. The current qualitative study aimed to explore how and why M4M impacted the mental health of those taking part.

Methods: We categorised intervention components using the Ingredients in Arts in Health (INNATE) Framework, and mechanisms of action using the Multi-level Leisure Mechanisms Framework. We conducted qualitative semi-structured online interviews and in-person focus groups with women experiencing PND symptoms who took part in M4M. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Results: M4M was acceptable, appropriate, and feasible to participants, with certain 'project' (dose, design, content) and 'people' ingredients (social composition, activity facilitation) identified as key. 'Context' ingredients (setting, project set-up) were more peripheral. Psychological, social and behavioural mechanisms for improved mental health included: 1) Increased self-confidence, 2) Increased positive emotional responses, 3) A supported exploration of self-identity, 4) Reduced loneliness and isolation, 5) Increased social bonding and connectedness and 6) Enhanced sense of time through new routines.

Conclusions: Participating in group singing can support new mothers experiencing PND by triggering psychological, social and behavioural responses that lead to improved mental health. Key programme features are identified which can be used in the design and adaptation of future creative health interventions to support new mothers.

Room 2 | Performance Studio

Chaired by Neta Spiro | 5-minute contributions

Rachel Levy and Rosie Adediran

London Rhymes: Music and songwriting group in a community perinatal mental health setting

This presentation (1) shows how a music and songwriting intervention can be applied in a clinical NHS setting for mothers with moderate-severe mental illness and their babies, and (2) showcases a project that could be replicated in other perinatal settings nationally/internationally. The London Rhymes music group is delivered in partnership with the City & Hackney Community Perinatal Mental Health Team. It is a 10-week singing and songwriting group programme for 10 mother-baby pairs. Participants are receiving treatment under the perinatal service due to moderate-severe mental illness arising either in pregnancy or up to 2 years postnatally. Each weekly session lasting 1.5 hours is co-facilitated by the Perinatal Occupational Therapist, lead London Rhymes musician, plus another musician bringing a different instrument each week. Sessions involve singing uplifting songs from around the world and collectively writing original songs, often about the challenging sides of life with a baby. Aims of the group include improving mood, encouraging mother-baby bonding, reducing social isolation and developing confidence in community access. It is an example of how a non-pharmacological music intervention can be delivered in a clinical perinatal mental health setting. Over 6 cohorts, outcome measures have shown on average attendance at a London Rhymes session results in a 20% improvement in mood. It has also been found that the majority of participants experience an



improved bond with baby, elevated mood during/outside of the session, have something to look forward to in the week, pleasure for the mother and baby, improved social confidence.

Sylars Akhigbe Music therapy for emotional wellness

Music Therapy for Emotional Wellness by The Melody & Soul Therapy Project CIC was mainly inspired because we wanted to provide emotional companionship to special people within hospitals and care homes through therapeutic music sessions which have proven so far to have positive impact on stress reduction, mood enhancement, cognitive function, physical rehabilitation, community building and overall wellness. We have two hospitals (Darent Valley Hospital and Crowborough War Memorial Hospital) currently benefiting from this initiative. Over the last few months, we have run weekly musical sessions in the hospitals, with 43 patients and 5 volunteers. Our weekly sessions have become very important to those involved. One patient once said "enjoying the music therapy session has since elated the atmosphere and I earnestly anticipate seeing either a singer or instrument player walk into the ward/day room". As a sustainable part of parental wellbeing, Music Therapy for Emotional Wellness can be beneficial in the following ways: It helps parents to engage and interact with young people as well as to express love and joy; it allow young people to explore their own identities, develop emotional resilience and improve self-esteem; during early development of young people, it helps them learn the sounds and meanings of words, and helps the body and the mind work together. It illuminates all areas of child development, skills, and overall literacy.

Natasha Krichefski, Ruth Cookson, Natasha Zielazinski, and Maryann Onyeaka Tuning In: A Bright Start Islington and LSO partnership

Bright Start Islington and the London Symphony Orchestra would like to present their 'Tuning In' programme, run in partnership for the last 2 years. The film will feature clips of a session, interviews with the leadership of the project – both creative and from a partnership perspective – and participants. Bright Start Islington is a council-run early intervention service, providing support to Islington families from conception to age 5, with the aim of giving every child the best start in life. Together with the LSO, we have been delivering responsive, small-scale participatory music workshops for over 7 years. The expertise and relationships both partners bring is key to its success. 'Tuning In' is a parent wellbeing approach for parents of babies under 6 months, led by creative leader Natasha Zielazinski alongside musicians from the LSO. Families are referred to the programme through CAMHS, health visiting and family engagement workers, and parents often bring along partners or extended family. The focus is on connection - between parents and babies, and between parents in the room. Sessions are led with an approach that emphasizes openness, togetherness and creativity, allowing parents to share experiences and express themselves through singing (with an international repertoire) and movement. A collective song-writing process supports participants to give voice to lived experience and self-expression. As a result of these wellbeing projects, the LSO has also initiated a supervision process to support the musicians and leaders involved, and this will be referenced in the video and expanded upon in the Q&A.

15-minute discussion

Kate Battenfeld

Exploring the impact of early childhood music learning on marginalized families: A case study with San Diego Youth Symphony and The Monarch School Project

My focal topic examines the impact of ChIMES, a 0-5 early childhood music program, on marginalized communities, with a particular focus on unhoused families. The study explores how participation in ChIMES classes enhances parent/caregiver-child bonding, increases engagement in music-making, and strengthens family connections. As an early childhood music educator, I am committed to uniting marginalized families through music. At the San Diego Youth Symphony (SDYS), I helped establish a



partnership with the Monarch School Project, a K-12 public school serving unhoused families. For three years, we have offered weekly ChIMES classes to parents and caregivers of younger siblings attending the school. Over a seven-month period in 2024, I conducted mixed-methods research to evaluate the impact of these classes. The findings revealed profound benefits, including strengthened parent-child connections, enhanced social interactions, and significant improvements in social and emotional well-being. This collaboration underscores the transformative role of early childhood music education in fostering resilience and nurturing inclusive environments. The research also aligns with Monarch's focus on resilience and social-emotional learning, highlighting the arts' essential role in holistic support for unhoused youth and their families. These insights inform the strategic direction of SDYS and Monarch, advocating for expanded early childhood music programs to reach more diverse families across San Diego. The potential of integrating music into the lives of underserved children and families is immense. This work illustrates how early childhood music programs can address bonding and overall well-being, offering a clear strategy for supporting vulnerable communities.

Maria Magdalena Sanchez, Desirée González, and Yeray Ruiz Chain of strengths: Multilevel alliances to support recent families for the first time

This presentation introduces the work developed by the organisation Grandes Oyentes (GO) in Spain through a series of descriptions of practices that aim to highlight the relevance of multilevel alliances to support families' well-being: 1) The role of an international network (Carnegie Hall's Lullaby Project) in sustaining a project in Spain, and 2) the role of collaboration between national policy bodies, public, private, social, academic and third-sector partners to generate a chain of strengths influencing scalability and social scope across the country. GO established an international alliance with Carnegie Hall's Lullaby Project in 2020. Alongside local social, academic and artistic partners, GO develops Proyecto Nana España, creating music with families at family shelters, but also highlighting the value of bringing families to top music halls and recording studios. The methodology and concern have transformed over time to respond to an important contextual challenge: Spain is the second European country with the highest childhood poverty rates. A multisector effort is key to generating a chain of strengths able to support families and young children in a country where meals, education and quality health coverture are guaranteed, but families are still underserved. After four years of project development and presenting their work at the Science and Innovation Weeks of Madrid, the organisation is awarded the Spanish National Youth Award in Culture. The season 24/25 scales the support to families through a new collaboration with the public institution Auditorio de Tenerife (Canary Islands), welcoming and supporting families through music for the first time.

Neta Spiro and Katie Rose M. Sanfilippo Reaching recommendations for increased equitable access to musical care during the beginning of life in England and Wales

Many families do not get the support they need during the beginning of life, with implications throughout their lives. Research suggests that musical care - the role of music in supporting all aspects of people's developmental and/or health needs – can be effective in supporting families during the beginning of life (pregnancy until two years after birth). Musical care during this life stage can include a range of practices such as music therapy, parent/caregiver-infant music groups, and concerts. Increasing attention has been given to the importance of relevant and culturally appropriate musical care activities that should be accessible to all and cater to different aspects of the beginning of life (pregnancy, infancy, for mothers, fathers, and carers). Our UK-wide survey results highlight significant barriers to accessing and providing musical care. We brought together parents, practitioners, educators, researchers, and policy experts to present our research findings and to codevelop policy recommendations for increased equitable access to music care during the beginning of life in England and Wales. The policy recommendations include long-term funding for universal opportunities and targeted interventions and musical care research, place-based approaches, integration of music into relevant guidelines, and training and upskilling opportunities for the musical care workforce to ensure quality and safety. In this contribution we present our UK-wide survey results, co-development process, and policy recommendations. This will contribute to our



understanding, and provide one example, of how we might be able to work together to influence policy around music for parental wellbeing in the UK and other contexts.

15-minute discussion

15:45 Break and discussion time (RCM Café, South Side)

Poster 3 | Lucy McCrudden, Dance Mama Moves

Since September 2024 we have been delivering Dance Mama Moves as part of Surrey Sports Park and Surrey University's Pre and Postnatal Activity programme supported by Sport England. The aim of this project is for Mums in the local community to access free activity sessions to benefit their physical and mental wellbeing. Our work is supported by my PhD research. We want to share the importance of the choices we make using recorded music to support the wellbeing and engagement of our participants (who may or may not have dance experience).

16:15 Policy panel and Alliance launch (Performance Hall)

In this session, we will explore the policy landscape for music and parental wellbeing. Following a welcome from RCM Head of Research Prof Robert Adlington, we hear from colleagues about international examples of policy implementation in creative health, before a live discussion focusing on policy making for music and parental wellbeing in the UK context. We end the session by launching our new Music and Parental Wellbeing Alliance, founded and co-chaired by Rosie Perkins and Katie Rose Sanfilippo.

Contributors:

Alexandra Coulter (Chair) is Director of the National Centre for Creative Health (NCCH) which was established in response to the Creative Health report, published in 2017 by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPG). The NCCH's mission is to: advance good practice and research, inform policy and promote collaboration, helping foster the conditions for creative health to be integral to health and social care and wider systems. The APPG and NCCH published the Creative Health Review in 2023 which makes recommendations to Government and Metro Mayors. NCCH is a partner in the UKRI research programme 'Mobilising Community Assets to Tackle Health Inequalities'.

Monica Boulton is the Strategic Lead for Healthcare Integration Lead & Neighbourhood Health at the National Academy for Social Prescribing and a Non-Executive Board Director for Musical Walkabout CIC in Kent. Monica has been involved in Social Prescribing for nearly 10 years after her Music degree confirmed her passion for how important creative arts are for people's health and wellbeing. Having worked as a Link Worker, managed multiple social prescribing projects, contributed towards ICB social prescribing strategies, and led national projects on workforce development and clinician engagement, Monica has a true sense for the difference Social Prescribing can make to people's lives and to the health system.

Michaela de Cruz is a music therapist, musician, and recording artist from Singapore. Since qualifying in 2019, she has left a significant imprint on the UK Music Therapy profession through her antiracist activism, writing, and ongoing community engagement. Michaela was a key member of the BAMT Racial Awareness Panel in 2021, which led to the co-founding of "We Are Monster," a global network for music therapists of colour. She runs a private practice, working primarily with adults facing wide-ranging mental health needs. She also



offers a lecture series on Antiracism, Social Justice and Cultural Humility for music therapy training programs.

Clare Lovett is the lead for Culture, Health and Wellbeing at City Hall, London, working as part of the dynamic Culture and Creative Industries Unit where she is delivering the Mayor's Dementia Friendly Venues Charter, supporting Young Londoners mental health and cultural social prescribing. Prior to joining the GLA she founded First Penguin Consultancy supporting cultural organisations and individuals to place civic engagement and participatory arts practice at the heart of their work. Passionate about creating conditions which enable people to flourish and deliver the seemingly impossible she has worked in senior roles at Spitalfields Music, The Place, London Philharmonic Orchestra, NESTA, and Arts Council England. Currently studying part time at the Gestalt Centre.

Hannah McLennan is Head of Public Affairs at UK Music and responsible for several strands of work including running the APPG on Music and UK Music's Party Conference season. She leads on UK Music's work on the Power of Music as a health and wellbeing tool. Prior to joining UK Music, she worked as a researcher at the Department for Work and Pensions where she worked on benefits, pensions and childcare policy. She is a trustee for music-access charity *Attitude is Everything*. Alongside full-time work, she recently completed a part-time MSc in Environment and Sustainability at Birkbeck University.

Nana Owusu is a respected mental health leader, public speaker, and campaigner with 20 years' experience as a CAMHS Clinical Nurse Specialist and Therapist. She is Head of Clinical Services at Anna Freud, leading strategy and clinical programs to support young people's mental health. Nana also consults for Electronic Arts, advising on mental health during major game events. Formerly Director at MIND (HFEH), she created the UK's first crisis prevention café for youth. She serves on the boards of New Horizon Youth Centre and MGUK Foundation and specialises in cultural influences on mental health and the role of communication in wellbeing.

Online panel contributors:

Nils Fietje is a Technical Officer within the Behavioural and Cultural Insights (BCI) Unit at the WHO Regional Office for Europe. As part of the BCI Unit, he is leading efforts to understand how cultural contexts affect and interact with health and well-being across the life-course and throughout the continuum of care. This work includes a particular focus on arts and health, having published the first-ever WHO report on the evidence base for arts and health interventions. Additionally, Nils is a co-director of the Jameel Arts & Health Lab, a globally leading arts and health think-tank focusing on arts and health research, policy development, engagement, and capacity building. Together with fellow Lab co-director Nisha Sajnani, Nils is currently leading the first ever Lancet Global Series on arts and health.

Rachel Green is a leading innovator in mental health strategy, digital service design, and lived experience leadership. As CEO of SANE Australia, she oversees digital resources and support services for Australians with complex mental health needs. Rachel led the creation of Australia's first digital psychosocial recovery platform, supporting nearly 200,000 people annually. She has held senior roles in mental health and public health policy with the Commonwealth Government, National Mental Health Commission, and Black Dog Institute. Passionate about peer-led, lived experience-driven initiatives, Rachel lives in Sydney with her partner and three young children.



Anita Jensen is an Associate Professor at Lund University's Department of Clinical Science and the Centre for Primary Health Care, as well as at Nord University in Norway. She is also an Arts and Health strategist at Region Skåne, Sweden. Dr. Jensen is Editor-in-Chief of the Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health. Her extensive publications include books, chapters, articles, and reports on the health and wellbeing benefits of arts and cultural engagement. She has led the development of educational courses in arts and health and actively teaches in this field.

Tania Lisboa is Reader in Performance Science and Digital Learning at the Royal College of Music, London and an honorary Research Fellow in the Faculty of Medicine at Imperial College London. Dr Lisboa has acted as a commissioner to the International Society for Music Education's Commission for the Education of the Professional Musician from 2016-2020 and she was elected an Honorary Member of the Royal College of Music in 2018. Her current research focuses on expert practice and music memorisation, digital learning, and music in health with a focus on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Her recent research and international collaborations, funded by the British Academy, have focused on how the arts can support wellbeing for families and urban residents in the Global South.

Nisha Sajnani is an Associate Professor and Director of the NYU Steinhardt Graduate Program in Drama Therapy, Chair of the NYU Creative Arts Therapies Consortium, Founder of Arts & Health @ NYU, and Founding Co-Director of the Jameel Arts & Health Lab. Other faculty appointments include NYU Abu Dhabi, where she developed the trans-disciplinary course Can Art Save Lives?, uniting current evidence for the health benefits of the arts with practice and policy; the NYU Stern School of Business, where she teaches improvisation and leadership; and the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, where she lectures on the role of the arts in supporting the wellbeing of people who are forcibly displaced. An award-winning author, educator, and advocate, her body of work explores unique ways in which aesthetic experience can inspire equity, care, and collective human flourishing across the lifespan.

- 18:00 End of Day 1
- 18:10 (Weather dependent) group photograph on RCM main steps, please assemble from 18:05
- 18:15 (Weather dependent) Relaxed walk in Hyde Park

Feel free to join Debi Graham in the RCM Foyer if you would like to join this optional and informal social walk in Hyde Park for around one hour.

Day 2: Wednesday 23 July

09:00 Coffee and registration (RCM Foyer and Café, South Side)

10:00 Parallel Session 3

All parallel sessions will take place in either the Performance Hall (Room 1) or the Performance Studio (Room 2)

Room 1 | Performance Hall

Chaired by Jessica Pitt | 15-minute presentations

Karen Burland, Freya Bailes, and Polly Ives Exploring the impact of live music events on new parents

Becoming a parent is a pivotal moment (McCourt, 2007, p.49). Around one-third of parents experience loneliness (Nowland et al, 2021) and, in some cases, antenatal and postnatal anxiety and depression (NICE, 2020). This emphasises the importance of understanding how to support the mental health of new parents. This paper reports the outcomes of a project exploring the impact of six 'Concerteenies' Relaxation Concerts on the wellbeing of new parents in Sheffield. These concerts were delivered by professional musicians spanning a range of styles, aiming to create an opportunity for new parent/s and babies to experience high quality, relaxing, live performances in a baby-friendly environment. Data were collected using standardised wellbeing scales: (DUKE-UNC Functional Social Support Questionnaire (FSSQ); Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC); Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)), alongside contextual and qualitative questions. Parents attending the concerts completed one question before the event about how they were feeling as they arrived and completed a longer questionnaire at the end. A subset of participants (N = 4) were interviewed about their experiences of the concerts and new parenthood. While there is an understandable societal focus on activities to benefit babies, our data suggest that the provision of high-quality concerts in a supportive environment may confer even greater benefits for parents. In addition to an increase in mood and alertness from before to after concerts, themes emerged concerning the quality and variety of music and the benefits of a nurturing environment in the face of psychological and practical challenges of parenthood.

Sam Fox and Ricardo Santos Rocha BAM concerts for babies and Night Shift podcast for parents

Musicians and Early Years specialists Fox & Rocha have over 20 years' experience, and have been delivering concerts and projects for babies, young children and their parents/caregivers since 2017. Their BAM: Babies' Adventures in Music concerts usually reach over 100 families on a monthly basis at the Midlands Arts Centre. In 2022/23 Fox & Rocha and Curiosity Productions secured Arts Council England funding to produce The Night Shift podcast for parents and carers soothing little ones at night. For the symposium, Fox & Rocha propose to share their experiences of creating and delivering concerts and creating the podcast, and the impact these projects have had on parents. They would offer a demonstration and presentation of practice, playing their signature harp, melodeon and voice, with some musical interaction for attendees. Fox & Rocha are parents of a two-year old, and are passionate about delivering work where the needs of parents are considered as much as the children.

They'll share feedback from audiences, stories from working in various settings (Arts centres, Stay&Plays, Nurseries, Children's Centres), and give insights into the creation and delivery process, including co-design with parents. They'll also share extracts from the podcast, and explain the decision to commission parents to write the stories that they have underscored and released alongside 'sleep tracks'. Overall, the aim of the contribution would be to share how the wellbeing and needs of parents are threaded into the fabric of Fox & Rocha's work, and to connect with likeminded, industry-leading academics and practitioners.

Kasia Don-Daniel, Charly Jolly, and Maddie Broad Little Beats and Roly Poly: Musical playscapes and playful partnerships

Through sharing practice from our two community music partner projects (Little Beats and Roly Poly) we will respond to the two questions: How can music practitioners working in this area be supported and cared for, and what musical practices could be used to support parents in a wide range of contexts? Roly Poly practice description: Roly Poly provides a relaxed yet high quality alternative, or even antidote, to more structured or traditional circle time classes; we offer a novel approach to community EY arts experiences that is more inclusive and accessible because the environment we create places no expectations on parents and children and draws creativity from them being themselves (ACE funded project). Little Beats project description: Little Beats is a place based Early Years music project in Lowestoft. The aims of the project are to improve wellbeing, child development and musical engagement amongst 0-5's and their families. We are doing this by: growing a placebased network of musicians, early years music providers and facilitators, offering FREE CPD for musicians, Early Years facilitators and Early Years providers, creating opportunities to share resources and offer peer to peer support. We are creating a dynamic early years musical workforce in Lowestoft. We run playful quarterly Network Meetings for musicians, early years providers, teachers and TAs. We support musicians to develop new work and new ideas. Roly Poly provides an alternative, sensory musical experience for parents and their young children that is different in pace and content from the mainstream opportunities that are easily and regularly accessed by parents. Roly Poly uses openended easily acquired props such as cardboard to create playful connective moments with added vocalisations that can be taken by parents into their play at home. Little Beats nourishes and supports the musicians engaged in the project. With support and room for experimentation and play, musicians can confidently take away and try out new ideas with their music groups, whilst feeling able to hold precious and nourishing space and time for both parents and children in sessions.

Zoe Dionyssiou

Communicative musicality as a framework of music practices in early childhood music settings: report from a case study in Corfu

The theory of communicative musicality was originally developed to analyse the communication between mothers and their infants through musical interactions and 'motherese' conversations that take place especially during the first two years of their lives (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). We used this theory as a framework to guide the music practices applied in the Early Childhood Music Education Program, which is offered by Ionian University and the Medical Association of Corfu in the community of Corfu from 2011 to today. The present study focuses on how the theory of communicative musicality shapes our musical activities and practices to create meaningful relationships between mothers and their babies, between the teacher and children, the teacher and the dyad, and among infants. Students of the Music Department, Ionian University teach the groups of infants with their parents voluntarily for a semester, as part of their teaching practice. Data presented here were gathered from two sources: a) video analysis of snapshots with musical activities, and b) student's reflective narratives in a focus group. The theory of communicative musicality can be used as a helpful framework to support stronger bonding and meaningful musical interactions in the music

classroom of infants. Those meaningful musical interactions offer a new perspective in early childhood music education practices and can give practitioners and music educators an easy-to-follow framework for musical engagement and for fostering meaningful relationships.

Room 2 | Performance Studio

Chaired by Tríona McCaffrey | 5-minute contributions

Amanda Krause, Kaila Putter, and Leah Chrisp A scoping review into music listening to support antepartum and intrapartum maternal well-being

A growing body of research supports the use of music listening for well-being. Our scoping review explores the role of music listening in enhancing maternal well-being throughout the prenatal and labour stages. We examined music listening specifically because it is a highly accessible component of musical care, making it a resource that is embedded in everyday life and one that expectant mothers can conveniently employ, regardless of location or time constraints. In undertaking this review, we aimed to (1) consolidate evidence-based knowledge on the role of music listening for maternal wellbeing prenatally and during birth, and (2) examine the features of the music resources used in the published research. Following PRISMA guidelines for Scoping Reviews, a database search using three search terms (versions of music, listen* and prenatal or birth) resulted in analysing 55 articles. Thematic analysis identified the well-being benefits of music listening during pregnancy (three subthemes: psychological well-being, attachment, and physiological well-being) and birth (three subthemes: pain management, psychological well-being, and labour progression). During pregnancy, music listening significantly improves psychological well-being, fosters maternal-foetal attachment, and improves physiological well-being (e.g., sleep, blood pressure, heart rate). During labour, music listening significantly reduces labour duration and pain, accelerates labour progression, increases the likelihood of vaginal delivery. Details about the music were often missing; however, when provided, most studies implemented a single session lasting 15-30-minutes with experimenter-selected music. These findings have implications for using music listening as an accessible, low-cost, nonpharmacological, evidence-based tool to support maternal well-being.

Zehra Karademir, Jan de Fockert, and Caspar Addyman The effects of maternal singing on emotional closeness, affect, and interaction dynamics

Singing to an infant is a widespread caregiving practice that can facilitate caregiver—child communication and maternal affect regulation (Cirelli et al., 2020; Mehr et al., 2018). Although controlled research has demonstrated potential benefits for intimacy (de l'Etoile, 2006; Fancourt & Perkins, 2018), evidence from everyday, naturalistic environments remains limited.

This study comprised two related studies using the same dataset. In Study 1, thirty-two mothers (ages 22–44) from the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe completed a within-subjects procedure via the Lookit online platform (Scott & Schulz, 2017). Participants engaged in two sessions, scheduled approximately one week apart, each following a pretest–interaction–posttest format. Prior to and immediately following a five-minute mother–infant interaction, mothers completed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) and the Inclusion of Others in Self (IOS; Aron et al., 1992). Interaction conditions were counterbalanced so that each mother alternated between a singing session and a non-singing session. Paired t-tests and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests revealed *no* statistically significant differences in self-reported affect or perceived emotional closeness between conditions.

Study 2 used video data from 28 of these mothers (a reduced sample due to missing recordings) to examine objective interaction dynamics. Coders applied the Murray Global Rating Scale to evaluate

four dimensions: eye contact, emotional expressiveness, maternal sensitivity, and reciprocity. Comparisons showed that singing was associated with significantly higher ratings of eye contact (p = .02), emotional expressiveness (p = .02), and maternal sensitivity (p = .005), whereas reciprocity showed *no* significant difference (p = .29).

Overall, these findings suggest a discrepancy between subjective and observable indicators of emotional connection: self-report measures did not detect enhanced closeness, yet behavioural observations identified higher engagement and responsiveness during singing (Trehub, 2012). This gap may reflect the subtleties of routine caregiving activities, wherein immediate affective shifts are not always consciously perceived (Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2019). Further research is recommended to investigate individual differences, refine measurement approaches for naturalistic settings, and explore potential long-term outcomes of infant-directed singing on attachment development.

Mark Scott, Beth Vleminckx, and Annette Burghes Dads Rock: Regular group music making for Dads and their children

Evolve Music will share our approach and findings of Dads Rock, an early years community music programme that supports improvements in the mental health and wellbeing of dads with young children. Dads Rock is delivered by two Community Music Practitioners in the form of child-led musical play sessions that take place in public spaces, such as community centres, libraries or health settings, across the south-west. The programme has been inclusively designed to ensure families with experience of health, developmental, economic, or social challenges can most benefit from them. The programme offers a unique space for Dads to develop alternative and positive ways of communicating with their children and fostering improved relationships. Many musical activities emulate the natural patterns of communication that are crucial for building the bonds of love between child and parent/caregiver. Group sessions enable parents to build on their innate parenting abilities and build confidence with parenting and other parents through musical play and singing. The observation of this also leads to an increased level of security and enjoyment for the child. First piloted in Frome, Bath and Bristol in 2021, the programme has subsequently been funded by Arts Council England, Youth Music and trusts and foundations, with regular Dads Rock programmes taking place in Bath, Bristol (3 programmes), Frome, Radstock and Worle. We hope to highlight how focused music interventions specifically for dads experiencing perinatal depression and their young children, provide rare opportunities for new dads to bond and foster deeper attachments with their children.

Debi Graham

Everyday music and baby crying: Striking a chord with fathers

Baby crying is exhausting physical and emotionally for many parents, especially if it doesn't stop easily. Ways to support parental mental wellbeing during persistent infant crying have been explored particularly given the worrying association between infant crying and non-accidental head injury. However, no studies have examined the potential of music to support parental wellbeing during this common challenge. Not to make the infant stop crying – baby crying is normal (if sometimes tricky) behaviour - but to help parents survive crying even if it persists. This presentation focuses on fathers' views shared as part of a wider PhD study at the Royal College of Music London examining the potential role of music to support parental mental wellbeing during persistent infant crying. Using the reflections and words of 50+ fathers, it answers the following questions: What is "everyday music" in this context and why might it be important to fathers? What does everyday music mean to fathers? How are fathers already using everyday music as part of the soundtrack of their lives? How might everyday music be harnessed to support paternal mental wellbeing especially during persistent infant crying? How might the concept of everyday music cut through barriers preventing fathers from accessing current musical "interventions"?

20-minute discussion

Claudia Oblasser, Barbara Prinz-Buchberger, Andreas Lichtenwörther, Gerhard Tucek, Anneliese Erdemgil-Brandstätter, Jörg Kammerhofer, Thomas Bamberger, Wolfgang Schreder Interpersonal violence in the professional practice of therapists and midwives in Lower Austria

Aim of contribution: To address and discuss the topic of domestic and client violence in the professional practice of music therapists and midwives; to present selected parts of our respective research project in Lower Austria to equip music, occupational, physical therapists and midwives with knowledge, skills, and competencies for experiences with domestic violence against their clients and with client violence against themselves.

Main focus of contribution: (1) Presentation of the descriptive statistical results of our online feasibility survey in Lower Austria, where therapists and midwives reported their experiences with domestic and client violence in their professional practice as well as their respective self-rated knowledge and learning needs; (2) Brief report on methods and results of our currently ongoing rapid scoping review in databases and via e-mailing international colleagues about available digital or hybrid learning programmes for domestic and client violence in the professional practice of music, occupational, physical therapists, and midwives; (3) Brief report on the development of two digital or hybrid learning modules about domestic and client violence in the professional practice of therapists and midwives in Lower Austria. This action research project holding focus groups with practitioners from these professional groups will be implemented during 2025.

In line with the UN sustainable development goals and national efforts to reduce interpersonal violence, this presentation contributes to enhancing music practitioners' own health and working conditions as well as their clients' care and health.

Melissa Lima and Diana Santiago

Mothers of children with autism and echolalia: Socio-musical interactions as a potential for affective bonding and emotional understanding of their children

This master's research - a multi-case study based on fragmented and repetitive songs - involved mothers of children with autism and echolalia, who gave interviews about how they perceive the songs sung repetitively by their children. Their reports showed clear links between the spontaneous choice of each song, chosen and sung by the children, and the possible communicative functions of their emotional states. For these mothers, music has a fundamental place in their children's lives, requiring them to pay special attention to the choice of song, the way it is sung, and the connection with expressions such as frustration, joy, upset, rigidity, organization, and emotional disorganization. One of the results found was the direct relationship between increased rigidity in the form of fragmentation and repetition of parts of songs and increased stereotyping, echolalia, and body agitation. When the mothers reported good socio-musical interaction with their children, there was greater musical fluency, accompanied by playfulness and flexibility on the part of the child to complete the song, getting out of the loop and accepting a change of repertoire. The mother's role in her child's musical life awakens the socio-musical bond, as well as the ability to develop subtle readings of the child's emotional states. Their report of the feeling that this role can only be exercised by them corroborates the insecurity of handing over their child to the care of someone else, highlighting the child's fear of not having their singing understood.

Jenny Bullock and Joy Gravestock

'It just helps everything': Perceptions of primary caregivers of people with Rett Syndrome surrounding the roles and experiences of music in their everyday lives

Parents and primary caregivers of those with Rett syndrome are experts in them and their care yet their voices are rarely heard in the literature, and those with profound learning disabilities and their families are at risk of marginalisation in research, as in society. Conducted for an MA in Music Therapy

in 2022, this study gives voice to them, using their lived experience to highlight the significance of music in their lives and its ability to promote wellbeing of both those with Rett syndrome and their primary caregivers, whose own wellbeing is linked to their ability to care for and communicate with them. Rett syndrome is a genetic neurodevelopmental condition causing profound cognitive and physical disabilities usually requiring lifelong care, often provided by parents. Thematic analysis of thirty online questionnaire responses and two interviews with parents/primary caregivers concerning their use of music in everyday life yielded three themes under the umbrella of 'Music is an enabler': (1) Music enables primary caregivers to meet the everyday needs of people with Rett syndrome, (2) Music enables primary caregivers and people with Rett syndrome to cope with the challenges of the condition, and (3) music enables relationship. Although this research focuses on Rett syndrome, many findings can be more widely applied to those with other profound learning disabilities and their primary caregivers. The analysis provides numerous descriptions of practices shared by participants which may deepen delegates' understanding, inspire primary caregivers to use music in diverse ways and inform recommendations from professionals working with families.

20-minute discussion

11:30 Break and discussion time (RCM Café, South Side)

Poster 4 | Alice Nicholls, Melodies of Life: Music therapy for parental and family wellbeing in children's hospice settings

This poster showcases the different ways that Music Therapy is used to improve parental wellbeing at Forget Me Not Children's Hospice in Huddersfield. Music Therapy is part of Forget Me Not's Creative Therapy team, and a hugely important part of our tiered Family Support offer, providing whole family music sessions for creative memory-making as well as 1:1 creative therapy for bereaved parents. Forget Me Not works primarily with children and young people aged 0-21 with life-limiting conditions, but also with their family members

The Music Therapy provision ensures that parents who are experiencing or anticipating the death of their child have ongoing support, a range of options besides traditional counselling, and a creative way of working through their journey. The therapist also provides a heartbeat music service, where a child's heartbeat is set to music chosen by the family, providing an' everlasting memory' and comfort for parents. The sessions are delivered by Music Therapist Alice Nicholls, either in the hospice itself or in patients' homes or hospital. Some parents have found comfort in making music in sessions with their children, creating fond memories of playing together; others have attended Music Therapy after the death of their child, and have used musical improvisation to process their emotions in the wake of their grief. When used therapeutically, music can offer parents a safe, creative outlet for processing grief. This work has powerful implications for the use of music in bereavement support and parental wellbeing in hospice settings.



Room 1 | Performance Hall

Chaired by Lauren Stewart | 15-minute contributions

Tríona McCaffrey, Sylvia Murphy-Tighe, and Pui Sze Cheung
'Mums using Music' (MuM): An online interdisciplinary programme to resource women with music
knowledge and tools to support their mental wellbeing and prenatal attachment during pregnancy

This contribution will highlight the value of interdisciplinary research among midwives and music therapists in designing, delivering and evaluating the 'Mums Using Music' (MuM) online programme that sought to resource women with music knowledge and tools to support their mental wellbeing and prenatal attachment during pregnancy. This contribution will describe 'MuM', a study that employed a participatory action research approach where women with lived experience of using music in pregnancy, midwives and music therapists, co-designed and evaluated this controlled-trial study. Participants (n=16) were women who were over 18 years of age, spoke English and were firsttime pregnant between 18-35 weeks. Each were assigned to a usual care group (n=8) or a music group (n=8) that comprised of four online 60-minute sessions co-facilitated by a music therapist and a midwife. Programme evaluation involved participants' self-completion of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and Prenatal Attachment Inventory in addition to exploration of their lived experience as described in an online focus group. This presentation will describe MuM findings in terms of maternal wellbeing, anxiety and lived experiences of participation. It will also reflect on the participatory nature and online environment of this innovative programme. This presentation will cast a spotlight on the potential for online music programmes in promoting maternal wellbeing. It will also offer reflections on the learning that has arisen for the project team through carrying out this innovative pilot study that aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3 & 5) to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being while also progressing the empowerment of women.

Pui Sze Cheung, Triona McCaffrey, Sylvia Murphy Tighe, and Mas Mahady Mohamad Integrating music into pregnancy care: A holistic model for supporting parental wellbeing

This contribution discusses the key findings from the Music and Perinatal Wellbeing research and introduces a new model for integrating music into pregnancy care. Conducted between 2020 and 2022 in partnership between the University of Limerick and the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service at University Maternity Hospital Limerick, the Music and Perinatal Wellbeing research explored the role of music in supporting parental wellbeing during pregnancy. It included a crosssectional study with over 300 women, partners, and healthcare professionals and a proof-of-concept interventional study on a specialised music therapy programme for nine pregnant women with mental health conditions. Key findings include: (1) the need for holistic support and increased resources during pregnancy to prevent mental health challenges, (2) the diverse benefits of music across various forms and uses, and (3) the barriers to implementing music-based interventions in perinatal care. Drawing on these findings, the model proposes three strands for the use of music during pregnancy: everyday music engagement, specialised music therapy, and music integration within maternity services. It takes a holistic approach to perinatal wellbeing, addressing individual, environmental, community, and societal factors that shape the pregnancy and birth experience. Ultimately, the model advocates for incorporating music into maternity care to help de-medicalise the pregnancy and birth process. This contribution highlights music's potential as an accessible, low-cost health resource during the perinatal period and offers recommendations for practice, policy, research, and education, relevant to music practitioners, music therapists, other healthcare professionals, researchers, and policymakers.



Lottie Anstee and Juliet Firth

The lived experiences of perinatal mental health and role of musical engagement amongst women of Global Majority ethnicities

Research on music-based interventions for perinatal wellbeing can be criticised for lacking diversity and failing to reach those women who are most in need. This research project focuses on the lived experiences of perinatal mental health amongst women of Global Majority ethnicities living in South London. It considers how music is used, if at all, by these women to support their wellbeing during the perinatal period and what their recommendations might be for future music-based activities. Our presentation will summarise our collaborative reflexive thematic analysis of focus groups and interviews with 14 women of Global Majority ethnicities, which were conducted by a community leader in South London. Participants were encouraged to reflect on (1) experiences of perinatal mental health, (2) support mechanisms available, (3) how music could be beneficial for perinatal wellbeing and (4) preferences for how music could be best used to support women in the perinatal period. Throughout our presentation, we will centralise the voices of these women by using direct quotations to illustrate some of the key themes from our analysis. These include the culturally differentiated experiences of perinatal mental health described by participants and their diverse suggestions for future music-based perinatal activities. Overall, this contribution could inform more diverse and inclusive approaches to future musical care for perinatal mental health. We hope this work will provide insights into how the wider field of music and parental wellbeing can be diversified and emphasise the importance of addressing health inequalities in future interventions.

Nina Polytimou, Christiana Adamopoulou, Christina Anagnostopoulou, Vasiliki Eirinaki, and Eleni Vousoura

Healing Harmonies: Developing community music therapy support for perinatal mental health in Greece

Despite the high prevalence of perinatal mental disorders (PMDs) and their negative impact to children's development, intervention options available to women in Greece are limited. Internationally, the use of music and music therapy has shown promise for mothers with PMDs and as support of the mother-infant bond. This project was conducted as preparatory work for the development of an accessible, community music therapy intervention for mothers living in Greece with symptoms of PMDs and their infants. To this end, we ran a mixed methods study. In the qualitative study, we partnered with an outpatient Women's Mental Health clinic and an NGO and held two focus groups: one with perinatal health professionals and one with new mothers with symptoms of PMDs. We will present insights from these discussions focusing on [a] exploring views on the use of music and music groups to alleviate symptoms of PMDs and support the mother-infant bond and [b] the barriers and facilitators in conducting music therapy groups to support new mothers. In the quantitative study, we conducted a large-scale anonymous survey with new mothers, exploring the use of music in Greek families and how this may be associated with maternal mental health and mother infant bonding. This mixed methods study enhances our understanding of how music and singing may support well-being and bonding in mother-infant dyads in the Greek cultural context. We also envisage this exploration as the first step towards organising music therapy groups for mothers and their infants in communities in Greece.



Room 2 | Performance Studio

Chaired by Kate Valentine | 15-minute contributions

Corinna Colella, Jenny McNeill, Fiona Lynn, and Una McCann Mamas in Harmony: Empowering early motherhood through song and social connection

Music based groups can offer parents invaluable support across a range of contexts, helping to address mental health and wellbeing, social connection and bonding with their infant. Women navigating the experience of early motherhood often report feelings of loneliness, stress and low mood. Existing research has shown positive outcomes for mental health for mothers when singing in both face to face and online settings. A pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT) and process evaluation was recently conducted of a music and social support group intervention; 'Mamas in Harmony'. Mothers (n=48) were randomised to receive 8 weekly 1 hour sessions comprising of group singing and facilitated social support led by a local choir leader who created the music component of easy to learn songs. Delivered alongside usual care in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The control group (n=24) received usual care only. Survey evaluations and interviews found mothers reported having enjoyed singing, feeling calm and welcomed in a non-judgemental environment, and feeling like they were part of a community while attending Mamas in Harmony. Following the sessions mothers said they felt more connected, positive, relaxed and uplifted including increased confidence in their abilities and a sense of achievement. Sessions enabled quality time for focused interaction with their infant, allowing them space to nurture their bond, make memories and sing to their baby more often between sessions. Mamas in Harmony was found to be acceptable and accessible for new mothers, supporting the creation of strong social connections, empowered motherhoods and nurtured mother-infant relationships.

Verna Vazquez Diaz de Leon

The interactive role of music as a facilitator for mother-infant bonding in early motherhood

Aim: Explore and analyse into what extent the uses of music in everyday life (singing and listening) facilitated the quality of mother-infant interactions and consequently maternal bonding during the early stages of motherhood.

Methods: Eight dyads of biological mothers with their four-to eight-month infants (M=6, SD=1.77) from Sheffield participated in a two-week quasi-experiment. The first week (control condition) considered their normal routine, and the second week (quasi-experimental condition) encouraged mothers to use their self-selected music within their assigned condition: music listening or maternal singing. The methods included: background questionnaire, measurements (parental stress and maternal bonding), online diaries, interaction videos, and a follow-up interview. The study quantitatively explored the effect of maternal bonding, parental stress, and behavioural descriptors observed on the interaction videos. And used a qualitative approach, in which the diaries and the follow-up interviews were analysed based on the early experiences of motherhood, music in everyday life, and experiences during the trial.

Results: Main findings suggest that mothers' self-selected music might reduce parental stress, specifically under the singing condition. Additionally, self-selected music enhanced the quality of face-to-face interactions, specifically under the listening condition. In general, participants self-selected music helped to feel more 'connected' with their infant.

Conclusion and Implications: The findings suggest that mothers use their self-selected music with their infant due to the infants' musical response of enjoyment, and the impact on their sense of well-being. Future studies could consider exploring father-infant bonding, as well as musical interactions in the family settings.



Brunella Govetto

Melodies of Motherhood: Investigating the impact of singing on maternal wellbeing and parentinfant relationship

This research investigates the effects of integrating singing into daily routines to enhance maternal well-being and strengthen the parent-infant bond. The study conducted singing workshops with new mothers, followed by in-depth interviews with participants and published experts. Qualitative data analysis focused on understanding how singing acts as a communicative and supportive tool, enhancing maternal well-being and mother-baby bond. The aim is to present evidence-based findings highlighting the correlation between maternal emotional health and child development outcomes, emphasizing singing's multifaceted benefits for promoting emotional support for mothers. The research focuses on three key areas: the value of maternal emotional well-being, the role of singing communicative and supporting tool, and the challenges mothers face in normalizing imperfections in caregiving routines. The study shows a strong correlation with child developmental outcomes, emphasizing singing as a therapeutic practice fostering joy and emotional support for mothers, thus nurturing a conducive environment for the baby. Qualitative data reveals how singing enhances mother-infant communication, fostering a shared emotional language through eye contact, responsive behaviours, and building security and attachment. The research addresses common challenges such as societal pressures and personal insecurities and advocates for a compassionate view of motherhood that embraces imperfections. This contribution enriches understanding of how singing can be integrated into parental well-being practices, providing valuable insights for researchers and practitioners in music therapy and parental support.

Emma Kenrick and Claire Flower

Henry's Music Therapy Project: Developing approaches to practice in family-centred neonatal care

Current literature suggests that music therapy, as part of family-centred, multi-disciplinary approaches within the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) can support the health and wellbeing of both infants and parents (2024, Ettenberger et al). This presentation outlines a pilot music therapy project within this setting, describing collaborative, creative approaches to practice and evaluation, and how such learning can inform future work in this area. The presentation will have a shared focus on practice and evaluation. We will outline key approaches to NICU music therapy practice, including voice work and lullaby writing, using examples to illustrate the benefits for infants, parents, and parent/infant pair. We also describe evaluation methods used, including online surveys, informal conversations, and musical content generated through practice. Reflections on the evaluation approaches used will be presented, alongside discussion of significant emergent themes. The shaping of this project in collaboration with parents will be reflected in the multiple voices included. The project has a focus on parental wellbeing at a particular point in time, and within a specific healthcare context. We hope the presentation adds to the growing understanding of the significance of music, and music therapy practices, in supporting the wellbeing of parents and infants at such a critical time of life.

13:15 Lunch break and discussion time (RCM Café, South Side)

Optional Singing Workshop (Performance Studio, 13:45)

During the lunch break, delegates who like to sing are invited to workshop a potential performance of a parental wellbeing themed composition with Ewan East. The short performance will feature in Ewan's contribution session in Parallel session 5, Room 1, following the Keynote (please see below).



14:15 Keynote 2 (Performance Hall)

Professor Helen Shoemark in conversation with Kirsty Jane

Musical parenting with parents of a newborn in hospital

Chaired by Rosie Perkins

Musical parenting with parents of a newborn in hospital

Hospitalization of a newborn is a stressful time during which we understand parents may experience high anxiety, grief, and demoralization. It is a time in which the potential of music to create respite, reflection, and moments of hope requires deep acknowledgment of their intersecting identities. This conversation will illuminate considerations in creating an experience of therapeutic restoration and growth with parents in hospital.

Prof Helen Shoemark is Director of Music Therapy at Temple University, Philadelphia. She has more than 40 years in the field as a clinician and educator. Her current focus is on musicality as an aspect of self-efficacy and explanatory modelling for music therapy in the hospital landscape. As an author she has published 40 articles and was co-editor of the book *Music Therapy in the Neonatal Care: Influences of Culture*. She has served as Associate Editor for the Journal of Music Therapy, and editor of the Australian Journal of Music Therapy.

Kirsty Jane is a specialist Music Therapist with enhanced knowledge in newborn behavioural observations and children's palliative care. Kirsty developed the therapies service at Noah's Ark Children's Hospice and neonatal music therapy services that create therapeutic pathways from neonatal units at Great Ormond Street, University College London and Barnet hospital to hospice care. In June 2023 Kirsty was awarded an NIHR Doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship to co-design a music therapy program to support key aspects of continuing bonds for parents with babies with uncertain futures on neonatal units. She is dedicated to increasing the acceptability and accessibility of psychological support.

15:00 Break and discussion time (RCM Café, South Side)

15:15 Parallel Session 5

Room 1 | Performance Hall

Chaired by Lorna Greenwood | 15-minute contributions

Aimee Gardner

Music and Matrescence: A developmental exploration of the facilitator's role

This contribution aims to raise awareness of the inherent challenge within the normative experience of matrescence, foregrounding the potential for facilitators of mainstream baby music groups to play a powerful role in the ecosystems of care that should surround all mothers at this important adult

developmental stage. Through a developmental exploration of the music facilitator's role within this context, this study documents the early evolution of mother-centric groups in an inner-city music education hub. It focuses on two interconnected areas: the role of the music facilitator and the developmental support offered to practitioners. Additionally, the impact on practitioners' wellbeing is considered. This research incorporates participants' lived experiences by including all voices through embedded autoethnographic techniques. Data was gathered via reflective conversations, semistructured interviews, and professional journaling. The study inquired deeply into the lived experience of matrescence, relational facilitation, and transformative learning practices through the lens of practice and leadership. Data analysis offered three overarching themes: Spaciousness, Attunement, and Transformation. Attunement emerged as central to the relational facilitation of both domains, supported by spacious pedagogies enabling the attuned sensitivity and agile responsivity of dynamic practice. Data evidenced practice transformation and personal flourishing through meaningful work, supported by a transformative learning model grounded in dialogic reflection. This contribution addresses a gap in research by exploring the relational conditions necessary for effective facilitation in practice and leadership of mother-centric programmes within the mainstream Early Childhood Music sector. It highlights the sector's potential to contribute towards the WHO's 'protective factors' supportive of maternal flourishing, with significant implications for workforce professional development.

Kate Valentine

Singing Mamas: Growing a global, grassroots network of practitioners

Singing Mamas is a global movement for singing for perinatal mental wellbeing. We operate in more than 70 UK local authorities and 10 countries worldwide. Our groups reach thousands of women and children every week. The movement was founded by NHS nurse Kate Valentine who trains women in the Singing Mamas approach. We use an 'Asset-Based Community Development' (ABCD) model to support growth and development, which means seeking out women embedded in communities and empowering them to become practitioners, rather than bringing in external 'experts'. Kate will describe the growth of Singing Mamas since it was founded as a CIC in 2019, offer case studies of women and offer an inspirational and interactive demo of the Singing Mamas approach in action.

Grace McGeoch, Kate Valentine, and Gemma Hurley Singing with mums and babies: A catalyst for professional development in midwifery

We are excited to share an example of innovative practice that embeds Creative Health in clinical education and promotes oral singing tradition as a way to wellbeing. Kate Valentine and Grace McGeoch have designed a 7-week Creative Health module pilot for first-year midwifery students, supported by Gemma Hurley, Associate Dean for Partnerships and Placements at City, St Georges University of London. Research in England shows high attrition rates among student midwives (McNeill and Kitson-Reynolds, 2024), with many qualified midwives leaving the profession alongside inequalities in maternity care (Care Quality Commission, 2024). During the Creative Health placement, student midwives learn about the benefits of singing for themselves and for parents and babies which brings them together with midwifery assessors in a shared learning space. Students learn about oral singing tradition, finding their own voices and building confidence, while practicing communication skills such as compassionate listening, conflict management, and promoting continuity of care for women and their families from diverse backgrounds. They learn about the concept of Creative Health which is the idea that creativity, culture and heritage are key to our wellbeing, and about the NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing. Voices of women, service users, advocates and clinical leaders, are woven throughout the learning which covers topics such as social prescribing and health inequalities. The pilot is ongoing at the time of writing in November 2024, and is well received by students and

educators. We are seeking funding to evaluate the pilot and to help design further iterations of the programme.

Ewan East

Parenting: Composing to capture the varying perspectives, reactions, and challenges of being new to parenting

In response to 'What musical practices could be used to support parents in a wide range of contexts?', I would like to put forward a workshop of my composition "Parenting". The piece explores the varying perspectives of parenthood and childhood through a series of games and standard scores, all the be performed live by a minimum of four vocalists at the symposium. The work details reflective and perspective lived experiences, both from my organisation of the score and the writing of poet Paul Eckert. As an example of practice, the potential performance would aim to demonstrate how musicians can use lived experiences to reflect on their wellbeing and parenting and also share how producing compositions in this manner can communicate challenges with parenting and wellbeing to a wider audience. The score develops in a way that demonstrates the parent I don't want to be but can so easily see myself slipping in to. By utilising Paul Eckert's text in a non-sequential compositional format, I was able to shift towards more negative phrasing and interactions as the piece progresses, before resolving with a positive line at the end of the piece. This is emphasised through the game-like nature of four of the 'children's perspective' scores, developing from a word search to demonstrate the discovery of language between 0-2 years, up to a game of snap for 8+ to emphasise an argumentative interaction.

Room 2 | Performance Studio

Chaired by Dennie Wolf | 15-minute contributions

Lisa Koops, Leslie Swaim-Fox, and Lauren E Hodgson Incorporating music activities for home in the library storytime

Researchers have described library storytimes as accessible spaces in which parents and carers have the opportunity to interact with their child while explicitly or implicitly learning literacy development and support, parenting/caring information, techniques, and strategies. The purpose of this research study is to document self-reported inclusion of musical activities in the home, attitudes toward music with children, and comfort incorporating musical activities by parents and carers as a result of adding selected music activities to a library storytime paired with follow-up videos. Families of toddlers who attend storytime at a library in a suburban United States city will complete questionnaires about music in the home at the beginning and end of the 10 week project. During those 10 weeks, participants will attend weekly storytimes on Thursdays that include music activities. Participants will receive an emailed video (2 minutes) reviewing the activity and including extra information about why it is important or how to adapt it for various home settings. Participants will also have the opportunity to complete an interview at the end of the session. Differences from pre- to post-questionnaires will be reported numerically. Qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews will be coded and analyzed. This project could provide a replicable model for library storytimes. The study results could also help uncover factors influencing how and why parents and carers learn musical activities to incorporate in home life, as well as attitudes towards including music.



Amelia Clapham and Natalie Meghie

Wiggles and Jiggles: A music and movement group for mums and babies

Our project 'Wiggles and Jiggles' is a community group for mums and babies at pre-crawling stage. This group is run by a fully qualified music therapist and physiotherapist. This group aims to support mums and babies in the development of healthy attachments as well as giving them opportunities to learn how to interact and engage with their babies and provide a support network of mums. The group will use a combination of music, baby massage, sensory stories and movement exercises to stimulate and engage the babies. Wiggles and Jiggles is focused on early intervention (aiming to develop key maternal and baby bonds which are vital for healthy emotional development) as well as improving maternal mental health. In addition our project is fully inclusive so open to those with special educational needs and aims to develop parents self-confidence in bringing their children to groups and mixing with children of different abilities. We have run this group several times and would love to share the outcomes of the group and examples of the structure and reasons why the group works so well to support maternal mental health and foster positive attachments, supporting early intervention. The group uses live music and movement exercises as well as baby massage techniques.

Ryan Humphrey

Melodies of care: Exploring the impact of music-making for care-experienced families

Although there is much discussion around the benefits that early years music-making projects may offer biological children and parents, there is little consideration of the impactful role such projects can hold for children in care and the key adults in their lives (Foster Carers/Adoptive Parents). This contribution considers the impact that such programmes can have for care-experienced families through undertaking a case study on two music-making programmes working with care-experienced children in Northeast England. Using participatory observations, interviews and focus groups with musicians, Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents, insights are gained into the musical activities being employed within sessions, how such programmes are supporting the development of relationships between children and the key adults in their lives and how programmes enable Foster Carers/Adoptive Parents to develop support networks. The findings indicate that such programmes are vital in positively impacting Foster Carers/Adoptive Parents' sense of well-being and supporting them in caring for the child. Finding new and innovative models of support for Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents is vital, given the overstretched local authority services and the increasing number of children entering the care system. Highlighting the multidimensional impacts of such programmes that offer benefits for the children and Foster Carers/Adoptive Parents is vital if we are to advocate for the development of more programmes that may support Foster Carers' and Adoptive Parents' wellbeing and enable them to continue to carry out their caring roles.

Elizabeth Brisola

Embracing infants through song: In search of the meanings of maternal singing

Singing to infants is a common practice for caretakers across different cultures and throughout history, serving as a key way to communicate with babies. Research in this area is growing, highlighting the benefits and effects of singing on infants' development, including its role in facilitating feeding, sleeping, and learning. However, there is still much to learn about the lived experience of mothers who sing to their babies. This phenomenological study explored the deeper meanings of maternal singing through a psychological and Humanistic lens to reveal the structural elements of this lived experience. To achieve this, thirteen individual dialogical encounters were conducted with first-time mothers from Brazil and the United States who had infants up to 18 months old. Comprehensive narratives were written and analyzed based on these encounters, and a synthesis narrative was developed. The significant elements that emerged include: (1) singing as a specific way of

communicating with the child, (2) fostering the establishment of an emotional bond, (3) helping mothers to better know their infants, (4) providing a means of recognizing themselves in the condition of being mothers, (5) offering an interesting way to share personal values and family customs, and (6) serving as a creative outlet for self-expression. These aspects of singing contribute to the mothers' potential for personal growth. The findings offer valuable insights for informing musical parenting practices and public policies, while also helping mothers gain a clearer understanding of the impact their singing has, not only on their infants but also on themselves.

17:00 Closing remarks and farewells (Performance Hall)

Closing comments, Rosie Perkins and Katie Rose Sanfilippo

Short performance, Sam Downey (voice, Urdang, City St George's)

"For Forever" from Dear Evan Hansen

Sam Downey is a dedicated performer about to enter his third year studying a BA (Hons) in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre at Urdang, City St Georges. He has appeared in touring pantomimes including The Wizard of Oz, Rapunzel, and The Little Mermaid. Sam is delighted to be invited to sing at the Royal College of Music and is grateful for the opportunity.

Thank yous and goodbyes

17:30 Close of MPWS 2025



Contributor information and biographies

(in alphabetical order)

Georgina Aasgaard

Music and Health practitioner, Alder Hey NHS Foundation Trust, Music director and mentor

Georgina Aasgaard is a Cellist and Music and Health practitioner with over 20 years of experience delivering music interventions in health and community settings. She has been a lead musician for the Liverpool Philharmonic's Music and Health Programme and Alder Hey Children's Hospital for 17 years. In collaboration with Live Music Now, she developed a pioneering mentoring programme and published a toolkit for musicians working in paediatric care. Her innovative approach to collaborative music-making extends to prisons, elderly homes, and refugee centers. Recognized with NHS awards, she won the 2019 Merseyside Woman of the Year for Arts, Culture and Media.

Christiana Adamopoulou

Rosie Adediran

Founder and Creative Director of London Rhymes

London Rhymes is a not for profit organisation that delivers singing and songwriting projects led by professional musicians in different settings involving families who face challenging circumstances. They partner with charity, NHS and community organisations in London to deliver these sessions to families accessing these settings, collaborating with them to create new songs and rhymes that reflect their lives, cultures and experiences. Where possible and appropriate, the music written is recorded and animated, then published and performed for a wider audience. This wider audience is both online and in-person - our live family music show is performed in public spaces such as arts centres, theatres and concert halls.

Sylars Akhigbe

Singer, songwriter, and social entrepreneur

Sylars Akhigbe is a visionary artist and social entrepreneur blending music and community development to create positive change. Rooted in passion to adding value to the community, Sylars combines creativity with social purpose – empowering others through art, therapeutic singing, and impactful local initiatives. Sylar's work is guided by passion, driven by impact, and anchored in service.

Lottie Anstee

Researcher, University of Roehampton, PhD student

Lottie Anstee is a PhD student at the University of Roehampton, researching music-based interventions for perinatal mental health under the supervision of Professor Lauren Stewart and Dr Katie Rose Sanfilippo. She graduated from the University of Cambridge with a BA (Hons) in Music in 2022 and from Goldsmiths, University of London, with an MSc in 2023. She has worked as a Research Assistant for the NHS and published several papers on local mental health services.

Katrina Ash-Burnham

Parent, Co-therapist

I will be presenting parts of my son's life story that was non-verbal to now fluent talking using music therapy.

Freya Bailes

Researcher, University of Leeds, Associate Professor in Music Psychology

I am an Associate Professor in Music Psychology at the University of Leeds, following previous appointments at the University of Hull, Western Sydney University, Université de Bourgogne, Ohio State University, and the University of Canberra. My research interests relate to music and wellbeing as well as music cognition. These have come together through my current project 'The Inner Music and Wellbeing Network', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. I am programme leader of the PGCert/PGDip/MA in Music and Wellbeing at the University of Leeds, and a founding co-director of the Music for Healthy Lives: Research & Practice Network.



Kate Battenfeld

Director San Diego Youth Symphony, Associate Director, Early Childhood Programs

Kate Battenfeld is the Associate Director of Early Childhood Programs at KeyNote/San Diego Youth Symphony, where she oversees parent-child music classes for ages 0-5, preschool and UTK school programs, and community outreach initiatives. She has also authored articles on early childhood music and is a local singer-songwriter, dedicated to fostering community through the power of music. Kate holds an MBA in Arts Innovation from the Global Leaders Institute and a Master's in Education from Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. With over two decades of experience in music education, research, and advocacy, Kate is passionate about enriching the lives of families and young children through music.

Elizabeth Brisola

Researcher, practitioner, parent, and Associate Professor, College of Medical Sciences of Minas Gerais

Dr Elizabeth Brisola is a researcher and clinician born in Brazil, where she has studied the experience of singing, in general, from a psychological standpoint and also, specifically, mothers' experience of singing to their infants. Now in the United States, she remains passionate about understanding the emotional, motivational, and social experience of singing and its impact on people, infants, and others around them. To achieve this, she conducts phenomenological studies with participants worldwide, exploring and disseminating the creative and affective power of music.

Maddie Broad

Artist and practitioner, Magic Acorns, Suffolk Artlink freelance artist

Maddie Broad is a participatory artist, musician and dancer based in Brighton. They are co-creator of Roly Poly, a sensory musical playscape for under-twos and their grown-ups. Maddie has worked with Magic Acorns and Starcatchers, and is currently developing a freelance dance practice in nurseries, mentored by Louise Klarnett, offering attuned improvised movement with children during free play.

Jenny Bullock

Music Therapist, Member of British Association for Music Therapy

A music therapist, teacher and performer, Jenny Bullock has special interests in working with those with learning disabilities and in neurorehabilitation. She trained in cello and viol at the Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music, and gained her MA in Music Therapy from the University of the West of England with distinction in 2022. She practices as a freelance music therapist with Chiltern Music Therapy and privately, teaches cello in schools and enjoys performing early music with chamber ensembles and orchestras, aiming to inspire, educate and enhance people's health and wellbeing through music.

Annette Burghes

Karen Burland

Professor of Applied Music Psychology, University of Leeds

Karen Burland is Professor of Applied Music Psychology at the University of Leeds and is the university academic lead for work relating to employability and student futures. Karen researches musical development and participation across the lifespan and is currently involved in projects investigating the ways in which musicians create and support their work in music, as well as in the role of music for wellbeing. Karen was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2021 in recognition of her work as a music psychology educator and her leadership in student education.

Alexandra Burton

Senior Lecturer in Mental Health/Honorary Senior Research Fellow, QMUL/UCL

I am a Senior Lecturer in Mental Health in the Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health, Queen Mary University of London. My research explores how and why, social, cultural and community programmes impact the health and wellbeing of people with mental health problems, primarily using qualitative methods of inquiry. I am interested in the interface between physical and mental health and how creative health and social prescribing programmes can support people with comorbidities. I also conduct research to improve social support and tackle loneliness and social isolation for people living with severe mental illnesses and physical health problems.



Vicky Charnock

Arts Manager, Alder Hey Hospital

I am the Arts for Health Manager at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, where I run an innovative and wide-ranging arts programme for babies, children and young people and their family. I will be presenting The Lullaby Project, which takes place on our Neo Natal Ward, with musician in residence Georgina Aasgaard.

Pui Sze Cheung

Music therapist, postdoctoral researcher, Edge Hill University, UK, University of Limerick, Ireland

Pui Sze Cheung is a registered music therapist and health researcher. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and completed an MA in Music Therapy and a PhD focusing on music therapy and perinatal mental health from the University of Limerick. In collaboration with the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service at University Maternity Hospital Limerick, HSE, Pui Sze pioneered Ireland's first music-based intervention for perinatal mental health, funded by Healthy Ireland and the Department of Health in Ireland. She was also trained in specialised Sound Birthing Methods including the Prenatal Music Bonding, Music Therapy Assisted Childbirth (MTABC), and Creative Arts Birthing to use creative arts to support the well-being of the families throughout prenatal, childbirth, and postnatal experience. Her clinical experience spans from the beginning of life to the end of life, including working with new parents, children, adolescents, adults, and older adults with mental health challenges, neurodegenerative disease, and intellectual and physical disabilities. She has led and been involved in various perinatal music therapy and arts and health projects across Ireland and the UK. Her work has been published in academic journals and presented at national and international conferences.

Amelia Clapham

CEO/Senior Music Therapist

Amelia Clapham is a senior music therapist and founder of Ace Music Therapy CIC. She has a passion for spreading the word about the transformative power of music therapy. She works with children of all ages from babies right through to young adults and is particularly passionate about autism. Amelia enjoys collaborating with other professionals and delivering groups together and supporting her local community in Chelmsford.

Corinna Colella

Researcher, PhD student, Queen's University Belfast

Corinna Colella is a PhD student at Queen's University Belfast, in the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Her PhD research involves a pilot randomised controlled trial and process evaluation of a novel music and social support intervention; Mamas in Harmony for postnatal mothers and their babies. The feasibility study aims to provide a foundation from which a protocol for a definitive RCT could be developed.

Ruth Cookson

Early Childhood Coordinator, Bright Start Islington 0-5 Service

Drawing on my Early Years background, I have dedicated my career to advocating for early intervention for families and children. Through my work with Bright Start Islington, I focus on developing a holistic and integrated program of activities that support and enable families to get the right help at the right time, making a meaningful difference and giving children the best start in life.

Tara Delve

EYFS Music Specialist, Digital Content Creator, Owner, Music in Unison

Tara is an accomplished music educator and performer with over two decades of experience teaching young children. She holds a postgraduate degree in music education alongside certifications in Dalcroze and Kodaly methods. As a composer and professional musician, she has taught at schools throughout the UK and internationally, specialising in early years music education. Her interactive teaching approach combines proven methodologies with engaging activities that make learning music educational and enjoyable for children, teachers, and parents.



Karen Diamond Music Therapist

Karen is a Music Therapist based in Northern Ireland who has worked with children and adults across a wide range of care pathways specialising in recent years in learning disability and early years. Karen is passionate about encouraging people to sing for their own mental health benefit and for communication development. Part of her work in early years involves joint working with Speech & Language Therapists in coproduction with Sure Start projects in Belfast. This work won the 2023 award for delivering innovative ways of providing effective music therapy and was the overall winner of the UK Advancing Healthcare Awards.

Zoe Dionyssiou

Professor of Music Education, Ionian University, Department of Music Studies

Zoe Dionyssiou, Professor of Music Education at the Department of Music Studies, Ionian University, Greece, directs the MA Program "Music Pedagogy" and coordinates a series of community music education programs. She is co-editor of the journal Musical Pedagogics (in Greek), author of the book "Didactics of Music: Views, approaches, perspectives" (2025), and co-author of the books: Early Childhood Music Education in the Mediterranean (2017), For a Sound-Based Education: Listening, Understanding and Co-creating the Soundscape we live in (2019), A Journey to Rebetiko for young and adults (2022), co-ordinator for two music education repositories: "Euterpe - Digital Music Repository" and "Singing Greek". She serves as a Commissioner in the Early Childhood Music Education Commission (ECME) of ISME (2022-2028) and as a member of the National Committee of Greece at the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance (ICTMD).

Kasia Don-Daniel

Artist, project developer, project manager and producer, Suffolk Artlink project development officer Kasia works as both artist and project manager for participatory arts charity Suffolk Artlink. Kasia currently runs Little Beats, Suffolk Artlink's early years music project. In addition Kasia produces creative opportunities with communities through the arts, this includes developing creative networks and partnerships, artist residencies and youth mentorship schemes. She is currently studying MA Medical and Health Humanities at UEA. Working for Suffolk Artlink has inspired her commitment to working in creative health, of which music for health in early years has become a passion.

Ewan East

Composer, Researcher, Parent, Project and Development Manager, SoundLincs

Ewan East is a composer, educator, pianist and improviser, currently undertaking a PhD in Music Composition at York St John University. The inaugural recipient of the Ann Green Prize for Contribution to University Music, Ewan is passionate about supporting multi-artistic creative ventures. Alongside his PhD research, Ewan is a Project and Development Manager at SoundLincs, leading on the community music provision across Lincolnshire and the East Midlands. Within his role Ewan manages the UpBeat adult mental health programme, and has recently supported the development of the Connect suicide prevention project.

Juliet Firth

Research assistant

Juliet has a background in music psychology research, having studied Music at Cambridge and then an MSc in Music Psychology at Goldsmiths, graduating in January 2024. Her academic interests since her masters include: the impact of music-based interventions on perinatal mental health, and the impact of the creative arts more broadly in educational contexts. She currently works as Trusts & Foundations Fundraiser for arts charity Pimlico Musical Foundation in London and freelances as a research assistant with Prof. Lauren Stewart and Dr Katie Rose Sanfilippo.



Claire Flower

Consultant Music therapist, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Claire Flower is Consultant Music Therapist within Children's Therapies at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London. She also works for Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, facilitating Together in Sound music therapy groups with people living with dementia and their companions. A deep interest in working with music and families underpins her practice, writing, and research interests. Claire is on the organising group of the International Music Therapy with Families Network, and has an ongoing curiosity about ways that practice, research, and training can be aligned to support developments in this field.

Hannah Foakes

Lead Producer, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Hannah Foakes is the Lead Producer for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's Community and Education team, named 'Resound'. She oversees the organisation's Health and Wellbeing activity as well as working on projects based on the department's other key areas of 'Inclusion and social cohesion' and 'Aspiration and achievement for all'.

Sam Frankie Fox

Co-artistic director of BAM: Babies' Adventures in Music

Sam Frankie Fox is a musician and maker of theatrical events, originally from Wales and based in The Midlands. She's best known for her expressive vocals, ethereal harp and playful approach to live performance and workshop facilitation. An Early Years specialist and Co-artistic director of 'BAM: Babies' Adventures in Music' and 'Fox & Rocha', Sam enjoys regularly working with, and performing for, young children and their adults. She is host of The Night Shift Podcast, where she keeps parents / carers with little ones company at night, narrating original stories and sharing soothing sleep music for listeners to drift off to.

Sophie Fox

Music Practitioner / Creative Producer / Director, Magic Acorns

Sophie Fox is an artist, creative producer and director at Magic Acorns CIC, a not-for-profit early years arts organisation based in Great Yarmouth that creates spaces where children, families and artists can flourish together.

Emily Gann

Founding Director, Connecting the Dots in Music

A creative producer, arts leader, musician and music educator, Emily Gann is committed to harnessing the power of music to achieve positive social impact through deep community engagement. As Founding Director of Connecting the Dots in Music, she has established a growing portfolio of creative music projects that sit at the intersection of the arts, education, community and health sectors. Since establishing Lullaby Project Australia in 2019, Emily has collectively led a diverse range of award-winning Lullaby Projects across health, rural, and community-focussed settings in South Australia. Emily was a cohort member of Global Leaders Institute for Arts Innovation (2020-21) and was awarded the SA Women in Innovation Award for the Arts in 2023. Between 2013-2018, Emily led the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra's Learning and Community Engagement program where she produced a number of new works and programs for young people and emerging artists. Emily works at Immanuel College, Adelaide, where she is both head of Year 12 and a music teacher. Emily's particular interest lies in how through music, community, and education, we can create the conditions for belonging and positive wellbeing.

Aimee Gardner

Music practitioner researcher and parent, Early Years Lead, Newham Music Education Hub

Aimee spent over 20 years in Newham as an Advanced Skills Teacher, supporting early years educators to make music with children, alongside her role as a class teacher. She now leads early years at Newham Music Education Hub, shaping the EY and families offer and supporting a team of musicians to facilitate this work. Having recently completed an MA in Education (Early Years) and qualified as a life coach, she combines her work in education with her coaching practice aimed at supporting mothers at all stages of their matrescence journey. She also facilitates a mothers' singing circle in Kent.



Desirée González

Manager and pedagogue, Auditorio de Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain), Coordinador of the Educational and Social Area

Desirée González, Coordinator of the Educational and Social Area at Auditorio de Tenerife since 2018, is a musician and holds a degree in Pedagogy and studies in Psychology, specializing in early childhood education. She has worked in the field of music education for 25 years, in both the public and private sectors, formal and informal, as a promoter, creator, and teacher for all educational levels. She coordinates and designs the educational content of the programs offered by the Educational and Social Area of Auditorio de Tenerife (Spain), aimed at students, teachers, families, and social groups, in alignment with the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Canary Islands.

Brunella Govetto

Music practitioner and researcher

Brunella has trained in the performing arts since a young age, specializing in Musical Theatre. As a professional singer, she has performed in theatre and television across the UK and Europe. Her passion for singing led her to pursue an MA in Voice Pedagogy at the Voice Study Centre and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, specializing in Singing for Health. Her recent research explored how singing workshops may support maternal well-being and the parent-infant bond. Committed to the transformative and meaningful power of voice, Brunella continues to develop her practice as a singing teacher and singing for health practitioner, investigating the benefits of singing on human well-being.

Lorna Greenwood

Head of Scalability, Breathe Arts Health Research

Lorna has worked in the arts for 15 years in various event production, project management and leadership roles. Lorna is experienced in scaling programmes in a sustainable and strategic way for individuals and communities, locally to internationally. She frequently develops and delivers talks and training packages designed to share knowledge with arts and health organisations, local authorities and most notably, the World Health Organization, on programme design, safe delivery models and evaluation. Lorna has led research partnerships with institutions such as King's College London on their SHAPER study, co-authoring papers and writing for academic publications and books.

Sarah Hadley

Music Therapist, Advisory Panel Member, Music as Therapy International (MAST)

During 40 years working as a music therapist, Sarah's commitment to working with parents (or with those who have parental responsibility) has been an integral part of her practice; Sarah maintains that this partnership provides the foundation for achieving the best possible outcomes for children. Her direct work with parents of children born with Down Syndrome in the mid-1990s was the inspiration for the development of Interactive Music-Making (IMM). IMM, a targeted, child-centred approach which draws on music therapy techniques and attunement theory, helps practitioners and parents build secure attachment relationships and fosters each child's individual potential through shared music-making.

Ryan Humphrey

Lecturer in Arts Management and Cultural Policy, University of Manchester

Ryan Humphrey is a Lecturer in Arts Management and Cultural Policy at the University of Manchester. He holds a PhD in Community Music and Cultural Policy from York St John University. Before this, he completed an MA in Community Music Research at York St John University and a BA (Hons) in Community Music at the University of Sunderland. Alongside his academic work, Ryan also works as a community musician delivering work with care-experienced children and families

Gemma Hurley

Associate Professor, Associate Dean for Partnerships and Placements, City St Georges University

Dr Gemma Hurley is the Associate Dean for Partnerships and Placements and Associate Professor at City, St Georges University of London. Gemma qualified as a Registered General Nurse (RGN) in 1990 and a Registered Midwife (RM) in 1994 and was awarded the Long Service Award for over 36 years of service in Community Healthcare by the Queen's Nursing Institute. Her advocacy for integrating art into healthcare education



emphasizes the importance of nurturing compassion, empathy, resilience, and emotional intelligence. Gemma worked with Singing Mamas to provide a placement opportunity for student midwives that showcases her commitment to creative approaches in education.

Polly Ives

Creative Director/CEO/Creative Practitioner, Concerteenies

Polly Ives is one of the UK's leading music educationalists with a varied portfolio as a concert presenter, narrator, promoter, workshop leader, trainer and cellist. Polly believes that music should be accessible to everyone from birth and throughout people's lives. Her career has focused on finding unique and creative ways to provide high-quality musical experiences for young children (particularly 0-8 year olds) and their wide and varied communities.

Charlotte Jolly

Music practitioner

Charly Jolly is a Suffolk-based composer interested in experiences that connect community participatory arts with live musical performance. She is a clarinettist, singer and multi-instrumentalist using improvisation as a key element to her work. Charly has a specialism in Early Years music after studying a PG Cert at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) and working with Magic Acorns, learning about child-led approaches to working with 0-5s. Charly is interested in finding ways to connect with people through music and help people of all ages and circumstances nurture trust in their own natural musicality.

Zehra Karademir

Researcher, Associate Lecturer, Goldsmiths University of London

I am a developmental psychologist specializing in parent-child emotional communication in early childhood. My research explores how emotional expressions in singing—a dynamic exchange between parent and child—shape emotions and strengthen their bond. I hold a BSc in Psychology from Roehampton, an MSc in Child Development from UCL, and a PhD in Psychology from Goldsmiths, where I examined the role of emotional valence and musical familiarity in infant emotions and communication. Currently, I am a PT Associate Lecturer in the Psychology department, teaching undergraduate students.

Emma Kenrick

Music Therapist, Chelsea & Westminster NHS

Emma Kenrick completed her music therapy masters at Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Since then she has worked in a range of education, healthcare and community settings with a variety of client groups. She currently works as a Senior Music Therapist in the Child Development Service at Chelsea and Westminster NHS trust and across paediatrics at St Mary's Hospital. She also works on the Neonatal Intensive Care units at St Mary's and Queen Charlotte's hospitals, and is currently involved in a pilot project on the NICU at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Emma is particularly passionate about learning from the experiences and working alongside families, children and other healthcare professionals, to develop our understanding of how music can support development and wellbeing.

Lisa Koops

Professor of Music Education, Case Western Reserve University

Lisa Huisman Koops is Professor of Music Education at Case Western Reserve University. She also teaches early childhood music classes and is the host of the podcast Parenting Musically. Her research focuses on the vital role of the family in optimizing children's musical experiences and learning. She is the author of A Family Guide to Parenting Musically (Oxford, 2024).

Amanda Krause

Senior Lecturer (Psychology), James Cook University

Dr Amanda E. Krause is a Senior Lecturer (Psychology) in the College of Healthcare Sciences at James Cook University (Queensland, Australia). She also currently serves as President of the Australian Music & Psychology Society. Her music psychology research focuses on how we experience music and in our everyday lives and how these experiences influence our health and well-being.



Natasha Krichefski

Senior Community Manager, London Symphony Orchestra

Bright Start Islington and the London Symphony Orchestra have run 'Tuning In' - a parent wellbeing approach for parents of babies under 6 months - in partnership for 3 years. Families are referred to the programme and the focus is on connection - between parents and babies, and between parents in the room. Sessions emphasise openness, togetherness and creativity, and a collective song-writing process supports participants to give voice to lived experience and self-expression.

Sara Lee

Artistic Director/music practitioner, Irene Taylor Trust

Following a performance at HMP Wormwood Scrubs as part of her degree at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Sara was offered the opportunity to develop all aspects of creative music in the prison, which, via a Butler Trust award in 1995, led to her being asked to form the Irene Taylor Trust. Sara has held the role of Artistic Director since 1995, developing, supporting and delivering the organisation's work with prisoners, former prisoners, young people on the fringes of the criminal justice system and other marginalised groups, in the UK and overseas.

Rachel Levy

Mental health clinician, Occupational Therapist, City & Hackney Perinatal Mental Health Team, East London NHS Foundation Trust

Rachel is an Occupational Therapist in City & Hackney Perinatal Mental Health Team, working in partnership with professional musicians at the London Rhymes project. She co-delivers community based singing and songwriting sessions to mother-baby pairs where mothers are undergoing treatment for moderate-severe mental health difficulties under the perinatal service.

Melissa Lima

Researcher, music therapist and music educator

I completed my master's degree in music at the Federal University of Bahia in 2024. I am a music therapist and music educator. I have my clinic where I treat neurodivergent children and adults. I am a member of the current board of the Bahia Music Therapy Association, in Brazil.

Gail MacLeod

Music practitioner, charity leader, researcher and parent

Gail MacLeod is a musician, creative facilitator, community songwriter and coach. She is a founder director of the award-winning charity Soundcastle. As part of this dynamic artist and woman-led team, Gail has spent over a decade working to unite communities across London and the Southeast through captivating musical experiences, building dynamic music projects that enable people at all ages and stages of life to create imaginative and thought-provoking new music. With an acute understanding of the barriers many face to life affirming creative activity, Soundcastle ignites musical communities with great care and understanding of the mental health challenges we face as a society, as arts practitioners and as excluded communities coming together to express the world we see around us.

Alice Marshall

Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader, University of Derby

Alice Marshall (Vale) is a Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for Dance at the University of Derby. As Artistic Director of Adaire to Dance, she creates accessible contemporary works that engage new audiences. Her collaborations with Illuminos produce visually striking performances that spark dialogue on social issues. Alice's research explores dance's accessibility and impact, contributing to academic discussions with Routledge credentials. Blending choreography, pedagogy, and advocacy, she uses dance as a tool for meaningful change, inspiring and educating through her innovative practice.



Tríona McCaffrey

Associate Professor of Music Therapy, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, Participatory Health Research Unit, Health Research Institute

Dr Tríona McCaffrey is Associate Professor of Music Therapy at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick (UL), Ireland. She holds a BA in Music and Irish (Trinity College Dublin), MA in Music Therapy (UL), Graduate Diploma in Psychology (Open University) and PhD in service user evaluation of music therapy (UL). Her music therapy practice background is in adult mental health. Tríona leads the 'Music for Parental and Infant Wellbeing Research Group' at UL who have carried out several research projects on perinatal wellbeing. Tríona's most important role is being Mammy to her three small children.

Lucy McCrudden

Founder/CEO, Dance Mama™ CIC, PhD student

Lucy McCrudden is Founder/CEO of Dance Mama™ CIC, advocating and celebrating professional dancing parents, highlighting their issues and providing inspiration, information and support. Lucy's 22-year career has dove-tailed her own work with key positions in learning and participation with world-class organisations including The Place and The Royal Opera House. She has taught over 19,000 people and has engaged with a wide variety of cultural organisations in consulting, management, choreography and presenting/public speaking roles. Secretariat - Active Pregnancy Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board, she received an Honourable Mention for the inaugural AWA Woman in Dance Award, won One Dance UK's Change Maker Award 2022, in the same year she delivered her TEDx talk as she embarked on her PhD at Christ Church Canterbury University. In 2023 she co-Founded the AHRC-funded International Parenting and Dance Network and was shortlisted for This Mum Moves Ambassador of the Year. In 2024 she co-authored a chapter on parenting in dance with Professor Angela Pickard in The Female Dancer (Farmer and Kindred) and featured in an online campaign for Women's Health and Barbie, Power of Play.

Grace McGeoch

Music practitioner and GP with interest in Creative Health

Dr Grace McGeoch is a North Central London GP with an interest in Creative Health and addressing health inequalities. She leads the South Islington PCN Group Clinic pilot, partnering with community organisations to deliver personalised care for diverse groups in local settings. An advocate for Lifestyle Medicine, she explores how creativity, culture, and social solutions enhance wellbeing. Beyond her clinical work, she leads singing groups, coaches doctors, and enjoys songwriting.

Alice Nicholls

Music Therapist, Forget Me Not Children's Hospice

Alice Nicholls is a Music Therapist working with children with life-shortening conditions and their families in hospice and palliative care. She provides 1:1 and family-orientated therapy sessions that not only increase wellbeing, but also allow parents and children to make memories together in a creative and nurturing environment. Alice is based in West Yorkshire.

Claudia Oblasser

Professor(FH), IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems, Austria

Claudia has been a practising midwife in Austria for 19 years; with a PhD from City, University of London; currently a lecturer and researcher at IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems on the Master Programme Applied Health Sciences.

Maryann Onyeaka

Penny Osmond

Music practitioner, Creative Futures

Penny is a creative music practitioner with a specialism in early childhood music making. Penny believes in the power of the voice to embed identity and provide wellbeing.



Rachael Perrin

Co-director/ Music Facilitator, Soundcastle

Rachael is a parent, therapeutic foster carer and co-director of arts charity, Soundcastle. She believes in the essential value of music and creativity in daily life and advocates for this through her role in Soundcastle. This sees her delivering and managing creative music programmes, supporting the development of the charity across London and the South East and raising understanding of the value of Mental Health First Aid. Rachael strives to integrate her varied experiences as a mother, foster carer and creative practitioner based on her lived experience of holding trauma. She sees music at the heart of bonding and healing."

Jessica Pitt

Creative Researcher and Director, Magic Acorns

Jess is Co-Director of Magic Acorns, an early years arts development organisation based in Great Yarmouth. She is an early childhood music educator-researcher who works in community contexts with parents/caregivers and very young children. As Creative Researcher she is exploring research as an embedded practice within an arts organisation - and continuing to be inspired by young children's ways of knowing and understanding the world; with sound, humans and more than humans.

Avozie Pollendine

Music Practitioner

Ayozie is a singer with many years' experience as a singing and workshop facilitator. She is currently working with Creative Futures on the Music at Heart project, delivering singing sessions for mothers in the area of maternal mental health. She is passionate about working with families and also delivers singing sessions for families in temporary housing.

Nina Polytimou

Researcher, lecturer, University College London

Nina Polytimou is a Psychology Lecturer in the Department of Psychology and Human Development at University College London. She completed her PhD in Developmental and Music Psychology in 2018 where she investigated musical development and the relationship between musical skills and language in young children. As part of her work, she has developed the Music@Home Questionnaire, a widely cited instrument to assess informal musical interactions and experience in the homes of children under 5 years. She has a growing record of internal and external funding awards for projects exploring how music therapy affects family well-being and how musical experience within families and educational settings affects cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development.

Maria Magdalena Sanchez

Co-founder, Grandes Oyentes (Spain), Phd student, Royal College of Music (UK)

Maria is a doctoral researcher at the Royal College of Music in London, awarded by the London Arts and Humanities Partnership (AHRC). As a social entrepreneur, she is interested in bridging theory and practice and in transferring research to society. She co-founded the organisation Grandes Oyentes (Spain), awarded the National Youth Award in Culture. Her research interests and motivations revolve around music psychology and neuroscience, musical development and education, the potential impact of music in health and wellbeing at diverse settings, and the study of cultural audiences and cultural rights. Maria has been recently appointed by the Ministry of Culture of Spain to participate in the drafting of the new National Cultural Rights Plan. "

Diana Santiago

PROPAP Professor, Federal University of Bahia, Brazil

I am a PROPAP Professor and Senior Researcher at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, and at the Brazilian National Council of Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq. My research stems from my performance practice as a pianist, music educator, and art therapist. I have studied the cognitive processes of musical performance, musical development, musical memory, group performance, and the impact of music on well-being. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Piano Performance (UFBA), a Double-Major Master's degree in Piano Performance and Literature and in Music Education (Eastman School of Music), and a Doctorate in Music (UFBA).



Ricardo Santos Rocha

Performer, music practitioner, Co-artistic director, BAM: Babies' Adventures in Music

Ricardo is a multi-instrumentalist and composer originally from Portugal and based in the Midlands, UK. He plays a variety of plucked instruments, diatonic accordion and hand percussion. Ricardo has extensive experience of working on music-led projects for live theatre, poetry and film. Ricardo specialises in making work for Early Years children, their families and carers. He is Co-artistic director of 'BAM: Babies' Adventures in Music' and 'Fox & Rocha', and is co-creator and composer on The Night Shift Podcast, a collection of original stories and soothing sleep tracks, created for parents/carers to drift off to.

Mark Scott

Project Manager, Evolve Music

Mark has extensive experience of developing and managing community arts projects in the UK having supported projects for those with mental health issues, those in recovery from addiction, SEN and family/early years interventions across the UK. Mark is also a Community Music Leader, supporting vulnerable young people and adult groups to access and explore music-making and sees firsthand the incredible difference music can make to those most vulnerable in our communities."

Neta Spiro

Reader, Royal College of Music, London

Neta Spiro is Reader in Performance Science at the Royal College of Music and honorary Research Fellow at Imperial College London, UK. Two questions underlie her research: What can the roles of music in health and wellbeing be and what is communicated during music making? Her research explores interaction in music, the extent of overlapping cognition in music making, and effects of music engagement on judgements as well as health and wellbeing outcomes. Neta is interested in interdisciplinary, international, and intercultural collaboration. She co-leads the Music Care International Network which brings together researchers and practitioners with different perspectives.

Leslie Swaim-Fox

Matthew Vale

Music practitioner

Matthew Peter Vale is a composer and co-founder of Illuminos, an audio-visual creative partnership with his brother Rob Vale. Trained in music composition, he specialises in a fusion of synthesized, natural and traditional instrumental sounds, crafting immersive scores. His compositions draw inspiration from places and people, shaping unique sonic landscapes that enhance the emotional impact of each project. Matt's work seamlessly blends digital media with public spaces, integrating music with installation, dance, and theatre. His dedication to site-specific storytelling has led to numerous high-profile collaborations, creating powerful, multisensory experiences that transform environments and engage audiences on a deeper level.

Kate Valentine

Founder/Director, Singing Mamas

Kate Valentine is an NHS nurse and the founder of Singing Mamas, a global movement for perinatal mental well-being through singing. Operating in over 70 UK local authorities and 10 countries, Singing Mamas reaches thousands of women and children weekly. Kate trains women in the Singing Mamas approach, using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model to empower community-led practitioners. The success and growth of Singing Mamas lie in its skilled, committed leaders—nurses, doctors, teachers, musicians, and mothers. Kate advocates for creative health, demonstrating how singing fosters connection, resilience, and well-being in maternal and community health settings. www.singingmamas.org

Verna Vazquez-Diaz de Leon

Music practitioner

Verna Vazquez-Diaz de Leon has over 12 years of experience working with families and music. Her passion for research grew from her extensive work with at-risk families in Mexico. She earned her MA in Psychology of Music from the University of Sheffield, where she developed a project exploring how self-selected music influences maternal attachment between mothers and infants. Verna is now focused on broadening this



research to include all family members. Her primary goal is to provide families with accessible tools that support their well-being and strengthen their unity.

Bethany Vleminckx

Music Therapist and Devon Hub Project Manager and Music Practitioner, Evolve Music

Beth Vleminckx is a Music Therapist from South Devon. She specialises in Music in Early Years and delivers group and individual sessions to support attunement and wellbeing. Beth is the co-founder and Devon Hub Project Manager of Evolve Music, a charity that provides inclusive music making opportunities with communities across the South West of England. Evolve's Early Years programmes focus on child-led, adult-responsive musical play and include parent-child sessions as well as Early Years workforce development residencies.

Lisa Williams

Music therapist and parent

"He's non verbal"- Tunes, Chill and Chat- a community music therapy group working with families to support communication and improve outcomes for children and their parents/carers.

Kerry Wilson

Reader in Cultural Policy, Liverpool John Moores University

Dr Kerry Wilson is a Reader in Cultural Policy at Liverpool John Moores University, where she co-leads the Social Innovation research group as part of the university's Institute for Health Research. She specialises in research and evaluation on the social value of arts and culture and the civic function of cultural assets in health, social care, and criminal justice. https://frontlineculture.net/

Dennie Wolf

Principal Researcher, WolfBrown

Dennie Wolf is a life-long researcher with an interest in the well-being of young families, going back to the women health activism of 1970s. She is currently Principal Researcher at WolfBrown, an international arts and culture research firm. There she specializes in understanding how arts participation can contribute to well-being and ways in which inequitable access to those opportunities can be redressed.

Tony Woods

Natasha Zielazinski

Music practitioner

Natasha is a composer, artist and cellist whose work draws on improvisation, folk traditions, experimental music making and a love of early and contemporary repertoire. As a composer she works with and alongside other artists, performers, communities and places. Her social arts practice has involved collaborative projects with Newham's Magpie Project, work with Women for Refugee Women as well as partnerships between organisations like the London Symphony Orchestra and Bright Start, Islington.