POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
2015
Inside covers: picture from Sir Henry Wood's copy of *La mer*, in the Academy's collections.
‘Academy postgraduates work in close collaboration with our creative staff — and in a peer group of exceptional fellow students. As part of the largest postgraduate student community of the UK conservatoires, and with our flexible approach to programme building, you will be in a uniquely effective position to take full advantage of the astonishing expertise that walks into the building every day.’

Neil Heyde  BMus, MMus, PhD, LMusA, Hon ARAM
Head of Postgraduate Programmes

A bridge to a professional career

The Academy takes enormous pride in the creative success of its postgraduate students and the reputation of our programmes. Postgraduates have been a vital part of the Academy’s cultural life for decades, in a uniquely collaborative performance environment ideally suited to helping talented musicians — from across the globe — to achieve their full potential.

We have more postgraduate students than any other UK conservatoire, and our portfolio of programmes is designed to serve the exceptionally wide range of artistic personalities and career aspirations of instrumentalists, singers and composers in the twenty-first century.

Above all, the Academy’s aim at postgraduate level is to ensure that every student has significant opportunities to work with their peers under the direction of world-leading musicians.

The Academy’s Diary of Events presents each term an outstanding array of creative work at the very highest level and you will have the opportunity to take part in a range of events which mirror your main focus and supplementary interests.

Individual support

Your individual Principal Study lessons are the foundation of the programmes, but individual support does not stop there. Professional development activities across the spectrum — from business development skills to practice and performance enhancement techniques — are supported by one-to-one tutorials in which our experienced staff will help you to find and develop your individual professional niche.
‘I completed my undergraduate study in Si Chuan Conservatoire of Music. Then I had such a valuable opportunity to study at the Royal Academy of Music for my MA. I took the flight from Shanghai to London. It was a huge challenge, because it was a totally new environment and a new society for me. It was my first time abroad.

My teachers and classmates here have been so great. I have started to learn how to become a Bel Canto singer — my professor carefully improving my technique, language and dynamic contrast. Singing in the Academy’s language classes gives regular experience in performing to an audience. Acting and movement are also very important for professional singers, so we are taught these too.

I am now delighted to be studying with Royal Academy Opera. It is difficult, but it is the best preparation for my professional singing career. I have sung in masterclasses, and many roles in opera scenes. I am preparing to sing the title role in Gianni Schicchi — my first big operatic role. A fresh and funny Gianni Schicchi is coming!’

Haobin Wang
‘When I came to London one year ago to study Masters at the Royal Academy of Music, I was far from realising what the school had to offer. It is a school where each student is unique and personally coached in their own way. It is a school where, unlike so many music schools, the topic of ‘life after studying’ isn’t a taboo but a principal matter of introspection and discussion. Right in the enrollment week, I was asked to think about what I personally wanted for my future: what kind of career, what level of income, what priorities, and how I would get where I wanted. This is when I realised how little I had given it a thought and how important it was to have a plan for the next years. The panic moment was very short, thanks to my portfolio supervisor and other very qualified and supportive staff members. I am on my way towards taking full responsibility for my career — what greater purpose could a postgraduate programme serve?

In many areas the Academy offers me much more than I wished: the amazing cello lessons; the many masterclasses allowing me to discover different artistic sensibilities from all over the world; the wonderful, very professional orchestra projects (with extremely motivated musicians and great conductors); and the original and eye-opening lectures (such as the pathway that I will be following this year in order to better understand the stringed instrument market and different violin-making schools). I’ve never felt as inspired playing the cello, and as excited about being a professional musician.’
‘With a list of alumni that reads like a Who’s Who of classical music over the last two centuries, there is no doubting that the Royal Academy of Music has successfully retained and developed its status as a centre of excellence’
Classical Music magazine

‘The Royal Academy of Music in London is internationally known and recognised as representing the highest values of music and musical society’ — Daniel Barenboim

‘This building has been absolutely at the centre of everything that I have done, everything that I have learnt’ — Sir Simon Rattle

‘The Royal Academy seems to me an inspiring and enchanted institution’ — Bruno Monsaingeon

Developing your own pathway

With the introduction of the MA as our core postgraduate programme in 2008 the Academy established a system of educational provision that allows specific pathways of study for each student — identifying career requirements and developing open dialogue with the programme rather than following a ‘pre-configured’ format.

We understand that student needs at postgraduate level can differ wildly, and offer both one-year and two-year pathways for most MA and MMus students (please check the department pages of our website, www.ram.ac.uk). We also respond flexibly to changing needs during your study: a significant number of students move between the one-year and two-year options as needs change or new directions are discovered.

Around the core of department-specific activities (your one-to-one lesson, orchestra, opera, chamber music etc.) we have a co-ordinated system of awards that map to the appropriate professional requirements and levels of all students.

We aim to help each student find their own way of developing a lifelong fascination with and understanding of the materials with which they work — and for the human stories binding them together.
World-Class Orchestral Experience

The Academy offers a bespoke orchestral training programme which is fully integrated into its MA and MMus provision.

Our celebrated diary of events — with an unrivalled roster of conductors and trainers — generates an environment which allows students to aspire to an orchestral career at the highest level.

Sectional coaching and audition workshops by the most eminent representatives of all the London orchestras.

Alongside established connections with the LSO, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, London Sinfonietta and many other ensembles, the Academy benefits from tailored associations designed to match the requirements of focused orchestral study to the individual.

Thanks to the Academy’s unparalleled international reputation, we have recently appointed regular visiting professors from the great orchestras (notably the Berlin Philharmonic, Concertgebouw and Lucerne Festival Orchestras) — several of whom were themselves students here.
‘When I decided I wanted to specialise in historical performance, the Royal Academy of Music seemed the obvious choice. Not only do the principal-study professors consist of many of the leading musicians in the field, but we work regularly with visiting artists such as Masaaki Suzuki, Laurence Cummings and Rachel Podger. For one of the smallest departments within the Academy, historical performance is certainly one of the most active. There are unparalleled opportunities for high-profile performances, including the monthly Kohn Foundation Bach Cantata series, where the high level of professionalism that’s expected is the perfect preparation for life out in real world.

What has set my experience at the Academy apart is the close sense of community within the department. Being able to interact with my Head of Department on a regular basis, who is available for careers advice and feedback, has been especially valuable. I have formed great friendships and there are ample opportunities for chamber music and to foster lasting musical partnerships. The friendly atmosphere allows for a free exchange of ideas, and I feel I am constantly being challenged and encouraged to question why I choose to play in the way I do.’

Bethan White
‘Before arriving at the Academy what I was looking for in a composition course was a challenging and inspiring environment where I could experiment and develop my skills as a composer. After finishing my Masters here, I can say that’s exactly what I got. The course is very intense; it has a large number of seminars, masterclasses and projects, some of which for me have had international repercussions.

A choral piece that I wrote here for the BBC Singers was performed by Saint Louis Choir in Missouri. At the same time another piece was being performed in New York as part of the MATA International Festival. I also went to Brazil to represent the Academy at the International Winter Festival, where my music was performed and won a prize. Another very interesting project was a collaboration with the Canary Islands Conservatory of Music to write pieces for an incredible space — a 30-metre-tall petrol tank with 20 seconds of reverb. I was one of four Academy composers who went to Tenerife and wrote pieces to be performed there, collaborating with local players and composers.

I decided to stay on for a Doctorate, thanks to the support of BMI and Santander, to continue my research on collaboration with a special focus on new instrumental approaches and softening the edges of the composer–instrument–player triangle.’
Master of Arts

The MA incorporates a wide range of ‘professional development pathway’ options, including workshops on concert practices, contemporary music collaborations, teaching, conducting and issues in interpretation; seminars on the economics and business of music, analysis and aesthetics, recording and performance traditions, and supervision for student-led projects. Some departments also run their own specialist pathways.

The PGCert is the MA in all but name and caters for those who cannot meet the MA matriculation requirements. Almost everyone who enrolls on the PGCert eventually graduates with an MA.

Master of Music

The MMus builds on the core MA: students who see themselves as ‘project led’ and want to take specific control of their future concert-giving or academic development undertake a specific research-led project that may be focused on the delivery of a concert event or recording.

Many of the projects undertaken on this programme have proved to be vital platforms in the early years of ex-students’ professional lives.

Professional Diploma

The ProfDip is aimed at students who have identified a particular area of potential specialism (normally during masters-level study) and provides a platform for specialist professional development in that area.

Advanced Diploma

(Opera) In recognition of Opera students’ special requirements, we created an Advanced Diploma in 2011. This is set at the equivalent of doctoral level of the FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications). Prospective students will normally have a Master’s degree, but non-standard routes are also possible.

(Instrumentalists) This programme is aimed at students at the highest artistic level. It provides a bespoke mentoring and support package for the development of a distinctive career.

Doctorates

In addition to the taught postgraduate programmes we offer a PhD in both composition and performance. The doctorate allows students with highly developed performance or composition skills to focus their work through engaging in a substantial research project that will normally have their own creative output at its heart, but which will also require critical context and critical reflection. This is supported by an outstanding series of research events.

Our exceptionally research-creative staff and doctoral students have developed models for critical engagement as artists which have an impact throughout the postgraduate community. Our collections of source materials (eg. manuscripts, programmes, marked scores, working documents) are outstanding and we also have one of the world’s great collections of stringed instruments (many of which are on loan to current students).
‘Studying on this collaborative course, I get all the obvious benefits of being at an institution where the standard of principal study lessons and orchestral projects is fantastic, but I also get to attend seminars and workshops outside of my principal study department.

In the months that I’ve been here, I’ve already met performers, academics, colleagues and teachers with perspectives on music that I’d never thought about previously, allowing me to think about the industry on a wider scale than ‘only’ performing on the trumpet. I believe that the course mirrors and prepares me for the wide set of skills that a professional musician now needs — a solid understanding of your instrument, analysing editions, arranging, teaching and self-promotion to name but a few!

Ideally, I’d love to freelance in the UK and Europe in period performance, orchestras of all sizes and brass chamber ensembles. There is a great set of teachers to prepare me for this lifestyle and I have had many chats about my realistic career and lifestyle goals with the Head of Department, professors and working professionals. It has made it very simple to work out what I need to do to get where I want to be.’

Darren Moore
‘It was a big decision to come all the way from Australia to study here, but the Academy has proven to be the best possible environment I could have hoped for in which to pursue postgraduate studies. I feel continually inspired by the cultural vibrancy of London, the eminent professorial staff of the Academy, and my fellow students. I am challenged by the diverse range of opportunities available. There is also the most fantastic sense of camaraderie among the students here — an altogether supportive and encouraging atmosphere in which great development as a musician is possible. I have been afforded so many varied opportunities through the Academy which collectively have provided me with experience that will prove invaluable when I graduate. I love orchestral playing and have had the chance to perform in the Academy’s orchestras under internationally acclaimed conductors, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and play in a side-by-side project with the Philharmonia. Chamber ensembles I have formed during my time here have led to various performance engagements both at the Academy itself and externally. And when my own rehearsals, lessons and projects aren’t keeping me busy enough, I have always tried to make the most of the activities in other departments: masterclasses, concerts, lectures... but given the Academy’s full diary of events I’m sure to miss out on something I was meaning to go to!’

Bronte Hudnott
‘As a postgraduate, what I was looking for in a musical theatre course was an environment that would challenge and inspire me; and then offer a springboard into the profession. The Academy does exactly that... and much more! Every week offers a diverse and stretching programme of classes and projects covering the many disciplines of the theatrical industry. Whether learning a dance routine, developing different singing styles, performing a cabaret or preparing for the Agents’ Showcase, you are under the watchful eye of some truly legendary professionals. Regardless of what background you come from, they are committed to strengthening any existing performing talents you possess and have an uncanny knack of drawing out new talents you didn’t even realise you had!

The course is intense and demands a lot of commitment both physically and mentally, but this is what makes it so exciting. I really have felt part of a vibrant, professional company. There is a constant focus on the ever-changing performance industry and how we can best equip ourselves to have long and successful careers as actors. I will always cherish my year at the Academy and know that the lessons I have learnt here will stand me in good stead throughout my career.’
‘Studying at the Academy has been one of my life-long dreams. Having had the opportunity to be a part of this incredible place still feels unreal at times. I chose to study here as an undergraduate, and then to stay on as a postgraduate, because I strongly wanted to be in an environment that challenges me on a daily basis.

I have performed so many times during my years here, both as a soloist and as a chamber musician. One of the memories that I treasure greatly dates back to my third undergraduate year, when I performed Stravinsky’s Concerto for Piano and Wind. The many other highlights have included recording Steve Reich’s Variations for Two Pianos, Vibraphones and String Quartet, and performing Bartók’s Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion at Kings Place. I have also had the honour to play in masterclasses for many of the famous musicians who visit here, including Imogen Cooper and Stephen Kovacevich.

I believe that the Academy’s holistic teaching system has made me want always to be a better and better musician. It has given me all the tools necessary to succeed once I graduate.’
Patron:  HM The Queen
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester GCVO
Principal: Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

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