

NAMHE Annual Conference Report – 6 May 2014

The 2014 NAMHE Conference was hosted by Bath Spa University and focused on 'Learning Communities: building vision and sharing practice in Higher Music Education'.

NAMHE members from University Music Departments and Conservatoires across the UK gathered to reflect on what has been learned about improving educational practice by researching Higher Music Education and to seek new means by which to enhance our effectiveness as a community.

The morning's keynote address on 'Learning Communities' was given by Pam Burnard (University of Cambridge). The round table that responded to this featured Joe Bennett (Bath Spa University), Kara McKechnie (Leeds University), Charlotte Tomlinson (freelance), and Adam Hope (Kingston University). Joe Bennett reflected on how music is now made and consumed and questioned whether HE should reflect music in society or whether it should attempt to influence it. He also questioned notions of creativity and constraints in academia and in the external world. Adam Hope, a postgraduate student representative from Kingston University, reflected on how communities of practitioners in music could be brought together to value their own creative contributions. Kara McKechnie referred to community engagement outside HE in the area of dance, and in particular to her work on collaborative performance in a partnership between Leeds University and Opera North. Charlotte Tomlinson spoke about health and well-being for music students in HE. She advocated that performers should be helped to rebuilding their relationships with instruments in a holistic way and that educators should build care into the curriculum through workshop facilitation.

Liz Dobson (Huddersfield University) gave the afternoon keynote address on 'The Gift of Confidence through collaboration; a case for offering extra-curricular interdisciplinary co-creating.' Liz spoke of her experience of facilitating extra-curricular co-creation and asked whether this was valued and educationally valid. She explored notions of distributed collaboration and multiple creativities. The plenary session, led by Charles Wiffen (Bath Spa University), Helen Julia Minors (Kingston University) and Martin Blain (Manchester Metropolitan University) explored the HE Music community's role in fostering creativity. The group explored the idea of constructing meaning from creativity with particular reference to the assessment of process.