

NAMHE Annual Conference 2015 Report

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow 5 May 2015

The 2015 NAMHE Conference was hosted by The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, and was titled 'Music – Learning – Technologies': it investigated the relationship between learning and the use of technology (in the broadest sense of the word). Led by J Simon van der Walt, the conference explored how many of our students are highly skilled in certain technologies in their everyday life, but these technologies can also facilitate portfolio development, dissemination of work and marketing of ones work. Additionally, it tackled issues surrounding the use of technologies in the classroom/lecture theatre, and considerations of accessibility, ethics and wider training were integral to discussion.

Key questions included: What technologies are available for music and what is their potential in HE? How do they impact on the composition, performance and study of music? What role might technology play for different repertoires? How might technology change the ways in which music research is conducted and taught? What role can technologies play in interdisciplinary studies? What barriers – technical or human – restrict the use of such technologies? What tools and support are required to make the most of the potential of digital technologies for music?

After the association's AGM, Danijela Bogdanovic (Open University) presented the aims, questions, research methods and findings of her research in the Gender Equality Mark Research Project. Her report was launched at the conference and copies distributed – a pdf will be circulated to NAMHE reps along with a video by Dani, explaining the context, scope and methodology of the project. The data collected was presented, with acknowledgement that there remains much data that could be published in other forms to assist colleagues who are considering an application to GEM. Dani drew out in particular the findings that related directly to the topic of the conference – how gender stereotypes impact on teachers as well as learners in the area of music technology.

Significantly, this year's conference included a keynote address by six students and was structured as a pecha kucha. James Slimings (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) explored technologies and applications that can facilitate vocal and choral teaching by highlighting the change of timbre, and which break down the use of metaphor in describing the change in vocal tone by illustrating it in graphic form. Charlotte Hoather (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) explored the potential of social media to generate a professional portfolio and discussed how she had successfully raised her international profile by charting online her progress towards becoming an opera singer. Sam Kendall (City University) explored how technology had impacted upon his undergraduate degree and how he now reflects on the use of technology theoretically, as part of his MA degree. Zaina Shibabi (Liverpool Hope University) explored the databases, archives (electronic) and various social-media platforms that facilitate research and assist in finding secondary sources, debates and discussions in the field. Meg Impey (Kingston University) raised a question regarding the balance of theory and practice in teaching and learning music technology with specific reference to the UK and USA modules, informed by a year of Study Abroad. Twila Bakkar (Bangor University) explored the many media portals that can support a PhD in historical musicology, and the methodological challenges of researching a composer who was among the first generation

to use computer-notation software. Electronic access to primary sources and the issue of accessibility and continued access were raised.

Chaired by Charles Wiffen, Charlie Inskip (UCL) presented some preliminary analysis of data gathered in the research project 'What do musicologists do all day?' Specific software and research approaches were explored with a presentation of the data collected via a questionnaire. The number and geographical spread of responses far exceeded the expectations of the research team, and provided some rich data to enhance our understanding of work processes and the adoption of software tools in musicological research.

The afternoon began with breakout sessions facilitated by Helen Julia Minors and Michelle Phillips. Small groups explored three key questions: 1. What barriers, technical or human, restrict the use of technology, and what steps might be taken to overcome these obstacles? 2. What tools and support are required to make the most of the potential digital technology for music? 3. What further questions do you have regarding music technology and how might NAMHE support the discipline in this area? Discussion raised the benefit of open-source software, the prohibitive costs of software upgrades, ethical issues of using social media, and the various learning and teaching methods which could be further supported by digital technologies.

Manuella Blackburn (Liverpool Hope University), chaired by Miguel Mera, presented her recent AHRC-funded research into the role of technology within intercultural creativity, speaking as an electroacoustic composer working with Indian musicians. Extracts from her compositions were presented along with the early version of a sound bank that will make recordings of Indian classical musical instruments available online to children.

Finally, J Simon van der Walt introduced Michael Clarke (Huddersfield), Peter Manning (Durham) and Frédéric Dufeu (Huddersfield), who collectively presented their AHRC-funded research project TaCEM, or Technology and Creativity in Electroacoustic Music. They demonstrated how their application enabled the analysis and manipulation of case studies drawn from the repertoire of electroacoustic music, and its potential to facilitate learning and teaching in music technology. The final application will be available free to download via their website soon: <http://www.hud.ac.uk/research/researchcentres/tacem/>

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