Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education

Episode 8: Music in Higher Education Transcript

[Intro music]

Yusef Sacoor: Hello! You're listening to 'Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education', a Music Mark podcast where we discuss inspiring projects, hot topics, and key challenges circulating around music-based work with young people. And if you're enjoying the intro, outro and transition music for this episode, make a note that it's from Able Orchestra, a youth ensemble and musical project allowing music-making on equal terms, specifically supporting those who are neurodivergent and people with disabilities.

Emma Cragg: Hi everyone, and welcome to episode eight – today we're talking about higher education and some of the different pathways available to people wanting to study music post-school. We dive into some of the challenges currently facing music departments across the UK, the benefits of a music degree, and how to best prepare young people to apply for higher or further education courses.

Yusef Sacoor: We've got three fantastic guests to share their expertise – James Prosser from BIMM University, Dr Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins from the University of Nottingham, and Dr Diana Salazar, from the Royal College of Music – so let's jump straight into it!

James Prosser: My name is James Prosser and I am the course leader for music production, music business and electronic music production at BIMM University. I'm situated at the Birmingham campus. And for those of you that don't know, BIMM University is across seven different campuses. We have five in the UK. We also have one in Germany and one in Ireland as well in Dublin. And we cater for postgraduate and undergraduate students, so level four to level six as well as level seven students. My role is primarily to look after the cohort of music production students and business students. We specialise in different areas of the music industry, and we focus more on the vocational side of the industry, as well as the academic side to give students that opportunity to go into academia or to go into the industry if they need to.

So a little bit of background about myself. Without going too much into a long story, I started in the music industry when I was 14 years old. I was living on the island of Tenerife and I, for a period wasn't going to school at that time due to unrelated issues and I started playing guitar. And by playing guitar I got to play in various bars and clubs around the island, I was heavily influenced by my father who was also a musician in the 60s. And when we moved back to the UK I then decided to go into education and I went straight into college at the age of 15 and 16, studied music technology there and managed to get a job as an apprentice technician alongside that. When I graduated from college, I then went straight into university and alongside working at university I was also a tutor at the college that I'd recently graduated from. So I was doing freelance lecturing and tutoring work with them, so it was a BTEC music technology course that we were running. I was also heavily involved in the foundational FND course that we started at the time as well, so I got to sink my teeth into a little bit of curriculum development and learning how to create a course from scratch and learning how the kind of ropes work behind the scenes. I then went to University of Wolverhampton where I studied audio production. And after my three years there, I got a job as a freelance lecturer working with the university, and alongside I also did my postgraduate in audio production. So I was able to work at the university as a freelance lecturer, as well as studying as a student, working seven days a week in your early twenties, you have the energy to do that, right? Not so much now!

But yeah, it was a great time to kind of experience education from both sides of the curtain, so to speak. As well as doing all of that, I was also working as a freelance musician and producer and live sound engineer. Got to work on many different records and different events, live events, as well as working with a variety of musicians. I also did some session work as a guitarist and a drummer at the time as well. So all from my early 20s, I was kind of juggling this life between those different aspects. So yeah, as I said, long story short, I then progressed more into the educational side of things when I eventually started getting more experience working as a freelance lecturer, started working for various different colleges and universities around the West Midlands and Shropshire area. At the same time, I was also running a music studio in Italy. So, you know, many Ryanair flights later, back and forth, trying to juggle those parts of my life.

That all led to about three and a half years ago now, where I was offered the position as a course leader for music production and music business at BIMM University. So that's where I'm at now. So having worked as a freelance lecturer and a freelance musician for the better part of 15 years of my career, then finally landing a job as a course leader at BIMM University, I felt was a great achievement and I'm really looking forward to seeing how, a few years later I'm able to shape and mould that role and work closely with the university on, you know, inspiring students and giving students those opportunities that I had and I'm very fortunate to have working in the industry. So in a nutshell, that's me.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you so much, James.

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: Wow, follow that! I'm Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins. I am Associate Professor of Popular Music and the current Director of Black Studies at the University of Nottingham. I grew up in North West London in the London Borough of Brent, which is a major cultural hub in the UK. I grew up partially on the canal side and on the Notting Hill Carnival route. So music was a substantial part of my childhood. I was very lucky to go to a very well-supported state school in central London that had connections to Westminster Abbey and to other major cultural institutions and this was in the 90s and the noughties when there was a lot of investment in getting young people from working-class backgrounds into the arts. I was very lucky, I got to work with the Royal Opera House and with the ENO to experience the Royal Albert Hall, but also to go to places like Abbey Road and Wembley Stadium. So that definitely propelled me into a music career where I'd initially, as many people from my background are, was pushed towards sort of STEM. Originally, my school was very interested in me potentially progressing into either languages or maths, but my interest in music led to me taking a music degree at the University of Sheffield, and I then ended up doing a PhD.

Initially as a child, I was really interested in composition, that was where I wanted to spend my energy. I think as many of us do, we start in film composition and then discover other areas of music! When I went to do my undergraduate degree, I then discovered that you could study musicals, but also became heavily invested in classical vocal performance, built up a semi-professional portfolio around there, started auditioning for things at the end of my third year and then got a vocal injury that I basically can't heal. And that was kind of the end of that. However, in the process of sort of reconfiguring, I ended up doing a PhD on an American musical called Kiss Me Kate by Cole Porter. And that was really the beginning of me thinking about being in education and supporting other people on their journeys, particularly when you start not really knowing what you want and also coming from a background which is less represented in music environments, broadly speaking, across the sector.

That led me into the decolonising the music space, which is a community that has been going on for maybe 30 years, to be honest, but had a real resurgence in the late 2010s and early 2020s. And it brings together many of us of mixed race and quote unquote “non-white heritages thinking about our place in music education”. And that sort of laid my path in terms of the research that I do now, which is thinking about hidden histories of black creatives in musical theatre and popular music, and also led me to become the director of a PhD programme, which is in black studies, specifically focusing on black studies in the arts and humanities. So I work with people doing music projects, but also other creative projects in English, literature, dance, in theatre. It's an expansive field. I think my day job is then a really interesting mix of teaching undergraduates, supporting PhD students doing their research projects, but also working with organisations and

drama schools and musical theatre colleges, thinking about what it means to develop music inclusively, to have inclusive classrooms and sort of change what our curriculum includes while still honouring the things that underpinned my education. So there's an interesting sort of mixture of influences I suppose to my background. So that's me.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you so much, Hannah. And I'm very glad to have you in music and to steal you from STEM. And finally, Diana.

Diana Salazar: Thank you very much, Yusef. It's great to be here and thank you to James and Hannah for their introductions. My name is Diana Salazar. My pronouns are she and her. I am the director of programmes at the Royal College of Music in London. And the Royal College of Music is a music conservatoire, and I'll talk a little bit more about what's involved in conservatoires as part of this podcast. We were established in 1882, so we are quite a historic institution. And since our establishment, we've been really committed to developing the next generation of musicians. And today that means supporting the next generation of performers, composers, but also conductors, researchers and educators. We currently have around 960 students. So we're a really big community of musicians and we have over 400 staff working at the college. And we work really closely in collaboration with the music industry and the profession in London, but also internationally. And I'll talk a little bit more later about how that really feeds into our programmes and our learning and teaching.

We're probably best known for classical music, but in recent years, we've really expanded beyond that. We want to give our students the tools to thrive in a really diverse music industry. We offer a flagship undergraduate programme, which is our Bachelor of Music programme, but we also offer lots of postgraduate programmes as well, including in performance science and research and music education. And as part of my role, one of the most exciting parts is working in the pre-HE space as well. So looking at those avenues and journeys into conservatoire study, we have a junior department on Saturdays where we have around 300 young musicians come together on Saturday to develop their musical skills. And we also have a big programme of learning and participation activity through our RCM Sparks programme.

So a bit about me. And it was really interesting to hear James and Hannah talk about their own journeys as musicians and the way in which it's a journey of kind of discovery and doors opening and kind of the unexpected. And that's definitely the way that my musical journey and my journey to become Director of Programmes at the Royal College of Music has been. I absolutely loved music as a child and I was really lucky to have access to flute lessons through my school and I had access to free instrumental lessons, which really got me started on my musical journey. And to this day, I really look back at that opportunity as being a real turning point and a real moment that led me to where I am today. And along the way, really inspirational music teachers and people around me were so encouraging and really helped me to take those steps and make

those decisions to where I am today, and that all started at age nine or 10, getting those lessons in school.

So I had a real passion for music. I kind of threw myself into local bands and orchestras and opportunities to develop my skills individually, but also in groups. And I went on to study as an undergraduate of what was then called the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. It's now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. And I had a wonderful four years there as an undergraduate. But my whole take on music shifted as part of that because I went in as a flautist thinking “I want to perform in an orchestra”, and I was exposed to lots of different aspects of music that I had never thought of. And remember, this is the pre-internet age, I'm afraid to say! So there are lots of things that I didn't know existed in the musical world, and one of those things was working with technology to compose. And as part of a module in my undergraduate, I realised actually I have a real interest in this and I really want to take it further. So I did, and I did a postgraduate programme in composing with music technology, and I went on to do a PhD. And then by chance, I ended up teaching music technology. So I worked in various universities teaching composition and music technology, and lots of other areas of music as well, everything from music theory to music history. And through various opportunities coming up, various doors opening, I've ended up here back at a conservatoire in London at the Royal College of Music. And looking back on the last 20 odd years, education has been really important to me. So those initial opportunities where teachers told me “you can do it” or “have you thought of doing this course, or joining this band?” Those conversations were really important to take me on the next step, but also teaching myself.

For a number of years I was a woodwind teacher working with local music services in Scotland and then went on to teach as part of my doctorate at University of Manchester. And all of those encounters with students have really made me into who I am today, and they inform all of my everyday work. And that includes working with young people and helping to signpost them about next steps in their journey, but also working with our undergraduate students and our postgraduate students and helping to give them the best possible learning experience and to give them the right support they need to flourish in their careers.

Emma Cragg: Amazing. Thank you so much, Diana. So I think its become apparent through each of you talking a little bit about where it is that you work in your backgrounds that we've got quite good representation of quite different styles of higher education institutions here. So we've got a conservatoire, a more redbrick university and a more contemporary style of institution as well with BIMM. So it'd be really interesting to know, you know, there are young people out there studying music who are interested in so many different areas of it and so many different styles. So it'd be great to hear from

each of you, what it is that you have to offer to those young people. What does studying at your institution look like?

Diana Salazar: So based at RCM, we offer a conservatoire programme. So it's a four-year undergraduate programme and it's a Bachelor of Music programme. So the first difference with maybe some of the other institutions we'll be looking at today is that it's a four-year programme. So it's a little bit longer. As a conservatoire programme, it's quite intensive and it's very, very much linked to the profession. So many of our teachers are working actively in the profession as performers, as composers, and we work closely with them, particularly through our one-to-one lessons. So central to our undergraduate experience is that opportunity to work really closely with a professional on your instrument or in composition or your voice. And so that characterises very much the conservatoire experience, but I should say that not all conservatoires are the same. And whilst we predominantly at the Royal College of Music support the development of classical musicians, conservatoire programmes cover lots of different areas and styles of music.

So what I would say is, consider conservatoire study as a young musician, but look at the specific programmes because different conservatoires offer different types of programmes and different specialisms and support and resources. And so there's quite a lot of variety within the conservatoire sector itself. And I'm really keen for people to look again at conservatoires because I think maybe 30, 40 years ago, there was a sense of conservatoires only being about one thing or only supporting a certain type of students, and that has really changed in recent decades. We offer at the college a really holistic programme of studies. So while it's centred very much on practice and students developing themselves as artists in their instrument, voice or composition, around that we've got lots of modules and subjects and experiences that help develop holistic musicians who are really well equipped for a music industry today that is in flux, that has challenges embedded within it. But we want to equip our students with the skills, with the resilience and with the confidence to ensure that they can really flourish in that environment and can really create their own career for themselves that really works with them.

Emma Cragg: Thank you, and I think it's really interesting, you having said that you studied at Conservatoire in Scotland, but perhaps had a similar experience of, you went in there with that kind of perspective that a lot of people might have of it's very much about curating your craft and your instrument, but coming out of it having learned a lot more than just that.

Diana Salazar: Yeah, and that's one of the things that I really love about my job at the college is to see that that kind of journey of development of the students over four years. We want to support our students to find their path. And for many, that may be really developing their skills in orchestral performance or solo performance or chamber

performance or opera. Along the way they may encounter aspects that start to really evolve themselves as artists, and so many of our students leave with a combination of interests and skills that they might not have expected. So many of our students develop skills in leading workshops, in teaching, in entrepreneurship. Some of our performers develop skills in composition, orchestration, electronic music, like myself! And so they leave perhaps having taken a journey that they weren't quite expecting, but we have given them those opportunities to explore what really ignites their passion and what makes them excited as musicians. So, we have lots of examples of graduates who've gone on to perhaps the careers you might expect from a conservatoire, so section principals in leading orchestras who have maybe gone on to train as opera singers, who have won competitions, have recording contracts and are touring internationally. And we support that work, but we're really proud, equally, of our graduates who have found their own path. And that might be a combination of lots of areas of music. It might even be looking beyond music into other art forms, other areas of the cultural industries. But we really want to develop students who have that confidence and the skill set to be that versatile in their careers.

Emma Cragg: Amazing, thank you. Okay, so Hannah, how does that compare or differ to what the University of Nottingham might offer?

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: I think there's kind of some lovely symmetry and then some quite distinct differences. I think, broadly speaking, maybe 10 years ago, you might pick a university approach to music based on a local specialism or a reputation for being strong in a particular area of history or a particular discipline. I think that that is much less true now, and with my admissions tutor hat on, I think it's really important to start there because I think those of us that went through the system, even 10 or 15 years ago, come to it expecting music in universities to look a particular way, and I think that it's changed quite a lot. In terms of what we offer at Nottingham, so we have three undergraduate degrees, a master's programme and then several PhD programmes. Our undergraduates are a BA in Music, a BA in Music Technology that is becoming a BA in Music with Creative Music Technology and a joint honours degree between music and philosophy. And I think the underpinning difference is an emphasis on music in society and music as a cultural phenomenon. And you can then balance the extent to which you want to emphasise or focus on practical music-making within a wider appreciation of music. And that's not to say that that doesn't exist in other degree courses, that's really important to say, but I think what we are looking at is the role of music, how music exists outside of just performance and composition, and how we balance those conversations in a different way.

I think for people who are often not quite sure what they want, I think in some ways an undergraduate degree in a university is one of the options where people have not quite decided what their music direction is going to be and maybe not necessarily pulled to

one discipline. Sometimes we hear the narrative that when you start university you know you want to be a singer or a producer or so on, and I think often our students are people with already a diverse range of interests who are looking to specialise and then change the direction altogether as opposed to students who already have an area of focus and then diversify. So I think we're very much in conversation, it's just the journey in is slightly different.

On a practical level then our music technology degree thinks very much about the studio space but also electronic composition, thinking about, broadly speaking, the role of electricity and music. And I mean that historically as well as thinking about sort of innovative approaches to composition, to sound recording, to producing. One of our professors is specialist in music and AI. And so we have a really interesting dialogue about what music technology can be. And in our institution, that is a sort of a half and half degree with a more conventional music degree, as opposed to focusing primarily on the studio space. So it's a slightly different pathway, I think, than we'll probably hear from James. For us, I think the headlines are that we are interested in you deciding what kind of musician you want to be. And we do that by giving you as much flexibility as possible and then helping you once you've sounded out lots of different areas. So that could be a diverse range of musical repertoire, that could be music psychology. There's a pathway in music education in our degree, but it could also be discovering that you can study musicals like I did for the first time, or it could be classical performance. I think to give you a sort of sense, we have a pretty eclectic, I think is the right word for it, focus of music genres within our performers that range from metal and funk and jazz to sort of early harpsichordists. We have, our dissertations spanned from the role of leitmotivs, so melodies conveying character in film, to the infrastructure of Spotify for artists, to the role of music for autistic children. So there is a real diversity of interest, and I think that that is maybe the space that the university degree that is not situated in a conservatoire holds at the moment.

Emma Cragg: Yeah, thank you. That's something actually I really resonate with, I studied music at the University of Manchester. And you saying about those students who maybe don't know what they want to set out to be was definitely why I opted to study at a university as opposed to a conservatoire. So, yeah, I'm really interested to hear about the kind of breadth of the programmes that you offer. It sounds like there's a lot, a lot available for people to go and explore! Okay and so James, last but not least, can you tell us a little bit more about what BIMM looks like and what it's got to offer to young people.

James Prosser: Absolutely. So at BIMM University then, we offer a wide variety, and that seems to be a common theme now amongst universities offering those wide range of different courses and opportunities and programmes. So the programmes that I look after is the undergraduate level six programmes, so level four range to level six, they're

three year courses full time. And I look after music production, electronic music production and joint honours music production and music business. So what we do offer, we offer single honours and joint honours. So our single honours offerings are music production, electronic music, music business, songwriting, as well as music, popular music performance. And we also offer joint honours courses as well. So, say for example, you're an applicant that wants to explore music production but also has a kind of flair for songwriting, you can do a songwriting and music production joint honours, which kind of takes 50-50 of the modules from each course. And then we also have our business course, which encompasses events and journalism within that to give students the opportunity to gain experience, sort of behind the scenes and those job roles that aren't really popularised on, you know, Britain's Got Talent. You know, it's those kind of behind-the-scenes roles that we offer our students to explore as well.

Within those programmes, as students progress onto level five and level six, they start to tailor the course to what they want to go into. So for example, if I was a songwriting and production students and I wanted to lean more towards songwriting, I then have the optionality to choose more modules that fit and suit within songwriting or vice versa if I wanted to do production. So it gives students even more optionality to kind of sway their degree into more of their specialty or more into a field that they feel more confident pursuing. And I really feel that giving that breadth gives the students opportunities to explore those. You know, logistically behind the scenes, there's a lot of moving parts with that, working out the timetable is a feat in itself. But the reason why we do that and the reason why we really want to focus on that is to give students those opportunities.

A lot of our students and applicants that come through our doors for auditions and open days hear about BIMM University because we've got a lot of award-winning alumni that have come out of BIMM University. You know, we've got Pale Waves, Idles, Fontaines, George Ezra, who all went to BIMM University and made a career out of themselves. So we have a lot of wide-eyed applicants that come to us, you know, wanting to pursue a career within the industry. So what our programmes look like in the kind of day-to-day activities is that we employ, much like yourself, Diana, we employ a lot of freelancers. In fact, most of our teaching staff are freelance staff that work within the industry. So we have people ranging from award-winning producers, songwriters, performers, touring musicians, record label managers that all come and work actively within the industry. And they come and teach our students during term time to instill that, you know, knowledge and experience into our students. And we often say to our students that if you want to make it in the music industry, no matter what you want to do, the best thing is to be reliable, turn up, have no ego and just work with people because at the end of the day, the music industry and the creative arts industry as a whole is people, right? It's an industry made up of people so if you have that personal approach and you're able to be reliable and turn up and be there, that means more than your, you know, vocation and academic sides.

So we do lean more towards the vocational side. Obviously there is an academic standard that we have to adhere to. So we give students the opportunity to go down the academia route. We offer a postgraduate course as well, and we're starting to expand on that offering different variety of postgraduate courses in music, music composition, music performance. And it gives students the opportunity to pursue postgraduate and then eventually go on to a PhD programme if they wish to do so. So kind of my everyday job role varies, and I'm sure it's the same for you both, Diana and Hannah, you know, your everyday job, you can't really say in one sentence what you actually do because it can be managing freelance staff. It can be managing teaching staff. It can be running curriculum. It can be supporting students. It can be running tutorials. It can be all of these different, kind of, hats that we wear within our programmes. But I think to encompass all of it is to support students and give students those opportunities to make something of themselves. And I think that's the common theme that I'm hearing today is that we want to give students those opportunities to explore what it means to be in the creative arts industry.

And sometimes we do get applicants and students that come on board not really knowing what they want to do. And we offer those opportunities to say, well, have you considered songwriting? Have you considered performance? You know, you're a really strong producer, so why don't you go down the electronic music production route? And it enables them to really dig deep on what that means to them so that when they leave university after the three years full time, they've got all of that experience. So I always say to students make the most of university, it's not just turning up for your sessions, it's going outside, getting experience outside of your programme as well as networking and working with a variety of practitioners within your field because that's what it means to have your degree.

[Transition music]

Yusef Sacoor: Thinking about that day one and pre-day one, the young people. What do they actually need? What skills do they need to come to you with? What qualifications do they need? What kind of applicants are you looking for? What do they practically and holistically need when they're coming to BIMM.

James Prosser: You need 64 UCAS points and you need to be able to demonstrate your ability within your chosen field. So for example, if you get through the audition process, you will be required to either perform or demonstrate some previous work that you've done, as well as the grading that is required. I believe it's two grades as well as 64 UCAS points off the top of my head. So, you know, that's to get you through the door. That's to get you an audition. And then the audition process is a 20-minute conversation between, the auditionee and the applicant who essentially has to go through the information that they've brought with them to the audition. So for example, for production, it could be that they bring two pieces of production work that they produced

themselves. They bring that to the audition and then they have a conversation during the audition about what they want to do, as well as how they produced the work, what kind of tools did they use, what's their chosen DAW, what's experience, what's their background. So you can get a sense of what this student wishes to achieve and how better to support that student moving forward if they're successful in their audition. Now, I always say to applicants, I always say the audition process isn't an interrogation. We're not going to play good cop, bad cop and try and interrogate you. It's not an interview process. It's a conversation. So come to it like you would a conversation, ask questions. And what I like to look for in students is I like to look for that willingness to take everything on board and that willingness to learn and that attitude that they're going to be reliable and they're going to turn up and they're going to really put in the work because that means more to me than just the grades. The grades get you through the door. That's fine. You've got those. You're at the audition process. What are you showing me that is, your passion? Why do you want to be a part of the creative industry?

Yusef Sacoor: I imagine that willingness is similarly received across the board. I saw some nodding heads as that was happening. Interestingly, does the 64 UCAS points on the practical level include having to have a music qualification?

James Prosser: Not necessarily, no. You don't need a music qualification. And we also offer recognition of prior practice for anybody over the age of 19 as well. So if you're over the age of 19 and you can demonstrate that, we also consider those applicants as well. And as I said, during the audition process, I'm looking for that reliability within the students, you know. Sometimes I might have an applicant come to an audition, and let's say their production work isn't quite up to scratch, I'll consider their attitude towards learning and say, well, this student clearly wants to learn, so they've turned up on time, they're reliable and they're showing that willingness. So, we're not as rigorous in terms of the grading, we're more looking at that student holistically and what they can bring to the table and what they're gonna get out of the course. We're more vocational in terms of what we offer because we're giving students those tools to work within the industry, so as somebody who runs auditions, that's what I'm looking for.

Yusef Sacoor: And does that chime with, and differ from your experience, Diana?

Diana Salazar: So there's definitely some overlap in terms of, we're looking for applicants to show us their skills, show us what they have been developing to date as an instrumentalist or a vocalist or as a composer. So we invite all of our applicants to audition because that's the most important thing for us, to have that moment where we can listen to an applicant perform, or look at their portfolio of compositions and have that discussion with them about why are you applying? What makes you passionate about music? What do you want to do with music? And we can really look at that fit as well and look at whether it's the right option for them to come to a conservatoire. So a lot is focused on that audition and looking at the skills that an applicant is bringing and

also their potential as well, because we recognise that applicants will have had different journeys, they'll have had access to different levels of support along the way. And so we're really cognisant of that, and really look in the audition at what have they achieved with the opportunities that they've had to date and are they at the right points in their musical development to then come into the conservatoire.

And for some applicants, it might not be the right journey for them. It might not be the right next step, or it might not be the right time. And that's particularly the case with singers. So singers' voices develop at different rates, and sometimes it's a case of not yet rather than no. So take a year or two to develop your voice and to develop your skills. Come back, and we would love to hear you again sometime. So there are different skills that we're looking for and it's incredibly competitive. And I do have to be completely upfront about that because we have hundreds, thousands of applicants every year for the Royal College of Music. And typically we're looking for a standard in performance around about grade eight or higher. We don't look for the grade eight certificates, that's just a kind of indication of where we generally expect our successful applicants to be. We are less interested in academic qualifications. It really is about musical potential in that audition. So we have some baseline English requirements and baseline academic requirements. We don't require a qualification in music, which might sound a little bit odd, but it is all about that audition moment and that discussion in the audition. That's what we use to make a decision on whether it's the right next step for an applicant.

Yusef Sacoor: Thank you. And it sounds like that audition thing is paramount in both places. I don't know if that's the same for you, Hannah, especially when you've got joint honours that might not directly or more obviously involve practical music?

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: So I am absolutely the anomaly in this conversation, and I would say that although I'm about to speak for the University of Nottingham, this is extremely varied across universities. So that's something that I would actually preface what I'm about to say with. When you are looking at where you want to study, actually investigate how this process works and why it works that way. Most universities are quite open about why, and other music education institutions are quite open about why they do their admissions process the way they do, and I'll talk through the rationale of ours. So we don't have an audition process. We don't have an interview process. Ours is a cold hard UCAS application, and that is it. Now there's a specific reason for that, which is that neither composition nor performance are compulsory at any stage in our music degree. Now, that sounds a bit dramatic to start with. I would say 90 to 95 % of our students take one if not both. It is not about restricting access or that the majority of our course does not involve practical or vocational music making. It's that we have experience that students who are forced to take one of those disciplines in their training, which is more common in our environment where you do both, certainly at first year, and then make decisions as you progress, tend not to enjoy the thing that they

either are not strong at or have no investment in. And we have found that our courses seem to run better where you choose to participate in the practical music making side. And as I say, pretty much everyone does something and normally multiple things. But as a result of that, we do not audition because students who are not going to take performance would be telling us or demonstrating something that they're then not going to use. So that's the rationale for why we work in the way that we do.

The slight difference I suppose is that what we have is an offer holder day, which I think everybody does, but the experience of that is that you come and you see what it's like to basically have a day at the University of Nottingham and that is really the deciding factor. It's for most students, they get to meet us, the staff, they tend to meet students. We are entirely in one building which again for the kind of university we are is quite unusual, so they get a sense of the space where they would be and that is sort of our rationale. That said, lots of institutions do audition, so that is something that is worth checking out and when that happens. So in my experience, in my application process, they gave offers and then auditioned. So the auditions were not always related to whether you got an offer or not, so it's something really important to look into.

I think one of the other layers in terms of the application process for us is that we recognise that music is going out of conventional mainstream education at the moment. S, we require a music qualification, but that is extremely loosely defined. The only thing that we are really hoping you will have is some capacity to read music so it means that the first year is not such a struggle. That's really the only infrastructure that we are particularly invested in. So I would say our students have a mixture of A-levels and B-tech backgrounds and often no A-level in music, but then a series of other music qualifications like performance grades or a theory grade. What we are looking for is that capacity to read notated music on some level, and then we move on from there. And in the first year, you then get to decide your interest in engaging with notated music going forwards, as it were.

Diana Salazar: Hannah has very helpfully reminded us all that there are very different application requirements for different universities and conservatoires. It can feel like a bit of a minefield actually, and sometimes careers advisors and schools aren't necessarily completely familiar with everything that's happening in the sector. So as a quick reminder for conservatoires, many of the conservatoires use a different platform called UCAS Conservatoires. And the deadlines are different to the usual UCAS deadlines and usually a little bit earlier. Most conservatoires have really detailed audition information on their websites and it's really useful to just check that quite far in advance to help prepare applicants. But also I would say that every conservatoire, including the Royal College of Music, is really open to being asked questions and we're really open to conversations. There is no silly question when it comes to this side of things. Please ask if you have any questions about the process. And that can even be

things like, what does it feel like to go to the audition? Who will be there? Who will welcome me? We also really support our applicants who are disabled and we have lots of support for reasonable adjustments during the audition process. So these sorts of things we're really open to conversations, please do ask questions. And I would say that that's for every conservatoire that I'm aware of, which is every conservatoire in the UK. But I imagine, Hannah, it's probably the same and James, at universities, if there are any questions about the process and the requirements, do ask a question, get in touch with someone. We're always happy to have a conversation.

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: Yeah, I would just add really briefly that often there is such a diverse range of qualifications that they're not always transparently listed because the qualifications are changing every year. So if you can't see yours, it's always worth emailing and asking because we will check. We will not see an email and not know what it is and then decide that's the end, that will never happen. We will always go away, investigate, come back if we have questions. There's always a conversation to be had and we are willing, excited, ready and have time to have as many of those conversations as we need to. Sometimes it can feel like you are pressuring or putting work onto someone you don't know, someone who can feel quite removed from you. In my experience, it doesn't feel like that. I've been the admissions tutor since I started at Nottingham in 2010, did all of COVID and honestly, there are no silly questions, but we also want to hear from you. And I can say now that I've completed, you know, a couple of rounds of students that I really remember the people I met on Open Days who then came to offer hold days, who I then taught in first year, who are now graduates. Talking to us before you arrive is exciting! It's not something that we are worried about. We want to hear from you.

Emma Cragg: Thanks Hannah, I think that's really nice to hear actually, really great to know about that openness there for people who are interested in studying. And I think it's interesting, you mentioning that greater diversity and breadth of qualifications that are out there now, which is maybe, noting a kind of changing landscape in terms of pre-university, what that looks like for students interested in music. And I think that is something that we're probably going to come back to shortly when we're talking about maybe some of the challenges facing universities at the moment and university music departments. I think that's something that we might want to talk about in depth. So before we move on to that, I think, really quickly, let's talk about some of the great things about studying music at university. And perhaps for some of those students who aren't sure about whether they should choose music to study?

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: Yeah, absolutely. I think my big takeaway is that most people who leave a music degree are surprised by all the amazing things that they can do. And that would be my sort of core message. I think in our environment, there is developing your own personal practice to then go on into professional music making, as

broadly defined as possible. There's also thinking about how music works in lots of different formats, whether that's going into sort of music therapy, thinking about music education with orchestras. We have an amazing relationship led by my colleague Elizabeth Kelly with the BBC Concert Orchestra. So we're now thinking about event management as well as writing for orchestra and thinking about what it is to be an orchestral musician. There's a massive array of opportunity from thinking about how we research music, how music exists in education, music in the workplace. A great example is that a student who came really wanting to focus on choral performance and on classical music is now leading the way on thinking about accessible digital instruments for a school for disabled students in his country of origin. So you can go on a very big journey and leave with a diverse range of practical, intellectual, and also emotional skills. I think my favourite thing about working in quite a small, comparatively, music department is that we get on really well. So you learn amazing collaborative skills. You learn about practical dynamics. You learn how to get on with people quickly. And you are then able to apply that in amazing creative and very practical ways, regardless of whether you focused on the book learning side of things or on conventional music making or a plethora of different types of work.

Emma Cragg: Yeah, thank you. interesting. And Diana, you kind of touched on a lot of people coming into conservatoire, maybe expecting one specific thing. Do you think that there's a similar trajectory with people going on quite different journeys maybe when they come out of it?

Diana Salazar: Yeah, and one of the main characteristics of study at conservatoires, there's never a dull day. There's so much variety. There's so much going on. Here at the college, we have over 500 events each year, and the vast majority of those are powered by students and their creativity. And that's such an amazing kind of ecology and environment to be in, to learn and to develop your professional skills, so I think that's one thing to remember. A lot of my ideas in this area overlap actually with Hannah and in being involved in those activities and events and placements and learning, you develop really sophisticated skills as a collaborator and as a communicator. And whatever field you go into in life, you will take those skills with you. And it might be that you're working in an orchestra or in a chamber group, really developing those sophisticated musical collaboration skills for performance. But equally, you can transfer those to business, to education, to all sorts of fields where there are really, really skills that are in demand.

In terms of conservatoire study as well, there's something about making new work together and creating something new together. We see that a lot, particularly with our composers, but equally from our performers. We try and give our students lots of platforms and opportunities to create their own work, as well as performing existing work. And to be able to take your musical skills and create something new, something

innovative, something that really changes the musical landscape and challenges the existing norms, that's really exciting, and that ties in with research and innovation. I think there's also something about advocacy and using your skills as a musician, the power of music within society to make the world a better place. That might sound a little bit cliché, but I genuinely believe in the power of music to make positive change. And we see that through lots of examples, Hannah's mentioned music therapy. We've also got examples here at the college within arts and health, we've got a module in musical care. We have students on placement in schools and lots of educational settings, working in care homes. And I think that shouldn't be underestimated as a really important way in which our students can be change makers. They can develop a more positive society using their advanced skills as musicians, and that's incredibly important. The world needs really outstanding musicians to make it a better place.

Emma Cragg: Amazing, thank you. And James, what about you? Is there anything else that you'd add?

James Prosser: Absolutely. I mean, it's really interesting. I'm hearing so many similarities with both Diana and Hannah and, you know, it's this idea that students come to university to gain the knowledge and the experience that they need to pursue a career in music, but also opportunities it opens up outside of that. I mean, we all know the creative industry is such a vast industry with a whole variety of different roles and disciplines and subject areas and one thing that we try and instill in students is that if you want to make something of yourself within the creative industry try and put on different hats and work in a variety of different areas because that's where you can really kind of flourish as a creative artist. You know, I take from my own experience, I was a session musician, a producer, a songwriter and arranger, I've been a composer, I've done work for film, I've done work for theatre. And I don't always try and pigeonhole into one area, I try and work across different areas as much as possible. So one thing we try and instil in students is this idea that, you know, work collaboratively on many different projects so that when you come out of your degree, you have all of those expertise and that knowledge to then take forward and carve out a space within the industry.

And, Diana mentioned that you can also go into other areas as well, so you can use those skills in business. You can use those skills in finance, academia. I know, Hannah, you mentioned music therapy, which is an emerging research field. You know, there's all sorts of different areas. And I think when students come to university, they don't always realise that those opportunities exist. They see the rock stars on TV and then they think that's it. But then when they come to university, we show them that there's a whole breadth of, you know, millions of different opportunities out there to work within a variety of sectors. In Birmingham, for example, we're solidified in the city centre and under the umbrella of BIMM University, we also have the MetFilm School and the Performers College. And at Birmingham campus, we work collaboratively with those

other schools. So if a student was really interested in composing for film, we have the film school literally over the road that we work collaboratively on projects with. So it gives students more opportunity to go, “Oh, there's music outside of just the music industry, there's the film industry or there's the performance industry, or I can go and work with theatre.” So it's all about giving those students the opportunity to explore different areas. You know, I've had students that have come on day one wanting to be a world-famous guitarist and then they've left and they've ended up actually working for Glastonbury as an event coordinator, or they've ended up working and running their own record label and being successful in those areas.

Yusef Sacoor: That breadth of skill sounds like the real common theme amongst all of you, and going back to one of our earlier episodes on pathways into industry, there's a huge emphasis on the reality of portfolio careers and having to wear lots of hats. So you're definitely chiming with the industry on that.

[Transition music]

Yusef: On from that, we have a slightly more difficult or potentially pressing question, which is the fact that over the last few years, we've heard news of more and more higher education departments of music having to close their doors. And for one, does that chime with your experience? And why do you think that's happening? I mean, Hannah, I know you have some thoughts on this.

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: I think that it would be foolish to say that we aren't seeing, you know, serious challenges and not just in universities, this is happening across the professional sector for all areas of music. I think that for me, there's a real complexity, and I wanted to just mention this about the fact that we are being driven towards thinking about education exclusively in terms of getting a good paycheck as soon as you leave university. And I think that particularly in the arts, that becomes very complex because it's become very hard to encourage people to study and to focus on areas that are not seen as directly connected to a long-term sustainable career. And I really wanted to just pause and emphasise that it is okay to do a degree in music or theatre or, you know, our related sibling disciplines because you want to and then go do something else. Like that is a legitimate route of entry to our qualifications, and I think that that is one of the places understanding is less sort of common now. It is a much more uncomfortable narrative to push at the moment in, you know, a cost of living crisis, a time where there is quote unquote “austerity” in the arts to say, come and do a subject because you love it and it's going to fill you up and you're going to gain all these skills while focusing on something that is, you know, emotionally, intellectually important to you. And that's not to say that it isn't really exciting for us to work with people who are excited to progress as musicians. I think these things can exist simultaneously and the lack of emphasis on doing education that is emotionally and intellectually fulfilling as opposed to a direct pathway to a career that feels sustainable

is definitely part of the dynamic that is driving the sort of infrastructural challenges we're facing.

I think also there is a lack of support, and I alluded to this right at the beginning, of people entering music earlier in their lives than there has been historically. And there is definitely a whiplash for those of us that went through music education at a time when there was more support. And as a result, there is some closing of access to music for those who are not financially wealthy. From my point of view, the thing that we have to interrupt is the idea that you can only participate in music if you are rich and you can only participate in music if you are going to a fancy venue or a fancy university. Music exists in all sorts of forums, whether that's in your local hall or whether it's just making music in your living room or producing songs on TikTok. Those things are all valid as well. And I think that there is some sort of imposition with this value system about work and financial sustainability, which is also actually quite untrue, that is hindering our understanding of embracing music academically, educationally as equally valid and a pathway to becoming a doctor or a lawyer or, you know, a special advisor, which are all journeys that have come out of our degree, a pilot. So for me, the limitations, the restrictions on music, the closing down is connected to this idea that you can only study music if you're going to become the most successful cellist in the world or you're going to set up the next BBC and it is possible to have a good career without reaching for those headlines ,and it's possible to have a good career in music and out of music while having a phenomenal time doing any kind of music degree as represented by all of us.

Yusef Sacoor: And it's worth saying that there has been a drop off at school level in terms of qualifications in music as well, which I'm sure has a knock-on effect on you guys. I was going to say, you mentioned it feeling closed off to people from certain backgrounds and I wondered if that's also affected the diversity of the kinds of students that are coming through your organisations? And what, and this is question to everyone, you do to make sure that there are opportunities for people to come through from those backgrounds?

Diana Salazar: This is something that we're really concerned about at the Royal College of Music because we rely on young people being able to have those opportunities to progress and develop quite a lot earlier than they would be applying to the Royal College of Music. So that long period of you starting an instrument and then building up your skills and developing your opportunities before you apply to conservatoire is really important. And we're worried that a lot of those opportunities have dropped off and aren't available to those who don't have the financial means. So this is really important, that pre-HE space, building back those opportunities and also elevating the position of music as a subject in the curriculum, because we've seen real drop off in GCSE and A-level. And that's an indicator of it just not being as important or prioritised in schools. And there are lots of reasons why that has happened. But we're now seeing that come

through into higher education. We're seeing that being one of the factors that has impacted on departments having to close because that pipeline isn't as strong as it used to be.

There are also, as Hannah said, perceptions around career prospects within music. And I think there's a lot of work we can do to raise awareness of the wide range of careers, of the transferable skills, but actually the way in which having a flourishing career that is exactly what you want to do and you can make it what you want. That's such an important thing and that's incredibly valuable: happiness, health and being able to develop a flourishing career. So I see the instability in our music ecology and a strong, healthy music and arts ecology benefits everyone in society. And that's both in the pre-HE space, the HE space, and also in the profession as a whole. And there's a lot of work that all of us in higher education can do to advocate for greater value for music and elevating the perception of music and the impact, the positive impact of music in society.

James Prosser: Yeah, absolutely. I agree with both of you on that one. It's interesting that we're all hitting on this theme of like this perception of what it means to study music. And as you said, Hannah, you can't really quantify being a musician to having this salary or this wage. The creative arts industry has made up quite a lot of freelancers and you can't say that you'll go to university, get a degree and go straight into a 50k salary. You know, that doesn't really exist, right? So, as you said, Diana, it's that idea that you go into university and you can make it what you want and I think the perception is definitely a big part of this and you can even go on to do something completely outside of music, but you've still got that degree as part of your learning process. And I think you mentioned it earlier, Hannah, learning those soft skills and those business skills.

I think this is an issue that there is no one size fits all. It's a combination of different areas and it's been something I've been trying to dig a little deep into and you may or may not have seen last year there was a Guardian article that made the rounds about why attendance has dropped across universities across the UK. And in this Guardian article after surveying thousands of students they realised that one of the key issues is living costs, and students aren't able to afford to do a full-time degree and be able to keep up with living costs so they're choosing to keep full-time jobs and choosing to go to those jobs instead of attending their lectures. And it seems speaking to friends of mine who also work at different institutions, that seems to be a common theme across the board. I think that with the higher living costs, it's making it harder for students to make those decisions to come to university and music's been one of those areas that's being hit the hardest. I also think that, and perhaps it might be controversial to say post-Brexit, we're getting less international students, and I know universities do get higher fees from international students.

But on the subject of fees as well, I think, the fact that universities have the cap of, I think it's £9,535, if I'm not mistaken? And it hasn't risen with inflation, but also you don't want fee costs to be too astronomical so that it prevents students that aren't able to access and they don't want to go into that much debt and you don't want to dissuade those students to not come to university because the fees are so high. So I think maybe re-evaluating what those fees are might be a good way to kind of funnel more people into the university sector and perhaps pursue a career in music. So for example, if it was to match inflation, you're looking at about 12 to 13,000 pounds per year, right? But obviously that might dissuade students that don't have the opportunity to pay back those kind of debts. So giving out more grants to students that need it more and supporting those students and those applicants with further grants to help support people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be able to access universities.

So what I'm getting at is that there's a whole kind of combination of different aspects as to why I think HE departments are having to close their doors. I've personally been through that, having worked at another university that did close its doors, and it happened overnight. And it was all of a sudden, it was a school that comprised of, I think we had about 650 students, and all of a sudden overnight they closed their doors and we had to teach out the remaining years. So having been on that side of things, you know, it has impacted the community. And I know Diana, you were talking about how music plays an integral part of that community, as well as the whole sector. And we live in the UK - the UK is at the forefront of the music industry. We have a billion-pound economy in music, in the creative arts. So we really need to be focusing on that and changing people's perspectives on that and what that means as a viable career opportunity. So yeah, there's a lot in there, but as I said, it's not a one size fits all and I think as practitioners within the creative arts, as educators, we can influence and support students and get these conversations going because that's where I really feel that it will make a big impact.

Diana Salazar: Can I leave us with a positive note perhaps, because it is a really bleak picture and I think we're all concerned across the higher education sector. But I'm mindful that there are some really amazing organisations doing really inclusive work in the pre-HE space, and I'm thinking of some of our own partners at the college includes places like London Music Funds, Music Masters, Nucleo and the hubs. And I think there's an opportunity to really think about some joined up work and to really collaborate across pre-HE, HE and the profession to look at becoming much more one voice to advocate for music and the importance of music in society, and I think that work is already happening and there's more that we can do, but there is some incredible projects and inclusive practice that can be developed and built on, I think, to move us in a much more positive direction.

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: Can I also add, that picking up on what Diana says, that universities are part of the solution and I think that is sometimes missed out. And I'm sure all of us are in environments where there are projects. We're working with the local music hub, we are being in spaces that are outside of HE to try and reintroduce music where it is not possible for the schools or, you know, community environments to do that work. So I think picking up exactly what Diana said, we need to develop this work but also that work is happening and that might be something worth looking out for when you are looking around for where you want to go. Many of our students are now reintroducing music A-level to schools in the local area, so the environment for music in Nottingham is already changing so there are ways in which we can intervene and change that ecosystem from within and that's also something you could come and be part of in very different but complementary ways across all of our environments.

Diana Salazar: There's this thing of historically, I think, universities have existed in a bit of a vacuum and the kind of ivory tower of academia. And I think things have radically changed and there's a real openness to working in collaboration with our local community and with organisations in our field, with local music organisations and hubs to really sort of co-create solutions together and to identify what each other's needs are and really work together collaboratively to address some of these issues and to really help young people have access to the next step on their musical journey. So really helping to create inclusive opportunities to progress and develop and then to make informed decisions about what the next step might be for them. And we've heard today about lots of different varieties of higher education experiences, different types of undergraduate degrees. There's no one size fits all. And I think what I'm really proud of in the UK higher education sector is we offer all of these different opportunities. That diversity is really important. That diverse ecology of higher education is really important so that young people can make the right next step for them as individuals, as individual musicians.

James Prosser: It's not as daunting as well. The sense I'm getting from today as well is both from yourselves, Diana and Hannah, that, you know, universities aren't this big daunting place. We're really friendly and open. If you come and speak to us, any of the universities, come and speak to us we're there to help you and guide you. That's why we're in education. I don't meet many people, if anybody at all, who works in education that's not in it because they care, right? So, it's all about that approachableness and we're willing to work with communities.

Emma Cragg: Thank you, James. we're bringing it back around to the reason that you all do this, which is for the young people who are wanting to learn more about music and that's the priority at the heart of everything that you all do. And you've all brought it around really positively, naturally, which is lovely. But to end on a real high, I think it

would be nice just to hear some really nice success stories about those young people that are at the heart of what we're all doing.

James Prosser: So at BIMM University, we have a whole list of award-winning students and alumni that have gone on to make successful careers, and you can see those on the website. But I'd just like to use this opportunity to say that I'm proud of each and every one of our students that comes, and we see them from day one. We see them at the audition process, and we see them go on this amazing journey of self-discovery. And I'm really proud of those students that come out of the graduation as better human beings and better versions of themselves, and they're the success stories that I like to see. It's the students that come out of university and really, become, actual practitioners within their field and flourished as human beings and practitioners. So they're the success stories that I'm really proud of, as well as those that go on to work at Glastonbury and those that go on to work within areas of the music industry and become these award-winning artists, it's the students that have gone on that journey and it's amazing to see that from day one right up until graduation. So I'm really proud of each and every one of them.

Emma Cragg: Lovely, thank you.

Diana Salazar: So a bit like James, I'm a bit reluctant to identify one person as the kind of signifier of success at the Royal College of Music, because I genuinely feel that anyone who completes a course with the Royal College of Music, that is a success in itself! I already talked about how competitive it is to even get into the Royal College of Music. It's a very intensive programme and to complete that is a success story in itself. And I think for me, I think we have to ask ourselves, what is success? What does that mean? And there's the kind of institutional view of success and there might be very traditional indicators of success, so the big competition wins, the big jobs, the international recording contracts and things like that. But actually fundamentally, success, I think, is about a student, a graduate, developing a really fulfilling, healthy career that's authentic to them, that is what they want to do, gives them a sense of purpose and is incredibly fulfilling and develops their own passion. And that can take so many different forms. And for many of our graduates at the Royal College of Music, it is having that orchestral position. It is winning the competition and gaining a recording contract, but it can be lots of other things too. And we have so many graduates working across lots of different parts of the industry, including things like artist managers, orchestral managers, programmers, people working in broadcasting and technology, teachers, heads of music, heads of music hubs, these sorts of things. But equally, and I think Hannah, you mentioned something about a pilot earlier as well, we have a graduate that became a pilot as well! There's a theme going on here! [Laughing].

But that people have decided maybe after doing a conservatoire degree, actually, they've taken a different path, but they've been using their skills as part of that journey.

So we have a pilot who graduated [laughing] from our degree a while back. We have educators, we have someone who works for the Arts Council, we've got policy advisors, we've got lawyers, accountants, entrepreneurs. And I think what's most important is that they have found success for themselves, and they have found something that is really fulfilling where they're using their skills from their RCM degree every day. So that's my take. Sorry, I didn't provide, I didn't do my homework and then provide a specific name, but I'm really reluctant to.

Emma Cragg: No, I think you're right. I think that, you know, there is no need for that. As you say, success looks different for every person and every person will go on and find their own success. It doesn't have to be that one specific job or whatever. It's whatever works for people. And the fundamental thing is that whichever course people go and study, it gives them the opportunity to find that for themselves. Hannah, is there anything that you'd like to add on this?

Hannah Thuraisingam Robbins: I guess the only thing I would add is that I wanted to celebrate the people who are open to the journey to take a music degree at the moment, can sometimes feel like a risk, even though it is generally extremely rewarding and leads to wonderful outcomes. And I think for me, one of the things I find most rewarding is seeing people investing and taking chances and taking opportunities and seeing what happens. There's an awful lot of pressure to predetermine what you're going to do and who you're going to be, and I found it very exciting personally, working with lots of people returning to education. So not just coming out of school. Sometimes we perceive the music student as a teenager and sometimes it is a diverse range of people from ages and backgrounds. But just to give an example of this, I suppose a student of ours decided that they were going to go do something different, and then they happened to have a chance encounter because we had a workshop with a big music organisation in the building. And they had a chat with one of the people that worked for this organisation. And as a result, they decided to do a post-grad in music and are now taking that leap of faith and doing that journey in music. And I feel like for me, one of the most rewarding dynamics is seeing people feel empowered to see that opportunity and take a risk and diverge from the path laid out. And I think that that's one of the exciting things that music equips you for, regardless of whether you want to become a professional musician, a composer, or a lawyer. I think that we give you something really exciting and dynamic, and the opportunity to see a chance and take it is a particularly unusual quality that comes out of our training.

Emma Cragg: Thank you so much. Well, it's been such an interesting discussion. It's so valuable to hear all of your different opinions. It's been fantastic to hear from you all.

[Outro music]

Yusef Sacoor: Thanks again to Hannah, James and Diana for joining us this month! It was super interesting to discover the similarities between each institution, despite some major differences in terms of the style of teaching and the content they each cover.

Emma Cragg: Ultimately, there are so many options for studying music at HE level and so much value in whichever pathway you or the young people you work with choose to take – but we need to keep shouting about that value and the importance of creative degrees.

Yusef Sacoor: Hope you enjoyed listening, and we'll see you again next time!