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From the Editor



Welcome to our first ever RAMpage Christmas edition! It has been a busy and excitingly performance-filled term, and I for one know that there were times where the sudden plunge into RAM 'normality' felt overwhelming. If you are reading this then you have made it through and are hopefully hibernating somewhere warm for the winter break.

This term's introduction of in-person society activities has been novel and rewarding for us at RAMpage, as the paper has operated almost entirely virtually since its creation in the first 2020 lockdown. Highlights include meeting new members of the team at the freshers' fayre, hosting our first ever 'newspaper mocktail' social event, and the introduction of in-person fortnightly meetings.

One aim of this edition is to build bridges between RAM departments, as we want to capture and promote the range of musical activity that goes on at the institution. You will find a rundown of what the musical theatre department actually gets up to from new editor Shona Masson, and a conversation with jazz saxophonist and composer Emma Rawicz, who is taking the London jazz scene by storm.

Highlights also include an interview with elite performance psychologist Britt Tajet-Foxell, an introduction to the life and music of Clara Schumann, the beyond-physical perks of yoga and a review of the Royal Opera House's thought-provoking new ballet *The Dante Project*.

On top of all this, Christmassy content is sprinkled throughout. With this edition to hand you will be able to test out traditional Danish Christmas baking, explore eco-friendly seasonal decorations and even have a crack at our first ever RAMpage crossword...

Thank you also to principal Jonathan Freeman-Attwood for his warm and insightful interview, and for his continued support of the newspaper.

Merry Christmas to all of our readers and contributors – new and old. Have a wonderful and restful holiday, however you are choosing to spend it.



An Interview with Britt Tajet-Foxell: Performance Psychologist for the Royal Ballet and Norwegian Olympic Team By Emma Baird

Britt Tajet-Foxell worked as one of the first physiotherapists for the Royal Ballet Company for twenty years, before deciding to retrain as a psychologist after becoming fascinated by the psychological aspect of rehabilitation. Shortly after she qualified in this new capacity, the Royal Ballet Company contacted her regarding one of their young female dancers who was struggling with extreme anxiety and depression after recovering from recent injuries. The company was eager for her to perform on stage again, and, af ter spending just two weeks with Britt, this hope became an astounding reality. The referrals that Britt received following this triumph were so numerous that the company decided to create a new job for her: consultant psychologist for the Royal Ballet. It was the very first time that this role had been introduced into a ballet company, and it represented a pioneering step forward. Britt subsequently worked with the Norwegian Olympic Team, the British Olympic Association, the Enalish National Ballet School, the Central School of Ballet and with members of the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House.



Big names from the worlds of sport and dance - including Darcey Bussell, Marianela Núñez, Steven McRae, James Cracknell and Sir Clive Woodward - have credited their ongoing and successful careers to Britt's input. It was a privilege and a delight to speak to Britt about her transformational work, and I am sure that her insights and expertise will be extremely interesting and applicable to Academy students. Also included below are the personal accounts of two esteemed professional musicians

Emma Baird: Can sports and ballet psychology be directly applied to musicians too?

who have worked with Britt.

Britt Tajet-Foxell: Yes. Whether you are a dancer, musician, athlete or in fact any kind of performer, it is always about translating that passion, motivation, potential and hard work into a physical performance, which could be a pirouette or a rowing stroke. For musicians, this may be as minute as the movement of a violinist's fingers. The process of translation between mind and body is exactly the same, but the instrument may be different. And this is where things can go wrong: you may have the intention to play a note beautifully and softly, but a number of things could get in the way and disturb that translation process. A thought may come up which triggers a stress response and disrupts focus, for example.

EB: Why do you think that ballet is ahead of classical music in this field, if the psychological aspect of both disciplines is so similar?

BTF: It's all about timing. The Royal Ballet has always been very pioneering. Their director, Monica Mason, was hugely interested in rehabilitation while I was a physiotherapist at the company. We often discussed the psychological component of recovery. When I returned as a newly qualified psychologist, she was on the spot and ready to promote it as an integral part of the Royal Ballet's rehabilitation programme.

We had the same vision and it was a result of the right people at the right time. Yet, there was a lot of skepticism surrounding psychology back then, and one of the first people to embrace it was Darcey Bussell. The injury aspect helped with this acceptance: dancers got into psychology through injury, which is such a common occurrence for them. They felt comfortable about using it around injury, which they may not have been if it was solely about seeing a psychologist. I often talk about using injury as a 'springboard' to becoming an even better performer. It opens a door into performance psychology and provides the opportunity for dancers to build strategies and resilience through dealing with it, so that the whole experience becomes beneficial.

EB: Dancers, musicians and sportspeople care so much about what they do, and it can become their whole identity. Does that make them especially vulnerable to issues such as self-doubt and perfectionism?

BTF: Performing artists are extremely passionate about their work. It is always, always, always about pursuing excellence. One of the things I have

come across is that most of them are perfectionists. People think that you need to be that way in order to become the best version of yourself. That is not true. Perfectionism can be very damaging and it traps you in your own anxiety. I would be wary of it. I promote the idea of pursuing excellence: taking small, smart steps towards always being better. The emotion around that is a sense of freedom, freedom to develop. It gives you a map with lots of different possible directions towards improvement. If your thought is 'I must be perfect', the feeling around that is quite arresting and inhibiting. It doesn't tell you what to do.



EB: Is it true that your mental image of a trauma or injury - simply what you believe about it - can dictate how well you perform and recover?

BTF: Yes, and it is incredibly important that someone who is fully qualified to deal with it, deals with it. If someone who isn't qualified goes into an individual's mindset and opens up a representation of a scary injury, that can do an awful lot of damage and create a panic attack. For instance, if you need to have a tooth taken out, it seems very simple just to pull it out. However, you go to a dentist to have it done: if something goes wrong, you need someone there who knows how to rescue it.

EB: Do you have any advice to share on the subject of practice? Is it better to do several hours every day or shorter bursts of focused sessions?

BTF: There is a lot of tradition and history surrounding this, but ultimately I think it is a personal preference. It is what happens in the brain, what happens internally while you do it, that is going to make the difference. For instance, you could have three athletes with exactly the same technical and physical abilities, but the one who is mentally robust and has developed a mental trainina programme is the one that is going to end up standing on the podium. At the elite level that we are talking about here, the mental component (which, for you, is linked to musicality and artistry) is what will make the difference. And this requires practice and training. One should build it in, just for ten minutes a day, as a maintenance routine.

EB: You often talk about the importance of creating a clear language for one's emotions. Please could you elaborate on your use of imagery with patients in order to achieve this?

BTF: We need to develop this instant communication system, so that we have a smart, sharp and simple way into the problem. We never have much time: I could have a musician fly in to see me from Berlin, who must fly back on the same day. There is limited time to turn things around.



Matthew Barley

Esteemed cellist, international soloist and chamber musician, Matthew Barley, speaks to me about his work with Britt following a shoulder injury, and about the power of visualisation:

Matthew Barley: Working with Britt helped with my recovery tremendously. I came across her through my daughter, who dances with the Royal Ballet Company. One thing that we did a lot of, was visualisation. For example, I was told to imagine a TV screen in front of me and think about what would show up on the screen if I imagined myself playing with a painful left shoulder. I would see images of jagged, sharp black and red lines in my imagination. When asked what it would look like if I was playing with absolute ease and comfort. I would then see blue and green gentle, curved lines on the screen. Then, I would try to visualise myself playing with the sore shoulder while also looking at the nice blue and green screen. When I picked my cello back up, the results were extraordinary and I was astonished! I then developed a "visualisation work-out" which I still use now. I once asked Al Jarreau how he prepares for his performances, when we were both performing at the Abu Dhabi Festival on different days. He said that, before every single performance, he will imagine that he is looking down and watching himself perform the entire concert through, which could be two hours long! It is very powerful, the imagination.

Read more about Matthew's story here



Ksenia Berezina

Ksenia Berezina, violinist and member of the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, talks about Britt and the importance of performance psychology:

Ksenia Berezina: I wanted to be part of this article because I was a student once, and always felt that I would have benefited from a psychologist's help. I think most of us would. As a student, you are not going to say 'I need some help', because everybody is trying to show off and it's not cool, is it? Through absolutely incredible imagery, Britt helped me to get very comfortable about what I do, and to put my focus in the right places during performances. I feel really blessed that I have met her. She is a very special person and she will just know, like a doctor, what to do. You feel like you come home and somebody, who doesn't know you, has a lot of love and appreciation for what you do.

It is a lot more helpful than just doing ten hours of practice. That won't solve anything if the problem is in your head, such as thinking that people are judging you or anticipating a particular passage with fear. It's something that we all have to overcome. Britt tells you what to do when these types of thoughts come into your head.

I don't think there are many people around who deeply understand the specifics of music psychology or performance psychology. Nobody considers it.

An Indian Winter?

25th December, 25 Degrees Celsius

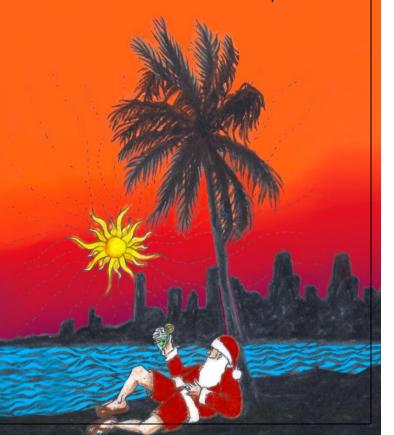
All of us have unique life experiences, upbringings, and backgrounds, and I like to think that Christmas is the time of year where we return home to celebrate them - quirky Christmasspecific traditions included. In the past, I have googled examples of what a Western Christmas entails, because Frank Sinatra, Michael Bublé and my younger brother's long-gone desire to decorate a Christmas tree aside, I am pretty oblivious as to what goes on here, having never actually spent Christmas in England.

I spend every Christmas with my family in the warmth of Mumbai, in perfect temperatures. Although notoriously hot during the rest of the year, Christmastime brings glorious sunshine and lovely temperatures of 18-27 degrees Celsius to the coastal city. December is a month in which my brother, my friends and I spend every day playing as much cricket and football as we possibly can. We eat ice-cream, watch sports, go to outdoor restaurants, go bowling and spend evenings on our building's terrace, watching the orange and pink sunsets that make Mumbai's skyline so special. As for the week of Christmas itself, I spend every Christmas day on the beach! Each year, my family and I travel either to Kashid, a remote village on the coastline of our state, Maharashtra, or, in more recent years, to the neighbouring state of Goa, where we stay at a resort until the 31st of December.

It is a time for learning new repertoire on my beloved piano at home, eating all of the delicious food that I grew up on, spending quality time with my family – who I see for less than 3 months each year – and meeting my old high school friends, who have almost all gone to study in America or remained in India, and who I usually only see in December and summer.

It has now been more than six years since I moved to England and I am becoming increasingly familiar with the ideas and excitement that arrive here around December. Each year, my interest is increasingly piqued by the totally different Christmases that the people I interact with experience, from one of my friend's gigantic extended family Christmas monopoly game (which, she claims, always ends in tears) to another's all-day Christmas dinner cooking extravaganza with his family.

However, there is one critical ideology that strongly unites my Christmas period with theirs – the glorious feeling of going home, spending time with your family, temporarily pressing the reset button on your life, and revelling in the most wonderful time of the year.



Artwork by Sena Bielander and Hannah Stell

The Dante Project: a dazzling journey through pain, purgatory and paradise

By Ellen Wilkinson

The Royal Opera House's *Dante Project*, which premiered in October 2021, is a tour de force of creative collaboration.

Intricate and angular choreography from Wayne McGregor (the Royal Ballet's resident choreographer since 2006) fuses with Thomas Adès' ambitious new score and striking set design by artist Tacita Dean in this retelling of Dante's epic journey through the realms of the afterlife. The role of Dante is the swansong of the Royal Ballet principal Edward Watson, whose remarkable career with the company has spanned twenty-six years.

The original 14th Century poem, *The Divine Comedy*, is divided into three parts: Inferno, where the poet-protagonist Dante explores the nine circles of hell; *Purgatorio*, where he pines after Beatriz, his deceased childhood sweetheart, and *Paradiso*, where an angelic adult Beatriz accompanies Dante in his celestial ascent to heaven.

Inferno is perhaps the most striking of the acts. McGregor's tormented, twisting movements convulse through hell's demonic sinners, who are sprayed with white chalk to represent their crimes - the thieves' hands are white and Satan appears entirely chalky. Circular patterns in the set and choreography capture the nine circles

of hell and represent the never-ending nature of the sinners' torture - perhaps a nod to the symbolic significance of circles in witchcraft, the demonisation of which was to rip through 1300s Europe.

McGregor's choreography captures the inhuman in ballet, and Watson is his ideal vehicle. Watson's agunt features and signature extraordinary flexibility have engendered a career of unconventional and ambitious roles, including his slimecovered portrayal of the insect in the Royal Opera House's 2011 production of Kafka's Metamorphosis. Adès' score compounds the ballet's insistent sense of unsettlement as it grotesquely parodies Tchaikovsky's Land of the Sweets from The Nutcracker, accentuating the onstage mayhem.



Artwork by Sena Bielander

Purgatorio brings a sense of stasis after the frenetic first act. Tacita Dean's sketch of a green Jacaranda tree forms a calming backdrop, though we soon see that the souls trapped here are no more at peace than the frenzied miscreants of *Inferno*. The choreography blurs into the abstract and there is less to hold onto than in the first act, but the newly introduced colours and sounds wash over the audience in sensorial serenity.

Perhaps the eeriest part of the whole production is Adès' use of recorded liturgical pre-dawn songs from the Ades Synagogue in Jerusalem. Guttural voices cry over the orchestra and meld with the dancers' looping movements; voice and body combine mesmerically, evoking the purgatorial eternal. The audience reaction is visceral: the sequence feels raw, spiritual and honestly human.

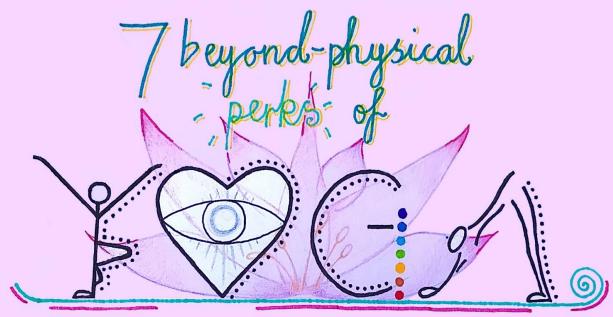
Dean projects a glowing globe of 35mm cinema film at the top of the set in the transcending final act.

The orb pulses in kaleidoscopic colours: green, red, white and dazzling gold. Sarah Lamb's Beatriz wafts in shimmering white underneath and the audience is torn tantalisingly between the celestial dancers and the glowing ball. The effect is hypnotic. *Paradiso* reaches an awe-inspiring climax as the colourful film rotates upwards suddenly, emitting a bright, blinding white light.

Dante and the audience are momentarily engulfed by heaven.

The *Dante Project* will be available to stream <u>here</u> from the 20th December 2021.





By Emma Baird

Assumptions about yoga are widespread. Most commonly, they can sound something like this:

'There is no point in doing it because I am not flexible enough.'

'It is far too slow and boring for me why not work up a sweat in a quicker way?'

'I will look ridiculous trying to do fancy poses like the ones in that magazine.'

If you feel discouraged to start, or have struggled to maintain a regular practice due to reasons resembling those written above, then it may be time to consider a new perspective. One that is, in my opinion, far more meaningful and rewarding and which will keep you going back to that yoga mat as if it is made of the gloopiest and most delicious chocolate you have ever tasted. There are endless benefits to the mind and soul which, once found on the mat, can be applied to your daily life and music practice. Yehudi Menuhin was known to say that his best violin teacher was in fact his yoga instructor. After discovering yoga, the violinist diligently practised it every day until his death.

Without further ado, here are seven possible reasons as to why he did that, and why you should too.

Process. Yoga is an ongoing process. It is about continuously learning and growing, without any particular end goal. The thing that you get excited about - the thing that feels rewarding is the practice itself. This can surely come in handy to the typically unbalanced and determined classical musician, who places all of their happiness into the hands of a future dream, whilst feeling somewhat drained and dissatisfied by the day to day grind. Investing in a curious and pleasurable process will make consistency feel effortless and is more likely to lead to that goal anyway. So, try this: practise for the sake of practice, because I think, paradoxically, that may be the key to the big stuff!

Resilience. There is hidden wisdom within the physical motions of yoga. Weight-bearing and strenuous positions are often held for numerous breaths, in silence and in stillness. Within these poses, you are encouraged to find more length in the neck, to rest the shoulders down and to unclench the jaw, finding ease and

elegance wherever possible. There is something about that which tells me that this is a lesson about resilience and the ability to remain calm and level-headed amidst conflict. It teaches us to find peace within something difficult; not suffering more than we need to, and taking time to consider the wisest response rather than mindlessly pushing through.

Sensitisation. Over time, one develops a more acute awareness of how the body feels and how it is positioned. From the level of tension in the muscle at the base of your thumb, to exactly how weight is distributed across your feet, to how far up your shoulders have risen during the course of the day, you are able to quickly sense these from within, without having to take a single glance! A peculiar thing happened to me a couple of weeks after I started practising yoga regularly. My brain suggested a new idea about a frustrating passage of music that I had tried to play so many times in so many different ways, which still felt somewhat uncomfortable: 'Play it again, letting the same mistakes happen, and simply observe what is happening in the body while you do it, as a non-judgemental outsider'. My goodness, I thought: just before that string crossing I am lifting the shoulder which is causing my hand to...and so on. Within seconds, a door of solutions had opened. The helplessness of not knowing why had vanished, and a clear list of solvable issues had emerged.

Mindfulness. Not only do you become more conscious of the body, but everything you do is executed with more presence, awareness and care. Yoga encourages participants to set aside thoughts about what has happened or what will happen, in order to be one hundred percent present and 'in the zone'. It is a moving

meditation, noticing everything that happens in the moment. No room for wandering, no time to switch off. The benefits of doing this are extremely fruitful! The ears, the eyes and the taste buds are stimulated and able to fully experience a more colourful and interesting world. Everything is more noticeable because your mind is no longer clouded by judgemental and distracting thoughts. Applying this skill to music could mean many things, such as becoming more sensitive to changes in harmony or more responsive to how your chamber partners play a phrase.

Kindness. It is without question that yoga helps you to cultivate a more supportive and respectful relationship with yourself. There are all sorts of ways in which this is developed. These include learning to observe yourself without judgement; learning to balance effort with rest through the ritualistic movements of expansion and contraction, inhale and exhale, tension and release; developing a selfcare routine and diligently committing to it; nurturing yourself first in order to show love and kindness to others; showing up on the mat in all states of yourself and accepting that every day will feel physically and emotionally different. The magical reward of committing to these values within yoga comes when they automatically begin to seep into one's musical life of practice and performance.

Focus. Balancing poses in yoga require unwavering concentration. If the attention is diverted for one second, then you will topple! These poses are a physical representation of one's mental state: the calmer you are, the longer you are able to maintain a still and balanced position. There are various levels of the tree pose worth exploring while keeping your eyes fixated on the 'drishti' (a point in front

of you to focus your gaze on), and a slightly more challenging position to try is the eagle pose. It is worth experimenting with increasing the length of time in which they are held, and (if you are really concentrating) closing the eyes.

Confidence. We like to make ourselves look as small as possible when feeling insecure or shy, by hunching the shoulders, arching the back and looking down. Science tells us that by simply acting physically confident and doing the opposite of this, we can trick our brains into actually feeling that way too. With enough practice of open postures and movements which make you stretch and take up space, you may find yourself standing taller, walking with more conviction and generally feeling more confident throughout the day.

An extra note from Sophie Langdon, RAM Violin Professor and teacher of Enhanced Performance Techniques.

"Within EPT - Enhanced Performance Techniques, an elective mainly for postgraduates - the yoga acts like glue, helping to link up the techniques of meditation and visualisation. Somehow, it allows a flow state between the unconscious mind and the conscious mind, which I believe helps to unlock and melt away elements of performance anxiety and stage fright. Rather like making the psyche sponge-like, so that things can flow in and out...It also provides a type of meditation, as asanas done with awareness and good alignment bring the breath into a calm place and create a trance like state."

Namaste.

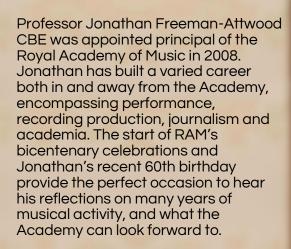
If you are interested in exploring yoga further, why not join the RAM Yoga Society?

RAM Yoga is a Vinyasa-style yoga practice tailored to fit the needs of a musician lifestyle. In Vinyasa, we focus on pairing the breath with the movement which in turn helps to warm up the body, find more mobility, and strengthen your muscles.

With RAM Yoga specifically, I aim to focus on strength and mobility, especially in the arms and wrists, as this helps prevent musicians from getting injured. I teach this because doing this in my own practice has helped tremendously with my wrist and shoulder pain. RAM Yoga is for all levels of yogi, from beginner to advanced, and I encourage everyone to try it!

Contact <u>Shannon.ross18@ram.ac.uk</u> to get involved.





Joe Lucas: Tell us about your early musical life and what (or who) first introduced you to music.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood: You know there's a commonly held belief that music is either part of your DNA or else it's encouraged by music-making around us when we're very young. I'm certain it's not that binary – and surely it can be anything between the two, and probably more besides. Nurture was certainly important for me. My father adored music and played it almost every hour he wasn't at work or gardening.

He tended to have pet obsessions: a month of just Berlioz's Trojans, then the next month. Bach's Mass in B minor – and on it would go. But the key person was an older half-brother who was (still is) a wonderful violinist, pianist and teacher. When he was back at home from the Academy (he was a Manoug Parikian student) and then university,

An interview with Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

By Joe Lucas

Photograph by Joanna Bergin music just poured out of him everywhere, like an elixir. I couldn't get enough of listening, messing around on the piano and asking him endless questions.

Already, I had a kind of nerdy love of remembering useless musical facts like LP and Köchel numbers. But I also had a sense from an early age that somehow music was at the epicentre of my being.

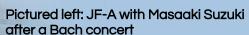
I started singing when I was 8 and a couple of years later I was selected for a Glyndebourne Opera production of *La Bohème*. Act 2 has a group of little urchins under everyone's feet — I was one of them, with a rather prophetic solo line, 'Voglio la tromba' ('I want the trumpet!'). But the thing I'm most proud of was singing with a young Colline (a philosopher) who made us laugh because he made such a hash of playing a note on the horn he was given by the director as a prop.

He was to become the greatest Wotan of modern times, Sir John Tomlinson! We made a bit of money from the tour (£30 for 2 months' work!) and I immediately bought a trumpet and was fortunate in having good teaching right from the start.

In the holidays of my teenage years, I was taken under the wing of an owner of a classical record shop. From the age of 15 I learned to do the cataloguing, ordering, marketing and eventually advising customers on what version to buy (I shrink with horror at the thought). It was at the time when LPs and cassettes ruled and people queued up for the latest Karajan release from Berlin. I only mention this because these days were central to my musical education: there were long afternoons when no one came into the shop and, instead of mugging up for my O-levels (GCSEs), I would put on a disc of Ravel's Daphnis and Chloé and compare it to the other one in the shop. Then I would bore the owner rigid on the merits or otherwise of both, as only callow youths can. I blinked and 15 years later I was doing just the same on BBC Radio 3.1 should also mention that I was at school near Bournemouth and my director of music took us to the BSO regularly. Paavo Berglund was in his heyday and it was wonderful hearing the likes of Henryk Szeryng and Paul Tortelier as well as terrific performances of Sibelius.

JL: Why did you decide to move abroad for your undergraduate degree?

JF-A: It was quite serendipitous. I have strong Canadian roots, on both sides of my family, and I liked the idea of going over to North America after school. It felt a real adventure. From 16 I was having trumpet lessons with the great James Watson – lessons in the Academy as a non-student which I'm sure was 'illegal', even then. All was going well until I developed a major dental problem: an embouchure that was going from bad to worse. It was clear I needed the right help as my playing was hanging by a thread. I remember one particular audition and a disastrous wedding where it was all such a





struggle. Jim recommended someone in Toronto and off I went, staying in the basement belonging to an old aunt. I was put on a 'special visa' year at the University of Toronto – and it turned out to be the best thing I ever did (apart from getting married). After a while, the playing and everything connected to it, started falling into place.

JL: What do you consider to be the pros/cons of studying in another country and what did it teach you?

JF-A: I think the answer is that the pros and cons depend on what an individual needs at a certain moment in their life. I wouldn't say it's right for everyone to 'up sticks' at a given time. I think Canada suited me then because I felt undecided where I wanted to go with music. Did I want to recover my trumpet playing and get good enough to be a professional performer, or explore my many other academic interests and see where they took me? In the UK in 1980, the culture between conservatoires and university was like chalk and cheese, but Toronto was a perfect environment in which to receive top-drawer practical as well as academic teaching. So, I didn't come back after that single year but stayed for all four. They worked you hard but I felt really well-equipped musically at the end of it. Toronto taught me that I didn't have to 'be' something that someone else thought I should be. It's ok to follow your own muse. Actually, it's best to follow your own muse!

JL: What drew you back to the UK for your postgrad at Oxford?

JF-A: I had a choice between Yale or Oxford, but I really wanted to come home. The other reason was that I liked the look of the musicology MPhil at Oxford, though ironically it left no room for performance. But by then I felt the trumpet was in a good place, and after a while I started getting some professional work, despite the strict residency rules of Oxford University. I was also keen to work on some 17th-century manuscripts in the Christ Church library and they let me do a paper on Bruckner symphonies as well, so

I was very content. But after two years I was still no clearer where my career would go.



Recording session with Chiyan Wong

JL: How did you go about establishing your early career - was there a particular goal in mind?

JF-A: For someone who is actually quite goal-oriented, it took me time, but that was to prove a godsend. I always say to students who fuss about not 'achieving this or that' by a certain stage to remember it's a marathon not a sprint. I started learning the natural trumpet after Oxford and that led to new opportunities. I was also keen on solo recitals, which I've kept going with various partners - in the UK and on the continent - over the decades. Initially I taught at a couple of schools but soon stopped when I started getting some writing and broadcasting work, eventually for Gramophone magazine and the radio. None of this happened in a hurry. Then I filled in for a producer in a commercial recording, and it went ok so I started working closely with various artists at that time, like the violinist Rachel Podger. We've since done about 30 recordings together. So, it was a patient process of gradually identifying the various things I wanted to develop. Oh, and I should mention that I was offered some part-time teaching work at the Academy in 1988 and never left...

You ask whether there was a goal in mind? Yes and no. Yes, in that I wanted a life which reflected my range of musical interests, passions and the things that challenged me and I felt I could do well enough. No, in that I refused to be pigeonholed. As Jo Cole always says, 'there are as many professions as there are professionals'. Other than the thread of performing, and developing more recently my trumpet activities with a number of 'themed' recordings for Linn, no year has ever been anything like the one before though since becoming principal in 2008, the whole portfolio thing has had to be rethought a bit.



Susie Sainsbury and Jonathan in the new theatre

JL: Are there any projects you're working on at the moment that particularly excite you?

JF-A: Yes, more than ever! I thank our lucky stars that our Bicentenary wasn't in the last couple of years but happens in 2022 – and on into 2023 to reflect 200 years of enrolled students. It presents a wonderful opportunity not just to celebrate our past but, more importantly, to reflect

on what a modern, forward-thinking conservatoire should be and *really* start to put that into practice. The pandemic has precipitated a great deal. Students and staff are already shaping, together, a new landscape as we head into our third century, which wouldn't have happened in the same way without Covid. It feels more like a partnership than ever before. That's got to be a good thing.

We're planning many great artistic projects to celebrate this landmark: commissions, big concerts, fabulous visitors, top-drawer collaborations and so on. We'll be announcing them gradually over the next few weeks and months. And you'll get a free tote bag!! Evolving our international connections has never been more important and I'll have some interesting news, soon, on what we're doing. This place was founded by professors from eleven different countries in 1822. Whatever you think of Brexit, it doesn't reflect the Academy's cultural outlook then or now. We are musicians without borders and we'll need to find positive ways to work through it. That is why I approached Elton John so we could lead on a global exchange programme with other world-leading conservatoires, which we launched last week.

JL: You're involved in quite a few Trusts. Why are they important to you?

JF-A: Yes, I am. I think it's important to have a handle on as much as one can outside the Academy. My second artistic 'home' is Garsington Opera where I'm on its board but also as Chair of the Artistic Committee that advises on productions and so on. It's a really brilliant company and it's been such a pleasure to see so many Academy singers develop there. The same's true of the Countess of Munster Trust that supports postgraduate students and recital placements, always making sure its money goes as far as possible in helping young musicians develop in their final years of study. I also had a wonderful decade on the Young Classical Artists Trust. Watching London

Youth Choirs blossom as a Founding Patron is another exciting element.

JL: What do you believe the legacy of COVID will be for classical music?

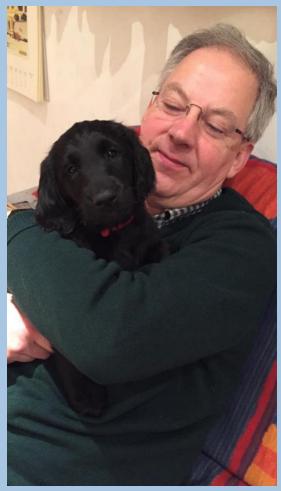
JF-A: Classical music – well, all music: jazz, musical theatre, all varieties of composition and everything we value here - is rebooting. It's sinking in again that music encompasses every aspect of being human and we can't do without it. Great music, delivered compellingly, is here to stay. Our job is to work out, post-Covid, how best to make the most of this time of reflection so we can position music in all the places it belongs, old and new. No-one can claim to have all the answers. Despite an habitual pandemic gloom, what we do know is that the individual artist has more agency to shape the musical world than ever. Young people are programming and presenting with more awareness of the cultural needs and stories of today than before. The old, established artistic institutions are only part of the picture now – new narratives are popping up with students imagining how their professional and personal journeys can contribute more widely to the world, as well as thinking how they can put bread on the table. I'm not pretending it's easy, but I smell new opportunity. One example of this is how streaming and playlists are getting classical music into the mainstream listening 'groove' literally – and that's beginning to break down barriers and encourage us out of our silos.

JL: To close the interview, is there anything you would like to be able to say to every student at the Academy?

JF-A: A few things...coming full circle. Don't worry if you're not the first in the queue right now. It has no bearing on your worth or capability. The world has plenty of room for all of us and we all develop uniquely in our own time. If we keep believing in what ability we have, and recognise what we need to continue developing, then the openings will gradually emerge. Also, while you're at the Academy, make the most of being in a place where staff are only there

because of you. This is a time in your life to pack your larder, metaphorically, with as many ingredients as possible. You never know when you might need them, so work us hard!

Finally, and I know it's a cliché...the real beauty about being a musician (apart from the wonderful friendships) is that the learning and discovering never ends. I recently did a duo recording with a young alum pianist who taught me in rehearsals to take bigger risks and take the breath as far as possible through the phrases. That started to happen in the sessions. I thought I knew about how to do recordings after nearly 300 as a producer and player! Luckily, I was wrong.



Jonathan holding his new puppy Winnie

Three Traditional Danish Christmas Recipes

By Milette Gillow

While I didn't grow up in Denmark, I grew up on Danish Christmases, having spent almost every Christmas in the Copenhagen area. This year I thought I'd share some traditional Danish recipes. I'm going to be honest here: most Danes would never dream of baking these treats from scratch, as they're available in almost every supermarket. However, as they're not available in the UK, and Bakeoff has recently come to an end, I thought it might be nice to present some new challenges when it comes to Christmassy treats.

Æbleskiver

Æbleskiver, literally translated, means 'apple slices', so it's amusing that there's no apple at all involved in this recipe. In the olden days there would be a slice of apple in the middle of each round pancake-like ball, but this isn't a common ingredient any more. They're often sold by street vendors and served with jam and powdered sugar, and if you take a stroll through Tivoli gardens, lit up by the glow of over 2 million lights, you'll be able to purchase a few æbleskiver to enjoy on your trip.

Ingredients:

vanilla pod 320g plain white flour 2 tsp sugar 1½ tsp cardamom ½ tsp baking powder 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda ½ tsp salt 1 lemon 3 eggs 450ml buttermilk 30g unsalted butter, melted 2 tbsp butter, for frying You will also need a special "æbleskive frying pan", which has lots of holes in it for frying the batter.

Method:

- 1. Halve the vanilla pod, splitting it lengthwise and scraping out the grains. Mix the flour, sugar, vanilla beans, cardamom, baking powder, baking soda, salt and grated lemon zest together in a bowl.
- 2. Separate the egg yolks, and combine with the buttermilk and melted butter. Stir the mixture into the flour mixture.
- 3. Beat the egg whites until stiff.
- 4. Gently fold the egg whites into the mixture, starting with 2 tablespoons to loosen the mix.
- 5. Put 200ml of the dough in a piping bag with a large nozzle.
- 6. Heat the æbleskive pan over a medium-high heat, adding a little butter to each hole in the pan.

7. Fill the holes three-quarters full of dough. Using a wooden skewer, rotate the æbleskiver a quarter turn when they begin to harden and rise at the edges. Add a little more dough to the middle of the æbleskive and

then rotate it all the way around. This way you get the finest round and full-bodied æbleskiver. Turn the æbleskiver a few times during frying so that they are fried on all sides and are baked through.

8. Serve warm with jam and a sprinkling of icing sugar.

Brunkager

Translated directly into 'brown cookies', brunkager are crisp Christmas biscuits flavoured with aromatic spices and laced with almonds. It's very normal to have a bowl of brunkager on the kitchen table for guests around this period, or to nibble on a brunkage or two while watching the traditional Christmas TV shows that air every day in December (essentially a TV 'advent calendar', ending on Christmas Eve).

Ingredients:

125g butter
70g golden syrup
125g brown sugar
250g plain flour
75g almonds, peeled and coarsely
chopped
2 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp crushed ginger
½ tsp crushed cloves
½ tsp crushed allspice
Zest from half an orange + 1 tbsp juice

1 tsp potaske (a raising agent that makes the biscuits expand outwards rather than upwards, resulting in very crisp cookies with a dark brown colour - bicarbonate of soda can be used instead, although the result will be slightly different)

Method:

- 1. Preheat the oven to 175°C (fan).
- 2. Melt the butter over a medium heat and add the syrup and brown sugar, removing from the heat when the mixture is lukewarm.
- 3. Mix cinnamon, ginger, cloves, allspice, grated orange peel, almonds and wheat flour together in a bowl.
- 4. Dissolve the potaske in 1 tbsp orange juice and stir it into the butter

mixture, along with the wheat flour and the spice mixture from step 2.

- 5. Knead everything together.
- 6. Roll out the dough to the thickness you want your cookies to be (approx. the thickness of a £1 coin). Put the dough in the fridge for a minimum of 4 hours before cutting out the cookies.
- 7. Cut the dough into shapes and place them on a baking tray lined with baking paper.
- 8. Bake for about 6 minutes, keeping an eye on the brunkager as they bake they shouldn't get too dark.
- 7. Cool the brunkager on a baking sheet. They won't be completely crispy when they're fresh out the oven, but will firm up as they cool off.



brunkager

<u>Pebernødder</u>

Pebernødder translates literally to 'pepper nuts', the name not from the unusual ingredient, but rather because the concept of "peppering" your food meant adding spices in general. Dating back to the 1400s, they're one of the oldest recorded Danish food items. Pebernødder are not only served as a little Christmas treat they're actually often displayed on the Christmas tree itself. Rather than baubles, danes often hang little paper cones and hearts filled with pebernødder on the tree. Fun fact: garlands of Danish flags are also quite a common Christmas tree decoration!

Ingredients:

250g butter

250g sugar

100ml double cream

500g plain white flour

1 tsp ground ginger

1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp white pepper

1 tsp cardamom

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

Method:

- 1. Preheat the oven to 200°C.
- 2. Whisk the butter and sugar with an electric whisk until creamy. Add the cream and whisk at the lowest speed.
- 3. Mix the flour with spices, baking powder and baking soda, and stir into the dough until it is fairly firm. Knead the dough together with your hands.
- 4. Divide the dough into smaller pieces, and roll each of these into a sausage shape roughly the thickness of a finger.
- 5. Cut the dough sausages into small pieces of approx. 1 cm. Roll each piece into a ball, pressing lightly down on the top. Put the pebernødder on a baking

tray lined with baking paper, and bake for 7-8 minutes until golden. Let the pebernødder cool before storing them in a tin.



So there you have it: 3 perfectly simple recipes with not at all difficult-to-source ingredients and specialist frying pans!

If you fancy trying some traditional Danish recipes and this all sounds like a bit too much work, I highly recommend Ole & Steen. They're an authentic patisserie found all over Denmark (it's called Lagkagehuset over there, but I expect they changed the name because it would have been slightly tricky to pronounce over here) and have very recently branched out to London. Their Cinnamon Swirl and Spandauer pastries are particularly good.

Artwork by Ruby Howells and Hannah Stell

In conversation with rising sax star Emma Rawicz By Ellen Wilkinson

'A crazy week for gigs!' Emma explains breathlessly, as I meet her for coffee in the Royal Academy of Music canteen her striking blonde hair and signature winged eyeliner making her easy to spot. She is giving her debut performance at the iconic Jazz Café in Camden that evening, opening for soul and jazz singer Judi Jackson. Emma is a second-year undergraduate jazz saxophonist at RAM, though, as I soon discover, she has never been limited to one instrument or style. Her versatile and honest '100 days of practice' video series led to her amassing over thirty-six thousand followers on Instagram, and she is a 2021 winner of the *Drake YolanDa* talent development grant, which aims to support emerging young artists in post lockdown and Brexit Britain.

Emma's musical roots are classical: she studied piano, singing, violin and percussion as a child around her home in Devon, playing with the North Devon Sinfonia. Emma explains that she 'enjoyed trying different things' when she was younger – a trait that has only strengthened over time. Despite having no formal training, she explored folk music and would 'have a go' at arranging and composing for local string orchestras, prefiguring her current insatiable desire to produce her own musically diverse albums.

At age twelve, Emma saw a big band perform and was instantly hooked, begging her mum, who insisted that she get grade eight on her other instruments first, to let her learn the saxophone; she eventually relented and Emma picked up the alto at age fifteen, and the tenor - her real dream a year later.

I began by asking Emma how she found the transition into the jazz world and when she realised it was the path she wanted to take professionally.

Emma Rawicz: I always knew I wanted to do jazz but I also knew nothing about it. I applied for junior Guildhall when I was fifteen because I thought there was no chance I would get anywhere if I stayed in a small town in the countryside.



In the junior Guildhall application I actually accidentally ticked the first study jazz sax box, but I gave the audition a go and played the head to *Autumn Leaves* and had a noodle over it – it was terrible as I had only been playing sax for a few months. They said 'you really don't know anything do you?' and I said 'well isn't that the point of you!'

I started exploring jazz harmony and history there and realised I needed to go to music school if I wanted to go to conservatoire, so persuaded my parents to let me audition for Chetham's for sixth form. I thankfully got in with a bursary, and basically practised for nine or ten hours a day, because I thought it was my one opportunity to get good before music college. Chetham's gave me a drive though I think I have always had that and the facilities and space to really work. I then auditioned for RAM and got in, which was never part of the plan! Then lockdown happened, and I went home and practised for about 12 hours a day. Looking back, that was quite mental, but I have always struggled with confidence in my playing, maybe because I have always felt behind other people, so I got to the lockdown and thought 'we have to do something about this!'

Ellen Wilkinson: Your Instagram videos impressively feature multiple instruments, from bass clarinet to scat singing; which is your favourite to play?

ER: Definitely saxophone! I also really enjoy bass clarinet and taught myself the flute. I find doubling and switching between instruments really inspiring as a composer. Also it's fun – you show up to a gig with four cases and everyone looks at you like 'huh?!'. I have always played multiple instruments and intend to keep it up, though the embouchure switching is a nightmare.

EW: The RAM jazz department, and the wider jazz world, is notoriously male dominated – is that something you notice and does it affect you when working?

ER: It is a fact that there are more men in jazz than women; that doesn't have to be a negative in my opinion. I mostly work with male musicians – my band is male. There is a particular lack of female instrumentalists so there have been a lot of incidents where people have assumed I am a singer, which is a whole other issue! I think that we are all people and musicians, and if we treat each other with respect and put the music first, it's never a problem. A good measure is if I notice if I am the only woman in the room - that feels weird, but it depends on the context and how people treat you.



EW: What do you think can be done to encourage more female jazz instrumentalists?

ER: I think it's a long game. Diversity in general is an issue in the jazz world; any kind of work to improve this has to be done at a base educational level. If vou want there to be more female saxophonists, you need to go into a school and say 'here's an example of a female saxophonist, that could be you! Here's a saxophone.' You have to start encouraging them when they are really young and inspire a love of music before they realise the nuances of society. That is what happened for me: I started playing and thought 'there may not be that many other women but I want to play, so I'm going to do it anyway.' The more that happens, the more balanced it will be, but it's just going to take time.

EW: You have a growing social media presence; do you find Instagram a helpful tool for sharing music and promoting? Are there any downsides to it?

ER: There are definitely downsides... it can be intense! It was really helpful in lockdown, because the only thing that was going on for everyone was Instagram and social media - our whole lives were online. I started the '100 days of practice' series in lockdown, and wanted to start a conversation about what real music making looks like, because on Instagram everything is polished and perfect. As musicians, it can be demoralising only to see the end of the process in a video, so I started posting videos of me making mistakes and showing the work in progress. It used to be a weird online community, particularly as a young woman, but as soon as I started posting about constructive things, the tone changed. As long as you don't take it too seriously, Instagram can be a really positive thing.

EW: The jazz department at RAM can feel quite separate from the classical; could you give a brief overview of a typical jazzer's week?

ER: I am a second year undergraduate now, so on Monday I will go in and practise and then have rep and improv class with my year, where we learn jazz standards. A lot of traditional jazz is 'off chart' (without sheet music) so it is about being able to quickly internalise complex music. On a Tuesday or a Friday there might be an ensemble project, where you work with a visiting artist and play in a band. On Wednesday we have aural and transcription class, where we do ear training – I do transcription every day, which I think is a big difference between jazz and classical musicians. We then have composition and arranging where we have to compose based on a compositional brief, with structural or harmonic criteria to meet. On Friday we have rhythmic studies which is coordination and how you express rhythm physically – something drummers are really good at! The first class is just teaching people how to step in time. That is combined with undergrad and postgrad, which really builds a sense of community within the department.

EW: You are in the process of releasing your first solo album. What was the inspiration behind it, and how has the process been?

I recorded it in June 2021, and raised all the money to pay for recording and production via my Instagram. The album is called *Incantations* and has nine or ten tracks – it is a mix of jazz, funk and some folk. It will hopefully come out in May 2022, and it will be really special to have my music out there. I am really passionate about recording a lot: by the time I have finished, I want to have recorded at least every couple of years, and this album is just about getting started!

EW: What was the inspiration for the album?

ER: I wrote one of the tunes based on a painting called 'voodoo' because I have chromesthesia so often take inspiration from visual arts when composing. I looked up other words around that – incantation, omen – and tried to write based on those words. It's groovy stuff that I hope people like listening to. It shouldn't be taken too seriously!

EW: How did you discover that you have chromesthesia, and how does it shape your music?

ER: I was in the car when I was about six listening to some music with my mum and said 'I am seeing a lot of blue'; she took me to the doctor and they realised I have chromesthesia. For me, it is shapes as well as colours and it means I can look at artwork and take inspiration from it. My second album, which I have nearly finished writing, is called 'chroma' and is based on unusual colours that you don't often see in normal life. For example, there is a really deep shade of red that is used in Sweden to paint cabins called 'Falu' and I wrote a piece based on it. If I look at colours for long enough, I start to hear music, so the album is an experiment to see if the chromesthesia

works when flipped on its head. Tonal centres have colours for me, so E major is pink-purple and G major is orangey-yellow.

EW: What are your aims for the future, musical and non-musical?

ER: I plan to release four albums by the time I leave college. The first is in the process of being sorted and the second I hope to record in 2022; for the third one I want to do a duo record with piano, and the fourth one I would like to be for a large ensemble. Recording and writing as much as possible is a big thing for me - I have only discovered recently how much I love it and now have the impetus to keep going. I would also like to have toured Europe with my own project around the time of me leaving RAM. Nonmusic wise, I struggle with chronic illness, and I want to try and get better. I have Crohn's disease and problems with my kidneys and I want to value my physical health more, especially when I get busy with gigging. I would encourage a lot of people to remember that you are a human being before a musician, and you have to think about your wellbeing. For me it isn't deliberate that I don't prioritise it - I find I just get musically overexcited!



The Loudest students that you might not hear about... By Shona Masson

RAM's Musical Theatre (MT) company seems to be somewhat of an enigma to the rest of the Academy. We are usually identified by our constant adornment in activewear, extraverted nature and keenness to get up and dance in the RAM bar (sorry about that). It seemed appropriate that my first contribution to RAMpage should explain a little bit about what we actually do when tucked away in the mysterious 'MT corridor'.

The first thing you should know is that the MT Department functions as a professional company. From day one, we work on performance projects with top working directors and choreographers. The course is one year long and we study for an MA alongside our vocational training. The three Musical Directors, who are being trained with us, are the beating heart of the company - we simply could not function without them.

It is generally known across the Academy that the MT students are incredibly busy but what does this actually mean? What does a week as a Postgraduate MT student look like? For a number of reasons, including various levels of experience and the need to accommodate private lessons, everyone in the MT department has individualised timetables. I can, of course, only speak from my own experience, but hopefully I can give an indication of the life we lead. The basic structure is lessons in the morning and rehearsals in the afternoon. We have many different classes because the ever-evolving MT industry requires so much from its performers within the realms of singing, acting and dancing, as well as doing all three simultaneously striving to be a so-called 'triple threat'.



Musical Theatre, focussing on singing and acting through song. We also have private lessons in singing, spoken voice and repertoire coaching with professional Musical Directors.

Our classes start at 9am sharp and we usually finish rehearsals between 6pm and 7:30pm; we have four and a half hours of classes in the morning followed by between four and seven hours of rehearsals in the afternoon. Then, like everyone else at the Academy, we must fit in our individual practice, research and study around this. We are also at RAM on Sundays for singing lessons, rehearsals and dialect coaching as well as individual training and practice.

I was recently in conversation with a RAM musician who stated that they spend most of their time "sitting in a room on their own, trying to get better". I feel that whilst MT students do that too, most of our time is spent training in a room together, surrounded by members of our company who are collectively striving to improve.

This rapidly produces a closeness and supportive atmosphere amongst the cohort.

The collection of people we have in the Musical Theatre company is fascinating because everyone is completely individual. There is incredible diversity in terms of nationality, background and skill sets. We are inspired, motivated and coached by one another with the overall goal to be the strongest company possible, producing the best work possible. One of the things I love most about my colleagues is the amazing secondary skills they have to offer; we have terrific musicians, a paramedic, mathematicians, linguists and teachers to name a few, all bonded by the common goal of working professionally in the theatre.

Every member of the MT company is extremely proud to be studying at RAM, and whilst we have our differences to most other students, what we all share is a love, drive and absolute passion for what we do

Musical Theatre vs. Classical Singing: a comparison By Milette Gillow

I had a chat with the lovely Shona Masson of the RAMpage team to get an idea of how the musical theatre and classical singing 'worlds' differ from one another. It is so interesting how two industries which on the surface have a lot in common can be so different — stay tuned for a comparison (no pun intended).

Let's start with the differences. The main difference between musical theatre and classical singing, in my view, is the range of ages: opera voices don't mature until your late 20s (even into your 30s), whereas musical theatre singers are ready for the stage much earlier - at some drama schools they start as young as 16. On the flip side, there's a lot more dance involved in MT which adds further pressure to 'peak' younger - physical ability and stamina typically start to decline after 30. With MT, there is also an expectation to graduate with a job at a company; while opera companies often provide singers with further training through young artist programmes, with musical theatre, you're either in or out of the show.

Another really big difference is where the focus lies in terms of casting. In the opera world, the emphasis is very much on voice type: while there is no doubt that 'look' contributes considerably to casting, this is always the afterthought. It is not uncommon to have 30 or even 40-year-old singers playing teenagers if the role demands it vocally (for instance, in Madama Butterfly, the part of 15-year-old Cio-Cio-san requires a fairly big soprano voice, and so is unlikely to be played by a singer even remotely close to that age). By contrast, on a musical theatre singer's resumé (or spotlight, as they call it), physical descriptions, including 'playing age', are very much the norm. Things like hair colour, eye colour, height, weight, voice quality (e.g. clear, raspy, sultry, commanding) all appear on an MT spotlight, as well as any and all skill sets, from dance to horse-riding to range of accents.

When it comes to your 'type' for MT casting, there are four main things to consider: look, voice, height, and energy. Your 'type', or your 'casting', is this unique combination. Energy is the hardest to pinpoint: the best description might be the vibe or aura you get off someone. If someone's 'energy' is the right fit for a character, you can simply imagine them being that character. Figuring out your type takes a lot of honesty and selfacceptance: although everyone slots in somewhere, it can be heartbreaking to find out that you don't slot in where you might want to - you might just not be an Elphaba. The MT department at RAM only takes one person of each 'casting' on the course (32 people total), which takes the pressure off the performers as it is expected that they will be on very different trajectories when they leave.

The equivalent in opera would probably be fach: there are several subtypes within each voice type (soprano, mezzo, etc), and individual roles can be quite specific. On top of that, look, height, and energy all play a part in opera casting, although this isn't much talked about. It might be that hair colour is less relevant in the opera world as wearing wigs onstage is slightly more common, but height, energy, and physique are all factors, particularly for female singers.

The final difference comes in the form of lifestyle after leaving the Academy. For both classical and MT singers there is no 'normal' path, but the general directions appear to be quite different all the same. For MT performers, the lucky few will be on the West End, performing eight shows per week and taking a few classes in between to keep up their skills; some will be working in smaller fringe theatre, and may even venture into straight acting; some will be performing on cruise ships; some will be working in coffee shops while they audition. It's normal to expect a career with plenty of 'gaps' in it, so a second job becomes increasingly important, whether it's nannying, teaching music, tutoring, or something else entirely. Being an MT performer requires a lot of waiting around



between things. You have to be able to afford to do it. By contrast, there's a lot of classical singing work to go round that doesn't involve being an industry 'superstar'. It's common for classical singers to do a lot of ensemble or oratorio work while pursuing opera roles and young artist programmes; in fact, for many this is a goal within itself. Choral work can be quite lucrative - particularly film and church music, including weddings, funerals, and memorial services, and although it's very normal to have a 'portfolio career' involving things like teaching, I haven't seen as much emphasis on the 'second job' in the classical world.

An interesting point here is that the two industries have very different views on amateur productions. While MT singers would only put professional work on their spotlight, opera singers often highlight amateur or unpaid productions on their CV. The main emphasis is on the fact that they have sung the role before, so a) are physically capable of singing the role, and b) already know the role - this can be incredibly helpful, particularly since many operas aren't written in English (and memorising a 3 hour opera in a foreign language takes some time!) By contrast, as Shona puts it: "no one cares if you were the lead in your high school production of Grease."

Now for the similarities. At RAM, there's a lot of overlap in terms of course content: singing lessons, repertoire coaching, drama, movement classes; weekly performances to the year group; shows (although the MT department functions like a professional company, which is more similar to the opera school than the vocal master's). In terms of classes, the MT course includes improv, voice acting, and dance, whereas classical voice provides song and language classes in Italian, French, and German. Overall, however, the courses have much in common.

Both being performance industries, they can be equally gruelling. It's hard not to feel personally attacked when you're turned down for opportunities. Both MT and classical singers can feel impacted by the taxing effects of near constant rejection, combined with issues like body image - which is increasingly becoming a problem in the classical world. It is uncommon to get feedback on why you might have been rejected from something, which makes it easy to overthink and overanalyse (when, for example, it might be a simple height issue). It can be crushing constantly comparing yourself to your peers, particularly while studying at an elite institution such as RAM.

Additionally, you often feel like you are being judged as a person, rather than on your ability to play an instrument - and I can only imagine the effects of this on students as young as 16. Putting yourself 'out there' on stage takes a lot of guts, and laughing in the face of rejection builds not only resilience but character as well. Despite their differences, I think the musical theatre and classical stage performers should feel united in their perseverance, determination, and courage.



Gluten-free Mince Pie Recipe! By Ruby Howells

Given my family's history of coeliac disease, gluten free food has always been common in my household. For those who are coeliac, consuming a gluten-free diet is the only way to manage the disease. Since discovering I most likely have gluten intolerance (which, it should be noted, is different to coeliac disease), I have been finding ways to alter my cooking and my baking so that I can still enjoy all the flavours and textures of a standard diet.

Christmas food often has gluten hiding where you might least expect it, such as in stuffing and even in gravy, but it's missing out on the seasonal classics that pains me the most. I've tried the gluten-free mince pies from most of the major supermarkets, and whilst each one is a pretty good free-from attempt of the original, none of them quite hit the spot.

However, whether you love them or loathe them, this particular mince pie recipe is guaranteed to make your tastebuds tingle - and if you follow it to the mark, there shouldn't be a soggy bottom in sight!

Ingredients and Equipment:

12-hole tart tray
Pastry cutters (circular and starshaped)
Pastry brush
Measuring scales
Mixing bowl
Rolling pin

For the pastry:

200g gluten-free plain white flour (I would recommend Doves Farm FREEE range) 25g icing sugar ½ tsp xanthan gum 100g butter (or chosen alternative) 1 egg 1-2 tbsp cold water

For the filling:

200g mincemeat – you can make your own or purchase some from the shop (but check the ingredients list for gluten!)

1 tbsp apricot jam, warmed up



Method:

- 1. Start by preheating the oven to 180°C / 350°F (Fan = 160°C), Gas Mark 4.
- 2. Measure the flour, icing sugar and xanthan gum into a large bowl. Xanthan gum is a key ingredient in gluten-free food as it acts as a binding agent, so don't skip it. Stir to combine and then sieve the mixture into a mixing bowl.
- Add the butter to the bowl. If you're fortunate enough to own a pastry blender, use this to work the butter into the flour, otherwise use a fork – try to avoid using your fingers. Do this until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs.
- 4. Next, break the egg into the bowl and add between one and two tablespoons of cold water. Using a wooden spoon, stir in the egg and the water until the pastry comes together to form a soft ball of dough that is slightly sticky to the
- 5. Rest the pastry for the next 15 minutes. Cover it with either cling film or a towel, held on with an elastic band. Whilst the pastry is resting, use the time to rub some butter around the insides of the tart tray. Make sure to also grease the rim of each as this will make taking the tarts out later much easier.
- Pastry is far easier to work with on a cold surface – I just use the kitchen countertop. Make sure to dust your work surface with flour, as this will prevent the dough from sticking.
- Take two thirds of your dough and dust it lightly with flour, then place it on your surface. Continue to rest the remaining third of dough. Dust your rolling pin with flour.
- 8. Roll out the pastry until it is roughly the thickness of a £1 coin. Any thinner than this and the mincemeat filling may come through the pastry during cooking.
- Using a circular pastry cutter that is slightly larger than the diameter of the holes of the tart tray, press it into the dough to create circles. Lift

- these circles onto the prepared tray and gently press each circle into the walls of the holes. You should have 12 pies.
- 10. Put approximately a teaspoon of mincemeat into the centre of each pie.
- 11. Take the remainder of your dough and roll it out on your work surface. Using the star cutter, create star shapes, and gently place these over the mincemeat.
- 12. Pop your pies in the oven and bake for roughly 25 minutes.
- 13. Warm up your apricot jam. Remove the pies from the oven and brush a little of the jam on each pastry star.
- 14. Cook for another 5 minutes until the pastry is golden brown. Once the pies have cooled down, dust a little icing sugar over the pies.

They're ready to eat!

Happy baking, and I hope this recipe inspires many of you to try something new this Christmas!





An insight into the life and works of

Clara Schumann

By Sophia Jin

Composer and performer Clara Wieck was born on September 13th, 1819 in Leipzig, Germany, to Marianne Tromlitz and Friedrich Wieck. From a young age, Clara was surrounded by music. Her mother was a very successful and talented singer, whilst her father was comparable to Mozart's father: both were teachers dedicated to building the musical careers of their children. Growing up, Clara would rigorously study with her father, having daily lessons in piano, violin, voice, theory and harmony, composition, and counterpoint. And after all this, she would practise for hours under strict supervision.

From the early age of nine, Clara Wieck's performing career began to take off. She debuted in 1828, giving a solo recital in Leipzig. At the age of eleven she toured Europe, where she encountered many important musical figures including the infamous Niccolò Paganini, who was so taken by her performance that he offered to perform with her. She also met Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin, who were completely besotted by her and her formidable talent. Clara was beginning to garner an international reputation and was well on her way to becoming a genuine celebrity. In 1838, she was honoured by the Austrian court and elected to the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna. But despite all these accolades at such a young age, Clara's greatness was only just beginning to unfold...

Alongside her glittering early career, Clara's personal life was developing in ways that would shape her whole life. In 1828 she met Robert Schumann, who eventually moved in with the Wiecks in order to study with Clara's father. Although Robert unfortunately injured himself while practising, sabotaging his hopes of becoming a concert pianist, it was during this period that a romance blossomed between Clara and Robert. They were married on the 12th September 1840, a day before Clara's 21st birthday.

This was strongly against the wishes of Clara's father, who Robert and Clara were even forced to sue for their right to marry. Despite these difficulties, their union fostered a beautiful and collaborative musical partnership.



Robert and Clara Schumann

Remarkably, Clara Schumann balanced a 61-year career as one of Europe's most prolific concert pianists of the Romantic period with the mothering of her seven children and looking after a husband with severe mental health difficulties. Throughout this time, she continued to go on tours and teach at the Leipzig conservatory.

Away from the piano, Clara was a sensitive and brilliant composer. However, as one can imagine, it was difficult to be a female composer in the 19th century. She faced struggles and heartbreaking frustrations:

"I once believed that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose — there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?" - Clara Schumann (diary entry, November 26th, 1839).

Female composers of the time tended to write small-scale music such as chamber music or solo pieces. They rarely had

opportunities to write operas and symphonies, and what they did write generally wouldn't have been allowed to be performed publicly. Many men in fact felt that women shouldn't perform or compose at all. As an example of the expectations placed on women, in the article 'Women Composers: From the Middle Ages to the Present', Stevie Feliciano writes that women were expected to 'cultivate "feminine" instruments that would not require an alteration in facial expression or physical demeanour'. Clara was able to write some more substantial works, but had to ensure that they were deemed 'feminine' enough. Some of her most notable works include her Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 7 (1836) which is much more Chopin-esque than Robert Schumann's concertos, and is also reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto. She was only sixteen when she wrote this work! The piece is highly virtuosic, showing off and glorifying her own abilities (she performed it often).

Another notable composition is her *Piano Trio in G minor*, Op. 17 (1846). It consists of four movements, and has a dark character with an extensive fugal development. Her *Romance in A minor for solo piano*, WoO 28 (1853) has a lyrical melody which would have lent the piece to some 'feminine' qualities, thereby making the work appropriate for a female composer of the time.

Her Variations on a theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 20 (1853) perfectly portrays how intimate Clara's relationship with her husband was. Using Robert's theme (from his Bunte Blätter, Op. 99 No. 1), Clara explores their joint love and passion for music and composition. The seven variations explore Robert's theme, shifting from a gliding romantic interpretation in the third variation to the fiery rage of the fifth variation. The seventh and final variation encapsulates Clara's own unique style of writing. The music is complex and elaborate, and it transforms the simple idea into a multi-faceted exploration of emotion, reflecting Robert's own heartbreakingly tumultuous life.

The composer Johannes Brahms became a close professional and personal friend of the Schumanns beginning in 1853. Brahms's talent in his performance and composition impressed them, and Robert went on to write about him in his music magazine *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Both Brahms and Clara would visit Robert when he was ill in the asylum. After Robert's death in 1856, Brahms and Clara continued what would be their lifelong friendship. Brahms would always send Clara his new compositions for her approval before publishing.



Clara Schumann portrait

I hope that this short introduction to the remarkable and prolific composer, Clara Schumann, has made you eager to learn more about this woman! In the classical music industry today, many of the pieces that are performed most regularly were composed by men. A lot of people will have heard of Johann Sebastian Bach or Richard Wagner or Franz Schubert, but fewer people will have heard of female composers. Today, as awareness of female artists continues to arow. Clara Schumann's contributions to music can be assessed more accurately, and we can see that she is a composer just as worthy of careful study as her male counterparts. I personally hope that more and more concerts will include works by composers like Clara Wieck (Schumann).

Things to consider reading:

Letters of Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms

Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman by Nancy B. Reich

Diary of Robert and Clara Schumann

This article was originally published at www.ff2media.com

Dreaming of a Green Christmas...

The winter holidays are seen by many as a time for giving, sharing, and spending time with your loved ones: whether celebrating Christmas or other festive holidays, the darkest part of the year in the UK is celebrated with bright lights, pink noses, and fingers wrapped around hot drinks – mulled and otherwise! One of my own Christmas traditions is dusting off Michael Bublé's deluxe Christmas album: specifically the classic 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas'. There's something magical about the idea of waking up to a snow-covered Christmas morning that we Brits seem to cling on to, despite it only having happened on 4 occasions since 1960 (the most recent in 2010). Unfortunately for us, the elusive 'White Christmas' was more common in the 18th and 19th centuries, and with climate change having brought about higher average temperatures, we are likely to continue to be disappointed.

Statistics for Christmas related waste and emissions are quite astonishing, with 'Zero Waste Week' writing that around 114,000 tonnes of plastic packaging were thrown away and not recycled in the UK last Christmas, as well as the equivalent of over 4 million Christmas dinners ending up in the bin. During this busy period, I've gathered a few tips on how to help make the yuletide greener this year...

The Christmas tree debate:

The debate of real vs fake Christmas trees is a longstanding one, and neither option is without cons. Here are a few things to consider when choosing your type of tree, and also a few eco-friendly alternatives that may pique your interest...

Real trees:

- They take around 10-12 years to grow, and for those years they capture carbon and are a great habitat for wildlife.
- Cutting down trees is bad for the environment, but as most Christmas trees are grown specifically to be cut down (and will therefore be replaced), cutting down 10 year-old trees does

By Rowena Taylor

- not have quite the same negative impact as deforestation in rainforests.
- Burning real trees after use can reduce potential carbon emissions by approximately 80% compared to trees that end up in landfill.
- At the end of the Christmas season, you can opt in to have your tree collected by local authorities where it can be turned into wood chip that could then be used for playgrounds or parks.
- If you buy a tree locally, there are few transport-related emissions.



Artificial trees:

- If you use the same artificial tree for more than 10 Christmases, then the carbon footprint will be lower than that of a real tree.
- Around 80% of trees bought in the UK are apparently shipped from China, which means transport-related emissions are high.
- They may be reusable, but they are not recyclable and will still ultimately end up in landfill.
- For people who like to start celebrating Christmas early, they last a lot longer than a real tree and decorations can therefore be in place for longer. Artificial trees also come in many colours and sizes, so there is something for everyone.

Other options:

Rather than having a real or plastic tree, you could find and decorate a branch from any tree, decorate a houseplant that you already have, or even get a wooden tree or other artistic representation that you could use each year.

If you want a real tree that is more sustainable, you can rent a tree with roots and give it back at the end of the Christmas season, where it will be looked after the rest of the year until someone else rents it for next Christmas. Simply google Christmas tree rental for your area - you might be surprised by the number of options available...

Whether you have a real or artificial tree, or something else entirely, if you are concerned about deforestation, you could always make a donation to a charity that protects forests.

Alternatively, have whatever type of tree you wish and instead focus on having sustainably sourced decorations. The options are endless!

To make: slice the citrus into circles about half a centimetre thick, pat with paper towels to remove some moisture, place on a wire rack and cook in the oven for about 6 hours (turning halfway) at about 120 degrees celsius (remember - you want to dry the fruit, not cook it, so towards the end check that the fruit is not going brown, as that is a sign that they are overdone).

When they have cooled and hardened, use a large needle and some string/thread of your choice to tie the fruit into garlands to hang up around your home. You can also tie up with cinnamon sticks, or add anything else into the garlands that will get you in the Christmas spirit! If dried properly, the garlands should last for at least two years and are naturally biodegradable so can go in the food waste or on your compost heap when they are no longer usable. I should also mention that whilst in the oven, your home will smell incredible!

Low waste decorations: dried fruit garlands

Last year, I decided that I wanted to make some low waste Christmas decorations for my flat. I made an array of paper snowflakes and origami Christmas trees that I hung up around the living room, but perhaps my favourite decorations were the dried orange garlands. These garlands don't have to be made exclusively of oranges; if you want things to get more colourful, you can use a mix of citrus; try lemons, grapefruit, or even limes to switch things up a bit!

Insights on inclusivity: a conversation

with George Chambers

By Tom O'Kelly and Hera Protopapas

The LGBTQIA+ Society is working to promote a safe and inclusive environment for queer students, a goal that needs to be pursued at all levels within the Academy. George Chambers is Head of Communications and External Relations at RAM and. among other things, he was one of the driving forces behind the flying of the Progress Pride Flag above the main entrance in June 2021. Society president Tom O'Kelly met with George to discuss his thoughts on queer life at the Academy and the ongoing work towards making our institution more inclusive.

Tom O'Kelly: First of all, I would love to know what you did before you joined the staff at RAM and how you came to be here.

George Chambers: I came here about four years ago now. My background is in PR (public relations), but initially I trained as a singer. I went from there to healthcare PR and then to record labels and artists agencies.

Before the Academy, I was working for an agency with orchestras and singers in particular. Then I applied for a job as Media and Communications Manager at RAM and got here, and it was a really different place to work. I had been in a much more cut-throat world (particularly with the record labels) and this place felt so inspirational and friendly.

My first project here was working on the Susie Sainsbury Theatre and Angela Burgess Recital Hall when they opened in 2018, which was a real jump in at the deep end. In January the year before last, I became Head of Communications and External Relations, with the view of getting to a wider range of partners, pushing the name of the Academy out to as many people as possible and celebrating our successes.

TO: One of your old clients, Joyce DiDonato, is a big advocate for LGBTQ+ issues in classical music. What was it like working with her?

GC: It was joyous to work for her. I remember when she did the Last Night of the Proms, and I had two main jobs. One was to get the message out that she was going to perform *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* as an encore and



Pictured left: George at Birmingham Pride

dedicate it to the LGBTQ+ community. This was at the time when there was lots of media about the LGBTQ+ community being persecuted in Russia, and she really wanted to make a statement against that. We got it out into the media, it was mentioned in reviews and we got lots of news out of it. It really felt like a success. My other and slightly more surreal job for that event was sourcing some diamonds to go with her couture dress. It was so much fun.

TO: What kind of work is happening at RAM to promote and increase queer inclusivity, and how has that developed in your time here?

GC: I think I have always been of the opinion that there is more we can do to make people feel included. For instance, when we put the Progress Pride Flag up over the entrance last year, it was a small gesture, but I was so proud that we were able to do that without question and with full support. I was prepared for the odd person to make a snide comment like 'How are people going to know it's the Royal Academy of Music if it doesn't say so on the flaa?', but that didn't happen. I do think the moment we hung the flag was really important. I think - because we're an arts organisation – it's sometimes taken for granted that we're inclusive and welcoming, but it's incredibly important that people see that we are as inclusive as we possibly can be. The flag was a starting point, and it gives us the opportunity to continue the work. I'm confident that the Progress Pride Flag – or whichever version of the latest flag we think is the most appropriate as an organisation and in dialogue with the students – will be up for years to come, and it has never flown outside the building before in 200 years. It's a turning point, but wouldn't have happened if the Student Union hadn't brought it up as something they wanted to do, and if I hadn't had those discussions as well. It was also imperative that we inform everyone about the flaa. We did some social media posts that explained it

and celebrated it, but the most important thing was getting an email out to staff and students, from Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, which explained why we were putting the flag up, what it meant and what the different colours symbolised. That was absolutely integral, because that kind of thing plants seeds in the heads of people who might not have known or just ignored it. It gives people context. The key thing when trying to promote inclusivity is to open up discussions, to voice your concerns and open up channels of communication.



Artwork by Jess Anderson

Apart from the flag, there have also been things like the Seen and Heard festival, which was arranged last year by the LGBTQIA+ Society, the Feminist Society and the Ethnic Diversity Society. That was a way of using student programming to raise unheard voices, and we had a public platform

for that so it got out to a wider audience. At the moment we're working on introducing pronouns in staff email signatures. Again, we'll need to explain why we're doing it and why it's important for the Academy and for the people who feel they need to be represented. Jonathan has been a strong ally in these processes, which means that things can happen quickly and efficiently. He has been stopping me in the corridor, asking things like where else we coduld put the flag next year to make it more visible. So I do think that things have changed during my time here, and it's down to some hard work, but also to keeping discussions open, talking about things and making them happen.

TO: How did you feel when the flag was flown?

GC: There are two things I remember particularly that really got to me and made me a little bit emotional. One was just seeing people taking selfies in front of it – which I just thought was amazing – and then being able to share them and spread that story on our channels. The other was when a friend of mine called me and said 'George, I'm in the car driving past the Academy and you've got the flag up, that's amazing!'. It was just a great thing to hear. The flag was hung in a very obvious place and it really has been seen by a lot of people. It's a gesture, but it's also a real statement.

TO: Do you think that there is enough LGBTQIA+ education at RAM?

GC: I don't actually know what is taught, in terms of what is on the syllabus et cetera. The one thing I would say is that you can always know more. I used to lead an LGBT society for two years and I'm always trying to read up on issues within the queer community. There is always more that I need to read. I think that, as an organisation, we're taking baby steps and we're doing the right things, even though we could definitely do more.

TO: Do you think there is a good awareness among the staff?

GC: I don't think there is any place for harassment of any kind against queer people at the Academy. I would hope that if something did come up, RAM would act immediately. My message to staff especially would be that language is always evolving, particularly in this area with pronouns and other aspects of diversity and inclusion. No one is going to get it right all of the time, but if you don't get it right and someone is offended in some way, open that discussion up. Talk to them and discuss what you did wrong, why they were offended, and what you can do to make it better. I like to think that my colleagues and I can do more to make more people feel included here at the Academy. The more we do that, the more inclusive the environment will be for both staff and students, and that can only be a great thing.

Food Guide near RAM By Milette Gillow

We all know the Sound Bites Cafe has delicious food at very reasonable prices, but on the rare occasion that you might want to get out of the building and explore the world, it's good to know what options are available nearby. Allow me to take you through a variety of price brackets and taste options, from the cheap and cheerful to the exquisite - from the times when you're grabbing something en route to Cross Keys, to going out with your parents after a concert.

See below for a (non-comprehensive) list of my favourites:

£ - for a quick bite



Chik'n (6 minutes walk from RAM)

Chik'n is perfect for grabbing some quick comfort food and has vegan options available. I've never been disappointed by their zigzag fries and delicious burgers. I particularly recommend the 'Spice Up Your Life' (£6.45) - the chicken can be replaced with veggie chicken which tastes just as good. Remember - you get free chips with your burger when you show a student card!

Chipotle (8 minutes walk from RAM)

Chipotle is THE go-to lunch spot for me. If you're ever craving something fresh (and slightly spicy), Chipotle's your guy. Top tip: when they ask which sauce you want, "all three" is absolutely a valid answer. My recommendation is the veggie burrito bowl with free quacamole, half and half rice, half and half beans, all 3 sauces, and all the vegetables, topped with cheese and sour cream (£7.00). This is making me salivate as I type - I wonder if they can deliver to my house right now?



Wok to Walk (6 minutes walk from RAM)

Wok to Walk lets you construct your own noodle box - you choose every detail from the base to the sauce to the toppings. The box automatically comes with white cabbage, carrots, soybean sprouts, onions, spring onions, and an egg, with additional toppings costing extra and price varying depending on the topping. While I can't advise on toppings (I find vegetable choices to be highly personal) I recommend both the peanut sauce and the Hot Asia sauce. The price can vary a lot depending on how many toppings you get, but the portion sizes are massive and the base rate is entirely reasonable.



££ - for an indulgent lunch



Paul Rothe & Son (11 minutes from RAM)

The Paul Rothe & Son deli is entirely worth the slightly longer walk from RAM. Not only do they sell a delicious array of jams and spreads (hello Christmas gift baskets!), their menu is fresh, delicious, and made to order. Even when I order something I can make at home - and I don't know why this is the case - it's somehow better when I get it from the deli. I'm not sure what magic they put into their brie, but it is utterly fabulous. My recommendation is off-the-menu: a brie, sun-dried tomato, and lettuce sandwich made from granary brown bread with a knob of butter (£5).



Le Pain Quotidien (4 minutes walk from RAM)

The main thing that strikes me about Le Pain Quotidien is the atmosphere - you couldn't get more 'classic café' if you tried. One of my favourite spots to sit with a coffee and get some work done, I recommend staying in or sitting outside if the weather allows. One of my favourite lunch memories over the past year was sitting out in the rain, under the awnings, with a cup of hot soup. Yes, it's a chain, but you don't mess with a classic - and the Marylebone branch is just so damn cosy. Their soups and tartines are particularly good, although I also recommend the Christmassy Chocolate Bomb for this time of year, which is absolutely sublime.



Orrery Epicerie (3 minutes walk from RAM)

Another one of those places that manages to make everything taste good with the added bonus of being an incredibly short walk away from RAM. I particularly recommend the smoked salmon bagel (£5.50). Yet again, they manage to make it taste better than any bagel I've ever put together myself, despite the fact that I have all the ingredients at home. What can I say - sometimes the fancy French place just does it better.

£££ - for a post-concert dinner

The Ivy (10 minutes walk from RAM)

It's a classic. I'm not going to lie - The Ivy has subjective levels of snobbery depending on where you go - but I've been to the Marylebone branch several times and it's always been lovely. They even have a special vegetarian/vegan menu, so make sure to ask for that to avoid missing out on half the options! Mains are around the £14-17 mark, so despite being on the fancier side it's not too pricey. Their menu is seasonal so my recommended goat's cheese risotto is sadly no longer available, but the Zucchini Fritti (£5.95) are surprisingly delicious. Their serving sizes are very generous - when I ordered the aforementioned Fritti with friends we genuinely thought they had given us a triple portion by accident.



Aubaine Marylebone (6 minutes walk from RAM)

If you're not feeling Italy, why not try France? Aubaine is definitely the priciest option on this list - the first thing on the menu is literally champagne and caviar - but if you get the chance to go it truly is a fabulous experience and the decor is super cute. I recommend the lobster spaghetti (£32) - if it sounds indulgent, that's because it absolutely is. There's literally an entire lobster tail on there - the menu describes the dish as slow roasted cherry tomatoes, lobster bisque, basil cress, lobster, espelette pepper oil. The truffle rigatoni (£19) served in a cream sauce is also delicious; although I think going to a French restaurant and ordering pasta might be a sin?



Caldesi (9 minutes walk from RAM)

You simply cannot go wrong with homemade pasta. Unlike the dried pasta you might buy in supermarkets, fresh pasta contains egg as an additional ingredient, making it smoother and more tender. It's slightly pricier than the lvy, but as long as you don't go for the swordfish (£28) it's absolutely possible to get a main for under £15. The perfect spot for a post-concert 'treat yourself' dinner with the family and a glass of wine.



THE CROSSWORD

A non-cryptic puzzle with a slightly festive theme

BY ANDREW FARNDEN

ACROSS

- 1 Word before job or couple
- 4 Frozen yoghurt brand
- 8 Crowd noise
- 12 Old dragon?
- 13 Medieval traveller
- 14 Shoppe descriptor
- 15 Acted like Marceau
- 16 Shoe seller
- 17 Unit of lettuce
- 18 An intelligent fruit?
- 21 LBJ's beagle
- 22 Number of goalkeepers?
- 23 Strengthen
- 27 New parents, at times
- 30 Deity in a hurry?
- 31 Hangman line
- 32 Keep at ____
- 33 Prefix for day or night
- 34 Greek mountain
- 36 Route
- 37 Taiwanese-Australian violinist
- 39 Often left hanging
- 40 Hotel room extra
- 41 Take to court
- 42 Faint tattoo?
- 45 Drives back
- 48 Passed slowly
- 49 A Roman cross?
- 50 Member of parliament?
- 52 Explosive cannabis?
- 56 Let's go somewhere quiet?
- 59 Letters before O?
- 60 Slimming surgeries, briefly
- 61 Yuletide, and a hint to 18a, 30a, 42a, 52a
- 62 Bracelet awarder: Abbr.
- 63 Part of the Road Runner's cry
- 64 Where lion cubs sleep
- 65 Out of danger
- 66 Gold: Prefix

DOWN

- 1 "Crikey!"
- 2 Hunter's prey, often
- 3 Dimwit

		1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
	12					13					14			
15						16					17			
18					19					20				
21					22				23			24	25	26
	27		28	29				30						
			31				32					33		
	34	35				36				37	38			
39					40				41					
42			43	44				45				46	47	
48							49					50		51
			52			53				54	55			
56	57	58			59					60			+	
61	+		+		62					63			+	
64			+		65					66				

- 4 Begets
- 5 "I'm telling the truth!"
- 6 Ransom that was paid for cars?
- 7 Praise for a dog
- 8 Creator of Fu Manchu
- 9 Led the Red Devils
- 10 Palindromic girl's name
- 11 Word before army or ant
- 12 Connect
- 15 Letters on a dashboard
- 19 P45, for one
- 20 It has lots of meanings: Abbr.
- 24 Be quietly angry
- 25 "Tell _____ your own words..."
- 26 High degree
- 28 More, in Buenos Aires
- 29 Elizabethan, for one
- 30 High spirited
- 32 Cave dweller
- 34 Sandwich cookie
- 35 Tree topper
- 36 Stir fry vessel
- 37 Winner's trophy
- 38 "Tee___"
- 39 "How cute!"
- 40 It's shown on TV across the pond

- I iPhone button indicated by a paper airplane icon
- 43 Pelvic floor exercises
- 44 "I'll pay you back!"
- 45 Clean again
- 46 Trimmer
- 47 Bird of prey's descent
- 49 "____ frog" (Witches' brew ingredient in Macbeth)
- 51 Superior to sgts.
- 53 City with a famous bell tower
- 54 The Wire actor
- 55 Waltzing violinist
- 56 70s role-playing game, for short
- 57 Cartoon bartender
- 58 Stag party attendees

Prize: Dinner at a Marylebone restaurant

Offered for a correctly completed submission

Please send entries to andrew.farnden19@ram.ac.uk

Deadline: Sunday 9th January

The Top Five Christmas Carol Descants to be singing from the Pews this **Christmas!**

Ding Dong, Christmas carols are back! Yes, it's that merry time of year when many of us file into a cathedral, church or concert hall to belt out our favourite

carols. We can generally agree that the majority of Christmas carols are true bops, but what really separates the wheat from the chaff is a showstopping descant.

For those of you who aren't quite as nerdy as me, a descant is the tune that the sopranos sing in the final verse of a Christmas carol. Their high pitch, crazy leaps and sudden funky harmony are all part of what makes them so iconic (and so fun to sing for those of us who are not sopranos). There is no greater thrill than risking your musical reputation to blast out every descant you know at the top of your lungs. But which ones should you really sever your vocal chords for? To help you out, here is my ranking of the top five choral descants worth singing this Christmas!

Follow along to the ranking via this Spotify playlist to hear some of these tunes for yourself!



Artwork by Jess Abrahams

By Mia Serracino-Inglott

5. Once in Royal David's City

A favourite amongst the mums, Once in Royal David's City lands itself in fifth place. We all revel in the textural build from solo treble, to choir in harmony, and then resplendent full chorus with descant, but the descant never truly measures up to the beauty of that solo treble.

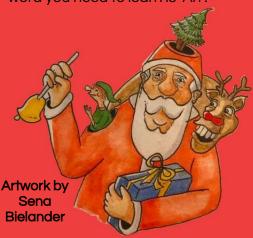
It's a little too repetitive and the jumps in the third phrase are particularly difficult to maneuver when stuck next to Sue from the parish who is barely nailing the tune. Sure, bashing out 'LOOOOONELY STABLE' is a lot of fun, but ending the descant on the third leaves us feeling very unfulfilled... sorry, David!

4. O Little Town of Bethlehem

You may notice that the majority of descants in this list come from the humongous mind of David Willcocks, but O Little Town of Bethlehem stands apart. Thomas Armstrong manages to break Willcocks' tyranny with a simple, yet exciting, descant that soars into the stratospheric ledger-line zone that only a soprano should really attempt... (should not could). The descant elegantly peels away from the melody in each phrase and, just as we begin to zone out from singing angelic A's, Armstrong provides us with the greatest twist ending of all time: the minor dominant chord on 'abide with us'. It's always handy to have a descant that keeps you on your toes and a surprise chord certainly does that - coupled with a cheesy ritardando, it's a showstopper.

3. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

Willcocks is at it again with a welldeserved third place for God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen. This descant adopts a very different tone to the others in this ranking: instead of just going full welly, the three-part harmony brings an incredible ethereal tone to the carol's final verse. There is no descant as beautiful as this one when suna well! You may feel very exposed singing this one so I recommend forcing two equally-drunk friends to sing the other harmonies with you. Bonus points are warranted for this particular descant because the only word you need to learn is 'Ah'.



2. O Come, All Ye Faithful

Of course, our top two would have to be a showdown between the two big daddies of the carol world. O Come All Ye Faithful's descant part is thrilling a genuine rollercoaster ride for any singer. The sheer BDE (Big Descant-Writing Energy) of Willcocks to set the 'Gloria' phrase from *Ding Dong! Merrily* on High as the soprano descant is unmatched. Then you get the cheeky bell-like setting of 'O Come' which you know is just building to a smashing ending... the only problem is that it's not the end. Verse 7 comes after the descant and always catches me by surprise. For me, this undoes some of that wild excitement from the descant, hence only second place.



Artwork by Jess Abrahams

1. Hark! The Herald Angels Sings

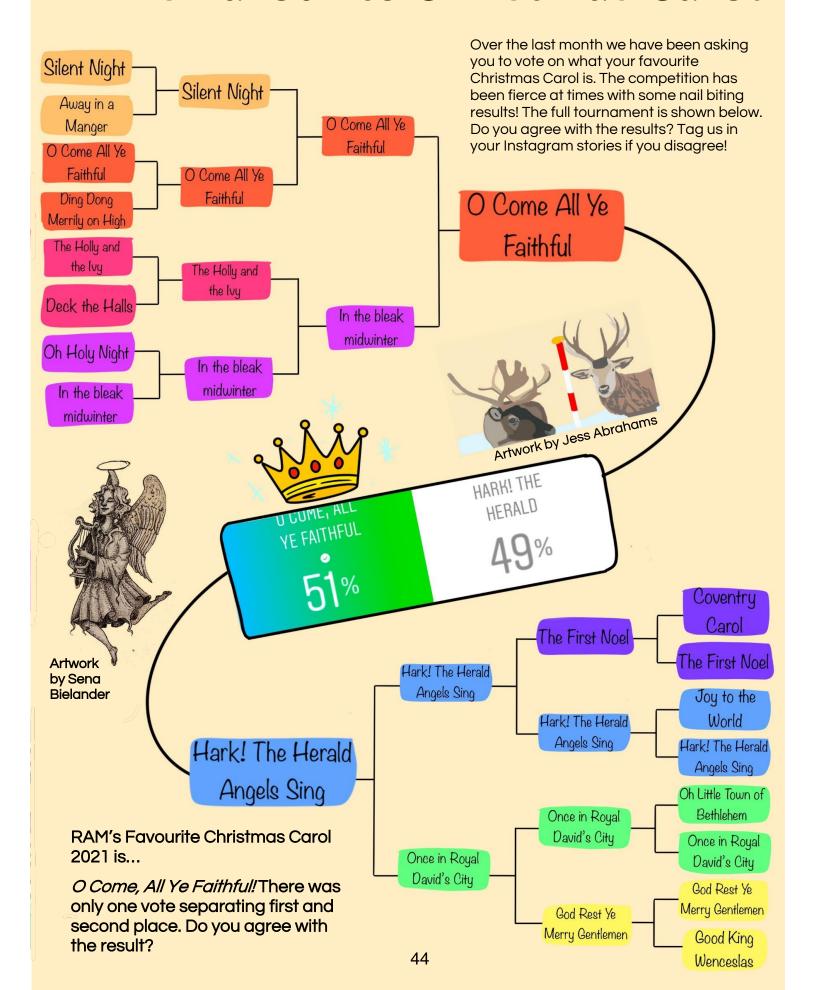
Can you sing a top A? Nope. Will you sing the *Hark!* descant anyway? Absolutely yes. It's a true no-brainer that top-spot goes to the mighty *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.* Sometimes you just need to scream at the top of your lungs and this descant lets you do that. The audacity of that F-natural vs. E-natural clash is genuinely the best part of my Christmas. There's nothing more triumphant than reaching that final G, knowing you won't have a voice tomorrow morning, but absolutely positive that it was worth it. Well done Willcocks, you did yourself proud there.

So there we have it! Hopefully this ranking helps you navigate your way through Christmas, whether you've only just learned what a descant is or you're a seasoned pro. After a year without congregational singing, now is the time to enjoy yourselves. So make the most of it, and don't let any beadyeyed parishioner tell you to shut up singing (and butchering) descants is all part of the Christmas spirit.

Happy Carolling!

All descants can be found in the 100 Carols for Choirs book (or just ask your local singer)

RAM's Favourite Christmas Carol!



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Ellen, Hannah and all the team at RAMpage!



Artwork by Sena Bielander