

RWCMD ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER
SUMMER
2021



ROYAL WELSH COLLEGE
OF MUSIC & DRAMA
COLEG BRENHINOL
CERDD A DRAMA CYMRU

rwcmd.ac.uk/alumni

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

THIS YEAR IS ENDING WITH JUST AS MUCH NEED TO BE FLEXIBLE AND FIND NEW WAYS TO MANAGE AS IT BEGAN. IT HAS FELT SO STRANGE BUT I AM HUGEY PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED, AND I THANK ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE AT RWCMD FOR THIS, AND FOR GETTING US TO THIS POINT WHERE WE ARE READY TO EMBRACE ANOTHER UNPREDICTABLE YEAR.

We've seen extraordinary imagination and creativity from students and staff throughout this year, in spite of the obvious challenges of delivering conservatoire training in the midst of a pandemic. While venues across the country have been closed to the public, we've been incredibly fortunate to welcome world class artists to the College and students and staff have had the opportunity to experience a wealth of live and online performances and masterclasses, many of which we've made available to our audiences online. We've also seen the growth of burgeoning longer-term collaborations and partnerships and there is much to look forward to next year.

Throughout the year, it's been wonderful to see a lot of vibrant activity still able to take place in the College. Against the odds this summer, we have managed to complete four full-scale Drama productions in College, directed by four of the country's leading and emerging practitioners with four separate companies of graduating 3rd year and MA Actors, performing across two theatres.

After many weeks of negotiation, St David's Hall agreed to us using the hall for a hugely successful orchestral project featuring our Postgraduate Conducting students in June. This followed closely on a wonderful opportunity for the conducting students to work with the WNO orchestra, our International Chair, Carlo Rizzi, in the Donald Gordon theatre at WMC. We also achieved semi-staged performances of *The Turn of the Screw*, a wonderful double-bill directed by our opera director students, and the musical *Urinetown*. All of this alongside a full schedule of recitals and assessments.

We continue to proudly celebrate successes within our Alumni community, especially during a challenging year, a range of which feature on page 3.

We were delighted to announce our great friend and International Chair Uzo Iwobi as a new Vice President of the College. For those of you who don't know Uzo, she's a British-Nigerian solicitor and equalities practitioner



Photo by Kirsten Mcernan

holding positions as a Specialist Policy Advisor on Equality to the Welsh Government, Commissioner to the Commission for Racial Equality UK and founder of Race Council Cymru. She's received many awards, including an OBE, for her contributions to community race relations and South Wales Communities.

Since Uzo joined the College three years ago she's been an active and inspirational member of our community, and her new role is a way of us celebrating her contribution to RWCMD. As well as introducing us to diverse members of our community, including the Windrush Cymru Elders, Uzo has also played a crucial part in helping us to form our Strategic Equality Plan and Anti-Racism Plan which we launched last year as a roadmap to creating and continuing to develop a respectful space for everyone within our College.

Looking forward, our Development Department are gearing up to launch a new fundraising campaign called Promise Addewid at the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year in September. The campaign will run for two years and aims to raise more than twice what we normally achieve so that we can emerge from this period of pandemic, able to invest and to drive forward our strategic goals at pace and scale. They write "we know that our students are the new generations of performers, practitioners, creators and managers who will bring about the promise of the arts to society and the promise of Wales to the world. Our campaign name highlights the promise that is inherent in all of them as well as our own commitment to nurture their talents, encourage diversity and provide the opportunity of training to those who are exceptionally gifted, whatever their economic or social starting point. Add in the promises and pledges of our supporting community and together we can do something extraordinary to provide them with their stages and set them on their pathways."

Please keep in touch and we very much look forward to welcoming you back to the College as soon as possible!

Helena F. Saint

STUDENT AND GRADUATE SUCCESS

DRAMA

- + Graduate and fellow **Rakie Ayola**, won a BAFTA for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Anthony*
- + 2020 Acting graduate, **Callum Scott Howells** played a lead role in Channel 4's ground-breaking drama *It's a Sin*.
- + **Andrew Horton**, who graduated in 2015 stars in Netflix's *Jupiter's Legacy*.
- + A whole host of RWCMD Graduates featured in the BBC Wales drama, *The Pact* including **Rakie Ayola**, **Aneurin Barnard**, **Heledd Gwynn**, **Alexandra Riley**, **Abbie Hern**, **Ben McGregor**, **Eiry Thomas**, **Mark Lewis Jones** & **Sophie Melville** in the cast. Behind the scenes, we also have Producer **Catrin Lewis Defis**, Costume Design by **Ray Holman**, Art Direction by **Vicki Male**, Colourist **Emyr Jenkins** & **Dilara Medin** and **Hollie Voice** as Stand-by Art Director and Location Manager.
- + Acting graduate **Anjana Vasana** featured in Channel 4's comedy series *We Are Lady Parts*, about an all-female Muslim Punk Band.
- + 2014 Acting graduate, **Thalissa Teixeira**, starred in ITV Drama *Too Close* and was a part of a noteworthy diverse cast in Channel 5's *Anne Boleyn*, which also featured **Lola Petticrew** and **Aiofe Hinds**.
- + Four of our Design graduates have been working together on a new Netflix adaptation of *Heartstopper*. **Guto Humphries** (2006) – Art Director, **Carys Beard** (2012) – Stand-By Art Director, **Charlie Chadwick** (2018) – Assistant Art Director & **Anastasia Louka** (2020) – Art Department Assistant.
- + 2015 Musical Theatre graduate **Luke McCall** was part of the *Les Miserables* – The Staged Concert at the Sondheim Theatre in 2020.
- + **Michael Lowe** (2017) has been cast in *The Phantom of the Opera* in the show's return to Her Majesty's Theatre this summer, having previously been cast in the show's UK and Ireland 2020 tour.
- + **Teleri Hughes** (2017) made her West end debut in *The Heathers Musical* at Theatre Royal Haymarket in June this year.
- + 2019 Design graduate, **Debbie Duru** held roles as Associate Designer National Theatre *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Designer at the Royal Court *Living News Paper* and was a Linbury Prize Finalist.

"WE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THE PARTNERSHIP WITH MUSIC IN COUNTRY CHURCHES – A CHARITY SUPPORTED BY HRH PRINCE OF WALES..."

- + **Rose Revitt** (2019) held roles as Designer the Bridge Theatre A Christmas Carol, won The Stage Debut Award for Best Design for Dr Korczak's Example at Leeds Playhouse and was a finalist in the Linbury Prize.
- + Two entries from RWCMD were selected as part of the final exhibited projects at The Prague Quadrennial International Common Design Project, The White Plague. The successful group submission was designed by **Josie Bellerby**, **Tomas Palmer**, **Joseph Loftin**, **Hannah Drum** and **Emeline Beroud** and, the individual submission, by **Flora Mealyou**.
- + BA2 Acting student, **Ayo Adegun** won the Luke Westlake Scholarship.

MUSIC

- + Music and Arts Management Alumni, **Toks Dada**, took-up his position as Head of Classical Music at the Southbank in December.
- + Much success for the Composition department - 2021 graduate, **Jasper Dommett** was nominated for a 2020 Ivor Novello Award in the Large Orchestral category for his work *Night Music* and was announced as the winner of the 2020/21 RSNO Composers' Hub, while graduate **Carlijn Metselaar** was announced as the 2019/20 winner – works by both of these composers will feature in the RSNO's 2021/22 season.
- + Conducting grad, **Tianyi Lu**, won First Prize at the prestigious 9th Sir Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition.
- + **George Robinson**, a graduate from the Guitar department, has earned a place on the Glyndebourne Pit Perfect Talent Development Scheme.
- + We have been working on the partnership with Music in Country Churches – a charity supported by HRH Prince of Wales, who is helping to drive an initiative to fold RWCMD young artists into concerts in country churches with professional ensembles. Stoutzker Prize winner **Laura Deignan** (clarinet) was the first featured RWCMD artist in a performance of *Finzi Bagatelles for Clarinet and String Orchestra* with The English Chamber Orchestra in July 2021.

ADAPTING AND INNOVATING — IMZ FLYING ACADEMY

IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC, WE HAVE FELT, PERHAPS MORE KEENLY THAN EVER BEFORE, THE NEED TO QUICKLY ADAPT TO ENSURE THAT ARTS PROVISIONS AND EDUCATION HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE DURING A CHALLENGING YEAR.

With this diversification, new opportunities for collaborations have emerged across the board and between April and June of this year, a group of RWCMD students had the chance to benefit from an online workshop between the IMZ International Music & Media Centre, RWCMD and Koninklijk Conservatorium Royal Conservatoire of The Hague.

The IMZ Flying Academy aims to work with arts colleges and conservatoires to implement digital learning into their curriculum. This is something we can all acknowledge the importance of sustaining as we move forward.

Six students from RWCMD, who had each been collaborating on three creative projects, were selected to take part; The Flying Bedroom – a theatre company bringing together music and design in accessible performances for children, an initiative by composers Jasper Dommett and Derri Lewis to curate a digital platform to promote & empower LGBTQ+ artists and inform audiences and Several Circles, an immersive performance work with Deaf and blind audiences at the heart and how this can be filmed, digitised and shared with audiences of young people across educational institutions.

Sofi Nowell, who is working on the Several Circles project said the carefully selected panel of experts introduced the participants to innovative new ways of working and encouraged critical thinking in their own work. 'I particularly enjoyed hearing from Kay Meseberg who shared ambitious digital work from Arte's Passengers series – a collection of audiovisual performances that take place in extraordinary spaces such as the Bassin de Lumières in Bordeaux. I drew

similarities between my own work and the work shared during the programme which gave me a new-found confidence in my creative ideas. It became apparent that I could go much further with my artistic vision, and this has re-informed my personal approach. To create a collaborative digital work (in less than two hours) with students in The Hague was special, and surprising, and has paved the way for future international collaborations.'

This pilot scheme culminated in a two-day online forum where the students worked with experts from Finnish National Opera and Ballet, the Association of European Conservatoires, ARTE and with Violinist Yury Revich during a programme of events designed to develop projects in workshops and feedback sharing, all with the aim of preparing students for the world that digital platforms open-up within the arts.

Head of Music Performance, Kevin Price said, 'The IMZ Flying Academy expert faculty offered mentorship in digital literacy, creativity and innovation for three RWCMD projects, providing an overview of best practice in the innovative and creative use of digital resources and expertise through the support of leading practitioners. The programme connected students from KONCON and RWCMD, with exchange of perspectives between the cohort of students, with practical workshop exercises giving participants the opportunity to develop their creative projects in a structured manner, with defined goals.'

'The project not only enabled a refreshed view of the structure and delivery models for student projects, but also illuminated the potential for a systematic review of the ways in which projects are adjusted and adapted in response to advice and mentorship from the IMZ Flying Academy expert faculty. In taking this long-term approach, IMZ is building a legacy model that enables international artistic partnership and creative digital literacy, with an ethos of Creative Citizenship as a core value.'

Members of Flying Bedroom meeting HRH The Duchess of Cornwall on a visit to RWCMD, July 2021. Photo by Simon Gough



SPOTLIGHT: PUPPETRY

**WITH LUCY HALL -
SENIOR LECTURER IN DESIGN
FOR PERFORMANCE**

Puppetry 2021 was a response to the *Artes Mundi* 9 which aims to stimulate dialogue and debate and link the global to the local. The biennial exhibition is currently on display at the National Museum, Chapter and g39 in Cardiff.

As there was no possibility of taking the project out into the community this year and no large audiences necessitating large scale work, it felt like the perfect opportunity to push the boundaries of the medium.

Since taking over the project three years ago, I've always been interested in how puppetry could respond and reflect on the 'big stuff' and where object, material theatre and devised work could sit within this much-loved project.

So, this year, groups made up of BA1, BA2 and MA design students and 2 composers, were each given one of the six *Artes Mundi* finalists to respond to. Alongside a team of expert making tutors, puppetry director Marc Parrett and I worked on devised material with the students to create two 45 minute shows which were performed in the Anthony Hopkins Centre courtyard at the end of June/July - Puppet Perspectives 1 and 2.



**"MAKING A SHOW
WITHIN THE COVID
RESTRICTIONS WAS
DIFFICULT AT TIMES,
BUT WE ALL PULLED
THROUGH AND
PRODUCED SOMETHING
AMAZING TOGETHER!"**

The *Artes Mundi* exhibition www.artesmundi.org has been a great stimulus. Firstly because going to an exhibition feels so exciting and liberating as we come out of lockdown, but also because the global themes of the exhibition resonated on so many levels, personally and professionally. Representation, community and belonging are threads throughout. Environment and the human relationship with the land and its destruction. History and the past, who gets to mould what is fact or fiction, or do they always co-exist? In every exhibit we see things struggling against confinement, struggling against rules, regulations and the status quo. Baez's explosions of colour disrupt the colonial-era maps, addressing questions of cultural identity and migration. Pachpute's imagined landscapes of hybrid figures excavate the land whilst bursting out of their rectangular canvases and onto the gallery walls.

Students saw the show in person finally when it opened a few weeks ago. 'It feels like we need to re-invent ourselves - just start again' a student commented. I think after the year we've had - that feeling is fairly universal!

One of the postgraduate students involved, James Jones Morris, said it was great to finally collaborate in a group after a lot of solo work during the last year.

'Making a show within the Covid restrictions was difficult at times, but we all pulled through and produced something amazing together! And to be able to show the work to a live audience in the end was really brilliant, performing in front of an audience really focuses you in on doing the best puppetry you possibly can!

The best thing about the summer puppetry project was seeing how everyone's ideas formed and then watching them get made and come to life as living breathing puppets!

**With thanks to Lucy Hall & James Jones Morris.
The *Artes Mundi* 9 exhibition is on display at
the National Museum of Wales, Chapter and g39
until 5th September 2021.**

Photo by Simon Gough



10 YEARS OF FACILITIES

On 23 June 2011, we celebrated the opening of our world-class facilities. On the same date in 2021, the College launched a year of celebration with ten selected events over the course of the next year, showcasing all that the College has achieved over the decade and signposting its ambition for the next ten years. Pictured is the view towards the in-progress Dora Stoutzker Hall & Richard Burton Theatre from the original building in April 2010.

HIGHLIGHTS

SCHOOLS OPERA

RWCMD Schools Opera programme brought an opera world premiere to 300 children from five primary schools across Cardiff, who were able to watch and engage with RWCMD students' online and socially-distanced production of *Cat and Dog* - a brand new opera written by Composition student Ethnie Foulkes.





The Electric. Photo by Kirsten McTernan



NEW '21: The Ache. Photo by Kirsten McTernan

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

The *Electric* by Vickie Donoghue and directed by Anthony Simpson-Pike, was one of four brand-new plays broadcast to online audiences in May and June. The NEW '21 season brings together some of the most exciting writers and directors and the Richard Burton Company – RWCMD's in-house repertory company of final year Acting, Stage Management and Design for Performance students.

JENNA PREECE

MA Acting student, Jenna Preece presented a programme on BBC Radio Wales about how we can make our world more accessible and inclusive for disabled people as restrictions in the pandemic are lifted.



Photo by Kirsten McTernan

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

RWCMD Symphony Orchestra rehearsing a programme of Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Mozart in June for their concert in St. David's Hall, their first since early 2020. The performance was directed by MMus Conducting students Naviena Selvarajah, Constanca Simas and Kay Salomon.

ROYAL VISIT

Members of the Students' Union team for 2021/22 meeting HRH The Prince of Wales during a Royal Visit to the college in July.



Photo by Simon Gough



MASTERCLASSES

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, students were still able to benefit from workshops and masterclasses with visiting artists and tutors. Here, Sir Antonio Pappano – musical director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden – works with students from the Vocal department.

UZO IWOBI

Newly-appointed Vice President, Uzo Iwobi, with Principal, Helena Gaunt. Uzo said 'It is such a great honour to be invited to serve the College as a Vice President. Over the past few years as your International Chair for Diversity I've developed a great admiration for the valuable work being done here. I was delighted to support the College as it took its vital and challenging steps to develop its own Strategic Equality Plan and its Anti-Racism Plan. These are important steps towards embedding an inclusive culture in all facets of the College's work and it's such a pleasure to be part of this exciting and transformational journey.'



Photo by Simon Gough

WHAT'S ON

AFTER A DIFFICULT 18 MONTHS, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO BE ABLE TO PLAN FOR WELCOMING BACK EXTERNAL AUDIENCES FROM THE AUTUMN. LOOK OUT FOR THE BROCHURE AND WHAT'S ON SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.RWCMD.AC.UK/WHATS-ON/EVENTS/ALL

for full programme details in what promises to be an exciting calendar of performances.



TAKE YOUR SEAT...

AND HELP OUR STUDENTS TAKE THEIR PLACE

Name a seat in the Dora Stoutzker Hall or Richard Burton Theatre for yourself, in memory of a loved one, to mark a special occasion or as an unforgettable gift for a music or theatre-lover in your life...

For more information, please visit the RWCMD website or email takeyourseat@rwcmd.ac.uk

Seat engravings start at £100 and every penny will contribute to our Bursary Fund

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BAD WOLF

EARLIER IN THE YEAR, WE WERE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT BAD WOLF HAD RENEWED ITS SUPPORT OF RWCMD, SPONSORING SEVERAL INITIATIVES THAT OPEN UP DIVERSE PATHWAYS TO CAREERS IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES.

The production company, responsible for hit TV series' such as *A Discovery of Witches*, *Industry*, *I Hate Suzie* and *His Dark Materials*, is at the forefront of a booming film and TV industry in Wales and the UK.

As well as a Diversity Scholarship for a talented student from an underrepresented group, Bad Wolf are supporting our Young People's Production Arts programme (YPPA) and a new Foundation Degree in Scenic Construction which commences in August. As part of the YPPA masterclass programme, Bad Wolf and Screen Alliance Wales (Bad Wolf's educational and training partner) have been bringing young people together with inspirational industry practitioners, such as costume maker and RWCMD grad, Hazel Jewkes.

YPPA Theatre Design Workshop



"THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BAD WOLF AND RWCMD DEMONSTRATES THE COMPANY'S COMMITMENT TO INSPIRING A NEW AND DIVERSE GENERATION OF SKILLED CREATIVE PRACTITIONERS..."

The partnership between Bad Wolf and RWCMD demonstrates the company's commitment to inspiring a new and diverse generation of skilled creative practitioners in production arts and technical theatre, enabling opportunities to access the high-quality training provided by RWCMD.

WWW.BADWOLF.COM

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RWCMD LEGACY

"BY INCLUDING THE
GIFT OF MY CELLO,
'HOTCH', IN MY WILL
AND SETTING UP A
CELLO SCHOLARSHIP,
I HAVE SECURED A
FUTURE FOR 'HOTCH'
AS WELL AS FUNDS
TO ENABLE FUTURE
GIFTED STUDENTS
TO CONTINUE THEIR
MUSICAL STUDIES.
I COULD NOT WISH
FOR MORE."

ELISABETH HOTCHKISS,
LEGATOR



To talk to someone about supporting
the students of RWCMD through leaving
a gift in your Will, please contact:

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