

RWCMD ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER
WINTER
2019



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

rwcmd.ac.uk/alumni

RWCMD NEWS ROUND UP



ROYAL HARPIST

Alis Huws had plenty to celebrate in July this year. Not only did she graduate from the College with a Master's Degree but she was also announced as the Official Royal Harpist. Prince Charles revived the tradition of having an Official Harpist in 2000 in order to foster Welsh talent on the harp, the national instrument of Wales.

Alis is used to playing for Royalty, having already performed for the Royal family several times. Her many high-profile performances also include playing regularly at events for the Welsh Assembly Government, performing across Europe and the Far East, and joining Katherine Jenkins and Only Men Aloud to celebrate the UEFA League Final in Cardiff.

Alis said of her appointment: "It's a great honour and privilege to have been given this unique opportunity. I am passionate about my Welsh heritage and I would hope to use this platform to be an ambassador for our language, music and culture."

Photo by Catrin Arwel.

RWCMD HONORARY DRAMA ASSOCIATES

The RWCMD Associates recognises and celebrates the achievements of recent graduates early in their chosen careers.

Last year we recognised Music alumni and this year we are recognising our drama alumni – from acting on stage and screen, to stage managing critically-acclaimed productions, to dressing the Spice Girls...

Congratulations, all!

Eric Abrefa
Elli Andrews
Aneurin Barnard
Tom Cullen
Rebecca Davies
Joe Fletcher
Madeline Girling
Olivia Harris
Sarah Hellicar
Arthur Hughes
Luke McCall
Francesca Moody
Amy Morgan
Ian Peniston
Sarah-Jayne Powell
Gabiella Slade
Anjana Vassan
Alex Vlahos
Ulrike Zoellner

NEW YORK SHOWCASE

Following on from our New York Gala for **Catherine Zeta-Jones** on St David's Day, the College was back in the heart of America's theatreland for its annual US Showcase at the Signature Theatre on 42nd Street. Now in its fourth year, the Showcase acts as a springboard into the industry, giving our American and Canadian acting and musical theatre graduates an opportunity to perform in front of agents, managers, casting directors and industry guests from the American entertainment industries.



New York Showcase Students.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

During the last few months our Alumni Association membership has grown to over 1000. It's been wonderful to get back in touch with you and hear about what you're up to. On 28th September over 200 alumni representing music and drama spanning the decades from 1960s upwards joined us for our Alumni Reunion which was a great success. We'll be planning more events over the next year which we'll be in touch about soon.

DA IAWN! SOME HIGHLIGHTS

RHIANNON BOYLE (1999)

First Wales Writer in Residence, backed by the BBC and National Theatre Wales.

SIMON TRINDER (2000)

UK and Ireland tour of Disney's *The Lion King*.

RACHAEL CANNING (2001)

Designer *A Midsummers Night's Dream* at Regents Park Theatre.

JEAN CHAN (2008)

Designer *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Globe Theatre.

SAMUEL BEES (2007) & KYLE LIMA (2009)

BBC Writers Rooms Welsh Voices 2018/19 Run in partnership this year with National Theatre Wales and Radio Drama Wales.

TOM CULLEN (2009) & JAMES NORTH (2002)

Nominated for a 2019 British Academy Cymru Award.

FRANCESCA MOODY (2010)

Producer of Edinburgh Fringe shows Square Go and bringing Baby Reindeer and Do Our Best.

LAURA TWEED (2010)

Production Buyer on *Killing Eve*.

SOPHIE MELVILLE (2013)

Winner of The Stage Edinburgh Awards 2019.

RACHEL BROWN (2014)

Deputy Stage Manager for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

PATRICK BARRETT (2015)

Junior Chorus Director at Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

TIANYI LU (2016)

Welsh National Opera female conductor in residence.

GARETH TROTT (2016)

Brass tutor at London College of Music (University of London).

EMILY ROOKE (2018)

WNO's vocal animateur internship programme

CHARLOTTE FRY (2019)

Appointed as Tours Assistant at the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

HEEJUN LIM (2019)

Appointed as lecturer in the conducting department in Chongqing University in Seoul.

Please continue to let us know what you're doing now: alumni@rwcmd.ac.uk



**RWCMD ALUMNI
REUNION:
28th SEPTEMBER
2019**

PHOTOS BY CLEMENT CHAN





Fiona Sinfield with Professor Helena Gaunt. Photo by Clement Chan.

FIONA SINFIELD

FIONA SINFIELD, NÉE INGRAM, ATTENDED THE COLLEGE FROM 1970-74 WHEN SHE COMPLETED HER LTCL IN PERFORMANCE AND IN TEACHING SPECIALISING IN PIANO AND VOICE...

Although she is originally from Milford Haven in Pembrokeshire, the vast majority of her career was in inner London where she taught underprivileged children of both Primary and Secondary years. She taught music to children from a variety of backgrounds. Many of them, often due to cost implications, would not otherwise have had the opportunity to learn to play the piano, to sing or even play the recorder outside school. Her selfless determination to raise standards in musical

"AWARDED A BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL IN THE 2017 NEW YEAR'S HONOUR'S LIST FOR HER OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO MUSICAL EDUCATION AND THE COMMUNITY IN SOUTH LONDON."

education, particularly to Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils is commendable particularly as primary schools do not always have the specialist Music Teachers among their full time staff who can deliver high quality musical learning.

She was awarded a British Empire Medal in the 2017 New Year's Honour's List for her outstanding service to musical education and the community in South London. She retired in July this year having taught music for 45 years and has inspired so many people during that time.

We'd love to profile other alumni at future events. We have so many to recognise and would like to invite nominations from you about who that may be in the future. Please do this by emailing our alumni email address alumni@rwcmd.ac.uk.

70TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

1949-2019



The exhibition timeline located in the Linbury Gallery. Pinboard memory timeline with memories added by alumni and staff, Photos by Edmond Choo.

JUDITH DRAY (RWCMD Archivist) and MANDIE GARRIGAN (Library and Archives Assistant)

WHEN WE STARTED THINKING ABOUT CURATING THE COLLEGE'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION, WE THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT IT CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF THE COLLEGE'S STORY OVER ITS 70 YEARS...

With this in mind, it seemed important that it focused on the people – staff, students, and friends – who have made the College what it is today.

We began the process by drafting a timeline of the College's history. We used material gathered from the College Archives, as well as from a research trip to Glamorgan Archives where information about the very start of the College is recorded in the Education Committee Minutes.

After compiling factual information for the timeline, we began approaching alumni to collect memories of their time at the College. We invited one or two alumni from each decade to come into the College. For each person, we selected relevant material from the archives such as photographs and programmes they were in and prospectuses from when they were at College. We chatted with them and encouraged them to talk about their memories. We asked them to select an object that triggered their memories or was particularly meaningful to them and explain why. We also

asked them to either write their memories or record a story or memory that stood out to them. These oral or written memories are displayed alongside the items from the archives that they selected.

It was really inspiring sharing the archives with the alumni who contributed their stories to the exhibition and seeing the potential of archival objects to spark memories. The stories people told were often both hilarious and inspiring, and I couldn't help but notice how many of them said that their time at College had changed their lives.

Of course, we couldn't include everyone at this stage which is why it was important that the exhibition was interactive so that more people were able to add their stories and memories. We included a pinboard timeline for people to add memories, photographs and other objects from their time at College and a memory booth where people could record their memories. It has been brilliant to see the pinboard timeline filling up with a huge breadth of memories allowing us to reflect a more complete story of the College across the decades.

Like many projects, this was definitely a collaborative process. It was wonderful to be able to work with designers at the College to create something really beautiful to commemorate the College's history. We are very grateful for the extremely hard work put in by staff and students from the Design for Performance and Stage Management departments.

The physical exhibition was on display from 28 September to 4 November. If you missed this then check out the online version which can be found at: <http://bit.ly/RWCMD70>

NEW COLLEGE STRATEGY

Earlier this term, the Board of Directors signed off a new College Strategy. Producing creative excellence and nurturing an inclusive and international artistic community, we will continue

to represent Wales as a major cultural force in the world, and ensure the impact of our highly skilled graduates on the creative industries. We will achieve this by being:

EXPERT AND CONTEMPORARY

EXPERT

- + Deep craft specialism
- + Industry focused, working in partnership, learning on the job with industry expectations
- + Prepared for lifelong employment

CONTEMPORARY

- + Traditions and existing repertoire serving new work: staying relevant
- + Now and next: always looking to the future
- + Curious, inquiring, embracing the unknown; risk-taking and space to fail being integral to artistry

RESOURCEFUL AND INCLUSIVE

RESOURCEFUL

- + Creative problem-solvers; individually and collectively looking for results greater than the sum of the parts
- + Practical, rooted, determined and gritty: ready to put in the hard graft
- + A culture of high support, high challenge

INCLUSIVE

- + Local and global: Wales in dialogue with nations across the world
- + Championing diverse individual pathways within the RWCMD community
- + A culture of mutual respect

COLLABORATIVE AND RESPONSIBLE

COLLABORATIVE

- + Mining the creative potential of ensemble
- + Bringing a rich range of disciplines into dialogue and exchange
- + A community of professionals (students as young professionals; teachers who learn, learners who teach)

RESPONSIBLE

- + Engaged in the bigger picture; outward looking; globally connected; aware
- + Broadening horizons and possibilities
- + Open to the big challenges, and critically self-aware

THE STRATEGIC PILLARS ON WHICH THIS IS WILL BE BUILT ARE:

1

Future-focused training with outstanding student experience; delivered by world-class staff in an inclusive community

2

A pioneering public programme (performance, participation, learning), providing transformative experiences for diverse communities across Wales

3

A global position and international profile as a conservatoire

4

An integrated research and enterprise environment incubating new work and innovating for the arts

5

A sustainable model and set of business practices to deliver a flourishing organisation

ZOË SMITH

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS WORKING AT RWCMD

WHO ARE YOU, AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AT THE COLLEGE?

I am Zoë Smith; after reading Music at Oxford University, I trained as an accompanist at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, following this with a freelance career which took me into most of the conservatoires. I have been working at the College in a range of roles since 1999: Assistant to the Head of Music, Assistant Head of Music, Assistant Director of Music, Head of Interdisciplinary Practice, Head of Ensemble Performance and Head of Postgraduate Programmes (Music). So I have done everything from organising concerts to timetabling to sorting out ensembles to my current role of running the PG Dip & Masters courses, with more than 120 PG students.

HOW HAS THE COLLEGE CHANGED FOR YOU IN THE LAST 20 YEARS?

I arrived at College in the year that we were granted premium funding, allowing the College to develop more ambitious plans in terms of staffing and courses, with funding to underpin the aspirations. I have worked for four Principals and seen an amazing transformation of the physical estate and shared in the development of provision and a student body that can really inhabit our amazing spaces. The vibrancy of our performances and the strength of our connection with our local community has been transformed. Throughout all of this development and growth (there are many more Music students now), the friendly and supportive nature of RWCMD has been maintained, which is a great source of pride and comfort.

"THE FRIENDLY AND SUPPORTIVE NATURE OF RWCMD HAS BEEN MAINTAINED, WHICH IS A GREAT SOURCE OF PRIDE AND COMFORT."

TELL ME ABOUT LIFE OUTSIDE OF COLLEGE?

I am kept very busy by my family – Mexican husband and two amazing children: Alex (16) and Mariana (10). Both are trilingual (Spanish spoken at home and Welsh at school) which is a joy to me (Spanish) and hugely impressive (Welsh), and they both love to sing – Alex is in Only Boys Aloud and Mariana is in Only Kids Aloud; they also both take singing lessons from RWCMD graduates (I know the quality of their training!). They tend to keep me on my toes as a taxi



Zoë Smith.

service and all-round supporter of their activities. When I have downtime, I am usually on my Kindle reading detective novels or watching competitive cooking shows on TV (my son is an excellent cook so we like dissecting them!).

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES?

There have been an enormous number of highlights, but every annual graduation has a real buzz, particular when I get to read the students' names and recognise their achievements in the shared smile before they cross the St David's Hall stage. I have been involved in many really exciting performance projects, but the one that fascinated me the most was managing the project with National Dance Company Wales, seeing our student orchestra performing in the pit in the Donald Gordon Theatre (Wales Millennium Centre). Another major highlight has to be travelling to China on many occasions for recruitment and Welsh Government promotional activities; it has given me some crucial cultural insights and enabled me to develop better understanding with our international students (as well as eating some amazing food and seeing some fantastic sights – selfies on the Great Wall of China are hard to beat). I have relished the challenges of tailoring a range of Masters programmes to ever-growing cohort, looking for ways of developing specialisms and creating really effective courses.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

I had the amazing fortune of being invited to record a CD of solo Welsh piano repertoire with my wonderful colleagues at Ty Cerdd (the Welsh Music Centre), and this has led to opportunities to create concert programmes featuring Welsh song and piano music, so I am very excited to get out and about performing these. All of this contributes to my area of research, and I am in the process of getting material ready to submit for a doctorate in the next couple of years, which is incredibly exciting for me, combining genuine interest with detective work and performance – what more could I ask for?

DAY IN THE LIFE OF... MUSIC STUDENTS

WHO ARE YOU, WHAT COURSES ARE YOU STUDYING?

VERITY: I'm Verity-Belle Atkinson and I'm on the Masters in Vocal Performance course.

CHARLOTTE: My name is Charlotte Forfar and I'm on the same course. We both completed our undergraduate degrees in vocal studies at RWCMD in July 2019.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR COURSE, A QUICK RUN THROUGH A NORMAL WORKING DAY?

CHARLOTTE: Every day is different. We have tuition in skills such as languages (Italian, German and French), Movement and Drama. We also have Vocal Performance classes, College Chorus, academic classes and individual coaching and practice. There are also intensive performance projects which are totally immersive and are often led by external industry professionals giving us great links with future employers in and around Cardiff.

VERITY: I work as an audition usher at the college and Charlotte works in front of house. This is great as it allows us flexibility with college commitments giving us time for our studies, but at the same time gives us good professional experience.

WHAT DO YOU DO OUTSIDE OF YOUR COURSE? HOW DOES LIVING IN CARDIFF PRESENT YOU WITH EXTRA OPPORTUNITIES?

CHARLOTTE: We are choral scholars with the BBC Chorus and have been since our second year at the college. Rehearsals are twice a week, and up to four times a week leading up to performances.

VERITY: Recent engagements with BBC NCW include regular concerts at St David's Hall, Cardiff and Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, The BBC Proms Seasons 2017-19 at The Royal Albert Hall and featured stand out soloists at this year's Proms in the Park. We also both teach at Stagecoach Stage School taking classes of 3-6 year olds on Saturdays and Sunday. I was initially a student at



Music Students Verity-Belle Atkinson and Charlotte Forfar.

Stagecoach but contacted them a few years ago asking if I could volunteer in classes which led to being employed as a teacher.

CHARLOTTE: This is something that we're highly committed to and it takes preparation and good organisation to manage our studies and work effectively, we tend to look ahead to each term and dedicate time to lesson planning and preparing for assessments.

VERITY: During our undergraduate degrees, both Charlotte and I organised placements working with the Welsh National Opera and BBC running workshops in schools.

CHARLOTTE: We took part in the first side-by-side project with WNO Chorus and Orchestra (Dead Man Walking) and as a result of this were employed with WNO and Oasis (a non-profit charity that aims to help Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Cardiff) in an Outreach Project 'Hope Has Wings' with WNO singers and players bringing together a unique mix of classical music, African beats and Iranian, Jurdish, Algerian and South American influences.

VERITY: Towards the end of our undergraduate degrees, we decided to stay and do our postgraduate degrees at RWCMD. There was no real consideration of anywhere else at that stage as Cardiff has so many opportunities and RWCMD provides such a supportive environment for students early in their career.

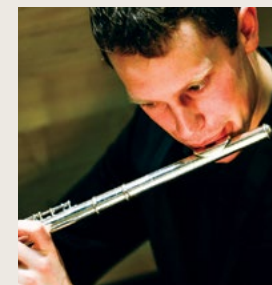
WHAT PROJECTS HAVE YOU GOT COMING UP?

RWCMD College Chorus are performing Faure's Requiem with the Symphony orchestra at St David's Hall this month; the BBC Chorus are performing the Messiah in December; and in the Spring term Vocal students at RWCMD are producing an Opera Scenes performance.

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CONNECT

Become a member and support student training **experiences** and **performance opportunities**



For more information on joining **CONNECT**, please call **02920 391420** or visit www.rwcmd.ac.uk/connect

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LEGACY



"IT'S THE FAMILY SPIRIT THAT HITS YOU WHEN YOU WALK INTO THE FOYER... EVERYONE SUPPORTS EVERYONE ELSE. THIS IS MY WAY OF GIVING SOMETHING BACK FOR THE PLEASURE I'VE HAD HERE"

CHRIS BALL, LEGATOR

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

LOUISA TURNER
02920 391420
Louisa.turner@rwcmd.ac.uk or

MARIE WOOD
02920 391401
Marie.wood@rwcmd.ac.uk

WHAT'S ON HIGHLIGHTS AT THE COLLEGE THIS SPRING TERM...



Richard Burton Company,
*Stupid F**king Bird*,
Photo by Kirsten McEernan.

RICHARD BURTON COMPANY

The current cohort of 3rd year actors, designers and stage managers present three plays – a new version of Molière's *Tartuffe*, Simon Stephens' powerful *Motortown* and David Lindsay-Abaire's wacky *Wonder of the World*, supported by *Bad Wolf*.

OPERA

Our singers bring Mozart's enduring comedy *Così fan tutte* to life in the Dora Stoutzker Hall and Music Theatre Wales visit the College for the first time with *Denis + Katya*, exploring our age of digital connection in association with London Sinfonietta.



Music Theatre Wales: *Denis + Katya*

RWCMD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Our instrumentalists explore the man behind the music in *Beethoven: Musical Superhero*, a special school's concert at St David's Hall. Part of the city-wide celebration of 250 years since the composer's birth.

MUSICAL THEATRE

Youth and rebellion erupt on to the stage at the Sherman Theatre in March as our musical theatre performers star in the rock musical based on Wedekind's controversial play *Spring Awakening*.



The Wearable Art Show.

DESIGN FOR PERFORMANCE

The ever-popular Wearable Art Show returns featuring costumes constructed by our theatre designers, don't miss this unique cat-walk of dance, light and sound.

Visit www.rwcmd.ac.uk
for a full list of performances
this spring.

KEEP IN TOUCH



Chanae Curtis in *The Marriage of Figaro*.
Photo by Robert Workman.

There are many benefits of joining the Alumni Association. Apart from helping you reconnect with your peers, we offer a range of services including discounted Library membership for up to 3 years after graduation, box office and rehearsal space discounts, professional membership discounts.

**PLEASE HELP US TO RECONNECT
WITH OTHER ALUMNI BY SHARING
INFORMATION ABOUT THE
ASSOCIATION WITH THEM:
WWW.RWCMD.AC.UK/ALUMNI**

