

## PROPOSED PROGRAMME

### How to play expressively: decoding the subliminal processes of musical performance

#### CONTEXT

This project will explore the ways in which professional musicians both play expressively, and create performances which are moving and engaging. It will give priority to the embodied and experiential understandings musicians have of the subliminal processes of performance. In this sense it stands in stark contrast to previous research on musical expression which, in its emphasis on quantifiably measurable elements, neglects the qualitative aspects which are most vital in the performer's and the audience's experience.

The literature is dominated by studies which subject performance, as an 'artefact', to analytical enquiry, breaking musical expression down into its constituent parts in an attempt to define 'what' musicians are expressing or 'how' expressive a particular performance is. Yet, in pursuing concrete indications of expression, these studies disregard the intuitive and transcendent aspects of performance and, as a result, marginalise many performers within a branch of musicological research with which they ought to be intimately involved. This project deals rather with holistic and embodied approaches to playing expressively, as implemented by performers, in an attempt to get to the heart of what underlies performed music and makes it so compelling.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The project will address three primary research questions:

- How do musicians attempt to play expressively or communicatively, and what role do they feel subliminal or intuitive processes play in this regard?
- What modes of discourse do they use to describe these activities, in both professional and pedagogical contexts?
- What techniques do they employ in establishing a connection with an audience and creating a common perception that something transformative has taken place?

#### AIMS

The project aims to:

- define specific ways in which musical expression can be manipulated by performers and identify the effects these may have.
- interrogate verbal descriptions of expression in rehearsal and in pedagogical contexts to determine the most apposite modes of discourse in particular situations.
- elucidate ways in which musicians mould performance as a social or shared activity, and how they perceive and achieve a 'meaningful' performance.

#### OBJECTIVES

The project will contribute to:

- new understandings of musical expression, for musicologists and performers, which enable more pertinent critical evaluations and foster greater diversity of nuanced pedagogical approaches.
- an entirely new body of data on musical expression, which currently exists informally as an oral tradition, but would gain a wider audience and stimulate more discussion if brought into a research environment.
- more fruitful relationships between musicologists and performers where interaction is mutually beneficial and generates meaningful insights with genuine practical applications.

## METHODOLOGY

I am keen to ground discussion of the questions outlined above in musicians' lived experience of performing and, as a result, shall approach my investigation using two principal research methods:

- A series of semi-structured interviews with professional musicians performing within Western classical music. Musicians will be interviewed twice over a period of eighteen months and will be encouraged to demonstrate on their instruments where appropriate. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. I shall evaluate the transcripts using interpretative phenomenological analysis and metaphor analysis to create an idiographic account which prioritises the qualitative aspects of musicians' experience.
- A practice diary consisting of audio excerpts from my own personal work as a professional pianist accompanied by a written commentary. While this will start as a primarily introspective exercise, it will gradually incorporate insights gleaned from analysis of the interviews with other musicians and will thus provide an opportunity to reflect upon and gain an embodied understanding of more universal practical concerns.

A detailed description of the timescale of my methodology can be found in the 'Plan of Action' below.

## PLANNED RESEARCH OUTPUTS

This project will result in a set of outputs aimed at a variety of audiences with long-term academic value. These will comprise:

- three academic papers which will be submitted for publication to journals which could include the Journal of the Royal Musical Association, the Journal of Musicological Research, The Journal of Musicology, and Music & Letters. The first will reflect on methodological issues associated with the practice diary and concerns of the researcher-practitioner. The second will present the findings of the first set of interviews, and the third will synthesise findings from both sets of interviews taking insights gained from the practice diary into account.
- a book which will present the findings of the project as a whole, to be submitted for consideration to a major academic press. This will be aimed at a readership of academics, performers, and the general public, and will prioritise findings from the project which are of practical relevance to performers and listeners alike.
- an online web-resource of sound and film clips gathered over the course of the project which will supplement the published articles, book, and other media. As certain aspects of musical expression may evade precise description in verbal form, it is essential that readers are able to both hear and see selected examples of performance if they are to fully understand the issues involved.

A detailed description of the timescale of research outputs can be found in the 'Plan of Action' below, and other methods of dissemination in 'Plans for Publication/ Dissemination'.

## PLAN OF ACTION

		INTERVIEWS	PRACTICE DIARY	DISSEMINATION
ACADEMIC YEAR 2012/13	OCT-DEC	Design interview, consider ethical implications, do a test-run, refine interview process, select interviewees for main study.	Keep a regular practice diary and record excerpts.	Set up project website.  Collate audio and video clips from my performances for web archive and dissemination via iTunes U ( <i>ongoing</i> ).  APR – present findings at 2 <sup>nd</sup> PSN International Conference, Cambridge.  Deliver presentations and lecture recitals at conferences, universities, conservatories, and music festivals ( <i>ongoing</i> ).  Publish feature articles in magazines on the project ( <i>ongoing</i> ).  JUL – present findings at 3 <sup>rd</sup> PSN International Conference, Cambridge.  JUN – organise a conference at Cambridge University on expression in musical performance.
	JAN-MAR		Maintain a written commentary.	
	APR-JUN	Carry out preliminary interviews. From August, analyse transcripts.	Write up first article for publication.	
	JUL-SEP			
ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/14	OCT-DEC	Define areas of interest for secondary interviews.	Continue practice diary.  Collate sound clips for archive and publish on project website, with written commentary.	
	JAN-MAR	Write up second article for publication.		
	APR-JUN	Carry out secondary interviews. Collate findings of all interviews.		
	JUL-SEP			
ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/15	OCT-DEC	Write up third article, incorporating findings from practice diary.	Write book for an academic and general readership using material from the whole study.  Finish book by September 2015 and submit for publication.	
	JAN-MAR			
	APR-JUN			
	JUL-SEP			

## PLANS FOR DISSEMINATION/ PUBLICATION

The articles, book and web archive mentioned in 'Planned Research Outputs' above will be complemented by a series of research activities which will aid their dissemination, including:

- Conferences. I shall apply to present at the Performance Studies Network International Conferences at Cambridge University in 2013 and 2014, as well as others which are suitable for my subject area. I intend to organise a conference at Cambridge University in the summer of 2015 which will focus on musical expression, with a strong emphasis on performance-based research.
- Lecture recitals. I shall present theoretical precepts from the three academic articles, with practical illustrations at the piano, as part of series in universities, conservatories and music festivals.
- Public performance. I regularly perform solo piano recitals at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall and Southbank Centre, and at music clubs and festivals across the UK. I have just released my debut CD and plan to make another two

recordings in the next three years. My experience of performance informs and underpins my research, while the publicity associated with concerts and lectures will raise the profile of this project. (*For more information on my performances visit [www.clarehammond.com](http://www.clarehammond.com)*).

- Magazine articles. in order to raise the profile of this project, and to reach a wider readership, I shall publish articles in magazines which may include *MUSO*, *Classical Music*, and *International Piano Magazine*.
- Website. I shall create a website which will detail the aims and progress of this project, house an archive of sound and film clips gathered both from my practice diary and public performance, and provide a forum for interaction with the public. This will act not merely as a useful tool to focus my own activities, but will also enable a wider readership to become involved in the project.

## ABILITY TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Throughout higher education I have focused on pursuing academic research concurrently with my performance career, as is reflected in my choice of doctoral programme where musicological research and performance were accorded equal significance. I have presented papers and lecture recitals at conferences organised by the Universities of Cambridge, Lancaster, Liverpool Hope, Manchester and York, and have given lecture recitals at the Royal College of Music and the Guildhall School. Publications include an article in the forthcoming volume *Benjamin Britten – echoes of time and place*, which will be published by Boydell & Brewer, a CD of contemporary British piano music for Prima Facie Records, and a recording of music by Unsuk Chin for BBC Radio 3 which will take place in October 2011. I was convenor for an RMA Study Day 'Performing Musicology', at City University London in June 2011, and this experience will help when organising the conference in Cambridge in 2015.

In pursuing this project at Cambridge University, alongside the Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice, I shall benefit from the proximity of highly talented colleagues (many of whom are world-leaders in the fields of musical expression, meaning, and communication), and from their extensive network with similar research institutions worldwide. My experience in academia and professional performance is essential to the success of this project – both are necessary if it is to reflect an embodied understanding of performance and to engage deeply with performers' lived experiences.

## CONCLUSION

As this project places great emphasis on individual creativity, would provide an original contribution to the research base of the nation and represents an emerging subject area, I believe that it matches very closely the criteria for funding proposed by the British Academy. The project would provide opportunities for a fresh consideration of the most vital aspects of the performance process and for a reappraisal of the ways in which performers and academics interact which will substantially benefit the creative activities of both.