

Pamela Jackson Memorial Scholarship Final Report

MScR Title:

“Neglected Creatives: a portfolio of compositions exploring instruments made by women, accompanied by a public performance of these new works using the museum instruments for which they were composed.”

Summary of Project:

From the outset, and with the significant assistance of the Pamela Jackson Memorial Scholarship, it was my intention to explore specific instruments from the University’s Musical Instrument Collection, which were in some way linked in their process of creation, with women. Specifically, and in close collaboration with Dr Jenny Nex, three instruments/groups of instruments were identified and explored throughout the duration of the MScR degree. The first was a 1766 Shudi Harpsichord, manufactured at a time when the family business included the participation of daughter Barbara Shudi. Secondly, a collection of Besson & Co nineteenth-century Cornophones, which were created during a period in which Marthe Besson was proprietor of the company. Finally, a Violin Octet, designed and made in the twentieth century by Carleen Hutchins. In close collaboration with museum and musical instrument specialists at St Cecilia’s Hall, existing researchers in this field, and my own extensive research, these instruments were explored both individually, and in terms of their context too.

Another significant element of this research degree was to compose music for the above instruments. In close collaboration with composition lecturer Dr Gareth Williams, and

with participating musicians, all the instruments were workshopped in order to explore their capabilities and idiosyncrasies, and new music was specifically composed for them in order to demonstrate what they have to offer. The works in question included a *Harpsichord Sonata*, *Trinity* for Harpsichord and Violin, *Dance Suite* for Cornophone Quintet, *Six Studies* for Cornophone Duo, and *Homogeneous* for Violin Octet. Performance opportunities were organised, both at St Cecilia's Hall and elsewhere, and these instruments and their makers had the opportunity to be showcased to a wider public, which was always a fundamental aspect of this research – the wider promotion of neglected women creatives.

Achievements:

Throughout this degree there were key performance collaborators including harpsichordist Dr John Kitchen, Professor John Wallace and the brass ensemble the Wallace Collection, and also a handful of eight student and professional musicians willing to explore the instruments of the Violin Octet. A main event was organised towards the end of my research at St Cecilia's Hall in the Concert Room, 20th July 2024. Despite being an exceptionally hot day, this lecture recital where the instruments were not only heard in terms of the music I had composed, but I also presented a contextual narrative too, was a popular event and very well received. There were very few seats left available on the day, and interestingly throughout the concert, people kept coming in to join the event. Feedback was exceptionally positive, and many in the audience had not only never heard of these instruments of their creators before, but were also new to the venue. Prior to this final concert, in terms of the music written for the Cornophones, this material was also showcased by the Wallace Collection at different events both in the UK and the USA. As an outcome of these other events, I have received correspondence from musicians interested in performing this music again.

Overall, this entire research degree was a fascinating journey into the world of specific musical instruments and their makers, and equally fascinating in terms of the compositional journey too. My overall degree was awarded a Distinction by the University of Edinburgh, which I was absolutely thrilled about. One key point which arose from this research is that one year was just not long enough for this research, and had there been the opportunity to extend for a further two years into doctoral study, then further exploration and promotion would then have followed, including possible a large-scale composition such as an opera or oratorio, which would include some of these instruments. A further key point from this study, is how much research still needs to be undertaken.

However, the work does not stop there. More recently Dr Arnold Myers has been in contact about the use of some audio extracts of the Cornophone recordings, in a publication he is preparing. Similarly, I have asked St Cecilia's Hall whether they would like short audio clips of all my composed works, to be included on their website as examples of the instruments in performance. At the same time, I have put forward programme ideas based upon my research to BBC Radio 3 for their Sunday Feature slot, and also to BBC Radio 4 for their Arts Features too. At this time commissions have not been forthcoming, but I will continue to put forward ideas as an outcome of this MScR, when commissioning rounds are launched.

Moving Forward:

During the final months of this degree at the University of Edinburgh, I was not only offered a place by the University of Oxford to commence doctoral study there in Autumn 2024, but Magdalen College have offered me a full scholarship too. My musicological interest into women in classical music will therefore continue, this time exploring the life and music of the British composer Liza Lehmann, who was once one of Britain's most famous

composers in the UK and around the world. For the next three years I will therefore continue my academic studies, whilst also remaining part-time with BBC Radio 3. At the same time, the compositions I have created whilst at Edinburgh will not be neglected. Although the recordings made to date are not of commercial or broadcast quality, I do have potential recording project ideas for the future. For example, a disc of harpsichord music promoting instruments at St Cecilia's Hall, if the necessary funds can be sourced. Similarly, I've plans for a disc of vocal music too. At the same time, I have already begun to share my works with practitioners, including the Hutchins Consort in America, and hope that further performances will be forthcoming.

It has to be reiterated, that my achieving of an MScR at the University of Edinburgh, with Distinction, could not have been achieved without the support of the Pamela Jackson Memorial Scholarship. Neither could my subsequent offer of a place at Oxford with full scholarship have been achieved either. I will be eternally grateful for this opportunity awarded to me by the Friends of St Cecilia's, and also for the tremendous support provided by Dr Jenny Nex, Dr Gareth Williams, the staff at St Cecilia's Hall, and all my collaborators upon this project. Should radio programmes or recording project ideas come to fruition in relation to this research, I will be in contact with the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall, to let them know.

My sincerest thanks.

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