



BELONGING UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2024

Dean of Students, Liz Kenny

The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create.

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**UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION FROM LIZ KENNY

My last update was sent as we finished the academic year 2022-3. July's update highlighted the work done in our community around the life of Academy alumnus Edmund T Jenkins. We began this academic year by taking our place at the unveiling of a plaque in Battersea, marking the remarkable life of alumna [Evelyn Dove](#) who, as part of an extraordinary career, was the first woman of African heritage to be broadcast on BBC Radio.

Members of Evelyn Dove's family visited the Academy's archive where her student records are still held. Thank you to the Library for enabling this important connection to be made.

As ever, this newsletter roams across different areas of Academy life: read on for updates from the Students' Union, the Glover-Edwards Programme, Blueprint for All and – as the applause at the end of the magnificent Students Create Festival is still present – the Artist Development team.

GLOVER-EDWARDS PROGRAMME

The Glover-Edwards Programme concluded last month with a final weekend of workshops and performances at the Academy.

Founded in 2018 by the Academy's Head of Conducting, Sian Edwards, the initiative encourages women to apply for a Master's in orchestral conducting in the UK or abroad, which ultimately will lead to more women taking their place on the podium. Further details are [here](#).

Participant Claudia Jablonski said of the experience:

'We spoke a lot about what our roles as women in the conducting world mean, and what those roles can look like. We spoke about improving physical and mental confidence and wholeheartedly claiming our role without second-guessing ourselves. These are important factors to remember when taking on a role of authority where women are still a large minority, especially when pursuing a career.'



Glover-Edwards Programme participants (left to right): Dame Jane Glover, Olivia Shotton, Claudia Jablonski, Jaclyn Rosenfeld, Anna Bottani, Mathilde Cattin, Alice Knight, Sian Edwards and Alice Farnham. *Photo Credit: Emily Mould*

THE STUDENTS' UNION

President of the Students' Union, Tiffany Qiu

Wellbeing has always been the focus of the Students' Union and now must be even more so, with the challenges and pressures faced by students today. This year we will launch a new initiative with Interim Head of Counselling, Harpal Chatwal: Drop-In Sessions.

Students can book a same-day or next-day meeting if they feel they need help with their mental health, or if they would simply like to speak to someone. We also collaborated with James Fullegar, the Academy's additional support tutor, to organise Time Management, Organisation and Planning (TOP) workshops.

Ahead of the two workshops we've had so far, students Sophie Patterson and Guillem León Vivas took over our Royal Academy of Music Students' Union (RAMSU) Instagram to talk about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and being blind, respectively, as well as sharing what kind of support is available at the Academy.



Guillem León Vivas. *Photo Credit: Gloria Vivas*

BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE

Sue Elabor, Blueprint for All

Three years ago, a proactive review was initiated, marking the beginning of a dedicated effort to cultivate a more inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment environment for all members of the Academy community. In 2020, Blueprint for All was commissioned to undertake a comprehensive review of all processes, policies, and procedures, setting the stage for significant advancements.

Since the release of the initial report, the Academy has made commendable progress in implementing the recommendations by Blueprint for All. These strategic measures have reinforced the principles of Belonging within the institution and underscored the Academy's unwavering commitment to maintaining its world-class, inclusive conservatoire status. The strides reflect the dedication and proactive approach of The Academy's leadership and community.

At the end of 2023, Blueprint for All was tasked by the Academy Principal with conducting both an impact and a reflective review. This dual approach ensures that TA's efforts align with its overarching goals and sets the stage for future objectives. The review is comprehensive, evaluating the Academy's newly adopted policies, protocols, and processes with a keen focus on their effectiveness and relevance in the landscape of diversity and inclusion.

Central to the success of this review has been invaluable feedback from key stakeholders, including students, academic and instrumental staff and the Senior Management Team. Those who participated in interviews during the initial analysis three years ago played a pivotal role, offering candid and insightful contributions. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders is crucial, providing a benchmark for progress and shaping the direction of the Academy's future Belonging strategy and actions.



Our review is not merely an assessment of past efforts, it represents a strategic step towards ensuring that the Academy's future objectives in Belonging are well-informed, achievable, and aligned with the evolving needs of its diverse community. It serves as a roadmap, guiding the Academy as it continues its commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that empowers its community members.

The commitment to Belonging is not a destination but a continuous undertaking. It is a shared responsibility between students, staff and leaders. In this collective endeavour, patience and kindness emerge as essential virtues. In the face of challenges and the need for systemic change, these virtues become the catalysts that facilitate understanding, bridge gaps, and foster an environment where everyone can thrive. The recognition of patience and kindness as integral elements underscores the Academy's commitment to achieving and sustaining a culture of genuine inclusivity, making the journey towards true inclusion harmonious and compassionate.

STUDENTS CREATE FESTIVAL

Dr Jessica Walker, Senior Lecturer and Lead in Artist Development

The 2024 Students Create Festival saw students expressing their creativity in myriad ways, but this year with a real emphasis on the expression of their own experiences through music.

In her collection of works, *After Silence*, violinist Chloe Bowers-Soriano shared manifestations of tinnitus through her powerful new compositions; Trombonist Jess Anderson and Harpist Hannah Runting explored disability and inner conflict through their varied concert programme; singer Kennedy Miller and composer Mary Offer created an evocative new song cycle about the transformation from girl to woman, and the first act of Toby Anderson's *Satyrs* unleashed a high-octane explosion of queerness onto the stage of the Susie Sainsbury Theatre.



NEXT TIME

Next time, we'll feature an introduction to our Disability Advisor Sofia Ali and Learning Support Tutor, James Fullegar, as well as updates from Open Academy and Widening Participation.

GET INVOLVED

It starts with students. I am always happy to hear your ideas, and help you progress them.

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