Women Conductors @ Morley

Phase 1 Report and Press Coverage

prepared for Arts Council England

by Marion Friend MBE



August 2016

The concept for Women Conductors@Morley began in Autumn 2013 and took its inspiration from Marin Alsop's appearance as the first female conductor at the Last Night of the Proms and the subsequent press coverage and reactions to this, some of which were negative. At the time, Andrea Brown was Director of Music at Morley and Alice Farnham was Head of Opera. They decided to address and challenge the issues by developing a course for young aspiring women conductors aged 16-25 initially with a pilot research and development programme in 2014. It was a departure from Morley's usual curriculum offer but also fitted with its egalitarian mission and ethos, and was endorsed by the Principal.

> *The scheme is valuable as it exists to be a programme to train, celebrate role models, and to widen participation of women within conducting*. ***(Andrea Brown)***
>
> *It feels obvious that this programme is necessary so I don't really know where to start!* ***(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)***
>
> *I've always been interested in conducting but now I'm trained to be interested in conducting.* ***(Ethnie Foulkes)***

The programme is in two parts: Phase 1 for ages 16-25 or full-time students, and Phase 2 for music professionals and teachers minimum age 19. This report will focus on Phase 1 but also acknowledge the progression routes that are available.

Course dates

Following the pilot scheme in 2014 the following Phase 1 weekend courses have taken place:

Oxford 09-10 May, 2015 hosted by University of Oxford Music Faculty
8 participants

London 19-20 September, 2015 hosted by Morley College
10 participants

Cardiff 26-27 September, 2015 hosted by Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
8 participants

Birmingham 30 Oct - 1 Nov, 2015 hosted by Birmingham Conservatoire
9 participants

Cambridge 13-14 February, 2016 hosted by University of Cambridge
11 participants

Glasgow 9-10 April 2016 hosted by Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
11 participants

FEES (for the whole weekend) [1]

Participant fee
UK Resident/UK Student/EU Resident: £150
Non-EU Resident: £300
Observer fee
£20 (weekend) or £5 (per session)

Funding

Women Conductors @ Morley acknowledges the generous support of the following organisations:

Arts Council England (Grants for the Arts)	£14900

To support the delivery costs of the programme including the roles of Artistic Director and Administrator, and marketing and evaluation

The following organisations and trusts gave bursary support for participants' course fees:

Worshipful Company of Musicians	£ 2000
Colwinston Charitable Trust for the Cardiff course	£ 2500
The Craignish Trust for the Glasgow course	£ 3000
University of Cambridge Music Faculty for the Cambridge course	£ 1500

Application process[2]

Applicants are asked to send a 500-word statement explaining why they wish to take part in the weekend course along with a one-page CV to womenconductors@morleycollege.ac.uk. If their application is accepted they are invited to enrol formally via Morley College's website www.morleycollege.ac.uk

Course content:
Repertoire [3]

Warlock Capriol Suite (Danse Basse)
Walton Henry V (two string movements),
Tchaikovsky Serenade - Elegy
Students to prepare Danse Basse and can choose one or more of the Walton and Tchaikovsky.
The following will be used as conducting exercises:
Beethoven Sonata No. 10, Op14, (No.2) – Andante – 1st 20 bars
Sonata No. 8 Op.13 Pathetique – Adagio Cantabile – 1st 16 bars

[1] Women Conductors@Morley application pack www.morleycollege.ac.uk
[2] As above
[3] As above

Programme [4]

Saturday
Participants work with Alice Farnham (conducting tutor) and Alma Sheehan or Shirley Keane (stagecraft/body language coach) and two professional pianists
10:00-10:30 Welcome and introduction
10:30-13:30 Session one
Lunch break
14.30-17.30 Session two
Sunday
Participants work with Alice Farnham, Alma Sheehan or Shirley Keane and professional string group (two violins, one viola, cello, double bass)
10:00-10:30 Physical and psychological warm-up
10:30-13:30 Session three
Lunch break
14.30-17.30 Session four (string group supplemented with student string players)

Conducting technique

The programme offers young women conductors valuable guidance in the essential technical skills of conducting. Alice Farnham draws on her extensive international professional experience and also her studies in Russia including with the renowned pedagogue Ilya Musin.

In her BBC Radio 3 broadcast (BBC Radio 3, *Inspiring Women in Music* 10.03.16) Alice talks about the importance of considering the phrase, sound, and character of the music. A clear beat is important but other factors are too – 'breathe on the upbeat and the arms follow suit'. Alice introduces group exercises and conducting games to free up the participants' posture and movement; these include taking on different personalities and moods (happy, sad, angry) and sometimes conducting without arms. She emphasises the importance of standing tall and being aware of the width and height of the conducting gestures. The exercises form an integral part of the conducting technique tuition as well as the concept of *'communicate your musical intentions'* ***(Alice Farnham quoting Ilya Musin)*** and connecting with the sound at all times.

Respondents valued the opportunity to try out conducting and be 'hands on' from the beginning, and be encouraged to feel comfortable in their bodies. They also valued the fact

[4] As n.1 above

that videos were produced which they could study later and learn from observing themselves and other participants in action.

> *Alice maintains a level, and expects the students to rise to that level with her encouragement and respect for them.* ***(Alma Sheehan)***

> *I now watch other conductors in a different more informed way. I keep researching too and I realise that to be a good conductor you need other skills including a good musical knowledge and awareness of harmony and counterpoint. You need to know the scores really well and be prepared and organised.* ***(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)***

Stagecraft and body language

All participants interviewed for this report commented on the invaluable element of professional stagecraft support within the weekend course structure.

> *Alma Sheehan's involvement was very useful especially with breathing, posture and approach to our self-consciousness. She showed us how to lead with different parts of our body e.g. with the chest, belly, and to have the image of sand in our head slowly dropping to the ground, to give us core stability* ***(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)***

The work on body language and verbal communication are seen as integral to the programme and may be especially relevant to young women who are stepping on to the podium for the first time. Alma Sheehan cites the example of opening out one's arms and making space underneath which is a simple gesture on one level but can be loaded with connotations for those who lack confidence with their body language. She encourages the participants to show emotion in the body and to adapt the energy levels to the music, developing their presence and freedom of expression. Alma introduces group exercises to encourage this; these include guessing games of taking on a character (e.g. Wonder Woman and power poses!) and emulating that in a participant's stance and conducting gestures.

In exploring verbal communication the participants are encouraged to bring out elements of themselves and to feel confident about asking for what they want in rehearsal, being aware of the difference between collaborative and directive language. Voice projection is viewed as important too especially when nerves set in and the pitch of the voice may rise and add tension, impacting on the communication with the performers. Alma Sheehan incorporates body relaxation with breathing techniques and visualisation to address anxieties, and participants have found these very helpful in a wider context too.

The course builds confidence in body language too and asks questions about the vulnerability of being a female in this role. Dress code was discussed and the breathing exercises were very useful – this could extend to other areas of life for example giving presentations. How do you want to present yourself? ***(Ethnie Foulkes)***

It teaches us about leadership which is also about collaboration and finding the best way to communicate what you want in a short time in rehearsals. I'm much more aware of this now. ***(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)***

Learning alongside professional musicians

Jenny Nickson, a highly experienced violinist and member of the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, has led the string ensembles on the pilot course of Women Conductors @Morley and on several Phase 1 courses. These ensembles contribute to the second day of the courses following the work with pianists on the first day.

Jenny sees her role as multi-faceted and pivotal to the development of the participants' awareness and learning. The work involves following the student conductor precisely and interpreting her gestures, and also explaining what the string players need from a conductor to get the best results. Jenny acts as a liaison between Alice Farnham and the participants and also leads her string player colleagues who are often Southbank Sinfonia players or alumni at the start of their own professional careers; this is a valuable learning opportunity for them too.

There was a groundbreaking moment when I was conducting Tchaikovsky Serenade and felt I was really connecting with the sound and with my hands moving, a bit like 'spreading butter' and making a connection through the music and communicating this in my whole body. I felt it and so did the string players who responded.
(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)

Jenny feels that the participants can learn quicker in this non-competitive environment where they may be less self-conscious than in a mixed one. She adds that role models like Alice Farnham are inspirational for young women and this course has great value in exposing and beginning to address a wider gender issue of opportunity.

The programme gives participants the confidence to stand up and speak as well as to conduct and it helps to develop presence and authority in a safe environment. There is a perception/image that conductors need to be 'tough' and this course challenges

> *that whilst encouraging personal development and assertiveness. I've been in the music profession for many years including at the Royal Opera House and London Philharmonic but this has really enabled me to look at conductors differently now and to realise what's involved in communication and technique. (**Jenny Nickson),***

The links to the music profession are viewed as essential to the programme's strategy and players from Welsh National Opera, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and professional musicians in Scotland have contributed to the local courses in their respective areas. This underpins the high standards and aims of the programme and the opportunities for participants to be mentored by professionals from an early stage in their training as conductors. *'It can be intimidating to conduct a group of professionals' (course participant)*

> *I'm used to working with voices so it was very interesting working with instrumentalists and learning the concept of showing 'intention'. As a string player myself, one of the highlights was joining in with the violins and realising the internal workings of the string section from both sides **(Rosie Howarth)***

> *The day with string players from Welsh National Opera was groundbreaking and was a big difference to conducting two pianists the previous day. I took my violin and joined in too. **(Angharad Phillips)***

General personal development for young women through Women Conductors@Morley

Respondents commented that though there are now more women in prominent roles in traditional areas of society than before, including in the Church, it is still fairly unusual to see a woman on the podium. It was felt that women are judged differently even if this is subconscious, and there are so few of them. Others respondents felt that the programme confounds the tradition of the young male choral scholar and/or organ scholar who takes to conducting his peers at university or conservatoire; young women have been excluded from this opportunity in the past or do not consider that this might be an option for them. They value the opportunity to address the imbalance individually and collectively; however they need encouragement to explore in a safe environment and to open up possibilities for themselves.

> *You have a right to be there too and to know that your decisions have value. The mentoring opportunities create a framework and fill a void **(Karin Hendrickson)***

The industry has been male dominated up until now and so it sometimes doesn't cross young women's minds that it's something they can do. If you ask a child to draw a conductor it will be a man. The course has value in its own right and is very supportive. Communities have developed and this is really great as it can be a lonely path and it's good to know likeminded individuals. ***(Rosie Howarth)***

The programme is a chance to inspire confidence in women who may otherwise feel uncomfortable in exploring conducting. It also provides a platform for women of all backgrounds and careers (though especially music, of course) to meet and share ideas and create connections and contacts.

- *It creates confidence that can hopefully be passed over into other areas of their development*
- *It provides a number of skills that are important for aspiring musicians to have, regardless of what discipline they choose to study in the end.* ***(Claudia Fuller)***

It feels obvious that this programme is necessary so I don't really know where to start! It gives young women the confidence to step up and lose inhibitions, to communicate through gesture and to lose the fear of being judged. I wish I would have had that opportunity when I was younger at school. ***(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)***

The course is a chance for self reflection and more dialogue and in general it's about making music in a better way all round. Young women need to trust themselves. This course is an opportunity to try out what's required and have the information and framework to take it further. It's a wonderful introduction and offers young women the possibility of becoming leaders? ***(Kerri-Lynne Dietz)***

Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development

Participants are encouraged to develop conducting experience externally with their peer group and more extensively through contacts and networks. Many participants value the closed Facebook group of Women Conductors @Morley set up for those who have been involved in the programme and other interested parties; to date it has over 120 members.

Communities have developed and this is really great as it can be a lonely path and it's good to know likeminded individuals ***(Rosie Howarth)***

Phase 2 Women Conductors @Morley

Several Phase 1 participants have progressed on to Phase 2 of the programme. Based in London, each workshop focuses on a different genre of conducting and is led by a prominent female conductor in that field. This phase is for female music professionals and teachers of all ages (minimum age 19) wishing to supplement their careers by adding

conducting to their professional portfolio. London venues: Morley College, King's College London, Royal Opera House, Barbican[5]

External opportunities

> *I went on to take a conducting course in Berlin fully supported by Help Musicians UK.and Alice Farnham was kind enough to write a reference. It was the first time I'd conducted a full orchestra and I was the only woman on the course. I could be braver because I had the experience of Women Conductors@Morley already.* ***(Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras)***
>
> *The skills I have learned have lead to me being accepted to work as an assistant conductor for OperaUpClose and The North Wall on their summer residency in Oxford this July/August. The number of contacts I have as a musician has also increased greatly through this scheme. (**Claudia Fuller)***

The future development of Women Conductors @ Morley

All respondents commented on the unique nature of the programme and the opportunities they perceived for its growth and development.

General opportunities for the development of Women Conductors@Morley
Some respondents saw the need to focus on the 16-18 age group as the starting point and to give sixth-formers in the state and independent sectors the opportunity to learn conducting techniques and to develop holistically as young women musicians, with role models and a pyramid of progression routes. Links could also be developed more extensively into Higher Education particularly with conservatoires and university music departments.

Showcases for young women conductors
Participants would value the introduction of small performance platforms and informal concerts linked to the programme to consolidate their learning experiences. Others suggested public performance opportunities to raise the profile of the programme and to showcase women conductors with more advanced skills.

Developing links with amateur and professional orchestras
There were also suggestions regarding working with larger groups of performers to extend the string ensemble experience, including with professional chamber orchestras. Many participants would also value making connections with the extensive range of amateur orchestras in the UK via Making Music. *'We need more opportunities to conduct now'* was a common theme when talking to participants.

[5] Women Conductors @Morley website application pack www.morleycollege.ac.uk

Debating the issues regarding the profile women conductors in the music profession
Several respondents would like the issues and challenges regarding equal opportunities for women conductors to be debated in a wider arena.

> *It would be worth creating debates with women in other fields - we are all facing the same prejudices no matter what field we are in, so sharing these experiences is essential* ***(Nicky Thomas)***

They also saw valuable research material in the programme which might be of interest to academic organizations such as the Institute of Education and culminate in a high profile conference.

Press coverage

Nicky Thomas Media has been associated with Women Conductors @Morley since 2015 and confirmed that there was considerable media interest in the programme nationally and locally and that the issues continue to be debated regarding women on the podium. Examples of press coverage are included in this report.

Conclusion

It was evident to me throughout the research for this report that Women Conductors@Morley occupies a unique position in the world of music education in the UK at present. The founders of the programme at Morley College, Alice Farnham and Andrea Brown, acted swiftly and wisely in responding to adverse national press coverage regarding women conductors in 2014. There has been considerable interest in the programme ever since and all respondents, including professional musicians as well as participants, commented positively on the impact it had made on their personal and professional development. The programme is still at a fledgling stage but the possibilities for growth, as outlined earlier, are far-reaching in providing a forum for young women both on and off the podium. *'It opens a door and changes your view of yourself' (participant).*

Marion Friend MBE
www.marionfriend.co.uk
July 2016

CONTRIBUTORS

With thanks to the following respondents who contributed generously to this report in face to face meetings, phone conversations and email

Andrea Brown, former Director of Music at Morley
Peter Collyer Head of School, Music and Performing Arts at Morley www.morleycollege.ac.uk
Kerri-Lynne Dietz, singer (participant on Phase 1 course and observer on several Phase 2 courses)
Alice Farnham, Programme Director Women Conductors@Morley www.alicefarnham.com
Ethnie Foulkes, composer (pilot course and Phase 1 participant)
Claudia Fuller, violinist (participant on Phase 1 course and three Phase 2 weekend courses)
Karin Hendrickson, Assistant Director and Programme Administrator, Women Conductors@Morley www.karinhendrickson.com
Rosie Howarth, choral conductor and violinist (Phase 1 participant)
Tamara Lorenzo Gabeiras, pianist (participant on Phase 1 course and three Phase 2 weekend courses)
Jenny Nickson, professionial violinist (leader of the string ensemble on pilot course and several Phase 1 courses)
Angharad Phillips, singer and violinist (Phase 1 observer and participant)
Alma Sheehan, stagecraft tutor Women Conductors @Morley www.actingforsingers.co.uk
Nicky Thomas, Nicky Thomas Media www.nickythomasmedia.com

LINKS

Arts Council England www.artscouncil.org.uk
BBC Radio 3 www.bbc.co.uk/radio3
Birmingham Conservatoire www.bcu.ac.uk
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra www.cbso.co.uk
Facebook https://www.facebook.com/groups/1071738759511461/
Help Musicians UK www.helpmusicians.org.uk
Making Music www.makingmusic.org.uk
Morley College www.morleycollege.ac.uk
The North Wall www.thenorthwall.com
OperaUpClose www.operaupclose.com
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland www.rcs.ac.uk
Royal Opera House www.roh.org.uk
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama www.rwcmd.ac.uk
Southbank Sinfonia www. southbanksinfonia.co.uk
Welsh National Opera www.wno.org.uk
University of Cambridge www.cam.ac.uk

APPENDIX 1

Blog on Women Conductors and the Morley College Course Ethnie Foulkes

Gender equality issues in music are nothing new, and while this is an issue that spreads across many aspects of the profession, women conductors remain spectacularly under-represented. As Jude Kelly (Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre) noted, “People tend to appoint in their own image. It's a tendency of men to support other, younger men and feel paternalistic towards them. We have to encourage them to support women”. Projects such as the Morley College Young Women Conductors programmes have been working to support and promote the status of female conductors, whilst encouraging and assisting women in the exploration of the art-form.

I was fortunate enough to be nominated by Marion Friend as the representative for Junior Trinity College of Music for the original pilot course at Morley College with Alice Farnham in 2014. I had already had some experience with conducting having studied with Andrew Morley (at JTCM), and was already passionate about the art-form. However, the second Alice stood up to begin the first session, I knew that this was something different. There was a real air of potential and willingness to learn in the room. Throughout the sessions, everyone’s confidence and individual style began to blossom. We tried new things, and were always learning, whether on the podium or observing others. We were led through basic beat patterns, on to Beethoven Sonata’s with two pianists, and finally to conduct two pieces (Warlock’s Danse Basse from The Capriol Suite and one movement from Walton’s Henry V) with a chamber group in a workshop with Sian Edwards.

We were continually encouraged to conduct by connecting our movements and feelings to the “sound” as if it were a physical floating object with a texture, density, character, colour, and substance that morphed and changed with every moment of the music. This level of connectivity with the sound required imagination in the preparation of each beat, for if the idea was clear, the limbs would (generally) follow suit. This resulted in many entertaining renditions of Beethoven; from the jovial, to the depressing, to the cartoonish! The main idea that grabbed me about this philosophy was that of quiet confidence and leadership. Conducting is not about dragging the players forcibly into ones tempo or mood. It is about respectful inspiration and invitation. I could inspire the musicians to perform in my tempo or mood by being mentally sure of the soundworld I was aiming to create. An upbeat became an invitation for the players to join a river of pre-existing mental sound, and because I was entirely focussed on the sound and had accepted it as a part of the space at that time, it inspired a higher level of confidence and a sense of homogony. This idea requires a lot of

work and practice, and is something that I am still striving for in my conducting. Alice identified in my technique a tendency to conduct within a small space, often in front of my face or stomach, which can have the opposite response to the one intended, pushing the players out instead of inviting them into my sound, so I have been working hard on that personally.

When the course re-ran in 2015 I registered instantly as conducting is becoming more and more of a focus for me. Ideas about confidence were discussed a lot in both courses. We examined why women sometimes feel under excruciating amounts of scrutiny, or that, as international sensation Bjork said in an interview with the guardian, "It's tough. Everything that a guy says once, you have to say five times." This kind of personal confidence is the major source of nerves for me when conducting, and I vividly remember in one of the Body and Mind workshops in the course with Alma Sheehan a very frank and open discussion about the difference between being arrogant, and being confident. Exploring the inner self across the courses with Alma and Shirley Keane produced valuable exercises in focussing on the body and breath to give an exterior (and up to a point interior) of calm and control. This fosters confidence in one's own choices and ability, creating a kind of gravitas around oneself which inspires confidence in the players, and ultimately produces a more unified performance of the music which is what everyone is there for. These physical and breathing exercises have become a central part of the way I prepare for any professional experience – they have been absolutely vital to me.

My personal highlight across the courses came at the end of the second course, when conducting the Elegy from Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings Op.48 with players from the Welsh National Opera. When the movement begins it is small and delicate, whilst being warm and nostalgic at the same time. Alice and I had worked a lot on the initial breath and upbeat, and it became apparent that for such a gentle opening, with such good and generous players, the slightest gesture would be enough. In the workshop, I remember a moment of absolute stillness before I moved for the upbeat. Anticipation was buzzing everywhere, but all was internally calm and collected. Then I moved just my fingers in the smallest circular upbeat, picking up the sound in the gesture, and the players responded with the exact sound I was envisaging. From that second on I felt enlightened, free, and alive. I have always found when conducting that my body and brain feel as though they are flying, even through the intense concentration and nerves, and this was the ultimate epitome of that feeling. I hope to continue to explore this in my studies at RWCMD as a Composer, studying conducting with people such as John Traill and Tianyi Lu. Sexism in conducting needs to be confronted by women with a commitment to the music, and it certainly will not deter me from trying to follow the path set out by so many amazing

women before, for as Marin Alsop says; "There is no logical reason to stop women from conducting. The baton isn't heavy"!

References:

Kennedy, M. 2013 *Marin Alsop: Society is uncomfortable with women in authority roles* Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/sep/06/marin-alsop-proms-society-women-authority-roles>. [12 March 2016]

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APPENDIX 2

PRESS COVERAGE /

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Home > > Meet the Maestro | Alice Farnham

Rhinegold Publishing

Meet the Maestro | Alice Farnham

4:25, 1st September 2015

The co-founder of Women Conductors@Morley talks to ***Jessica Duchen*** *about training in Russia and her work encouraging young women to enter the profession*

How did you begin conducting?

My father was a clergyman, so church music seemed an obvious direction. He died when I was ten and I was sent to a school for clergy orphans – which had a fabulous music department. I won an organ scholarship to Oxford and as part of that I had to conduct the college choir. I had no confidence at first, but soon found I preferred it to sitting alone in a cold organ loft: you're actually communicating with other people! I conducted the university music society in the Fauré Requiem and it was a lightbulb moment: for the first time I wasn't nervous as a performer in a debilitating way. I began to feel that this was what I really wanted to do. I took it slowly, moving back to London and having lessons there, until I heard about Ilya Musin.

You went to study in St Petersburg with him. What was he like?

Musin was a force of nature. He could get very angry if you weren't doing what he wanted, but you always felt that was because he wanted you to be better. The way that many things in the arts are taught in Russia instills a very strong technique, but for the sake of expression: the better your technique, the more you can express in the music. That was key to Musin's teaching, and that's what makes it so powerful.
He didn't know the meaning of the words 'political correctness', but he always taught women – and was often criticised for that. But he would say that the most important thing is to communicate your musical intentions to an orchestra – and for him that was the end of the discussion!

It was an exciting time to be in Russia. This was the early nineties: the cold war was over, Britain and Russia were friends and the atmosphere was very positive. I went for three months and stayed four years. I completely fell in love with it once I got over the initial shock of the cockroaches and the state of the public loos.

What experiences do you think have developed your artistry most strongly?

After St Petersburg I got a job at the Gothenburg Opera as chorus master and then assistant conductor; that was my first real taste of working in opera, seeing it from the inside out. I also did a lot of prompting, which is a fantastic way to learn about what singers need; innumerable excellent opera conductors learned their craft this way, but it's a dying art now.

Back in London after ten years away I wrote to the Royal Opera House offering my services as prompter. I had a call back within minutes – and my first prompting performance there was *Il Turco in Italia* with Thomas Allen and Cecilia Bartoli. From that came a lot of assistant conducting and offstage conducting, plus quite a lot of work in ballet. Recently I conducted Welsh National Youth Opera and I'm about to go back to do Peter Maxwell Davies's *Kommilitonen*.

You've started, with Morley College, a series of workshops to enable young women musicians of sixth-form/college age to try conducting. How and why?

When Marin Alsop conducted the Last Night of the Proms in 2013 I was interviewed about my views on negative comments about women conductors that had been reported. I reckon it's a numbers thing: twenty years ago there were very few women conductors; there don't seem to be many more now; and until more women are in the profession, those stereotypes will persist. I'd just taken over the opera course at Morley College, so I got together with Morley's director of music, Andrea Brown, to try to devise something positive to do about it.

Where does the course go from here?

We've come up with an exciting programme of two-day workshops all over UK, each involving ten women aged 16-25: students, or young musicians who might take a sideways step; perhaps women who really want to conduct, or maybe curious, serious musicians who might not have thought it was for them. If they have the curiosity and willingness to give it a go, that's all they need.

ALICE FARNHAM: CAREER LANDMARKS

- Organ scholarship at St Hugh's College Oxford; later organ fellow at St Thomas, Fifth Avenue, New York
- Studied at the St Petersburg State Conservatoire under Ilya Musin
- 2001-4 Chorus master and assistant conductor at Gothenburg Opera, Sweden. Chorus master at Opera Holland Park in 2006/7
- Music director of Welsh National Youth Opera for award-winning 2013 production of *Paul Bunyan* (will return for 2016 revival)
- Invited by Valery Gergiev to conduct Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at the Mariinsky St Petersburg in November 2013 and April 2015
- Has conducted large-scale community concerts and operas including David Bedford's *Titanic* at Carlisle Sands and Martin Read's *Round-about Basinastoke* at the Anvil

Stations Categories Schedules Favourites

iPlayer Radio Search

Inspiring Women in Music: Alice Farnham

Inspiring Women in Music Episode 4 of 5

In the week of International Women's Day, five women tell us about their lives in music including what, and who, inspires them. Alice Farnham is one of Britain's leading female conductors. As well as enjoying a

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Struggling female composers forced to play second fiddle

Richard Brooks
Arts Editor

BRITAIN'S most successful young female composer is having to quit London after failing to shatter classical music's glass ceiling. Emily Hall, 37, says her "hand-to-mouth" existence means she is having to move to Stroud, Gloucestershire.

She is at the forefront of a new generation of female composers who are struggling to get commissions and be properly paid while their male counterparts get more work and money.

The mother of two wrote her first music at the age of 13. This autumn she stayed on Unst, the most northerly inhabited island in Britain, to record the sounds of nature and some unusual local instruments, for a piece to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 this month as part of its Northern Lights season.

"But the big commissions, certainly the big opera ones, are for men," said Hall, whose record label is the intriguingly named Bedroom Community — appropriate as, with young children, she composes mainly at night. "There's a boys' club mentality, too, where women can only reach a certain level."

Hall's financial position was helped by money from two awards: £50,000 from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and £18,000 from the Genesis Foundation. "But we must still sell our London place to move to Stroud," she said. "It can be a hand to mouth, almost unsustainable, existence."

Hannah Kendall, 31, who has composed orchestral, chamber and choral works but also works as a producer and events director to keep afloat, backed up Hall's complaint. "The gatekeepers of this business are men, and the most significant commissions are for men, too," she said.

Kendall, whose first, admittedly short, opera The Knife of Dawn – is due at The Royal House in north London next year, added: "Some composers will even work for free, but they really should be paid properly. Too many females also shy away from talking about the gender imbalance in our business."

Janis Susskind, managing director of the music publisher Boosey & Hawkes, said: "Yes, most orchestras and opera companies are run by men, which may not help. Even so, I am more recently being asked 'What female composers have you got?' The real challenge is money. I know quite a few composers who will write for just a few hundred pounds."

Emily Hall says most of the big commissions are given to men

Not just a cute girl on a podium: how to get more women conducting

If we are to encourage more women to become conductors they need both hands-on experience and inspirational role models.

Alice Farnham

Thursday 10 September 2015 19.26 BST

This time two years ago, Marin Alsop was preparing to conduct the Last Night of the BBC Proms - the first woman to do so. On Saturday, she returns to conduct the Last Night, but she is still the only woman to do so in the Proms' 120-year history, while it was only 30 years previously, in 1984, that Odaline de la Martinez became the first woman to conduct at the Proms at all. We're making slow progress! Shortly before Alsop's appearance on that closing night, Vasily Petrenko told an interviewer: "A cute girl on a podium means that musicians think about other things."

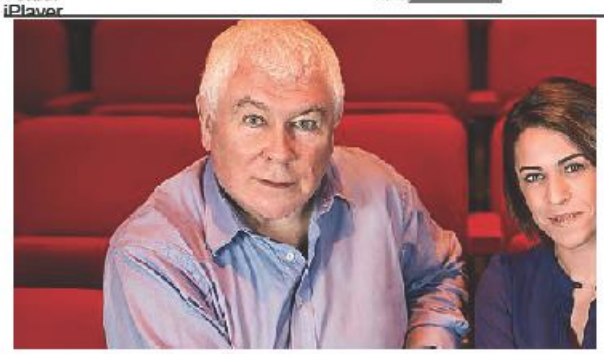
In the traditional Last Night conductor's speech in 2013, Alsop said: "I want to say to all the young women out there, and as I say to all young people, believe in yourselves, follow your passion and never give up, because you will create a future filled with possibility."

I graduated from university over 20 years ago and have been working across the UK, and from St Petersburg to Singapore, as a conductor ever since. Although female conductors are enjoying more success these days, they are still a rarity. I've turned up to rehearsals with a baton in hand and a score under my arm, only to be asked if I work for the publisher, or, with no instrument in sight, which one I play. This is sometimes followed by a metaphorical pat on the head. One particularly tiresome comment came 10 years ago, when a male colleague told me: "Women can't conduct because their breasts get in the way." I have always wanted to be judged simply as a conductor, rather than a female conductor.

The furore over Petrenko's comments and the discussion provoked by Alsop's appearance at the Proms was a light-bulb moment for me. In a 2013 interview on Radio 4, I pointed out that very few women have chosen to become conductors, and this was unlikely to change unless we did something. Now was the time to normalise the idea of women in this role. I decided to become an advocate for women conductors and take proactive steps to inspire young women. Alsop openness in addressing the problem inspired me to create the Women Conductors @ Morley programme with Andrea Brown at London's Morley College.

We ran a successful pilot course for 16- to 19-year-olds last year and are continuing and developing the course for this year. For 2015-16, we now have a two-phase programme: the first is UK-wide workshops for female music students, the second is for female musicians over 19, with no upper age limit.

Creating role models for women is important. Some of today's most successful conductors - Jane Glover, Sian Edwards, Julia Jones, Andrea Quinn, Jessica Cottis, Sarah Tenant-Flowers



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LEARNING FOR LIFE at Morley

MUSIC

Passing the baton to women conductors

London Morley College has become the first to offer exclusive training to women – and now course director Alice Farnham is bringing the course to Birmingham. **Christopher Morley** discovers her inspiration



» Alice Farnham, right, will be bringing a women conductors' course to Birmingham this weekend

MARIN Alsop conducted the Last Night of the BBC Proms in 2013, and repeated her triumph this year. In response to the depressing ruffling of a few misogynistic feathers, London's Morley College has launched a women conductors' course, which arrives at Birmingham Conservatoire this weekend.

Directing the course is Alice Farnham, born in Stratford-upon-Avon, and herself someone who came into conducting via a circuitous route. She was an organ scholar at Oxford during the early 1990s, and gradually accrued more and more conducting appointments.

In 1997 she enrolled as a student of the great Ilya Musin at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, studying with that legendary teacher until his death at the age of 95 in 1999.

"I was extremely lucky to be in Russia during that small window of time," Alice remembers.

"Musin had been famous in Russia for 60 years, and when the wall came down and many of his students (Vladimir Gergiev and Yuri Temirkanov, for example) began enjoying success in the West, his fame as a teacher spread.

"When I went out there he was already 93, so I knew I wouldn't have long with him. But during those two years he held five three-hour classes a week with huge energy and commitment. He always wanted the best from his students, building them up, but could be very demanding and even frightening sometimes.

"He demanded a disciplined technique but one that was always in the service of musical expression rather than timekeeping.

"He embodied the music he was conducting. I remember one class when one student conducted the Finale of Tchaikovsky's Pathétique Symphony. When Musin demonstrated the end of the movement, I was seriously worried for his health, hearing and seeing the heart-beats of the music gradually come to a halt. Fortunately the next student conducted Nutcracker and Musin instantly became a young child!"

Perhaps the situation for women conductors is still precarious enough in the West, but how are they perceived in Russia?

"It's a complicated situation there – full of contradictions, as is the case with many things in Russia. In Soviet times they believed that everyone should be given equal opportunities in the workplace. The reality wasn't always quite so equal in some quarters though. Musin always had some female conductors in his class, though his colleagues often criticised him for this. My experience of studying and working there was generally positive."

We then move on to discuss the hostile reaction to Marin Alsop at the 2013 Proms, and Alice warms to her theme.

"I'm not sure the reaction was hostile as such, it was mostly some rather silly off-the-cuff remarks about whether women are suited to conducting. What was shocking for me was that any comments at all were made about her gender. It brought the classical music world up short, when they realised that in the 21st century we are still talking about firsts for women, and such a fuss is made of them. By the time she appeared for the Last Night, she was greeted rapturously, and there was no doubt who was in charge. I think with hindsight many of us saw it as a perfect opportunity to explore the reasons why there are still not so many women wanting to be conductors and what we can do to redress this."

So we have this Morley College course, taking residence at Birmingham Conservatoire this weekend. How will it run?

"The weekend workshop will take place over four sessions," Alice explains.

"Prior to the weekend the participants will have prepared some short string pieces. After an introduction to the workshop, the participants will get to conduct two experienced pianists (used to working with conductors) all day on Saturday.

"I will also give them some baton technique tips. The focus is on technique only insofar as it helps free them up and gives them physical confidence.

"The stakes rise on the Sunday, as the participants will work with five professional string players (from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra).

"In the afternoon we hope to bring in some student string players to join them and make more of a string orchestra.

"On both days they are all given an equal amount of podium time. I've learned so much from teaching these workshops and the feedback has been fantastic!" Alice concludes.

» **Details on 0121 245 4455.**

> By the time she (Marin Alsop, *pictured right*) appeared for the Last Night, she was greeted rapturously, and there was no doubt who was in charge



CD RELEASES

Classical



I Have Set My Hert So Hy
The Dufay Collective

SINCE their formation in 1987 The Dufay Collective has pursued a free-wheeling career, happy to move between musical eras and record labels.

Medieval dance music, a 12th century liturgical drama, 17th century bawdy English ballads and music for the Spanish court have all been explored.

Here they perform a collection of 13th century songs and dances with some fragmentary original sources reconstructed and arranged by the group's director, William Lyons.

The four members play harp, lute, gittern (a predecessor the guitar), recorder, pipes plus vielle and rebec (early fiddles) and are joined by the female vocal trio Voice. It's a zestful and enjoyable collection – there's nothing staid or dull here. From the plaintive title track to the jaunty Gresley Dances and even a couple of Christmas carols, Corpus Christi Carol and Nowel: Owt of Youre Sleep Arise, there's a vivid individually tailored sound rather than a uniform "olde worlde" style.

Norman Stinchcombe

Jazz



The Complete Concert By The Sea
Erroll Garner

THE recording of the concert that the Erroll Garner Trio gave at Carmel, California, on September 19, 1955 was originally made just for local radio. Garner's forceful manager, Martha Glaser, thought it deserved wider circulation and the resulting LP of selected tunes went on to be one of the biggest selling jazz records ever.

The slightly average recording quality has been improved through remastering with the complete concert filling two CDs, while the third preserves the original LP programme augmented by interviews with the band members.

It's still brilliantly fresh 60 years on, Garner's "monumental swing", as writer Richard Cook called it, rolling with Pacific force through more than double the original number of tunes.

That classic cover with the smiling woman holding her arms aloft next to the sea at Carmel really does reflect how this music makes the listener feel.

Peter Bacon

Rock & Pop



Rod Stewart
Another Country

ROD Stewart's last album marked a major departure for the legendary Scottish ladies' man.

After 12 years of seemingly being happy to produce sporadic Great American Songbook albums as if he's Michael Bublé's grandfather, 2013's Time contained actual new Stewart-penned music for the first time since a sole track on 1998's When We Were The New Boys.

Inspired by writing his autobiography, Time was a critical and commercial success, taking him back to number one in the album charts for the first time since 1976's A Night On The Town.

Another Country, with 11 of its 12 tracks again co-written by Stewart, carries on where Time left off – but the results aren't quite as successful.

The singer's sentimental streak has never been so prominent, with some cringeworthy lyrics throughout, and some of the musical ideas aren't so great either.

Andrew Greenhalgh

ANNOUNCEMENT: PRIORITY BOOKING FOR WINTER SEASON POSTPONED FOR FRIENDS OF COVENT GARDEN

Home > News > Why opera's future is more diverse than its past

Why opera's future is more diverse than its past

Opera is reinventing itself and creating a more relevant, inclusive and dynamic art-form in the process.

BY JOHN FULLJAMES (ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF OPERA, THE ROYAL OPERA)
21 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 2.16PM | COMMENT ON THIS ARTICLE



Conductor Julia Jones © Maurice Korbel, 2009

It was interesting to read Edward Qualtrough's recent blog about gender in opera (https://corymbus.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/operas-gender-problem-diversity-and-the-battle-for-relevance/?utm_content=bufferb8adb&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer). He highlights a very important issue. I agree that there is intrinsic creative value in greater diversity of ideas, artists and approaches in opera. Inclusivity of outlook and practice will help create a better, richer, more relevant and more dynamic art-form which is better equipped to reflect on and engage the society within which we live.

As one of the world's most diverse cities, London is almost uniquely well placed as a site for renewal and innovation in opera. Here at The Royal Opera we believe that increasing the diversity of our art and our artists is an essential part of making our programme of work both excellent and transformational.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that opera has a history, practices and critical debates which are far from diverse. In an art-form which is currently defined by its reinterpretation of a body of existing works, this is potentially a life-threatening issue. We need to re-examine the repertory, unpick its prejudices and uncover the unconscious biases within it. This is both about how we stage productions and also about how we contextualize and critique them.

When it comes to creating brand new operas we have a cleaner sheet of paper and must strive to better reflect the society in which we live. In so doing we should be proud that opera now comes in all shapes and sizes and celebrate this work as being at the heart of our companies. For The Royal Opera, the work we are doing in the Linbury or at the Roundhouse (http://www.roundhouse.org.uk/) is as important for the development of the art-form and the Company's identity as the work on our main-stage. As we work with more diverse artists, so the sites, scales and forms of opera will diversify.

We have a very long way to go and are really just embarking on what will be a sustained process of change, but it is important that we recognize and celebrate diversity as it grows. The Orchestra of the Royal Opera House (http://www.roh.org.uk/about/the-orchestra-of-the-royal-

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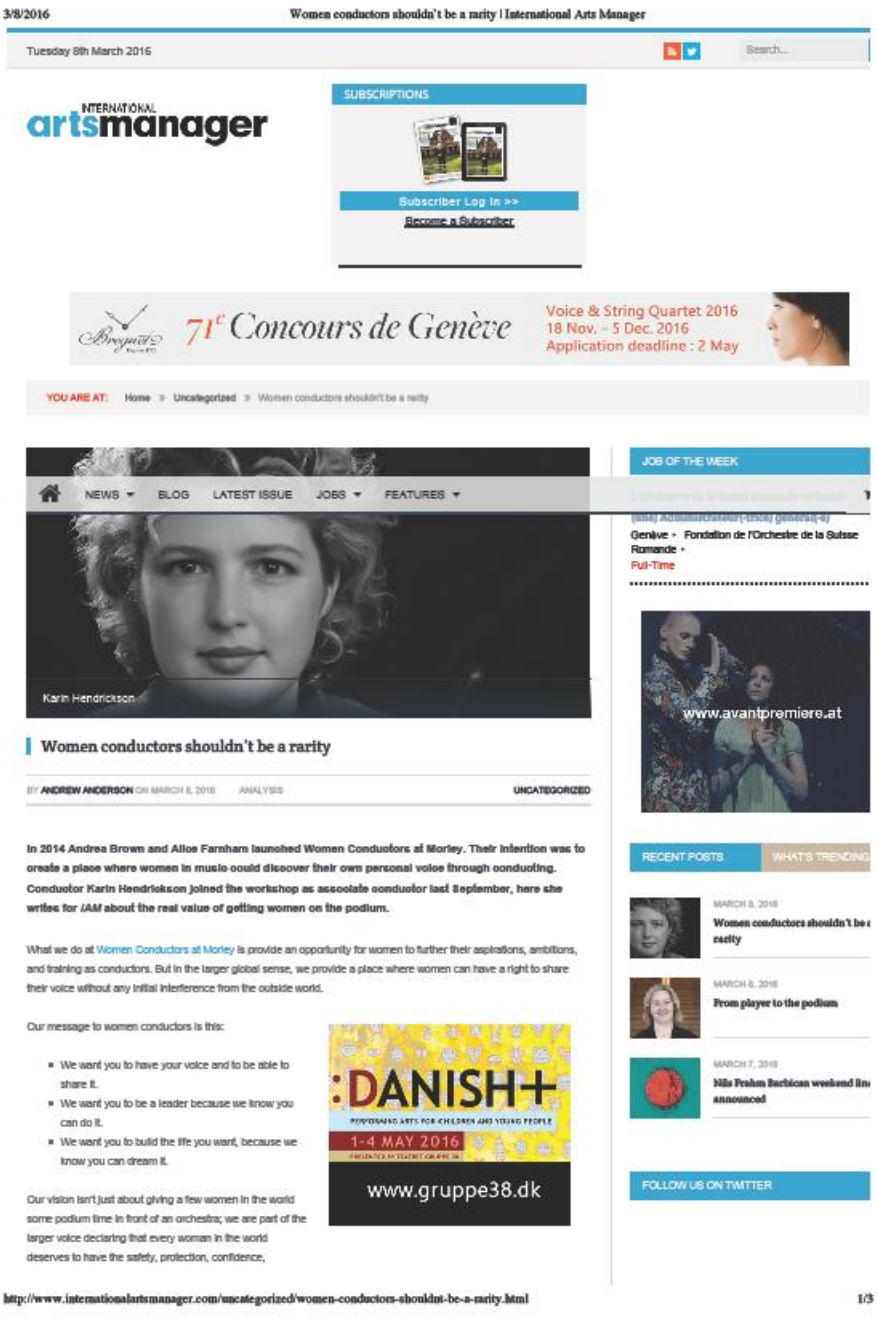

3/8/2016 Women conductors shouldn't be a rarity | International Arts Manager

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Women conductors shouldn't be a rarity

BY ANDREW ANDERSON ON MARCH 8, 2016 ANALYSIS UNCATEGORIZED

In 2014 Andrea Brown and Alice Farnham launched Women Conductors at Morley. Their intention was to create a place where women in music could discover their own personal voice through conducting. Conductor Karin Hendrickson joined the workshop as associate conductor last September, here she writes for IAM about the real value of getting women on the podium.

What we do at Women Conductors at Morley is provide an opportunity for women to further their aspirations, ambitions, and training as conductors. But in the larger global sense, we provide a place where women can have a right to share their voice without any initial interference from the outside world.

Our message to women conductors is this:

- We want you to have your voice and to be able to share it.
- We want you to be a leader because we know you can do it.
- We want you to build the life you want, because we know you can dream it.

:DANISH+ PERFORMING ARTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 1-4 MAY 2016 www.gruppe38.dk

Our vision isn't just about giving a few women in the world some podium time in front of an orchestra; we are part of the larger voice declaring that every woman in the world deserves to have the safety, protection, confidence,

http://www.internationalartsmanager.com/uncategorized/women-conductors-shouldnt-be-a-rarity.html 1/3

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Friendly overtures

Sir,

Here at Morley College we can just about see that Lunchtime O'Boulez might not quite appreciate the subtleties of an institution as complex and all embracing as ours (Music and Musicians, No.1361). Founded in the 1880s as the "Morley Memorial College for Working Men and Women", we were the first of our kind to admit women on an equal footing. Our course giving young women musicians the confidence to consider conducting as a possible career – just one of nearly three thousand courses we offer – is part of our " commitment to gender and class equality", hardly an example of us acting contrary to our founding principles. Perhaps Lunchtime would like to sign up for our male ballet class to see how we redress imbalances in other areas.

Morley's Conducting Course is led by Alice Farnham, who recently conducted Rape of Lucretia at the Marinsky Theatre and has been Musical Director of Welsh National Youth Opera, and includes a masterclass with the Royal Academy of Music's Head of Conducting, Sian Edwards... and there are plenty of men playing and tutoring too. And while Lunchtime may not like the idea of a women only course – this is not a view shared by the country's leading conservatoires who have all been extremely pleased to nominate students to take part.

But why does O'Boulez go further and become misleading: Jude Kelly is certainly no conductor, but her contribution to the course is to give a keynote address on "Women and Leadership", something for which she is eminently well qualified. And the Southbank has confirmed for us that she did not, in fact, make the speech which O'Boulez claimed made the VPO so "uncomfortable". We assume this inaccuracy, which makes O'Boulez well placed to pronounce on what is "dodgy", was simply the product of too good a lunch.

Morley boasts a popular and well attended Introduction to Journalism: a solid two hours every week covering the basic principles, a course from which it would appear Lunchtime might benefit. I am sure we could squeeze him in.

Best wishes,
ANDREA BROWN,
Director of Music, CAM for Drama,
Morley College, London, E1.

