

# Movers



Royal Conservatoire  
*of Scotland*

and  
Shakers

# Movers



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*of Scotland*

# and Shakers

**Developing Enterprising Artists,  
Makers and Technicians**

**We are the music makers  
 We are the dreamers of dreams,  
 Wandering by lone sea-breakers  
 And sitting by desolate streams;  
 World losers and world forsakers,  
 On whom the pale moon gleams:  
 Yet we are the movers and shakers  
 Of the world for ever, it seems.**

*Extract from Ode by Arthur O'Shaughnessy, 1873*

# Hello

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is a distinctive place. We are a national institution and the only place in Europe where students can study all of the performing and production arts. We offer a ground-breaking and widely-acclaimed curriculum which actively encourages trans-disciplinary collaboration, as well as disciplinary excellence.

We have around 1100 students pursuing degrees at the Royal Conservatoire and have been ranked in the world's top 3 for performing arts education in the 2017 QS World Rankings, as well as being number one in Scotland for graduate employability (HESA 14/15), endorsing our status as a national and international centre of excellence for the performing arts.

As Scotland's national conservatoire we are committed to attracting and nurturing the best Scottish and international creative talent, as well as to breaking down barriers and challenging boundaries. We work hard to develop strong existing and innovative new creative partnerships at local, national and international level to advance the experience and knowledge of our students.

We continue to be fully focused on developing our students as the engaged, creative and highly-employable artistic community of tomorrow for Scotland and the world.

# Developing

The performing artists, filmmakers, designers, composers and technicians that graduate from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) join an industry of innovative self-starters, establishing careers in competitive fields with high levels of risk and uncertainty. Capacities for enterprise and career longevity are essential ingredients in their future success, resilience and long-term health.

Our goal in this publication is both to learn from and share the rich experience within the institution and among those who have studied here, and stimulate new dialogues and ideas around enhancing approaches to enterprise development for the future.

In conversations with staff, we considered the range and variety of ways that students are supported to develop their enterprise skills as part of their experience at the Royal Conservatoire.

The breadth and diversity of programmes and the widely varying artistic and career goals of the students, means that a one size fits all approach could not possibly facilitate or support the wide-ranging aims and ambitions of the students.

However, there are common themes and approaches across the programmes and opportunities for new and continuing conversations about the role that enterprise plays in RCS life.

We invited 12 graduates, who have been out in the world making their work for some time, to reflect on their own models of practice and share them with us. We asked them to consider the key moments from their education that set them on their current path.

These short accounts offer a rich portrait of how working artists define their work and make (and re-make) their models as part of building sustainable careers and businesses. The stories also highlight the importance of the Royal Conservatoire's role in guiding and empowering students to successfully navigate these challenges.

The time, commitment and dogged determination to make their work happen, demonstrates natural aptitudes for enterprise and endeavour. These case studies exhibit the graduates' openness to new experiences, their willingness to collaborate in new settings and their thirst for continuous learning. The graduates share moments of insecurity and doubt, and offer a pragmatic view of tasks such as networking, managing time, project planning and raising money. They also highlight the critical importance of emotional and social intelligence, the need to foster the skills and behaviours required to build and sustain long term professional relationships, as well as the need to develop the grit and resilience to keep going when times are hard.

This publication has been created as part of the Royal Conservatoire's commitment to *Making It Happen*, Universities Scotland's cross-institution statement of agreement to strengthen and develop the higher education enterprise agenda and highlight the important role that the sector has in making Scotland a world-leading entrepreneurial and enterprising nation.

The case studies demonstrate potential for the Royal Conservatoire's enterprising graduates to share their insights with those in other sectors, highlighting, as they do, the power of creativity and imagination - creating something from nothing, making things happen and realising a vision. The stories highlight strong value systems and capacities to influence change and transformation. There is also much to learn from our graduates in terms of managing risk and their remarkable ability to continuously reinvent work, models and structures as personal, professional and environmental factors evolve.

**We are so grateful for their generosity in sharing these stories with us.**

We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions and insights of Royal Conservatoire staff: **Dr Colin Broom, Joyce Deans, Professor Joshua Dickson, Ros Maddison, Adam McIlwaine, Jamie Mackay, Steve Macluskie, Professor Andrew Panton, Deborah Richardson-Webb, Dr Marlisa Ross, Dr Diana Salazar and Dr Marc Silberschatz.**

# 21st Century Artists

## Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Curriculum Reform

The Royal Conservatoire adopts a range of approaches to the learning and teaching of enterprise and employability, within the Academic Framework that was the outcome of comprehensive Curriculum Reform completed in 2011.

Approaches to the development of entrepreneurship skills and capacities are designed to follow a tight-loose structure - working towards clear shared goals across the institution, but loose enough so that each art form and programme can adopt these in the way that is sensitive to professional practice and industry standards.

- **We expose students to the widest possible range of perspectives in the arts.**
- **We encourage students to challenge and question their underlying beliefs and assumptions.**
- **We assist students to develop a capacity for tolerating ambiguity, complexity and risk.**
- **We develop programmes to provide our graduates with the knowledge, skills and understanding required for sustainable lives and livings.**
- **We give students the opportunity to engage in work-based learning.**
- **We provide students with clear statements of anticipated entrepreneurial skill outcomes.**
- **We engage artists from a wide range of backgrounds in student learning wherever possible.\***

## Graduate attributes

Graduate attributes capture the potential range of specialist abilities, personal qualities and skills gained through study at RCS. Our graduates are specialist arts practitioners and generally highly skilled, effective and confident people. Our graduate attributes firstly encapsulate our curriculum principles, and then develop those principles in the context of the wide range of transferable skills which are required in the course of the unique educational experience offered by RCS.

## The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland graduate...\*

**is an excellent and reflective arts practitioner** and leads, creates, achieves and innovates. Our graduates understand that the highest level of risk and daring offers the greatest potential for achievement and fulfilment.

### **has the creative attitudes and skills needed for collaborative learning**

and has sophisticated skills in leading, building and working in teams. As adaptable and confident people, our graduates are used to taking risks and working positively with ambiguity and unpredictability.

### **takes responsibility for managing and evaluating their own learning**

and is resourceful, independent and effective in their approach to managing their life and work.

### **has insight into a diversity of artistic fields and experience of what is required to succeed in their individual arts practice**

and can respond quickly to a fast changing and dynamic world. RCS graduates have a professionally-orientated, entrepreneurial outlook and respond positively to new opportunities and challenges.

### **uses theoretical understanding to inform practice and practice to inform theory**

and combines sophisticated aesthetic and emotional intelligence, integrity and insight with the ability to think analytically and critically.

### **makes a contribution in the world, as an artist, educator, advocate and active citizen**

and uses highly developed skills to communicate a profound appreciation of how their artistic discipline connects with the real world.

\* RCS Academic Framework 2011

**“...we often talk about giving students a map to understand their context and chart their course, but really what they need is a compass, for vision and direction and to find their true north. Then they can create their own maps...”**

***Dr Marc Silberschatz***

### Routes to Sustainable Success

The skills and capacities that students need in order to sustain viable careers in the performing and production arts are central to each programme at the Royal Conservatoire. There are common approaches taken to enterprise skills development across RCS programmes though the timing of the interventions, and particular areas of emphasis vary. In most programmes, the principles of enterprise are embedded into wider programme design and delivered through a variety of routes and at different points in the academic year. Enterprise learning at the Royal Conservatoire is therefore rooted in industry context, addressing industry expectations, technological developments, professional standards and intrinsically linked with core arts and technical study. In its students, the Royal Conservatoire aims to develop pioneers who will make their own maps and models.

Many of the programmes take a studio-type approach to enterprise skills, combining live projects, placements with industry and projects in community and industry settings, where students learn by doing. Discussions with programme staff and the graduates who contributed to our case studies suggest that these experiences in live settings are strongly valued by students and highlighted by graduates when they reflect on their experience at the Royal Conservatoire. Many programme leaders commented on the high levels of satisfaction that arise out of these experiences, as well as their role in developing relationships and building networks at an early stage. The opportunity to grapple with real challenges in a live setting is pivotal to students' learning.

### Industry partnerships

The Royal Conservatoire offers students access to high-level industry partners as part of their educational experience. These relationships further facilitate the development of freelance skills through hands-on learning and access to professional networks.

Partnerships include those with the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Opera, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Red Note, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, National Theatre of Scotland, Playwrights' Studio Scotland, Solar Bear Theatre Company, Dundee Repertory Theatre, Citizens Theatre, Scottish Ensemble, Bard in the Botanics**, and many many more.

Many of the Royal Conservatoire's programmes offer a combination of enterprise and employability skills, such as marketing and promotion, budgeting, self-employment, tax and HMRC, setting up a website, developing CVs, and presentation skills. These sessions are usually delivered directly by programme staff and often also involve guest speakers from industry, masterclasses, and workshops. This creates an environment where students learn some practical self-employment and business start-up skills, as well as how to build networks and audiences for their work. In some cases, students are able to begin to explore their professional brand while doing some blue sky business planning and futures thinking - all within their programme.

Most programmes centre around professional outcomes - usually performances. Some take modules into the field - such as the Bachelor of Music's Music in Society module, MA Classical and Contemporary Text's On the Verge Festival, and BA Contemporary Performance Practice's Into the New Festival. In the School of Drama, Dance, Production and Film, an end of year industry showcase contributes further opportunities to engage with industry.

Across the Royal Conservatoire, the much-admired Bridge Week provides a chance for students to collaborate and create something new together. Bridge Week provides sought-after preparation and performance spaces for R&D and access to an audience, all within the space of an intense week. In addition to space, students are given technical expertise, resources and a small budget, and most importantly the freedom to get on and make something. The students who get involved in Bridge Week see it as a highly valued opportunity. A further highlight for some students is the opportunity to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe with a range of offers produced and led by RCS.

The depth of art form and industry expertise within the institution means that the various approaches to the enterprise and employability modules are grounded in reality and continually updated.

## MA Classical and Contemporary Text Class of 2010

### How would you describe your practice?

I introduce myself as 'a performer and a producer.' If I think I've got the time to say more then it becomes 'a performer, a producer, and many other things depending on what the project requires'. My tax return says 'Theatre Maker'.

I also do lots of work facilitating exchange projects for students in theatre training.

My particular interest at present is best summed up in the mission statement of my company, Rootstock: "a focus on international co-production in live theatre, both at the professional and educational level".

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

Relentless resilience. There are a select few ultra-talented individuals for whom all the pieces fall into place straight away, but for the vast majority of us, this is an industry of incessant knockbacks. Far more than I think recent graduates realise, the difference between successful career theatre artists and those that leave the industry is very little to do with talent or ability, and almost entirely due to the way we recover from setbacks. It means that often the most important attribute for a self-starter is not a skill per se but an all-consuming passion.

Also being a pleasant human. In Scotland the theatre community is tiny and we work too many hours together for too little pay to make it worth having unpleasant co-workers. It's vital to be the kind of person others enjoy working with.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (or RSAMD when I was a student) does a fantastic job of helping students to develop a really thorough and critical understanding of their identity as artists and as people. I think this is almost more important than a focus on any particular skill. It allowed me to see how the many different hats I wear are all part of a single artistic identity, which gave me the confidence not to try to be just one thing or another. Getting that right was really important in making sure I stay connected to my own version of that all-consuming passion which I think is necessary to thrive in this industry.

It did take a while following graduation for all that learning to settle into place and for me to become aware of the understanding I had developed as a student, but I think in my case, that extra distance provided even more clarity. So current graduates needn't panic - the sense of perspective will come with time!

**“RCS does a fantastic job of helping students to develop a really thorough and critical understanding of their identity as artists and as people.”**

**Alex**  
**Performer and Producer**

Artist

**What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?**

It was an accident really (as all the best things usually are). Before coming to RCS I'd done a double degree as an actor and a technician/designer at Pepperdine University in California. While I was at RCS, Cathy Thomas-Grant, the head of my courses from Pepperdine, asked for my thoughts on doing a study abroad trip with her students in Scotland.

I arranged some initial introductions to people who knew the territory much better than me. The response was really positive and so I was hired to arrange introductions and assist on research for Cathy's month-long recce trip to Scotland the following year. By the end of that trip it was a foregone conclusion that I was going to help run the eventual exchange project. At that point people started calling me "the producer" and so I decided I'd better figure out what exactly a producer does. That was in the summer of 2011.

I spent the next year working part-time to put the project together, focusing mostly on getting all the right practitioners involved. I saw it as an arm's-length job working for a former teacher to pay the bills and keep my name fresh in everyone's minds while I worked unpaid on my own projects. By the time we finished that first Pepperdine-Scotland exchange in 2012, though, it became clear to me that this had always been part of my core artistic identity and I just hadn't been aware of it. Since then I've been clear about my multifaceted but unique identity as an artist and it has really helped me thrive. I am happier now than I have been at any other point in my adult life.

**What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?**

I've learned that every single moment in my entire life where I found myself thinking, "I'll never need to know this", I was wrong - I needed to know it at some point. Or at the very least, that knowledge has saved me a lot of money.

If it's your project then you work the most and get paid the least of anyone involved. Your colleagues in the freelance community are your co-workers even when you aren't working on a project together. You'll end up sending work to each other, advising each other and venting frustrations together. Your presence in their lives is as important to them as theirs is to you, so don't be afraid to reach out to them.

I always thought that working for myself or running a company would require lots of discipline to make sure I worked enough hours. Over the last couple of years I've found that a good working hours discipline is essential for the opposite reason: it's a constant battle to make sure I stop work and close the computer at the end of the day. The better I am at forcing myself to stop and take time off, the happier, more efficient, and better I am at my job.

**Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?**

I wouldn't say a turning point so much as turning people. There were several seasoned professionals with whom I worked with during training and with whom I have kept ongoing professional relationships. They are mentors and colleagues to this day, and I think they were absolutely vital in helping guide me to the place I'm at now. I owe pretty much my whole career to them.

These include playwright Peter Arnott who was under commission to the programme; Julie Ellen, then director of Playwrights' Studio Scotland; and playwright Nicola McCartney, also under commission to the programme. Peter and Julie are now also Rootstock board members.

**What's the best advice you have ever received?**

Peter facilitates lots of script development for other writers and is really great at directing play readings. I once asked him if he had any ambition to further develop the directing side of his career/profile. He said, "Here's my philosophy on directing: I'll do it if we can't get anyone better." It was partly a joke, but I've adapted it into a guiding principle behind just about every project I ever put together; every single little job on a project that I can possibly imagine is my responsibility until we find someone better. And if we do have the resources and contacts to get someone better but I'm still reluctant to give up that part of the project, then it forces me to examine whether it is about my artistic vision or about my own ego. If it's the former then our 'someone better' isn't actually better, but if it's the latter then it's time for me to let go and trust someone else.

Also the following are my words but are a distillation of years of advice from various different people: "There are no rules, only precedents, but precedents are there for a reason." The implication being that it's usually safe and efficient to follow precedent, but no 'rule' is completely off limits from being broken, revised, or replaced, as long as you take the time to work out why it was there in the first place and are sure that breaking or changing it is actually an improvement.

**“Right now I am on the cusp of making my entire living from my arts practice – that would be a huge success in the eyes of my younger self.”**

**Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?**

Undoubtedly my business skills have improved. These days I get my help and advice from my colleagues, my board of directors, and other mentors and supporters. Usually I know someone specific that will know the answer, but when I don't it's a pretty safe bet that a post on Facebook will return at least a useful lead.

In terms of official bodies for support for early career freelancers in Scotland who maybe don't have my professional network, I'd say to find out everything you can about Playwrights' Studio Scotland, the Federation of Scottish Theatre, Equity (the Glasgow office), the Scottish Society of Playwrights, and especially the Cultural Enterprise Office. Also your accountant often has far more helpful input than you might be aware of until you ask. And don't be shy to ask a company or individual who you think might be slightly out of reach - nobody is an island and everyone had help at some point, so everyone is willing to pay that forward in some way.

**What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?**

It's really easy to do one or the other straight away after graduation, but not both, and certainly not both at the same time. Getting to the point where the two are related is a gradual process. I think it's much easier to focus on the art first and add the money later than to try to do it the other way round. Everyone I know who went for money first has since left the arts industry.

I also heard Candice Edmunds (Artistic Director, Vox Motus) say side jobs that are marginally related to your art are exciting at first, but after a while you learn that they tax your creative energy without actually being fulfilling. This really resonated with me; sometimes the mindless side jobs are the best ones.

In every project there's always a two-way sacrifice of money for artistry and of artistry for money. I have regretted sacrificing too much art in favour of money, but I have never regretted sacrificing too much money in favour of the art.

**What does innovation mean to you?**

Innovation to me is made up of two layers: originality and application. Particularly when innovation comes out of the process of trying to solve a problem, I think these two layers often form simultaneously, which tricks us into thinking that originality and innovation are the same thing. Then when we have an original idea we automatically assume it is innovative and are then disappointed when we share it and aren't universally acclaimed for our brilliance.

We forget the second layer - that second layer is a process of critical reflection where we must figure out what new thing our original idea makes possible - something beyond the original idea itself - what is the full extent of what we can do with this idea that we couldn't do before? In the case of Pepperdine-Scotland, it's not enough just to have a Scottish playwright write for American drama students; the play only becomes innovative when it is greater than the sum of its parts. The question we ask in the commissioning process is: "what's the ONE thing that THIS playwright and THESE performers are better equipped to do than anyone else in the world?" When we get that right it is amazing what we manage to achieve.

**What does success look like?**

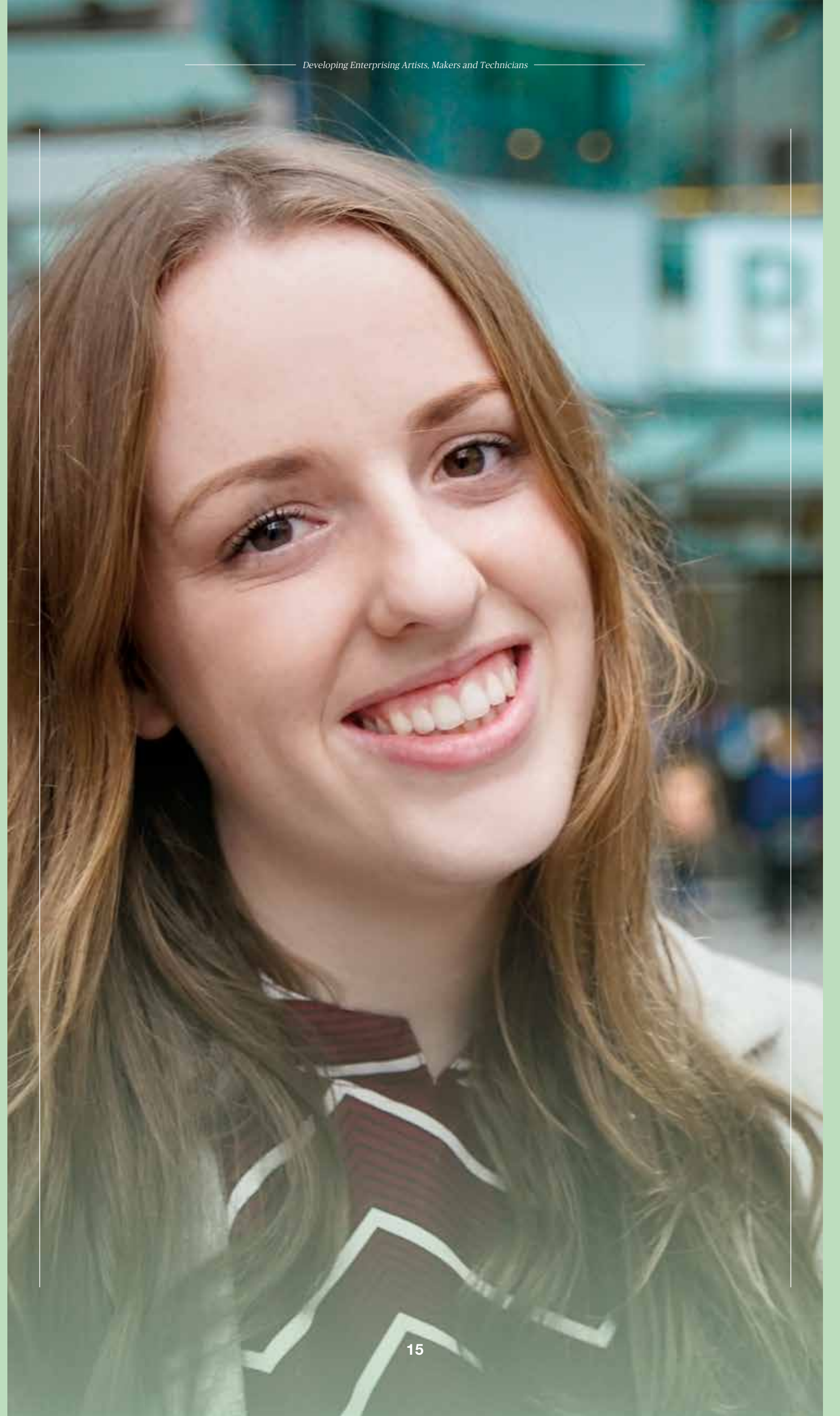
Right now I am on the cusp of making my entire living from my arts practice - that would be a huge success in the eyes of my younger self. For that I am extremely grateful - it makes me one of the most privileged people in the world. It is also an opportunity to define the next step in success.

At the moment I think the next level of success would be the freedom to decide what I want to work on based exclusively on artistic and personal sensibilities. It would be the freedom to say 'no' to a project or job without fear of the professional or financial consequences. It would be the knowledge that every time I say 'yes' it is exclusively because of my enthusiastic artistic interest in the project.

**“Your colleagues in the freelance community are your co-workers even when you aren't working on a project together ... Your presence in their lives is as important to them as theirs is to you, so don't be afraid to reach out to them.”**

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**Children's Television  
Producer**





## BA Digital Film and TV Class of 2014

### How would you describe your practice?

I am a Children's Television Producer, producing and developing both broadcast and online content for teenagers and young adults. I'm often asked what a producer actually does, and in all honesty, no day is ever the same.

I am a freelancer, currently working on a long-term contract with a company called Strawberry Blond, producing CBBC's *The Playlist*. I'm in charge of overseeing the entire production, from writing and developing the script and ideas, to running all logistics of the show, overseeing post-production and ensuring the show is both compliant and relevant for our child audience. As well as running *The Playlist*, I'm also heavily involved in the development and research of new shows - both for children's TV and other genres.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

I think one of the best things I ever heard was "Good things don't come to people who wait - they come to people who go out and get them" and I think that's very true. As a self-starter in any field you must have the ambition to reach where you want to be and the drive to push yourself there - sitting around and waiting doesn't get you anywhere. Patience is important but the "go get 'em" attitude is what will throw you over that finishing line.

Getting your name out there as the next big thing. Doing free gigs, doing favours. Showing everyone that you're the person they want to be working with; you're the person with the big ideas and no one else will come close to you. I think it's key to be able to sell yourself so you have to believe in yourself first before others will. This doesn't require an ego, just a pinch of confidence and self-belief.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

Unlike most other educational establishments, the close-knit class structure at RCS helps create healthy competition amongst your peers. From day one we were competing for script commissions and crewing positions. We were encouraged to make and make and make; to develop our skills and become the most sought after crew member that everyone wanted to work with. That push to be the best you can be was something I think we all took into the industry with us, and it's that hunger for success that's driven me to be the best practitioner I can be.

**“Good things don't come to people who wait – they come to people who go out and get them.”**

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

After graduation, I suffered from what many people have, the graduation fear, and shied away from film and TV. I did a few runner jobs here and there before doing bits of teaching and then doing some theatre lighting during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. After becoming quite ill, I was told that I needed to take some time off to rest - and I genuinely think this was the best advice I could have been given.

The months out gave me time to reassess exactly what I wanted to do. I think it's easy to keep doing jobs that are kind of what you want to do because its money and you're not in a position to say no as a young self-starter. But it's important to take a step back and make sure you're doing what you want to do. Not long after this, a friend in London told me about a position opening up in children's TV (which had always been my end goal). I met with the executive producer and the rest is history. It's only now that I realise how much I actually developed as a practitioner at RCS and that I'm thankful not to have taken runner positions straight out of school.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

I think the most important lesson I've learned as a freelancer is that it doesn't need to be a life of jumping from job to job. Originally, I assumed it would be a day here, a day there and a day of counting up the pennies to scrape together rent money. However, I've found that there are long-term gigs for freelancers that allow a lot more of a structured life. That's not to say that there's always stability. I've also found how important it is to never take security for granted and to be responsible with the money you earn, when you earn it.

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

I never had a clear turning point really ... despite a brief period of wanting to be a vet (and then realising I'd need to take the three sciences at school) I always knew I wanted to do something creative and for a long time I thought that was editing. However, our first ever project at RCS made me do a bit of a U-turn when I offered to take on the role of producer to do something a little different. I quickly discovered that production gave me a balance of creativity and organisation that other areas lacked - and it was something I seemed to be fairly good at. After that first project, I pretty much turned my back on editing. It was key to my development that I got to try out a variety of different roles while at RCS to find my feet; without that opportunity I would probably have closed the door on editing and the industry a long time ago.

### What's the best advice you have ever received?

"Don't do something because someone once told you that you were good at it - do something you love and be grateful if you're good at that." Paddy Higson (*Magdalene Sisters*, *Monarch of the Glen*) told me this during my graduation crisis of 2014. I went through a stage where I wanted to shut the door on film and TV, feeling my creative spark had died but I felt a lot of pressure to continue. It's important to know your limits, and not push yourself to the point where you fall out of love with your art. As soon as that happens, it becomes a chore and suddenly it's something you're merely good at, but not what you want to do.

### Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?

Working in the production department has allowed me to develop my business skills quickly. I work with budgets daily and ensure that the shows I'm developing work within budget and make a profit. A huge part of my job is to see shows get commissioned and therefore, create more work (and, of course, income) for myself. I'm lucky to have senior executives that I work with to advise me and the advice given at work transfers neatly over to my personal life. Although I'm still near the bottom of the learning curve when it comes to running a business, I'm grateful to have knowledgeable peers running successful production companies on hand to advise.

### What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?

Ultimately, the harsh truth is that we live in a world where money must come first. We have rent to pay, student loans to pay off (!) and a life to live. But that doesn't mean it has to come into conflict with our art. I consider myself lucky to be earning by doing the thing I love. Every day I get to make 'art' that I'm proud of and somehow I'm getting paid for it. However, there was a time where I was jumping between jobs, not making anything I wanted to make, nor that I was proud of, and that was a struggle. I think it's important to find a balance in earning enough to live but being happy with who you are, where you are and what you do. If you really believe in your art, you'll always find a way to bring it to life - even if that means putting aside pennies each month until you can do it yourself.

### What does innovation mean to you?

Innovation is a word I hear almost daily in children's TV. With such a tech-savvy audience it's key to keep up and always be one step ahead of the game. This doesn't necessarily mean filming television shows on iPhones and claiming it's 'brand-new-never-seen-before' but it does mean being creative and thinking of new ways to stay in touch with the audience. Whether you make art as a means to get a message out or to entertain an audience, you want to ensure that the content you're creating is the freshest and the most interesting to digest. For me, innovation is a way to stay ahead of the game; you want to be the name dropped in future documentaries as the face that changed television as we know it.

### What does success look like?

Success is in the eye of the beholder. I very much believe that we define our own success. During my first year at RCS, my kitchen window looked out over to the BBC at Pacific Quay. I remember looking out there and thinking "one day, I'll work for them". Then when my first pay cheque from BBC Scotland came through for some running work on *River City* a year later I thought, "I'd better up my game". I think a lot of people who work in the arts aim high - I know I certainly do - so it's difficult to ever look at yourself as successful. I'm very grateful for where I am.

Every day I turn up to work at BBC New Broadcasting House to write and produce for CBBC - literally my dream job since I was 18 - and yet I crave to do more. I think it's important to be able to look at yourself and be proud of where you are and the success you have achieved so far, but I think it's also important to have that little voice in the back of your head pushing you to keep going further and further. But success doesn't need to be career-driven. If one day I have a family of my own, I know I'll have led a successful life. Success is knowing when you are satisfied in your life, and being happy with that.

**“Success is in the eye of the beholder. I very much believe that we define our own success.”**

# Wattheinside

## Composer and Concert Producer

### MMus Composition *Class of 2012*

#### How would you describe your practice?

My practice is a twofold one: I am a composer and concert producer. As a composer, I write music for film, TV and concerts, but concert music is my main area of interest. I'd describe my music as contemporary classical, often mixing classical instruments and compositional techniques with live electronics. One of my friends has described it as 'spectral minimalism' which fits the way I think about my composition. My writing is often quite collaborative, working with individual players or groups of players over an extended period of time; this allows the development of the electronic element. It seems my music falls slightly between the gaps in radio programming, as it has been broadcast on both 6 Music and Radio 3 Late Junction. I also work with other art forms. I've created an installation with Dominika Mayovich using motion sensors to allow the audience to trigger and manipulate various sound design elements linked to paintings by Dominika, and I'm currently working with Marisa Zanotti to create a film/installation with Magnetic North.

As a concert producer, I put on concerts of music that interest me mainly in informal spaces. I've recently started to commission other composers as well.



**“Be curious. Absorb as much as you can in all art forms. Read, listen, and watch everything - it can all feed into what you are doing.”**

**From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?**

I've found a lot of my opportunities have involved being in the right place at the right time, but you need to be able to put yourself in those situations in the first place. Being around and constantly going to things; not just concerts and networking events but plays, screenings, poetry readings or gallery openings. You get to meet many different people and sometimes you might meet one of them at the right time to work. But don't always pitch to the first person you meet - let relationships grow organically. Be interested.

Apply to everything and say yes to everything, at least for a while. It took me two years of constant applications after graduation to get anything substantial, and even now I send off more than 50 applications a year for funding, opportunity calls for scores and calls for commissions and maybe get less than 10%. Learn what funders want and write the application tailored to their aims. Have staying power and the ability to shrug off being told no (sometimes many, many, many times). Work out why you have been told “no” and improve from that or work out a different person to ask or a different way to ask it. And, linked to that, learn from your failures. The only way I learned what good concert programming entailed was when I put on an awfully programmed concert.

Be curious. Absorb as much as you can in all art forms. Read, listen, and watch everything - it can all feed into what you are doing. Learn how to create and manage budgets, especially if you are going to run your own projects. Learn what professional fees are expected, build in contingency and, importantly, make sure you budget to pay yourself at the end. No matter how passionate you are about a project you still need to pay the rent and eat.

Be realistic. Don't expect to be commissioned by an orchestra straight out of music college. It's good to aim high but be prepared for the long game. Learn how to use social media professionally and try and keep your professional persona separate from your personal one.

**How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?**

At RCS I took the arts admin elective during my Masters. This gave me a valuable insight into project management and administration, how to contact the press, how projects are developed and funded, writing funding applications, budget management and a lot of other things that have been important for the development of my business since graduating. There was also a lot of emphasis on building a sustainable portfolio career. From a compositional point of view, the composition staff always stressed how hard it is to make a living as a composer, while teaching the tools and giving the support and direction to start to make that happen. I didn't leave RCS with any false impressions of the career I was getting into. I knew it was going to be hard.

**What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?**

I have played the euphonium since I was eight but during my GCSEs I became more engaged with writing music and became aware that composers weren't just long-dead guys.

During my A levels I applied to study law but then decided I wanted to be a composer. I changed my UCAS application to music degrees and was accepted to Queen's University Belfast (QUB) where I immersed myself in the world of new music.

I moved to Glasgow to continue my studies at RCS but with the aim of trying to meet 'the right people' while still studying so I would have a bit of a running start once I completed my Masters. During my undergraduate music degree at QUB I realised there weren't that many performance opportunities for my music. I decided to start putting on a concert each term, called Queen's Composers Concerts, of music by QUB composers performed by students and staff.

I continued this idea when I moved to Glasgow through Said Ensemble, with Jason Staddon, programming music in pubs, and Edit-Point, with Timothy Cooper, programming electroacoustic music. Edit-Point was more of a traditional concert programme with established composers and a few new pieces whereas Said Ensemble was just new. My current project The Night With... grew out of what I learned from both projects in terms of project management, fund raising and concert programming.

There was never really a first step to get me where I am now; it was more a large number of things adding up.

**What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?**

This year I have learned the need to take time off and delegate. There was a period where I was involved with four different performance events (plus rehearsals) in 10 days in Dublin, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, and in one of them I was trying to be sound engineer and producer. It was too much. Once the events were over I came down with the flu and had to do pretty much nothing for two weeks. Learning to delegate and to take breaks is difficult, but it is something you need to do to sustain yourself. It's only when you push yourself too far do you realise why it is important to maintain a balance.

**Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?**

As I said above, there was no real turning point within my education, it was more a gradual realisation. The biggest turning point was two years after graduation; I hadn't had any kind of indication that I was on the right path, was working in a non-music job and everything I applied to had come back as a “no”. I was starting to think of packing in music and retraining - and then I received Creative Scotland funding to write a new piece, tour it, and record and release my album. That nod of confidence from someone external gave me a boost to keep going and continue on my path.

**What's the best advice you have ever received?**

Never give up your rights. As a composer, make sure you hold on to as much of your PRS money as possible. Be reliable. If you are reliable and consistent people will want to work with you. If you say you will be somewhere at a time do not be late. Sometimes things happen and deadlines are stretched or the trains are delayed, but make sure that is the exception rather than the rule.

**Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?**

Yes they have. I've taken advice from the Cultural Enterprise Office, the Musicians' Union and Creative Scotland, along with practical knowledge from people I know who run festivals and ensembles. I think it is important to build up a network of people you can pick up the phone to and ask “Have you experienced this? How did you get through it?”.

**What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?**

There is a tension being making art and making money but it is a tension that needs to be navigated. Sometimes I take on projects that aren't as artistically fulfilling because they are financially rewarding, but that means I can take on projects that aren't as financially rewarding but are artistically fulfilling. It is a balance, but in the end everyone needs to work out their own balance. One thing I fully believe is that you should always be paid for your work, and if it's a self-started project you should find a way either to raise funds to make it happen (for example through Creative Scotland) or find a way to monetise it once it is finished.

I've learned it is important to have different income streams and not rely on one thing completely. For me this is a mix of commission fees, project management fees, royalties, album sales and a little admin work for New Music Scotland. It's also very important to be aware of what money you are expecting to come in and have a buffer in case something falls through.

**What does innovation mean to you?**

Using existing things and doing something new with them or combining new and old. For example, taking a traditional concert format and putting it into a pub and making it three thirds rather than two halves to give it a more informal feel, like with The Night With... or combining traditional compositional techniques with new technology like with my instrument and electronics music, or with the Bedroom Community label and what is being called Indie Classical. Innovation doesn't have to be a massive leap it can simply be small developments that add up over time.

**What does success look like?**

That is a really hard question to answer. It's easier to see success in other people than work out what it looks like in yourself. I guess it's simply developing a sustainable career doing what you want to do and being able to make it happen. I think it is important to be able to accept successes as they come, and say thank you rather than strive for an ideal. If you strive for what you think is the idea of success you'll miss the good things along the way. Years ago my uncle told me that an overnight success is 10 years in the making - that seems important to remember.

In purely practical terms it's the ability to get people listening to my music and commissioning me and being able to put on engaging concerts that people come to, all while making a living.

**Matthew recently won the 'One to Watch' award at the Sunday Herald Culture Awards 2017.**

# Nic Green

## BA (Hons) Contemporary Performance Practice Class of 2005

### How would you describe your practice?

I am a performance maker working across the fields of live art, dance, participatory performance and sonics.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

I think it's really vital to be able to reflect thoroughly and critically when it comes to your work, your collaborations, and your processes. No one can do this for you and this is how the practice grows and matures and how the work progresses in quality. I have found I need to be flexible in terms of how I apply my skill set to be able to sustain myself. And learning to be a good collaborator, that will help.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

I do feel these are all approaches I practised and developed on the Contemporary Performance Practice programme. You do a lot of working together, reflecting on the work you make and also applying your creative tools to performance, educational and critical contexts.

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

Well they weren't conscious at the time, but I started small. I made small, scratch type pieces for no money, which grew into bigger things with support. In the end I ended up with a feminist trilogy which helped me find some agency in the early years. I didn't do any of that networking stuff. I still feel uncomfortable in those environments. Maybe I'm naïve but I think if the work is good it will do the talking for you.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

Trust the Process. Plan ahead a little bit if you can, but if you can't don't worry - something will come up. Work slowly on the things that matter and get good at doing the other things (all the stuff which is not art), quickly.  
You will know when you get there.  
Learn to be more yourself.  
Work with people you trust.  
Learn to disagree better.  
Practise dreaming.  
Invest in a hobby.  
Know when to stop.  
Speak your mind, but pick your battles.  
There comes a point when you need to start putting a value on what you do.  
Learn how to say no.  
Community is everything.  
You are never trapped.  
Author your structures.

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

If I'm honest I knew I wanted to do something like this from the start, but in my third year I made a piece where I carried a chair for forty days, everywhere I went. This was when I realised that creative action can change your whole perception, understanding and experience of yourself in the world. I haven't forgotten that.

# Performance Maker

“I realised that creative action can change your whole perception, understanding and experience of yourself in the world.”

**What's the best advice you have ever received?**

Turn up, tell the truth, don't be attached to the results.

**Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?**

Yes they have because they have had to. I wouldn't say I am particularly business minded but I do manage budgets and contracts - I employ people and I generally look after all kinds of relationships in my work, although these are not defined by economics. For me anything that is 'business' (and I probably wouldn't use that word!) is just a tool to help the art be made and have the best impact. If it ever became the other way round, it would probably be over for me. But if I need help on something, or if the project is of a certain scale, I work with a producer to manage things better.

**What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?**

It's OK if you need to get another job to pay for things. If you love making art you will find a way. I actually think it is OK sometimes to make things for nothing, but only if you are OK with it and someone else is not profiting substantially from your free labour. There are always pros and cons. Making something on your own time, in your own way, without cash support, comes without baggage and the freedom to explore without expectation. I find I make my best work in these cases as I have no worry. It helps me remember that performance is of the body, the voice, in the togetherness. You don't need to buy lots of shiny things to make a fantastic piece. You can achieve energy, quality, and have a great time with folk, with the very basic elements.

There came a point where I needed to make a better living from my work, which coincided with greater opportunities. I had to realise its value better and what a fair exchange for it would be. Each piece is different, but at times I need to hold fast when someone is trying to devalue what I have to offer. I find this uncomfortable, but it needs to be done.

Only you know what you have invested and what this is worth, what you need to survive doing the work you do and how much you are willing to give. This negotiation happens all the time and it's ok to say no when a situation is just plain unfair. If we do this more, the system will respond. And remember, lots of people working in the arts who are not artists, are on a salary. They rely on you. We have to work together to shift this balance of power.

**What does innovation mean to you?**

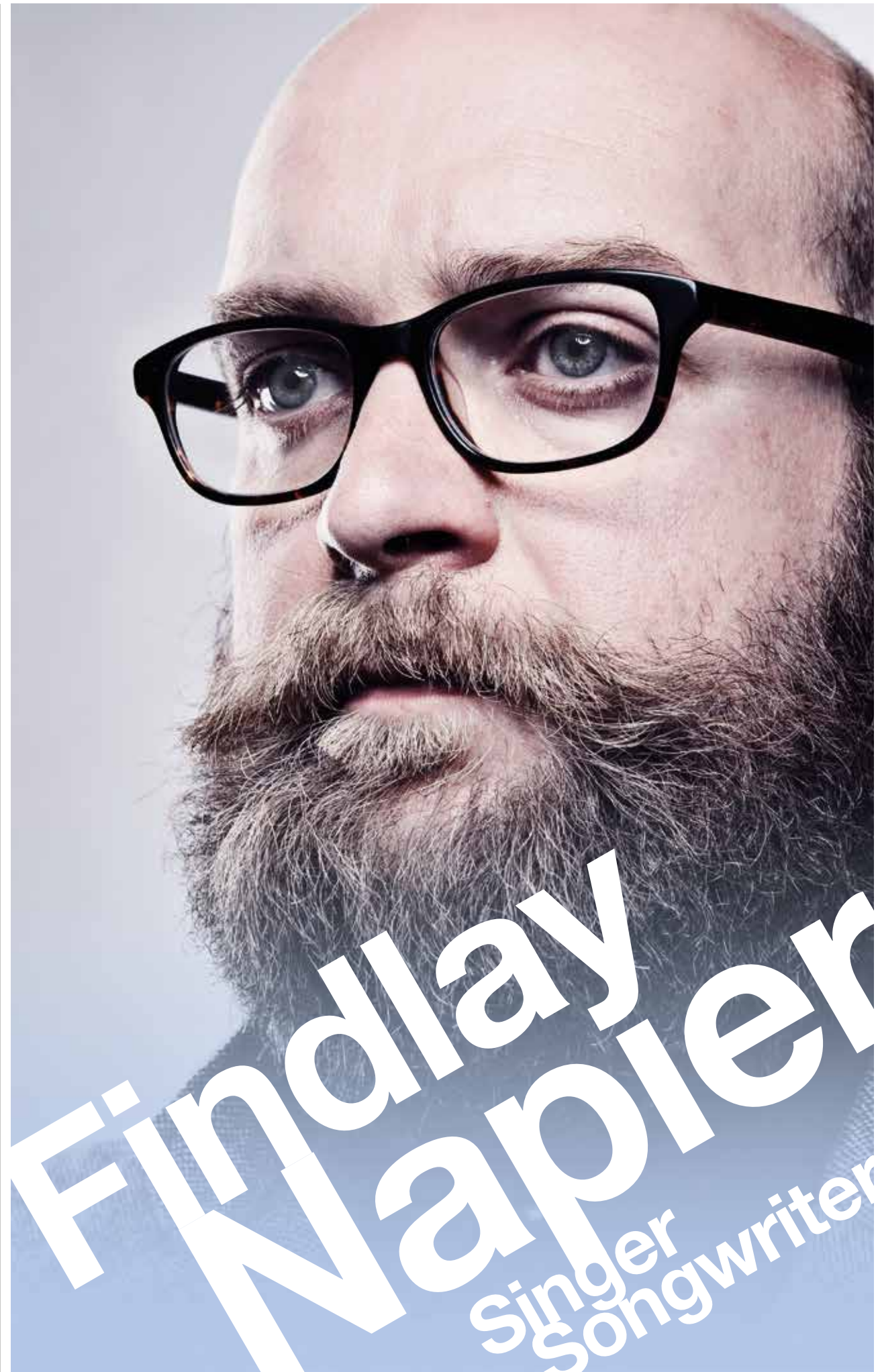
Someone doing their work, simply for the value and politics of making great performance.

**What does success look like?**

I think it is important for me to distinguish between the art and all the stuff around the art. Success for me is only about the art. Yes, it's great if you're supported, but you can be supported really well and end up with a piece you feel really disappointed with. You can be making no money from a process and arrive at a form which fills you with energy and renewed aliveness. This is what is about for me.

**“There came a point where I needed to make a better living from my work, which coincided with greater opportunities. I had to realise its value better and what a fair exchange for it would be.”**





## BA Scottish Music Class of 1999

### How would you describe your practice?

I am a singer-songwriter. I perform, write and record my own songs. I also teach songwriting. I set up and run Glasgow Songwriting Festival. I also run songwriting retreats with Karine Polwart at the Scottish Creative Writing Centre at Moniack Mhor.

Hazy Recollections, the concert series I run to promote and celebrate bands whose music meets at the edges of the folk, indie and country scenes, will be celebrating its 10th anniversary next year. I work with a lot of community education groups (e.g. Glasgow Fiddle Workshop, Feis Rois, Feisean nan Gaidheal) teaching Scots song, guitar, ukulele and group work.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

The ability to do more than one thing. I believe it's known as a portfolio career. I am a singer, a writer, a PR person, a producer, a teacher, a performer. Also time management!

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

If I'm honest RCS didn't really prepare me for that. I was dreadful at time management while I was there. I was generally a below average student. I think one of the things I learned to do well at RCS was to do research which has proved to be a big part of my career. Researching information and turning it into songs (see my VIP: Very Interesting Persons project).

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

After I left RCS I was invited to join a traditional Scottish folk band called Back of the Moon. BotM were quite successful: we toured extensively in UK, Europe and North America. We were nominated for and won quite a few awards and released three critically acclaimed albums. The whole time I was learning on the job how to tour manage, how to rehearse, how to promote a touring act and a CD release.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

A lot... see my previous responses! The main thing though is that time is precious. I strive to maintain a balance between working for financial reasons and work that is creatively satisfying.

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

I had a clear idea from an early age that I wanted to be a performing singer-songwriter. An amazing two-day performance masterclass with Jean Redpath at RCS in 1999 changed my attitude to being a performer and gave me a huge amount of confidence.

The main turning point regarding my work as a teacher came at a Trad Music Forum workshop with Stephen Deazley who recommended that I treat my teaching work with the same respect that I treat my performance work. I started enjoying my teaching more which in turn made me work even harder on my performance.

### What's the best advice you have ever received?

Always respect your audience. They have paid money to come and see you - they need to be entertained.

### Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?

Yes. Slowly but surely... I've taken loads of workshops and sought one-off advice from Musicians Union, Traditional Music Forum, Hands Up For Trad, Wide Days, etc.

### What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?

I think it's a balance rather than a tension. It is not easy. There is nothing wrong with being paid for your art. Michelangelo didn't paint the Sistine chapel for free! That creative part is often the part that keeps you sane. It's necessary too.

### What does innovation mean to you?

Coming up with new ways to use my skills to build my audience and/or income, e.g. Glasgow Songwriting Festival.

### What does success look like?

A solid touring network and a supportive audience that come to shows and buy merchandise. Also a lack of money problems. I don't mean rich. I mean owning your own home. Driving a car that isn't a banger. Being able to put food on the table.

# Sophie Ammann

Dancer  
Choreographer  
Administrator  
Translator

## BA Modern Ballet Class of 2012

### How would you describe your practice?

I'm a freelance dancer, choreographer, administrator and translator for several dance and theatre companies, which means I basically do a bit of everything that is required to bring a dance or theatre performance to the stage.

Being a freelance dancer nowadays implies wearing many different hats - there's about as much "creative" as "administrative" work involved. I use the quotation marks because sometimes it feels like you need to be extremely creative when it comes to writing funding applications, and explaining why your project stands out and deserves support. I train regularly by taking dance classes or simply going to the gym, and rehearse for different projects with different dance companies, as well as for the company I helped co-found, Junebug Company. Junebug Company works as a collective, meaning the other two co-founders (Rosanne Briens and Erin O'Reilly) and I are usually equally involved in the creative process: sometimes the three of us choreograph the pieces together, and other times it's just two or even one of us leading a creative project.

I also take care of the administrative side of things for the company, which includes finding performance dates, writing funding applications, inviting the press and programmers, and the whole financial side to running a company. Despite this demanding a lot of time and work, it's always so rewarding to be able to present a creation that you care deeply about to an audience. We've been able to perform in Switzerland, the UK, France and Serbia, which all seems a bit mad now when I think of where we started. I also joined Beaver Dam Company, directed by Edouard Hue, recently, to help with the administrative side of things. I mostly take care of the day-to-day administrative tasks, as well as contacting the press and doing the PR.

Having grown up in Switzerland and studied in Scotland, I'm lucky enough to speak English, French and German fluently, so I also work as a translator for theatre and dance companies.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

Every day is so different for me, and sometimes the biggest struggle is knowing which step to take next. You need to know what you want to get out of your work, and set yourself goals, otherwise it's hard to decide on your course as no one else will set it for you. No one is behind you really to push you to keep moving. I always set myself a bigger goal, then break it up into smaller, manageable tasks that will help get me there.

Also, it's extremely important to be curious about what is happening around you. I try to go and see as many different shows as I can - theatre, dance, or concerts - because it's always a fantastic source of inspiration, and also a great opportunity to meet different people and possibly collaborate with them further down the line. It's about being open and approachable, and passionate about what you do.

“Studying abroad in a setting like RCS helped me open up to many different art forms.”

It's quite daunting to put yourself and your work out there in the dance world: submitting funding applications, contacting important people, performing your work onstage - I'd have to say that one quality that is essential is fearlessness, or else such a strong need to dance and create that you manage to overcome your self-doubt.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

During my BA in Modern Ballet, we had several opportunities to develop our own work, which definitely helped. Thanks to my degree, I was also able to follow up with an MA in Cultural Management through Distance Learning with Northumbria University, which helped in setting up the company and our first projects. This meant I could keep dancing and creating whilst also completing my degree.

Most of all though, I think studying abroad in a setting like RCS also helped me open up to many different art forms, and appreciate just how lucky I was to be surrounded by talented people in different disciplines. It made me want to keep widening my horizon, and mesh dance with other practices. One of my biggest take-aways I think is seeing how far collaboration can bring you. The highlight of my time as a student was dancing the solo of Peter Darrell's *Rückert Songs* during the graduation performance, with Catriona Morison (BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2017) singing live and Seho Lee playing the piano.

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

After graduating from RCS, I spent two years with the Ballet Junior of Geneva, which is a junior company. We worked with several renowned choreographers there and were able to take part in the creative process. That's also where I met Erin O'Reilly and Rosanne Briens, and after creating a short piece together we decided to try and see where this collaboration could lead, and formed Junebug Company.

With Junebug Company, we started quite small at first, with short pieces that we performed in festivals in Switzerland and Glasgow, with the Cottier Dance Project. Having studied in Scotland, we also decided we wanted to give the Edinburgh Festival Fringe a go. We performed there in 2015 and 2016, collaborating with another Swiss company, WAVE: it was a tremendous amount of work, but it really helped in motivating us to take all the steps to make our company official. We also got a first taste of all the work it takes backstage to bring a show to the stage - the Fringe is complete madness, but the whole excitement of the Festival really carried us through.

**What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?**

The most important thing I've learned is to just go for what you want. I'd often lose so much time worrying about what others would think about my work, or if I was "legitimate" enough to contact certain people - but we're all just humans doing our best to bring our work to the stage. I'm finally more relaxed now when it comes to networking or simply sending in applications.

It's also been great to learn more about the administrative process in creative work. I've learned how to employ people, pay the necessary taxes for the company, and get funding for my own work ... I also know now what it takes to create the lighting for a show, how important the sound is for a good performance, and many other backstage tasks I had no real idea about before.

I feel like a more well-rounded dancer now, because it's not just about showing up to the studio and learning and performing the steps - I appreciate all the work that goes into bringing a performance to life.

**Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?**

It probably wasn't so much in my education, but during the whole audition process that I realised I had to go my own way. Every audition I'd turn up to there were dozens or even hundreds of other dancers there for the same job. Even just getting invited to an audition is an achievement, because you know that there were probably a thousand applications. I knew I wanted to dance, and I met people I wanted to work with - from there it was just a question of rolling up our sleeves and giving it our best shot.

**What's the best advice you have ever received?**

I think the best advice I've ever received is to just go for it - nothing is gained from worrying excessively. Also, not to take rejection too badly. It's hard not to take things personally when you put so much of yourself in your work, but art is such a subjective thing, and in the end you just have to make work that resonates for you, and hope it resonates with others too.

**Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?**

My business skills have definitely developed over time - I used to not even understand how to create a budget for a production. Of course I still need help and advice for some tasks, so I usually go to people who I know are dealing with the same struggles I am. It really helps to be surrounded by supportive colleagues, and we often ask each other for advice on different matters. The more we learn, the more we share.

**What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?**

I think it's sometimes hard to strike a balance between making art and making money. I struggle to ask for as much money as we should for our work, even though I know that people need art. We need empathy, we need to share our experience in this world, and art is such a powerful way to do this. Yet, I don't know why, it's still slightly ingrained in me that art can't be a "real job". But what is a "real job" really?

Amanda Palmer says something really great about this in her book *The Art of Asking*, and I hope you'll forgive me for quoting her because she says it so perfectly: (About her experience working as a living statue) "Of all the insults hurled in my direction, GET A JOB hurt the most. It was an affront. I took it personally. I had a job. I was doing my job. I mean, sure. It was a weird job. And a job I'd created out of thin air with no permission from a higher authority. But I was working, and people were paying me. Didn't that make it a job?" (p.55)

**What does innovation mean to you?**

To me it means finding new ways to use your art form and touch people with it. To find new ways to address important subjects in life, like hope, love, empathy.

As an example, I recently collaborated on a project with Junebug Company and WAVE: we came up with an improvised dance show concept, which used the audience's participation to shape the performance. Sort of like an improvised musical, but with contemporary dance and different steps in the creative process. It was so daunting, yet exciting at the same time. We never knew what we were about to come up with. Sometimes we "bombed", but other times I think it was precisely by putting ourselves in danger like that, that we managed to create something really worthwhile.

**What does success look like?**

I think success looks different to everyone. For some people performing at the Edinburgh Fringe would not be considered a success - but for us it was a huge step in the evolution of our company.

For me, success is when we manage to create something that truly touches our audience. When all the hard work we put into bringing our performance to life, all the administrative work, all the rehearsals, the reflecting on a subject, comes together for the space of a performance and manages to create a bond between the artists and the audience.

After our last performance in Switzerland, we got to meet some of the audience members. There was a writer there who was filling pages and pages in his notebook, and came up to us to say we'd managed to clear his writer's block.

We were also lucky enough to have our composer present for the performances. He took out his violin and played for everyone at the end of the show when we were all gathered in the bar - everyone was quiet and we just listened to him create his magic. I remember thinking really clearly then "Wow, we did this. We managed to bring all these people here to share in this moment". It was really special.

**“For me, success is when we manage to create something that truly touches our audience.”**





**Raga  
and Jazz  
Pianist**

# Utsav Lal

## BMus Jazz Class of 2014

### How would you describe your practice?

My foremost goal is to develop a technique to play Indian classical music on the piano. I'm also a jazz pianist and during my time in Ireland and Scotland I've played a lot of traditional Celtic music in sessions and concerts.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

I think the most important thing is to be multifaceted. It helps musically and professionally to a huge degree. Being boxed into one genre or tradition is limiting. That being said, it's important not just to learn different traditions and styles of music, but to build an independent voice taking into consideration all the different practices we encounter during our studies and out in the world.

Other skills that are crucial are networking and being open. I was very opposed to the generic musician after-gig "schmooze" but I realised networking doesn't mean putting yourself forward in every situation you get. It's just about being friendly and maintaining relationships with people on a consistent basis without being overbearing or too pushy. Helping fellow musicians out consistently is a really smart move as it always comes back to you at some point and generally creates a much more positive network of peers.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

Tommy Smith, Head of Jazz, was incredibly helpful in developing a business sensibility in his students. We had four years of Music Business as opposed to a few semesters in most other conservatories. He taught us how to do taxes, register our music, claim royalties from radio play or even pub gigs, build a website, fill out Arts Council funding applications, etc. What was amazing was that none of this was from a textbook, but all from personal experiences which made it so much more relevant for us.

The general vibe at RCS is really positive with so much cross-department collaboration which was a huge bonus for me. It encouraged me to look beyond my major and try and make the most of the amazing resources available at the institution. This applies directly to building a thirst for knowledge and the resourcefulness which is essential when you aren't a student any more.

“People don't necessarily book the best musician, they book the best musician they want to play with and spend time with. Being friendly, organised and humble goes a long way.”

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

Developing a strong independent voice on my instrument has been my priority - so that I stand out from the thousands of jazz piano graduates every year. I loved learning to play the tradition of jazz, but I knew that for my own personal satisfaction and also to make it, I needed to have a unique message through my music. Building a website, making as many connections as possible, going to see any many shows as I could - these were all really helpful.

One of the biggest things was to understand that I could learn something from anyone in absolutely any situation. I feel like I was always asking questions. Even if it was something I was not directly interested in, there was always something intriguing about the music and musician. All these little bits of insight were usually helpful in really unexpected places later on, and sometimes affected my perception of what I was working on in a really meaningful way.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

I think a big realisation as a freelancer and soloist is that to survive and grow, I have to do a lot of different things. Teaching seems to have become an integral part of the life of almost every musician I know and is extremely rewarding. Touring and performing is incredible but doesn't seem to be self-sustaining in most situations. It's important to have a résumé that doesn't just have an incredible performing portfolio but also experience of teaching and accompanying. Organisation and planning are obvious but often overlooked aspects.

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

I'm not sure there was a definite point. I knew what I wanted to achieve before I started the course. Obviously this changed and mutated in many wonderful ways, but the overall goal has been the same. I feel like the steady opening up to possibilities and being constantly inspired by all the wonderful music around me during my time at RCS and around Glasgow made me view my initial goal through various "lenses" and contexts. I'm a firm believer in regularly taking everything I play to pieces and constantly re-questioning what I'm doing, how I'm doing it and why I'm doing it.

### What's the best advice you have ever received?

People don't necessarily book the best musician, they book the best musician they want to play with and spend time with. Being friendly, organised and humble goes a long way.

### Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?

I think they definitely have, but there's a long way to go. Being a student is so different from being in the professional world. I don't ever like pushing myself forward or talking about my achievements but I have learned that it's needed in some situations. I think the best teacher is experience. Every time I have an interview or a meeting with a programmer, I learn how to present my projects, how to make sure I get the information I want them to know across, even if they don't ask me directly. The biggest challenge is not doing this in a calculating or pushy way. I think observing some musicians I really admire in such situations was a great learning tool.

### What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?

We have to live, pay rent, eat food and that is important. But I know a lot of people who have put their musical dreams on hold in order to survive, and settle for something that makes them resentful. Every situation is different and you can never judge or understand someone's situation. For me, I try my best to make sure my creative work and musical vision is being developed at the same time as earning a living. The dream is to make exactly the music you want to and get paid enough for it, which is usually incredibly hard! Compromises are always involved and everyone needs to figure out their own balance. I remember initially being critical of musicians I admired for "selling out", but I'm more sympathetic after conversing with a few close friends in that situation; priorities change for people based on an incredible variety of factors. All I need to focus on is what feels right for me.

### What does innovation mean to you?

Respect for and feverish assimilation of all aspects of the traditions, aiming towards unbiased criticism of those traditions, awareness of where they leave you unfulfilled (there are always some aspects) and filling those holes with your creativity.

### What does success look like?

Finding a perfect balance between making the music you want to make and making a living with as little compromise as you can. And most importantly, being a socially conscientious and loving human while doing that.

# Loosiana Diana



Dance Creator  
Choreographer  
Teacher  
Mentor

## PG Cert Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Class of 2016

### How would you describe your practice?

I am a dance creator, choreographer, teacher and mentor, working within education and the professional sector. I teach on the Royal Conservatoire's BA Modern Ballet programme, and my teaching practice encompasses technique in contemporary dance and choreography, teaching and coaching modern repertoire and improvisation. My practice draws upon all of these elements within my teaching and my choreography.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

Self-discipline, motivation, being open and flexible. Resilience, perseverance and passion. Communication, collaboration, creativity, reflection and interpersonal skills.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

Mostly with communication, collaboration, creativity and reflection. It was having the opportunity to reflect and self-analyse in the writing for my blog and the practical elements in my final project for the Masters. Realising and seeing my whole skill set and with support and guidance I was able to continue to develop these areas of interest, researching and putting these into practice. The opportunity to work alongside other artists and understand other disciplines, a cross collaboration of ideas.

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

From an extensive career as a performer, working with various choreographers and companies, understanding what it means to be part of a team, observing different practices and the workings of a company life, I knew my life's work would be relevant in an education setting but also pushing into my own interpretation and experience of dance through choreography. My passion to stay within dance, develop and give was the first step, at the same time ensuring I could provide stability was a priority to maintaining my life and family. Understanding my skill set and where my experiences and passions could develop to generate my practice. Being mindful that I could access my creativity and keep learning. The opportunity to work within RCS and the diversity it offers gave me these opportunities.

As a freelance dance artist, my artistic endeavours are based on my choreographic exploration. This area requires drive and realisation to keep moving it forward. Establishing yourself and your work, generating a community and maintaining a presence are the challenges I face. Developing this aspect of my practice is a work in progress and reaching towards funding and applications is the next step.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

Self-motivation, self-belief and managing expectations. Integration, the importance of putting back in to the self/self-development. Greater collaboration, trust in letting the work speak for itself. Timing has a lot to do with things, and so does patience!

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

Aspects of my education helped facilitate new research and put into practice these interests. I was able to develop my creativity and ideas around improvisation and experiment with them in a practical setting.

Developing that aspect of my practice has enabled new developments for myself and has had an impact on my teaching, my choreography and my students - generating new possibilities for the programme and the development of our future dance artists, while also generating a richer cross collaboration across RCS.

### What's the best advice you have ever received?

Keep asking questions. Trust yourself! Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?

As a freelance artist I find the self-promotion part difficult, finding the balance of your work standing on its own, for the sense of integrity, and pushing outside of comfort zones to self-promote. An aspect that I am constantly evolving is seeing my practice more like a product or business. I would go to colleagues working in this area for advice.

### What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?

It's a constant juggle of priorities, realising and fulfilling the basic needs, trying to fulfil demands in all aspects of your life but leaving enough time and head space to keep fresh, creative and current. The priorities shift and change constantly. I find the uncertainty of being reliant on others and finding funding bodies or other collaborators to support artistic endeavours is always an area of tension. Staying true to yourself and being true to your ideas, and still realising that there is always room for compromise. Being resourceful.

### What does innovation mean to you?

Collaborating and the sharing of ideas, taking risks. Exploring, bringing about change.

### What does success look like?

Enjoyment in the sharing of a journey, bringing dance to new audiences, igniting passion in others and helping others fulfil dreams. Exceeding expectation. Continual learning.

“Aspects of my education helped facilitate new research and put into practice these interests. I was able to develop my creativity and ideas around improvisation and experiment with them in a practical setting.”

## BA Acting Class of 2012

### How would you describe your practice?

Collaborative!

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

You have to be willing to work really, really hard because if you don't, it will show. But if you do, it will also show! You've also got to be totally shameless as you have to ask for a lot of favours when starting out in theatre. And resourceful. You might have to ring 20 places before you find one free space.

You probably have to be happy to give up socialising because you are most likely juggling a few jobs whilst working on your own projects, so being a bit boring helps that. My co-artistic director of Etch Theatre is the most thorough person I know, she thinks about every possible worst case scenario and that has certainly saved us on more than one occasion.

It also helps to be as transparent and honest as possible at all times, otherwise you can get yourself in a pickle.

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

RCS encourages you to work things out for yourself and to take responsibility for yourself. No one held your hand or told you what to do. They treated you like adults and professionals so you had to act like one, otherwise you just wouldn't get much out of it. It is a very outward facing school, you feel part of the (Scottish) industry by the time you leave because of all the people you have met and the theatre you've seen.

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

My friend Ruth and I started small with our company Etch Theatre. We utilised the contacts we had made over the five years acting experience between us and did something that everyone involved would benefit from. We kept the risks very low whilst trying to maximise impact for individual artists. We wanted to make opportunities for ourselves and for others. We wanted to look around, rather than up, and carve out our own industry.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

That making your own work and steering your own projects is really, really hard work. The stressful thing is that if you don't do anything, nothing will happen. That takes a lot of getting used to. But when it pays off, you sleep really well! Also that social media is your greatest friend.

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

Probably how horrific I found doing our showcase. I didn't put in the work because I was too scared and then I just sat and waited for nothing but rejection. I think that was the beginning of wanting to work out my own way!

### What's the best advice you have ever received?

"If there's anything else you want to do, go and do it." Ali De Souza, 2009, first day of BA Acting. Very sound advice.

### Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?

Certainly. You just figure out what works and what doesn't by doing and copying. It is the only way! And then you can start to carve out your own way of doing things. If I am to carry on producing, I would look at Stage One apprenticeships, just to see how projects work on a grand scale with piles of cash; it would be interesting to see what that shifts in the process. And every project I do I realise there's something major I don't know - so it would be good to watch and learn a bit more.

I will also keep meeting more experienced producers for coffees because it is very useful to hear about the many different career paths.

### What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?

It is never going to be easy to be honest, you just need to get really good at writing funding applications. At first I found it hard having to conform to certain funding criteria but actually writing applications allows you to hone the drive behind your work. It really sifts out what you're doing "just because", and what you are doing because you really feel it needs to be done and that is worth tax payers' money. You will generally always need other work to tide you over, so spending time on finding a job that sustains you and that you enjoy is really important.

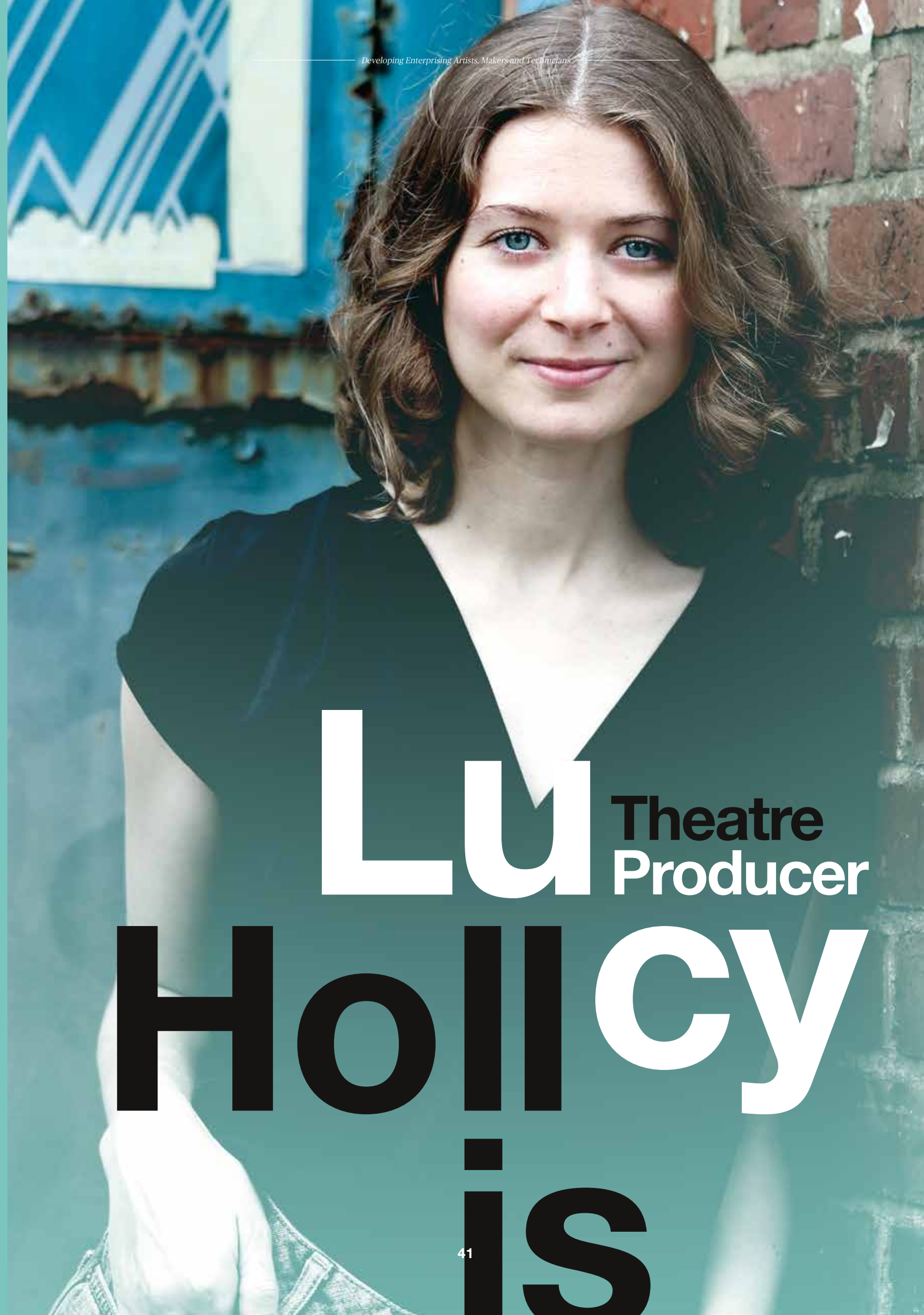
### What does innovation mean to you?

Being honest and completely rigorous.

### What does success look like?

Enjoying what you do, doing it thoroughly and with grace.

**"We kept the risks very low whilst trying to maximise impact for individual artists. We wanted to make opportunities for ourselves and for others."**



**Lu** Theatre  
Producer

**Holly**  
**is**

# NICOLA RUSSELL

Costume Designer  
Russell Costumes

## BA Production Arts and Design Class of 2014

### How would you describe your practice?

I am a dance, gymnastic and skating wear retailer with a custom-made costume design and manufacture service. I also do non-dancewear alteration, design and manufacture.

### From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

I would say one of the main skills you need is to be committed and self-motivated. Nine to five hours, holidays and sick days rarely exist when starting your own business. Starting out I completely underestimated how much work and time was needed. Areas such as;

- finding suppliers then getting the best price and quality
- the legal side of tenancy agreements, staff contracts, employment laws and procedures, and regulations with health and safety and First Aid
- accounting, hidden overheads, cash flow, budgeting and business banking
- website construction
- setup and ongoing social media training

I also think you need to be very critical of your own work. If it's your name above the door and your reputation on the line then you have to be able to look at your work and question if it is of a high enough standard for your customers. If not then act upon it.

**“I would say one of the main skills you need is to be committed and self-motivated.”**

### How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

I was very lucky that I chose a module where I could build in what I wanted to learn about during my final year. I constructed a module all about setting up a business.

I arranged sessions with Business Gateway and other professionals from my field. I also undertook research into other businesses/suppliers and competitors. Between this unit and my work experience unit, I was able to gain knowledge to help me to get to the point where I was ready to start my business venture.

I still keep in regular contact with my lecturers and know that if I find myself in a difficult situation I can always contact them for a second opinion and support.

### What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

In the last few weeks of my course I had already set the wheels in motion by viewing potential business premises. I started the process by setting up business email and banking accounts. In October 2014, I signed the lease for my new premises, made some renovations, kitted out the shop and started trading within 22 days, just in time to link with the Christmas lights switch-on in the town. I also set up Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

Now almost three years on, I have invested over £45,000 into my business venture. I work a minimum of six days a week sometimes 60 hours a week. I have roped my mum into working voluntarily at the shop front and my dad helps me with invoicing and records for the accountant.

I also travel to dance competitions throughout the UK and Europe to network and build business. I now have many customers across the UK and Europe.

### What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?

Too many lessons to list them all and I feel I still have a lot more to learn. As this industry is ever changing and growing, we are always looking for new ways to improve the service we offer or keep up with the latest technology.

### Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?

It was in second year. I loved working in the theatre industry, however I also love having an active role in my children's lives. The theatre lifestyle of long days and late nights in the city didn't work easily with raising three young children in the countryside.

Through my children I was heavily involved in the dance industry and realised that my hobby of making dance costumes could satisfy my love of creating for performance. This has given me a perfect balance of work and family time. Now I have one daughter working for me and two more desperate to join the family business.

### What's the best advice you have ever received?

To never give up and not to let the negativity of others stop me from taking risks.

I remember an old employer laughing at my decision when I told him I was giving up my job to study fashion. Eight years later, I have completed my degree, winning the Alexander Award for excellence, made a costume for Beyoncé, opened my own business and created seven jobs.

**“Success to me is waking up and wanting to go to work every day because you enjoy your job.”**

### Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?

Absolutely: every day my business learning evolves. I am part of a Facebook network and business group for women called "She Means Business". This is a worldwide group that shares ideas, tips, and encouragement. I am on the committee of our local town's Traders Association and I regularly network with other business owners in the area to share tips and ideas. We are currently looking at working in partnership with our local authority to increase footfall and revenue to the local businesses, to help growth and create new jobs in the town.

### What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?

I have learned many lessons. Initially (and still at times) I undercharge for my services. This was due to starting out while still a student and working from home. It's very difficult to then suddenly increase costs as customers will never fully understand the overheads involved with running a business.

### What does innovation mean to you?

Innovation is so important in my industry. In terms of competition costumes: these tend to follow trends just like the fashion industry. It's so important to move with changing fashion trends, to try to fashion forecast and make sure the costumes we make are on trend. Our customers always want to stand out from others so we are constantly thinking of new designs, shapes or techniques for them.

### What does success look like?

Success to me is waking up and wanting to go to work every day because you enjoy your job. As a business owner I understand that I have to invest back into the business, and that in time I will be financially successful. I am proud when I pass the shop with my name above it, or see a customer take the floor, feeling a million dollars in their costume. I look forward to growing the business to a larger team in the future.

# FRON LO L WATSON

## Traditional Music Specialist

BA Scottish Music  
*Class of 2003*  
PhD graduate  
*Class of 2013*

How would you describe your practice?

I think my practice is a balance of creative, performance and education work, all informed by research.

From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?

I think if you find the right support, anyone can do it but you might not enjoy it. I have to get through a lot of tasks for/with different people at different times. I need to be able to swap roles, read situations well and respond quickly. It has been a challenge for me to learn to judge how much I can take on before feeling miserable under the weight - when and how to say no, and when and how to ask for help.

How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?

RCS has helped me to see possibilities and to access expertise in music, research, learning, culture and traditions that I could not have accessed by myself. Working independently is not easy but you shouldn't ever feel completely isolated - as a freelancer you might have to put your own community together and it might not look or operate like anyone else's, but you need it as much as any other career path - so look after it.

What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?

I had some very valuable conversations with experienced people in my field. Some encouraged me to be ambitious, others had insights that I didn't know I needed. I started teaching and gigging before my undergrad so I began communicating with customers and audiences as soon as I could. It was important to learn to situate myself - understand the terrain and where I stood - in order to guide my goals, expectations and build respectful relationships in my field(s).



**“In more practical terms, it’s important to recognise that we contribute to the wider understanding of what our art is worth.”**

**What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?**

Determination ranks just above ability in the priorities list and other people will happily let you fix their problems if you step forward - so step forward for yourself too.

**Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?**

I was an ‘all-rounder’ at school, with lots of interests, so making choices for study was difficult. I remember thinking ‘What couldn’t I ever give up?’ and it was music. Opportunity-based professional development has been key to my particular trajectory. I work in waves or cycles of ambitious confidence that push me to reach out, then a form of perfectionism and hard work pushes me to reach in.

**What’s the best advice you have ever received?**

I’ve had a lot of great advice over the years. I think knowing yourself - keeping up with yourself as you change over time - is very important; so you can understand what you need, to be your best for yourself and others.

**Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?**

Absolutely - my business skills and particularly my people skills. I got a good beginning to business skills in my Scottish Music undergraduate degree. That was followed by some trial and error/youthful confidence and then learning what I needed as it appeared. I learnt a lot from Musicians Union, Cultural Enterprise Office, Sencot, Creative Mornings and New Economics Foundation, there’s lots on the internet about music entrepreneurship, content marketing, etc. but you have to filter it really well.

Now I’ve got some very experienced, knowledgeable and encouraging mentors. Some of them might not know they’re mentors! But I know I can reach out to them for advice without pride or fear getting in the way, though I sometimes have to build up to it.

**What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?**

I tend to be driven by ideas and interesting work before money. I take risks with my cash flow in order to do fulfilling projects. I don’t think of the economy as purely financial - I look at the potential experience, knowledge, contribution, renewed enthusiasm, ideas, positive change to be gained. I see it as a valued part of my portfolio. This absolutely does not include playing background music for ‘exposure’.

In more practical terms, it’s important to recognise that we contribute to the wider understanding of what our art is worth. Understand the real cost of your work and communicate that cost. If you don’t value your work, it’s unlikely that others will - start a co-op if you need moral support.

**What does innovation mean to you?**

I did a PhD on innovation! For me, it’s a common process of applying different ideas or methods to existing things.

**What does success look like?**

Developing a clear vision of your own path and then creating it.



# Noisemaker

**Scott BA Musical Theatre  
Class of 2012**

**Claire BMus Composition  
Class of 2009**

**MA Musical Theatre (Directing)  
Class of 2010**

**How would you describe your practice?**

We've been working as a writing partnership for five years now. Our company, Noisemaker, is dedicated to the creation and development of new musical theatre, both in Scotland and around the world. However, as we both trained as multidisciplinary artists, we have continued to freelance alongside our work as a partnership. Claire is a musical director, sound designer and composer, and I work as an actor. We've always allowed our practice as individuals to inform our development and understanding as writers.

**From your own experience, what skills and qualities would you say are most needed to be a career self-starter in your particular field?**

A dull one to start but, over and above practical skills, we've relied most on patience. Not just in waiting for the right theatre or director or producer to put on our work, but allowing time for us to grow as writers and, most importantly, to get things wrong. We needed time to experiment and understand what stories we want to tell, how and why we'd like to tell them. We're just beginning our seventh show as Noisemaker and it's only now we feel confident enough to take on more substantial commissions and longer-term commitments internationally, as we've taken the time needed to discover the kind of work we make and how we best function as a team. Alongside this, finding our own voice has been pivotal in our development. Having the courage and intuitiveness to question why an art form works, and then beginning to explore ways of challenging its boundaries, has enabled us to find our own united voice as writers. Investigating and researching your craft, discovering the work of the artists that have come before you, this allows a vital base of knowledge to begin carving your own path from. So, hone your skill for learning; read, watch and listen to as much as you can.



**Scott Gilmour &  
Claire McKenzie**

**How did the Royal Conservatoire prepare you for that?**

Having now collaborated with other institutions and conservatoires, it's become apparent how unique RCS is in its approach to collaboration. As students we were encouraged to explore all the elements and facets of performance and theatre-making, regardless of our chosen discipline. In fact, the only reason Claire and I ever began making work in the first place was because of a project called *On The Verge*; a collaboration between RCS and The Arches, in my final year of study. RCS offered students who were interested in making their own work a platform to try it out. Claire and I had often discussed the possibility of writing together (usually over a glass or two of wine...) and this was a real opportunity to do so. I submitted a proposal and a month later we'd created our first piece of work together; *Freakshow*. The show moved to London, and later to the Edinburgh Fringe where it won the Scottish Daily Mail Drama Award 2012. After this we decided to form Noisemaker.

**What first steps did you take to get to where you are now?**

The first thing we decided was to not rush in and form a theatre company, but instead create a brand and identity as a partnership. We were writers first and foremost, and that is what we wanted to dedicate our time to. We formed Noisemaker as an umbrella term for our partnership, and began seeking ways to fund and expand our work. We've always kept a close relationship with RCS, specifically the Musical Theatre department. In the first two years of working together we worked closely on the new musical development strand of the MA programme developing several new shows which all premiered at the Edinburgh Festival. Having worked on *Freakshow* in a similar fashion, we understood the route of developing a musical with a student cast and it worked for us. We've now had four shows developed in this way; *Freakshow*, *Forest Boy*, *The Girl Who* and, at this year's Festival, *Atlantic*. Each have gone on to find further life and success, but the inception and development for each idea has been the same process. Having the backing and support of an institution like RCS, especially in our formative years, was fundamental for our growth.

**“One of the biggest transitions from an educational environment to a professional one has been experiencing that art and theatre must also function as a business.”**

**What have you learned through operating as a freelancer/solopreneur/company owner?**

The main thing we have learned is to be willing to do things yourself. Whether that is building a website, marketing a show, sourcing funding for a project, meeting with prospective collaborators or venues, writing applications or simply keeping the people you're currently working with happy (we've always found doughnuts are very popular in a rehearsal room), be prepared to graft and work and learn. It's tough, but often you're only ever as good as your last job. Maintaining professionalism, commitment to detail and quality, and a willingness to get your hands dirty in the process, is sometimes the difference between working with that person, or company, again. The other key aspect of working as a freelancer, or as a company, is that you never know where one conversation may lead. You may have been scheduled to meet with some young director who you've never heard of before. It might be the end of a really long week and all you want to do is go home and binge on Netflix. But, that meeting could be the starting point of an idea that could change the shape and trajectory of your career. You just need to allow it the time and opportunity to do so. We can only make theatre together, so allowing the time to meet and discover new collaborators that inspire you is essential. It has kept our work fresh and exciting and new, and also stopped us being tired of each other.

**Was there a turning point or realisation in your education that set you on your current path?**

Absolutely. For both of us thankfully it came at the same moment. In my second year of the BA, part of my training was to experience the development of a new musical. We were given three weeks of development, one each term, which resulted in a full production of a new work at the end of the year. Looking back, the team that was allocated to this project was unbelievable: renowned Scottish playwright Douglas Maxwell, former Artistic Director of the Traverse and Dundee Rep Philip Howard, and West End composer Richard Taylor. We also had a freelance musical director who happened to be a newly-graduated Claire McKenzie. We all

developed this new work, *Watertight* over the course of my second year and it was the most eye-opening, inspiring process myself, or Claire, had ever been part of. It let us see first-hand what it meant to write and create a musical, and it started a fire in us both. The collaborative element of discovering an idea from blank page to production was so thrilling to me as a book writer and lyricist and to Claire as a composer. It was during this project that everything changed for us. Something that had felt like a dream job was suddenly there living and breathing in front of us. Had it not been for *Watertight* I doubt we would have ever truly considered the possibility of making our own work.

**What's the best advice you have ever received?**

Fortunately, it's a difficult one to answer as we've had so many excellent bits of advice since starting out. Probably the statement that impacted upon us the most though was from the composer Claude-Michel Schönberg. We were invited to work on a masterclass with him a few years ago in London. He described a song we'd written as "hitting an invisible target". The idea of aiming for something that no one has thought of yet, a bullseye that nobody else was looking for, reinforced how we wanted to approach our writing. We don't emulate what's come before, instead we try to understand it and then, with that knowledge, aim for a different set of goals entirely. This can be the difference between stories that are enjoyed yet forgotten, and stories that can change things completely.

**Have your business skills developed over time and where would you go to get more help or advice?**

One of the biggest transitions from an educational environment to a professional one has been experiencing that art and theatre must also function as a business. As Noisemaker we are involved in, if not solely responsible for, raising funds for a project, maintaining overheads and securing profit where possible. We've had to quickly acquire knowledge, and the correct vocabulary, when dealing with contracts, budgeting and copyright of our work. This has come from engaging with different creatives and companies, each bringing a new set of skills and challenges to the table. Seeking advice from bodies such as Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland is invaluable when starting out. As our needs and quandaries started to become more project-specific however, finding individuals who specialise in a particular field of business - lawyers, finance advisors etc. - has helped us navigate certain interactions. The other, and most useful, point of contact for developing business skills is talking to other artists. Discuss the goals and circumstances surrounding your work with your peers, get advice from people in the same boat as you. That is where we have really learned about business and enterprise.

**What have you learned or could you share about the tension between making art and making money?**

I'm not sure we can shed any new light on this subject, however, what's noticeable is the number of people making a career in the arts. We're lucky to live in a country that does allow support and opportunity to emerging artists but, as a result, the sector has become saturated with lots of brilliant people, all fighting to make their work. The sad truth is, if you can't economise on the work you're making, if your art can't make money, then it becomes increasingly difficult to survive. The revenue stream of an artist does determine their longevity in their field. The first lesson we learned about making money as writers is it's hard. Second; it pays off. Continuing to develop, not just as a creative, but as an entrepreneur is vital. Understand what you are worth and how you can capitalise and build on that. When starting out, research what support is available to you, what collaborators or funders could have an interest in your work. Once you're more established and generating work more regularly,

**“Having now collaborated with other institutions and conservatoires, it's become apparent how unique RCS is in its approach to collaboration.”**

it becomes about investing in what's next. Securing longer term finance or backing, putting plans in place to solidify future projects, can sometimes become more important than fully realising the piece you're currently working on. It's a balancing act. But there are more of us doing it now than ever, so take comfort in the fact that it can be done.

**What does innovation mean to you?**

For us, innovation is the advice Claude-Michel gave. It's aiming for a target that nobody has seen yet. And the most important thing that I believe innovation brings is progress. It can move an art form forward. It can grant new, relevant meaning for those who have never engaged with it before. Innovation keeps art alive. Whether it's rethinking an art form - Rodgers & Hammerstein applying dramatic narrative to a musical which, in turn, gave us modern musical theatre; rediscovering how audiences experience an art form - the arrival of Netflix and Amazon Prime allowing us to stream cinema-quality TV into our own homes; or creating something new altogether. That is what innovation means to us as a partnership and it's what we seek most in our practice.

**What does success look like?**

As Noisemaker, for us success has always been about leaving something behind. When a story is finished or a project is done, it being allowed to linger in people's minds or exist again in some fashion; that's what we dream of as writers. However, more generally, I think success comes in the moments where balance is achieved. When the reward for the work matches the effort it took to make. When the idea is finished and is met with the response you'd hoped for. John Williams said "Success isn't just hard work. Success is sustained hard work". I believe this to be true in many ways. To achieve success, yes, we need to continually push forward, to improve and grow our craft and our understanding. But success is also being allowed to continue to do so. A common link between most artists, regardless of their field, is that we each started our profession as a hobby. That has now grown, in many cases, to define who we are and why we're here. I think success is being allowed to feel like you made the right choice turning that hobby into a career, to have your patience rewarded and your fire relit.

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Royal Conservatoire  
*of* Scotland



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