



SCIENCE, HUMANITIES AND ARTS RESEARCH EXCHANGE
(SHARE) SYMPOSIUM #3

ON INSPIRATION

10 JUNE 2025

BYRE STUDIO, ST ANDREWS



The Graduate School for
Interdisciplinary
Studies



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland

The Science, Humanities and Arts Research Exchange (SHARE) facilitates interdisciplinary collaborations between researchers and artists at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the University of St Andrews, and beyond. The first SHARE symposium took place in 2019, followed by the SHARE Creative Health symposium in 2023. We are delighted to be hosting SHARE Symposium #3. The topic for this is *Inspiration*, in all its literal and metaphoric forms:

- the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative
- the drawing in of breath; inhalation

You can find out more about SHARE via the website

<https://shareinterdisciplinary.co.uk/>

We look forward to hearing what inspires you!

Laura Bissell, Emily Doolittle and Laura González
Athenaeum Research Fellows
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Cover image credit: Laura González, *Breath at the End of the World* (performance, 2021), photograph by Ingrid Mur

1-1.10 Welcome (and inspiration)

1.10-2:00 Lightning talks 1-5 (10 minutes)

1.10-1.20 Panna Muqit

1.20-1.30 Aby Watson

1.30-1.40 Devesh Dhasmana

1.40-1.50 Bede Williams

1.50-2.00 Kiro Baker

2:10-2:40 Parallel Creative workshops

Sonia Allori and Nichola Scrutton

Roxani Krystalli

2:40-3:00 Coffee

3:00-4:00 Lightning talks 6-10 (10 minutes)

3:00-3:10 Benjamin Ong

3:10-3:20 Mercy Ojelade

3:20-3:30 Beth Whiteside and Morven Shearer

3:30-3:40 Walter Pedriali

3:40-3:50 William English

4:00-4:30 Parallel Creative workshops

Jamie Mackay

Megumi Hari

4:30-5:00 Social/snacks

5:00-7:00 Performances

5:00-5:15 Paul and Angela Docherty

5:15-5:30 Shola Miller

5.30-5.45 Janet Sit

5.45-6:00 Maria Braender, Laura Bissell, Alistair MacDonald

6:00-6:15 Sarah Bowers, Rachel Sullivan, Gillian Galbraith

6:15-6:30 Peter McMahon

6:30-6.45 Alex South

Abstracts and biographies

Panna Muqit – Inspire to Learn About Inspiration

A collaborative exploration of breath, creativity, and connection through singing, storytelling, and shared learning with patients, Singing for Lung Health researchers and medical students.

Dr Panna Muqit is an academic GP and Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of St Andrews. She specialises in community-based medical education and plays a key role in the ScotGEM programme, focusing on interdisciplinary teaching and innovative curriculum design.

Aby Watson – Here We Flow and Scottish Neurodiverse Performing Arts Network

For this lightning talk, Dr Watson will zone into her work leading the Scottish Neurodiverse Performance Network, a new neurodivergent-led organisation forging space, solidarity, and visibility for neurodivergent creatives working with/in performance across Scotland. She'll talk about their recent project *HERE WE FLOW*, alongside the emergent organisation's mission to disrupt neuronormativity in the performance sector, creating space for neurodivergent minds, bodies, and ways of making to flourish on their own terms.

Dr Aby Watson is a neuroqueer artist, choreographer, performer, academic & activist based in Glasgow. Shifting fluidly across contemporary performance and knowledge exchange, Aby's work hyperfocuses on radical neurodiversity. She is the founder of the Scottish Neurodiverse Performance Network // <https://www.abywatson.co.uk/about>

Devesh Dhasmana – *I can't breathe*

Breathing is an essential hard-wired component of life which works well, until it doesn't. Why does it fail? How can we fix it? Can we fix it? I will present the issues around breathlessness and how we might try and support those who struggle to breathe.

Dr Devesh J Dhasmana is a Consultant Respiratory Physician working for NHS Fife and a Clinical Teacher at the School of Medicine. After completing his training in London, he moved to Fife to a position where he could enjoy both clinical medicine and research. His interests are in severe lung disease, in particular, around complex infection and pulmonary fibrosis.

Bede Williams – Three Notes

I will attempt to take inspiration from, almost by free association, three ancient brass instruments and how they stimulate nascent thoughts relating to the (dis)continuity of tradition, resistance (both physical and cerebral) and creative motivation.

Bede Williams is Deputy Director of Music at the University of St Andrews. His musical activities are mostly in the area of new music and improvisation, but he is easily led and often works with others in unrelated fields in unexpected ways.

Kiro Baker – Atmospherics: A Meditation on the Nature of Breathing

In a globalised world with one shared atmosphere but many felt atmospheres, how can we recognise universal truths without collapsing into uniformity?

Kiro Baker is a postgraduate student studying a conversion course in Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. With a background in Art and Design, his research focuses on bridging the arts and humanities through cross-disciplinary approach.

Sonia Allori and Nichola Scrutton – Adventures in creative captioning

How do you improvise with other musicians when you are deaf? In this session, we'll give a short live performance, talk about the process, and then give the audience a chance to try it out!

During the session, live descriptive captioning will be provided by Eluned Charnley.

Sonia Allori is a composer/ performer/ researcher and music therapist researching deaf performance practice at RCS.

Nichola Scrutton is an award-winning composer, performer and artist who produces self-directed projects and works in various interdisciplinary and participatory collaborations.

Roxani Krystalli – Rooted inspiration: Practices of attention and place

This workshop will offer storytelling prompts for participants to consider their relationship to nature and place, as well as invitations to pay closer attention to the relationships and practices that sustain life around us. Participants will work on the prompts during the workshop and/or can take them home if they wish.

Dr Roxani Krystalli is a Senior Lecturer at the University of St Andrews, where she currently co-leads a research project on how practices of love, care, and attention sustain life in the face of loss.

Benjamin Ong – Air for two (or more) voices: Celebrating a botanic garden milestone

In this talk, I will reflect on the production of Belukar dah jadi Rimba, an exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Rimba Ilmu Botanic Garden in Malaysia: how artists and scientists shared inspiration, the messiness as worldviews and values collided despite shared goals, and what we learned from this interdisciplinary collaboration.

Benjamin Ong's interdisciplinary research-creation practice, often engaging with themes of dereliction and decay, lies at the confluence of ecology, environmental education and placemaking in the urban tropics. He is a PhD candidate at the School of Geography and Sustainable Development, University of St Andrews.

Mercy Ojelade – Faith as Inspiration, Creativity as the Realisation

A lightning talk to touch on my relationship to faith, and how this fuels the creativity in my practice as an actor and teacher in Higher Education. When inspiration comes from a Higher place.

Mercy Ojelade is a professional actor and teacher in the performing arts. Mercy has worked as an educator in the arts for over 20 years in various settings including: youth and community theatre, primary and secondary schools, Further and Higher Education as well as with specialist training providers.

Beth Whiteside and Morven Shearer – Inspiration through co-creation: developing choreographic scores with dancers living with Parkinson's and multiple sclerosis

Funded through an RSE Research Collaborations Grant, during spring 2025, a group of researchers (dancers, dance for health practitioners and musicians, and academics) co-created research themes and choreographic scores. Here, we focus on the very particular moments of individual and collective inspiration experienced together and the learning inherent within this.

Dr Bethany Whiteside is Senior Lecturer and Doctoral Degrees Coordinator at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Since 2016, her research activity has been largely situated in the field of Dance Health, working with dancers living with neurological conditions. Bethany has also undertaken research within the areas of dance education and dance organisational studies and teaches on the BA Modern Ballet programme at RCS.

Dr Morven Shearer is the Director of the Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Studies at St Andrews, and a Senior Lecturer in the School of Medicine. Morven has a particular interest in medical ethics and healthcare, together with interdisciplinarity in and through pedagogy, teaching and scholarship.

Walter Pedriali – Inspiration, Imagination, Utopia

One of the key breathing techniques in the Buddhist tradition requires us to focus on the passive interval between inhalation and exhalation, that elusive moment in spacetime where genuine inspiration (and outright enlightenment) resides. In this talk, I explore the connections between our thinking about utopia and the Buddhist preoccupation with that liminal no-space between changes of direction in one's breathing.

Walter Pedriali is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Deputy Director of the Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of St Andrews. He has published on the philosophy of logic, mathematics, and on continental philosophy.

William English – How can I explain where my motivation comes from ?

Where does my motivation , my creativity come from and why we may never find out.

My name is Bill English and one of my hobbies apart from gardening is street photography. I work at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where I had an exhibition pre COVID , I have also exhibited my work in a coffee shop in Mount Florida, there are lots of coffee shops in Mount Florida.

Megumi Hari – Meaning Making Through Materials

Everyday objects that surround us hold vast potential. Take a moment to explore the materials; not just for what they are, but for what they can become.

Megumi McKillop currently works as the Scenic Art Tutor at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in Technical Theatre Design from the University of Calgary and maintains interest around Ecoscenographic practices.

Jamie Mackay – Inspiration Top 5

In his workshop 'Inspiration Top 5' Jamie will be exploring the nature of the objects and experiences that inspire us and why we might be the best source of our own

inspiration. In preparation for the session, it would be useful if you could think of 5 things or experiences that you have found particularly inspiring for your arts practice.

Jamie has a background in painting, going on to teach scenic art and theatre design for many years before moving into his current role leading the part-time Postgraduate Learning and Teaching programmes at RCS. Alongside this role, Jamie is (slowly) undertaking a part-time PhD exploring non-directive coaching and artist development.

Paul and Angela Docherty – In Breath

A live performance of spoken word, music and ambient sound exploring the fragility of breath, and inspiring encounters with those who stand between one person's final breath and another's chance to breathe again. Informed by interviews with the heart transplant team at the Golden Jubilee Hospital, Glasgow, and interwoven with the performers' reflections on the lived experience of a heart transplant.

Angela Docherty is a writer and heart transplant recipient who is currently doing a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Aberdeen looking at the embodied experience of heart transplantation and the impact of a trauma accelerated menopause on her recovery.

Paul Docherty is a musician and cultural producer, currently working as a wellbeing adviser at the University of St Andrews, with a PhD in Publishing and an interest in neuroarts and community resilience.

Shola Miller – Inspiration in Medtner's Fairy Tales

A 15-minute performance exploring the theme of inspiration through selected Fairy Tales, Op. 26 by Nikolai Medtner. Combining performance with reflection, I will consider how poetic and narrative elements influence interpretation and sound projection.

Pianist Sholpan Sharbakova Miller is a versatile artist shaped by the rich traditions of both the Russian and European piano schools. Trained under distinguished mentors including Grigoriy Gordon in Moscow and Hamish Milne in London, she continues their legacy with a distinctive voice that bridges rigorous tradition and contemporary artistic expression. Her career spans acclaimed performances across Europe, Russia and Kazakhstan, conceptual premieres at international art fairs, and collaborations that unite music, theatre, and visual art.

Janet Sit – Ties and Tides of Kinship

'Ties and Tides of Kinship explores my multispecies encounters of Scotland's coldwater marine ecosystems from embodied perspectives in relation to how coastal communities perceive relationships with the waters surrounding them. I engage with Scotland-based marine mammals scientists to hear about their lived experiences and observations as it relates to ocean ecologies, conservation and community engagement and education.

Janet Sit is a Toronto-based music composer and sound artist who is a current doctoral student at UC San Diego. Her interdisciplinary research interests include underwater acoustics and field recordings, marine organisms, sound installation practices, community engagement, decolonizing methodologies.

Maria Braender, Laura Bissell and Alistair MacDonald – Moth Mutterings

In this work in progress performance, we invite you to make yourself comfortable and to tune in to moths, furry companions, night fliers and outliers as we seek the light.

Maria Brænder: Currently a PhD candidate at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Brænder is a Copenhagen based artist, working in the crosscurrents of performance/sound/installation (bio)art; exploring and manifesting the ideas of radical environmental philosophy through live art and/or installation-based experiences for audiences. www.mbraender.com

Laura Bissell is a writer, researcher and arts educator based in Glasgow. Laura's creative projects and research interests include: technology, ecology, interdisciplinarity, matrescence, feminism and performance and journeys. She is an Athenaeum Research Fellow at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Alistair MacDonald is a composer, performer and sound artist. He creates his own computer-based interactive environments to create rich, spatialised sonic textures, collaborating with dance and visual arts as well as other musicians, using field recording, live processing, interactivity and improvisation. He is Professor of Electroacoustic Composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Sarah Bowers, Rachel Sullivan, Gillian Galbraith – Total Silence: A performative exploration of the end of life experiences of caring for people with multiple long-term health conditions

Total Silence is a creative performance that conveys the emotional and physical journey of supporting someone with multiple long-term health conditions at the end of life, developed through a collaboration between a PhD student, an MA

composition student, and a public advisor as part of the Intersections project. Drawing on 12 qualitative interviews with bereaved caregivers, the piece unfolds in four parts—blending music and participants' direct quotes—to represent the emotional and physical journey of the final year of life until, and beyond, their final breath.

Dr Sarah Bowers is a palliative care doctor who is currently undertaking a PhD at the School of Medicine, University of St Andrews exploring through mixed methodologies how people with multiple long-term health conditions use and experience healthcare in their last year of life.

Rachel Sullivan is currently studying composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, she has received several commissions—including the 2025 Kimie Composition Prize—and her work has been performed internationally, with her chamber opera Bertha premiering in summer 2025.

Jillian Galbraith is a member of FCAC (Fife Community Advisory Council), with musical experience e.g. Coordinator of the Scottish PlainSong choir. Professionally she is a retired lecturer in Microbiology, with research centred on the fungi known as moulds.

Peter McMahon – Composed Composition

A short presentation exploring different approaches to songwriting and composition. Ending with a performance combining the different philosophies of gardeners, architects and editors, this practical approach will revel in taking inspiration from peculiar places...

With mix of indie-folk and musical-theatre sensibilities, Peter's music tends towards honest lyrics, evocative melodies and lush harmonies, with a generous helping of live performance and comedy thrown in for good measure. He is originally from Fermanagh in Northern Ireland, but is now seen soaring on the steep streets of Glasgow. Upcoming projects include "Mr Burns - A Post Electric Play" in the RCS, and his next acoustic EP launch.

Alex South – Multispecies Musicking: Songs Without Words

The principal sonic inspirations for the music of my current project Keening - Song of the Stranding are the sounds of long-finned pilot whales and the Scottish Gaelic lament Pill iù Pill ill ill ill Eòghainn. I will introduce these “songs without words” and demonstrate how I and my collaborators (Nerea Bello and Katherine Wren) have treated them compositionally.

I am a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (University of Edinburgh), where my research aims at understanding the role of human musicians and other performers as interspecies mediators between other-than-human animals and the general public. I perform on clarinets and electronics in many groups in Scotland including BARE, Collective Endeavours, and Glasgow Improvisors Orchestra.



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