

# **Healthy Conservatoires**

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on  
Musicians' Training, Health and Wellbeing

Aaron Williamon

# Overview

- Musical Impact
- Healthy Conservatoires
- Innovations in Teaching and Student Support

I.

## **Musical Impact**

Professionals 60-75%

Students 70-85%



70%





Debilitating anxiety  
15-25%

# **Conservatoires UK** (in 2013)

Guildhall School of Music and Drama

Leeds College of Music

Royal Academy of Music

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Royal College of Music

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Royal Northern College of Music

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance



A Conservatoires UK project funded by the  
Arts and Humanities Research Council

# Guiding questions

- How do the physical and mental demands of making music interact with and determine musicians' health and wellbeing?
- What can we learn from existing international educational and professional approaches to promoting musicians' health?



# Timeline

## 1. Fit to Perform

A survey of musicians' physical and mental fitness

## 2. Making Music

A study of the physical demands of practice and performance

## 3. Better Practice

Promoting health in music education and the profession

Year 1  
2013/14

Year 2  
2014/15

Year 3  
2015/16

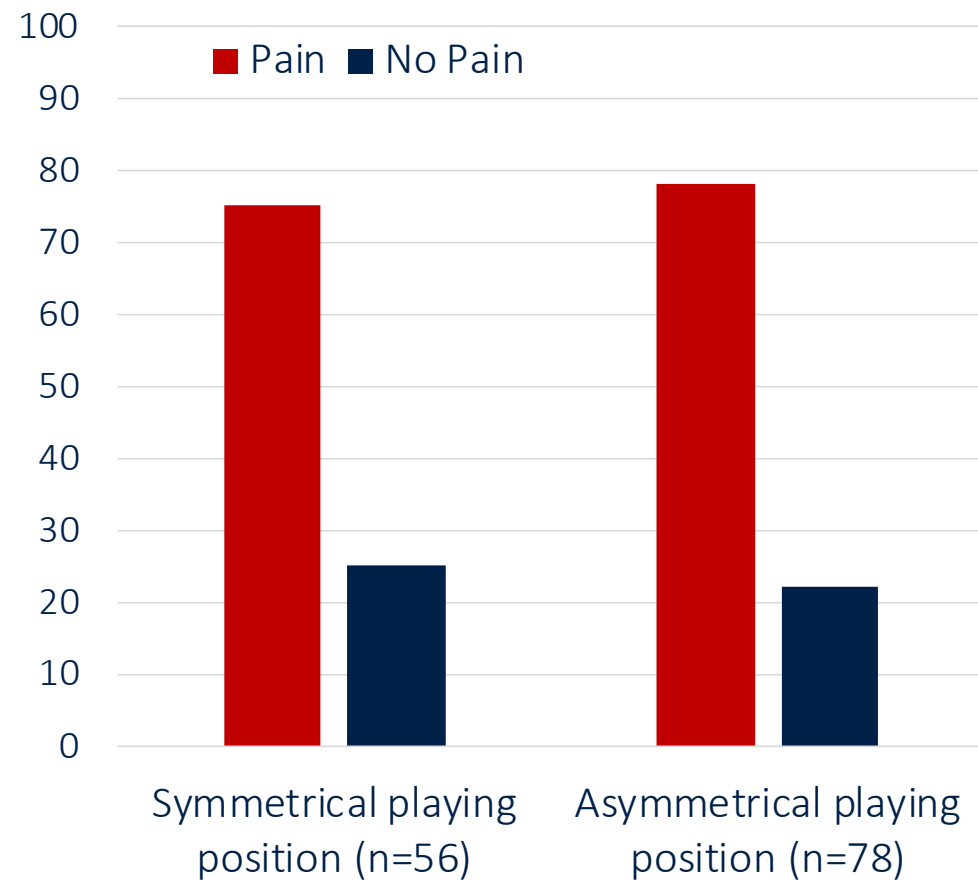
Year 4  
2016/17

...2018

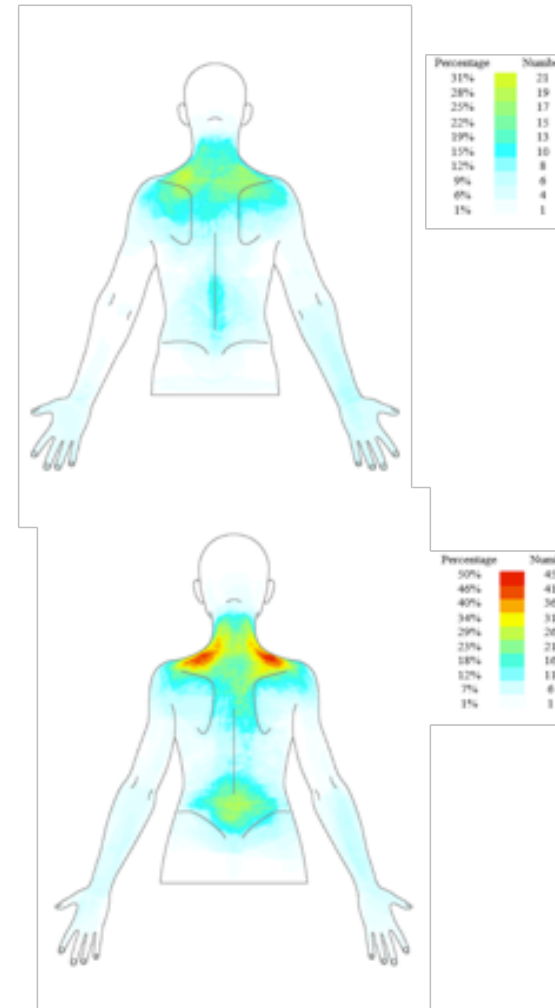
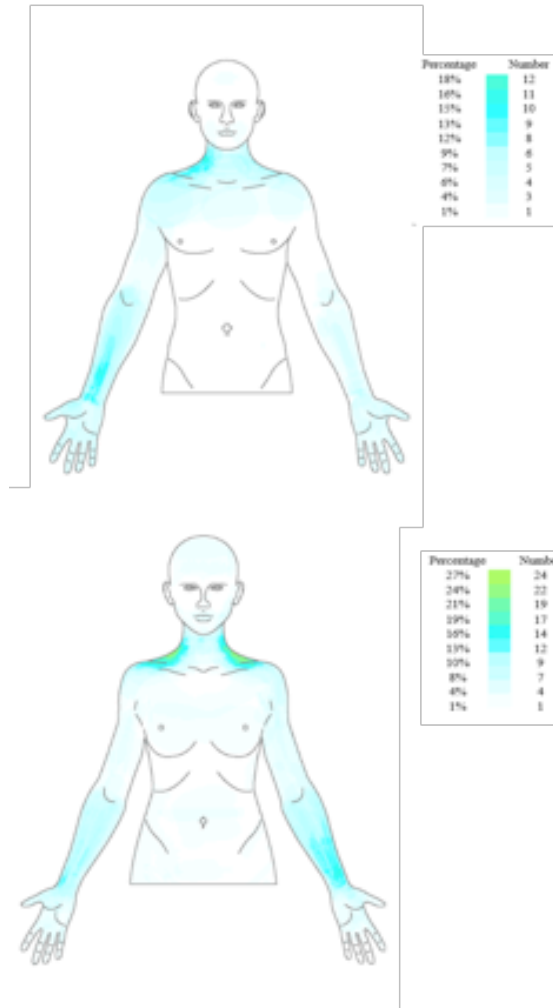


- 90-min mental and physical **fitness assessments** for 600+
  - 3-hour **vocal health screenings** for 150+
  - 4-hour **biomechanical assessments** for 20+
  - 1-hour **physiological assessments** for 30+
  - 20 hours of **in-depth interviews** with over 30+
- New, evidence-based approaches for promoting and enhancing the health and wellbeing of musicians.

# Pain



# Pain




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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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# Profiling the Location and Extent of Musicians' Pain Using Digital Pain Drawings

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# Fit to Perform: An Investigation of Higher Education Music Students' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Behaviors toward Health

*Lilliana S. Araújo<sup>1,2</sup>, David Wasley<sup>3</sup>, Rosie Perkins<sup>1,2</sup>, Louise Atkins<sup>1</sup>, Emma Redding<sup>4</sup>, Jane Ginsborg<sup>5</sup> and Aaron Williamon<sup>1,2\*</sup>*

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Making music at the highest international standards can be rewarding, but it is also challenging, with research highlighting pernicious ways in which practicing and performing can affect performers' health and wellbeing. Several studies indicate that music students' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward health and healthy living are less than optimal, especially considering the multiple physical

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# Perceived Enablers and Barriers to Optimal Health among Music Students: A Qualitative Study in the Music Conservatoire Setting

*Rosie Perkins<sup>1,2</sup>, Helen Reid<sup>3</sup>, Liliana S. Araújo<sup>1,2</sup>, Terry Clark<sup>1,2</sup> and Aaron Williamon<sup>1,2\*</sup>*

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Student health and wellbeing within higher education has been documented as poor in relation to the general population. This is a particular problem among students at music conservatoires, who are studying within a unique educational context that is known to generate both physical and psychological challenges. This article examines how conservatoire students experience health and wellbeing within their institutional context, using a framework from health promotion to focus attention on perceived

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II.

## **Healthy Conservatoires**



A word cloud featuring various locations and settings. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern. The words 'Homes', 'Ageing', and 'Cities' are highlighted in red, while the others are in grey. The words are of varying sizes, with 'Homes' and 'Ageing' being the largest.

Schools  
Homes  
Communities  
Ageing  
Hospitals  
Islands  
Prisons  
Cities  
Workplaces  
Markets  
Municipalities  
Villages





# **Healthy Conservatoires**

Aim to create environments that promote and enhance the health and wellbeing of performing artists, enabling them to achieve their full potential and to build healthy, sustainable careers.

## **Key characteristics**

- It uses a settings-based approach.
- It focusses on promoting health.
- It is informed by the demands of performing.
- It engages directly with research.

## **Key characteristics (cont)**

- It is NOT health and safety.
- It is NOT a clinical service.

# Resources

- Network meetings (120+)
- Case studies of good practice
- Mapping of expertise and services

# **A healthy conservatoire...**

- creates an environment that openly embraces and embeds health and wellbeing in all aspects of its culture and community
- works towards a holistic health and wellbeing provision that addresses a wide variety of factors affecting its performing arts community
- frames and promotes health and wellbeing in positive ways to enable those within its community to achieve their full potential and build sustainable careers



# Rounded support



Environmental



Spiritual



Social



Physical



Occupational



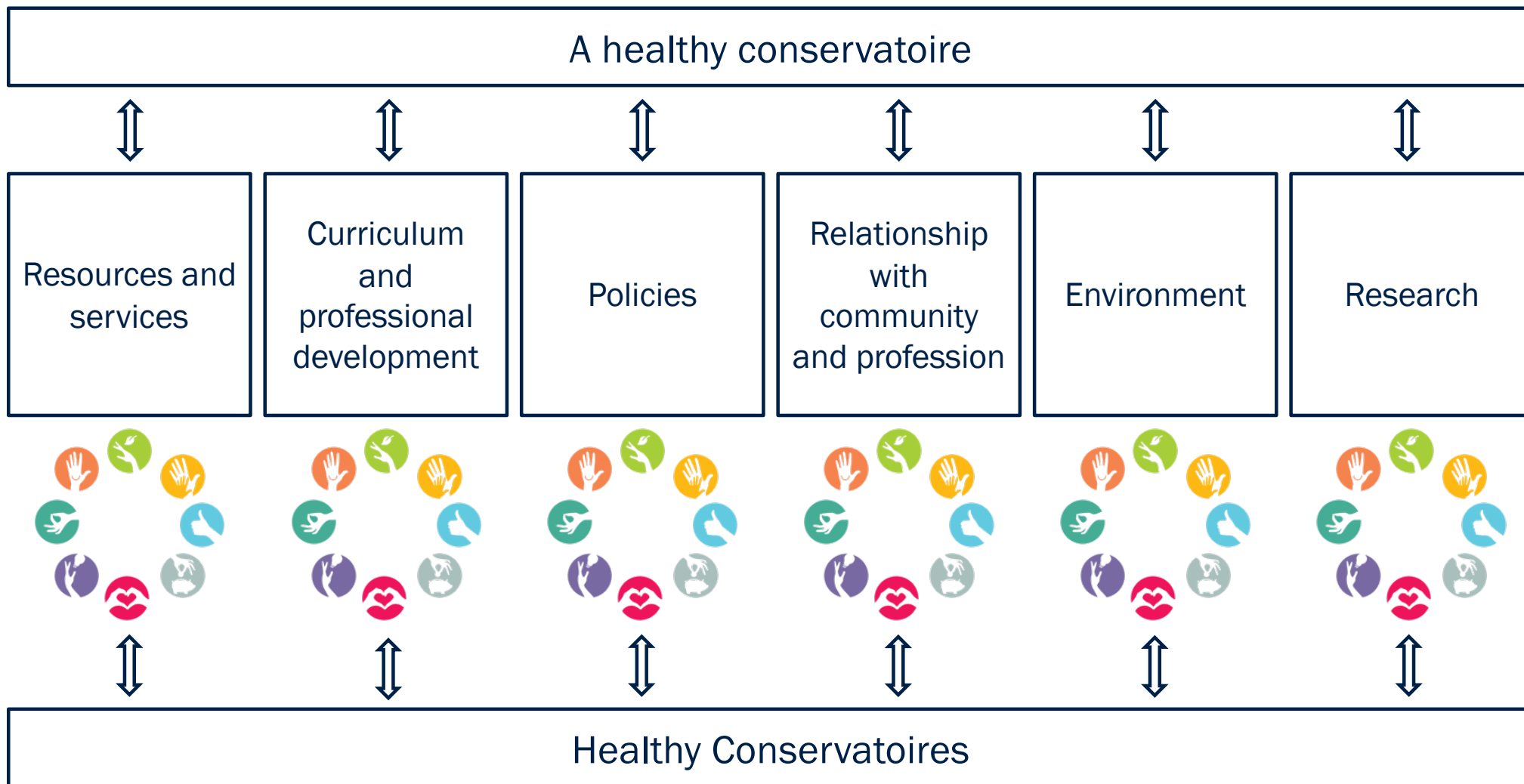
Intellectual



Emotional



Financial



after Holt (2015)

# Healthy Conservatoires

London  
15 November



HConservatoires



Healthy Conservatoires



[www.HealthyConservatoires.org](http://www.HealthyConservatoires.org)  
(coming soon)