

INSPIRING  
MUSICIANS  
SINCE 1886

BIRMINGHAM  
CONSERVATOIRE



BIRMINGHAM CITY  
University

*Where talented  
musicians grow*

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## Welcome to Birmingham Conservatoire

“The moment you arrive in Birmingham you will be at the centre of the United Kingdom in a major international city which is home to not just one but TWO of the world’s finest concert halls (Town Hall and Symphony Hall). Birmingham is also home to a world class orchestra (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra) and a constant stream of visiting international soloists – many of whom come to give masterclasses at the Conservatoire. The possibilities for you to develop a career in music will be endless – especially if you take advantage of the unique collaborations the Conservatoire has to offer as part of a major University.

You will soon discover that the Conservatoire’s practice rooms, studios and performance spaces are hives of activity, buzzing with the creativity and hard work of students committed to becoming professional musicians. You will also benefit from specialist conservatoire training and be treated with the individual care and attention you need as we aim to inspire you to become the very best musician you can possibly be.

In addition, we have long-established links with Birmingham’s globally renowned music organisations, giving you not only the opportunity to learn from professionals elsewhere in the city but also the chance to forge connections that will be invaluable for your future.

We look forward to welcoming you to Birmingham Conservatoire.”



**Professor Julian Lloyd Webber**  
Principal, Birmingham Conservatoire



Sir Simon Rattle,  
President of Birmingham Conservatoire

## Why choose Birmingham Conservatoire?

Along with the success and satisfaction you will experience, Birmingham Conservatoire has a reputation as a friendly and welcoming place to study. We are like one big family here at the Conservatoire – all working together to create something different and special to the best of our abilities. We listen to you, encourage you as an individual and, above all, prepare you to graduate from the Conservatoire thoroughly equipped to take your place in the highly competitive music profession.

Being a part of Birmingham City University also means that you will have access to state-of-the-art facilities which are unavailable at other music colleges.

You'll receive opportunities to perform in two of the world's finest concert halls – Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Town Hall – and the roster of illustrious visiting soloists and professors is awe-inspiring.

**Professor Julian Lloyd Webber**  
Principal, Birmingham Conservatoire



Birmingham Conservatoire Jazz Orchestra outside Town Hall





## The benefits of Birmingham

Birmingham Conservatoire is situated right at the heart of the city, within a few minutes' walk of Symphony Hall and Town Hall, two magnificent concert halls where our orchestras perform regularly.

There are many other arts venues equally close by, ranging from Birmingham Hippodrome (home of the Birmingham Royal Ballet and a regular host to the Welsh National Opera) to jazz clubs and bars.

At the CBSO Centre, another close neighbour, the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG) presents its ground-breaking concert series.

Just as important, art galleries, museums and theatres, and the iconic Library of Birmingham are all in the immediate vicinity, making Birmingham city centre a thriving cultural hub to rival any European city. Indeed, Birmingham is often dubbed the 'youngest city in Europe', with 40 per cent of the population aged 25 or under, making for a city that buzzes with energy.

Road and public transport systems make Birmingham easily accessible, nationally and internationally. This is reflected in the city's famously multicultural life, and also at the Conservatoire itself. The student body reflects the city's diversity, with a growing international reputation as well as a wide national and European dimension.

Teachers are likewise able to visit from around the country and from across Europe, giving the Conservatoire an enviable roster of tutors who enrich the training you receive during your time with us.

## Birmingham City University

As the Conservatoire is part of Birmingham City University, students benefit from being part of one of the largest communities for training in the creative and cultural arts outside London.

Birmingham City University offers a vibrant, multicultural atmosphere in which to study. The University has around 23,500 students from over 80 countries studying at sites across Birmingham. Although you will learn alongside other music students, your University colleagues are often no more than a stone's throw away, which means there are no limits to your opportunities for creative collaboration as long as you have the imagination and drive to make them happen.

Together with Birmingham School of Acting, Birmingham School of Media, Birmingham School of Art, Birmingham School of Architecture and Design and the Schools of English, Visual Communication, Fashion and Textiles and Jewellery, Birmingham Conservatoire demonstrates the University's enviable and growing reputation for excellence in both the traditional and digital arts.

From music to media and film to fashion, our students regularly win awards and gain national recognition for their achievements. You'll see them on television and on stage, hear them in concert halls, jazz clubs and on CD, and see their works in galleries and on the high street.





## Student life and accommodation

### Birmingham Conservatoire Student Council

The Conservatoire has its own student council, made up of and chaired by student reps – elected students who want to make the Conservatoire the best place it can be! The reps aim to improve the Conservatoire by speaking to staff not just internally, but also within the wider University, Students' Union and other music colleges.

### Students' Union and Conservatoire activities

As a Birmingham Conservatoire student you are automatically enrolled as a member of Birmingham City Students Union, which allows you to get involved in University-wide sports, societies, volunteering and student campaigns.

Here at the Conservatoire we also have some of our own activities to support our students. This includes the Conservatoire Events Team who run our social events, ranging from our own Freshers' Week in September, to the Christmas Party and the End of Year Ball which has been held at venues such as the ICC, Edgbaston Cricket Ground and the Botanical Gardens. These are a great way to let your hair down!

The recently-established Birmingham Conservatoire Sports also acts as an umbrella for any sport you wish to take part in. There is already a men's football team and occasional summer cricket team. However if you would like to take part in something else, you are strongly encouraged to set a team up. You could end up playing against teams from the University and other music colleges!

### Accommodation

A variety of accommodation is available through the University's Accommodation Services, either in University-owned or private Halls of Residence at various locations throughout the city, or from private companies that supply accommodation close to our city centre campuses.

Most first-year students opt for the local Campus Living Village (CLV Birmingham) private accommodation, a modern complex located on Belgrave Middleway, just over a mile from Broad Street and Five Ways in the city centre.

Rooms are en-suite with shared kitchen/lounge per flat including a TV (licence fee not included), a gym, WiFi throughout and a social programme. CLV have even invested in new practice rooms for Conservatoire students so you have no reason not to continue your development away from the Conservatoire building!

More information:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/accommodation](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/accommodation)

[www.clvuk.com/locations/birmingham](http://www.clvuk.com/locations/birmingham)

After the first year, many students move out of halls into private accommodation, generally living in houses by the Edgbaston Reservoir or in flats in the City Centre.





## Our international community

Students and staff come from all over the world to study and teach in the unique environment at Birmingham Conservatoire – one in four of our students is international. Our international student population has risen and diversified greatly over the last 10 years, we now have students from 41 different countries on six different continents. We also have Erasmus partnerships with more than 50 European conservatoires and bilateral agreements for student exchanges with institutions in the US, South America and China.

If you are applying from outside the EU, we recommend you contact our team before making your application. We can provide advice on international qualifications, making an application, fees, visa applications, funding and many other matters. Once you have accepted a place at the Conservatoire, the University's International Advice and Support team will become an important resource for you. Once you arrive in Birmingham, an orientation programme will help to make you feel at home. We have a dedicated International Student Mentor who is responsible for looking after the welfare of our international students.

Further details about where to go for further advice, English language requirements for our courses, audition recordings and our international audition centres is available on our website at:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/international](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/international)



## Professional development and partnerships

The music industry is a kaleidoscope of different and exciting opportunities and today's musician is likely to pursue a portfolio career, working in several areas simultaneously.

To stay in touch with how the musical world is evolving, we have forged excellent links with professional musical organisations in Birmingham and beyond.

Each of these partnerships provides the opportunity for our students to step out into the professional world – a vital stage in any musician's transition from student to full professional. They range from performance opportunities, through outreach workshops to pedagogical mentoring.

We currently have partnerships with:



[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/partnerschemes](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/partnerschemes)

## Partners in orchestral development: the CBSO



The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is the flagship of musical life in Birmingham and the West Midlands – and one of the world's great orchestras.

The CBSO works as Partners in Orchestral Development with the Conservatoire, including conductor and ensemble workshops, research, unique performance opportunities, the CBSO Orchestral Training Scheme and a bespoke Master's award in Orchestral Performance specifically for String players. Working with the CBSO Learning and Participation team, Conservatoire Students also have the opportunity to support CBSO Family Concerts at Symphony Hall and Notelets concerts for early years groups at the CBSO Centre, as well as working alongside CBSO musicians on education projects throughout the West Midlands.

The CBSO Orchestral Training Scheme enhances employability by providing the opportunity for selected students from the Strings, Woodwind, Brass and Percussion departments to gain first-hand professional experience by observing and

playing in CBSO rehearsals. Students on the Scheme also have the opportunity to perform in CBSO masterclasses and receive orchestral audition training and mentoring from CBSO principals.

Auditions for the scheme reflect professional orchestral audition procedures. Supporting workshop activities extend the benefit of the Conservatoire's involvement with the CBSO to all of our orchestral students.

Outside of the Scheme, the Conservatoire's Symphony Orchestra performs at Symphony Hall four times a year before CBSO concerts, and many Conservatoire students also perform with the CBSO Youth Orchestra, tutored by CBSO musicians and some of the world's leading conductors, as well as singing with the CBSO Chorus in Birmingham and beyond.

[cbso.co.uk](http://cbso.co.uk)

## Student profile

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When choosing to study an instrument full time it is essential that you make your decision based upon the tutor whom you can work with best to achieve your goals. When Dr Louise Lansdown was appointed as the head of strings I knew that I would be joining a strings department under a dynamic, forward-thinking leadership I was awarded with a very generous scholarship which allowed me the time to really focus upon my studies.

I am enjoying my one-to-one instrumental lessons, as that is the main focus of the course. However, I have also had some wonderful taster experiences of life as a professional musician. I have been fortunate enough to work with City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Welsh National Opera in their Professional Placement schemes. Last year I had a thriving chamber music life. During my time at Birmingham Conservatoire I have also been privileged enough to perform the world premiere of Benjamin Britten's youthful composition Chaos and Cosmos at the Town Hall. The piece began with a viola solo, which as the principal violist of the orchestra I was fortunate enough to have played.

The staff and the atmosphere at Birmingham Conservatoire is unlike any of the other music colleges that I have attended or visited. It is a supportive feeling amongst the fellow students and staff. We have also had some very influential players come to give recitals and masterclasses; my personal highlights have been violinist Alina Ibragimova and violists Maxim Rysanov, Thomas Riebl and Garth Knox.”

### Laura Feeney (student, viola) MMus Instrumental Performance

## Strings

As a student in the Strings Department at Birmingham Conservatoire you will be part of a dynamic and exceptionally supportive student and staff community. Strings Staff include leading UK and internationally renowned performers and pedagogues.

We foster creativity and individuality through our bold and varied performance programme offering a wide-ranging agenda of solo, chamber music and orchestral performance opportunities, many internal and external recital possibilities and frequent master classes from international artists and visiting tutors. International Chairs include Oliver Wille (violin), Thomas Riebl (viola). Alexander Baillie (cello), Thomas Martin (double bass), Catrin Finch (harp) and ensembles in residence the Navarra String Quartet, Schubert Ensemble and Gildas String Quartet as Junior Fellows.

We devote much attention to Pedagogy and the importance of adequately preparing our students for this essential and fascinating facet of the music profession.

“

**Studying at Birmingham Conservatoire allowed me to grow and flourish into the player I am today. It provided such a nurturing environment combined with top quality teaching and guidance, and this combination is what I feel really allowed me to find who I was as a player and develop in the right way. There were fantastic opportunities and each person was allowed to have their own personality – rather than being moulded in to ‘yet another violinist’!** Amy Littlewood”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/strings](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/strings)





## Woodwind

As a student of the woodwind department, you will immediately appreciate the supportive and collaborative attitude shared by our staff and students, making for an atmosphere that is motivational and inspiring.

We offer a wide range of experiences for our students, as soloists, in orchestras and as chamber musicians. You would be part of a very busy department!

We also devote much attention to pedagogy – an essential and extremely rewarding asset for future employment.

Our expert teaching staff are renowned as leading performers and teachers in the UK and provide exceptional tuition. Specialist tuition is available in all orchestral instruments and also recorder and saxophone. We take the greatest care to nurture and develop every student's skills, to create individuals with a wealth of knowledge, who are fully prepared for the profession.

“**The high level of teaching and the opportunities available to me were a great preparation for my professional career. On my first visit to the Conservatoire I liked the friendly atmosphere. Birmingham felt like a much more approachable and less daunting place to live than London, for example. The location right in the centre of Birmingham meant that we had easy access to concerts at the Symphony Hall and it was also close to the main amenities.**

Rosa Campos-Fernandez, 2nd clarinet, Halle Orchestra”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/woodwind](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/woodwind)

## Alumni profile

“



I was very fortunate to be part of a vibrant Woodwind department. Its team of passionate and inspiring tutors gave me (and continue to do so as an alumnus) the support, encouragement and imagination I needed to pursue an exciting and varied performing career. I also got heavily involved with the Composition department who helped me develop my passion for new and contemporary music.

When I moved onto Master's level, I worked with composition tutor Ed Bennett with his own ensemble, Decibel, which performs new and experimental pieces, so I was moving from a student-tutor relationship to a working relationship, which felt exciting. The Conservatoire has a great creative atmosphere and all the people who teach there are very involved in the local scene. It's great to learn from them, getting that direct link into the professional world.

The courses were fantastic – they all had just what I wanted, particularly the APD [Advanced Postgraduate Diploma], which is really about gearing you up for a career as a professional performer. The Conservatoire was also very flexible with my teaching commitments, enabling me to fit my part-time work around my studies.

I formed my folk duo with Charlie Heys, who was also a student at the Conservatoire, in 2007 and played a few gigs in the local area, before entering the BBC Young Folk Awards, where we reached the final. Our first CD followed, and we've now just released our fourth. We write and arrange all of our own material, which is rooted in folk traditions. While at the Conservatoire I worked with several chamber groups formed with other students there and got involved with the various chamber music prizes.

It's important to get involved early on and put yourself forward for new and sometimes daunting experiences, applying for orchestral work and seeking out concert opportunities. Working and learning from lots of different musicians, and not giving up, are all important steps towards a lasting and fulfilling professional career; it's just a matter of getting your name out there and making contacts.

I also teach privately to pupils at a wide range of different ages and abilities. I worked with the music service while a student, and with early years. I've also worked with Joe Broughton, whose folk music course gets young people interested in folk music and builds their aural skills because nothing is ever written down in these sessions!”

**Jack McNeill**  
(alumnus, clarinet) BMus, MMus, AdvPgDip

## Brass

The world of brass is exceptionally diverse requiring uniquely versatile musicians to offer a broad range of skills. Our internationally acclaimed team of tutors together with our carefully designed, practical curriculum gives our students opportunities to focus on a high level of professional performance in Orchestral, Brass Band and Jazz while developing advantageous links with the 'music business' preparing them for careers in performance, education and administration.

Besides tuition on your principal study instrument you will be offered opportunities to study related instruments such as Early Brass alongside an active schedule of international masterclasses and brass workshops covering everything from practice technique to orchestral repertoire. The Conservatoire also maintains a comprehensive range of ensembles, frequently directed by guest artists and our own talented staff.

To prepare our graduates for the realities of life as a professional musician we are also proud to offer 'side by side' training opportunities with all our major arts partners in the Midlands (see page 12 for details).

“

My time studying at the Conservatoire (1996-2000) gave me an excellent balance of playing experience and performance exposure, with time to practice and develop my skills as a trumpeter under world class tuition. Now as one of the resident trumpet tutors it gives me great pride to see the continuing success of the department launching students into flourishing careers in the music business.

Alan Thomas (Principal Trumpet BBC Symphony Orchestra)

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[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/brass](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/brass)

## Percussion

We aim to offer the most versatile training with employability being the main focus of our course.

Our busy department offers an immensely broad and thorough percussive education. We have over a dozen highly acclaimed specialist tutors who are all working and well connected in the current music industry throughout the UK and overseas. Our syllabus is carefully designed to cover classical to commercial, contemporary to rock and pop, Cuban to folk, ballet to opera, outreach to solo percussion.

We regularly host masterclasses and 2014/15 saw over 150 hours of classes from both the department tutors and visiting specialists. These included Neil Percy, Pete Lockett, Sam Walton, Colin Currie, Alexej Gerassimez, Paul Clarvis and Matt Skelton. Other classes include regular Practice Pad Workouts, Audition Approach, Rock and Film Timpani, Junk Percussion, Workshop Leading, Moeller Technique, West End Shows, Carnival Music, Folk Percussion, Film Music and numerous Auxiliary Percussion Methods to name but a few.

“

The facilities at the Conservatoire allowed us to build our professional portfolio through use of excellent recording facilities, strong staff expertise, a supportive external engagements department and numerous opportunities to represent the Conservatoire at arts events.

Tim Palmer and Jason Huxtable

”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/percussion](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/percussion)



## Vocal and Operatic

Offering extensive tuition for aspiring professional singers, our comprehensive course of study allows you to follow your individual preferences, while experiencing all types of repertoire, from opera and early music to performance with technology. Repertoire and performance classes cover Lieder, French and English song and oratorio, while specialist activities include individual vocal coaching and Baroque and contemporary music classes; language tuition in French, Italian, German and Russian; as well as masterclasses with visiting professionals.

All students undertake a theatrical training programme including drama and stagecraft and both undergraduates and postgraduates have the opportunity to perform in fully-staged operas, early operas and musicals, as well as our hugely popular opera scenes and song evenings.

The Department of Vocal and Operatic Studies offers extensive tuition for aspiring professional singers. Our comprehensive course of study has been designed to allow you to follow your individual preferences, while providing you with the broad base of experience needed in the profession today.

“

**“The teachers at the Conservatoire are very professional and friendly, and there are lots of competitions and performance opportunities for students.”** Li Li

”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/vocal-operatic](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/vocal-operatic)

## Alumni profile

“



Coming to the Conservatoire was the greatest and most rewarding thing I have done. The support given to me throughout my course was brilliant. I knew that if ever I was worried about any aspect of my course there would be someone I could go to and I would always feel comfortable speaking with them. This helped me to gain a First Class degree and a huge amount of performance experience.

I was able to work with fantastic conductors and get used to performing with an orchestra which has helped tremendously with the professional work that I have already done with orchestras. I was also able to work with Michael Barry who directs the Conservatoire's operas; this helped me to gain confidence in acting and taught me a lot about stagecraft. The skills I have learned from various vocal tutors in performance classes has helped me understand text in various languages and how to convey this to an audience.

I have had an abundant amount of help from Julian Pike (Head of the Vocal and Operatic Department); not only did he inspire me to love Lieder and French song but he also gave me constant guidance throughout the course, whether I had a lack of confidence or if I was struggling with my workload, he was a

constant source of support and he has an inspirational passion for his craft. Of course my vocal tutor, Rita Cullis, taught me on a weekly basis and again not only with my singing and performance skills but also with how I should take steps in developing my career.

My favourite part of my time at Birmingham Conservatoire was the amount of performance opportunities I received. The operas were incredible to be a part of as were all other opportunities I had to work with other instrumentalists.

I really love Birmingham as a city and this is what drew me initially to audition here. I came to an Open Day and was greeted by Steve Halfyard, whose enthusiasm and wit were amazing and I just loved the friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

I plan to apply for the Bayrische Staatsoper course in Munich and also the National opera studio and ENO opera works next year. I will continue to be a self-employed singing teacher and continue to audition for opera companies over the next couple of years.

”

**Elizabeth Ryder**  
(alumna, vocal and operatic performance)  
BMus



## Keyboard

You will receive intensive pianistic training through individual tuition, supplemented by a wide range of specialist. Masterclasses with distinguished professionals will form a fundamental component of your study, as will weekly performance classes. Undergraduates undertake fortepiano and accompaniment training and all students are encouraged to participate in chamber music and to develop their concerto work. Performance opportunities include Symphony Hall Solo Piano Showcase events and annual themed Festivals.

**Organ and Harpsichord:** With a unique set of resources, we have established ourselves as a major European centre for the study, research and performance of organ art music. We are the largest UK department of our kind and current students include prizewinners at St Albans, Odense and Breda International Organ Competitions and assistant organists from Ely, Lichfield Cathedrals and St George's Chapel, Windsor.

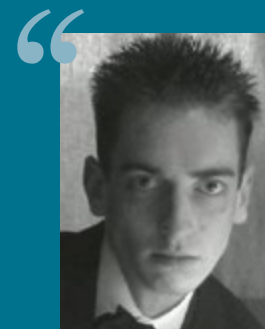
Harpsichord tuition covers repertoire from the late 16th- to the late 18th-century, but can expand to include contemporary works. Coaching in chamber music is available and both harpsichordists and organists receive regular continuo classes.

“ I've had a wonderful year as a Weingarten scholar. A busy year full of inspiring concerts, masterclasses, chamber music projects; a year during which I barely had a week without a performance, workshop or some special program. ”

Zsuzsanna Tihanyi

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/keyboard](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/keyboard)

## Alumni profile



I work extensively in musical theatre, working on West End productions, and major UK/European tours as a Musical Director and keyboard player. I am also visiting member of staff at the Conservatoire, as Staff Accompanist, and also as a visiting MD to conduct opera and musical productions for the Vocal and Operatic Department.

My other freelance work includes orchestral sessions with CBSO and the Hallé, and Musical Supervisor and Arranger for QDos Entertainment and One From The Heart Productions.

My four years at the Conservatoire were extremely useful in providing lots of performing experience – I accompanied a large number of fellow students in their end of year recitals, building a reputation as a strong sight-reader, which was to result in my employment as a staff accompanist upon graduation. I was also able to do lots of networking and make good contacts within different areas of the music industry.

Whilst working with fellow students, I produced several transcriptions and arrangements which were performed at the Conservatoire, both as part of recitals and concert performances.

A piano reduction of Joseph Schwanter's Concerto for Percussion & Orchestra (commissioned for a Conservatoire event whilst I was a 2nd year student) was later published worldwide at the composer's request.

Whilst in my 3rd year, I was given the opportunity to work as Assistant Musical Director on the Summer Term musical production, which then led to my employment on various projects with the Department since graduating.

I chose to study at the Conservatoire as several of my friends and colleagues in the area had been students, and had great things to say about the institution. During the Open Days and at my audition day, I found the atmosphere to be very friendly and very welcoming. The Conservatoire was also able to provide good links with potential employers within the Birmingham area, including the CBSO scheme.

In future I plan to keep increasing my network of employers, and to gradually move into musical direction full time, but still to enjoy the variety of my other freelancing work where possible. ”

**Ben Kennedy**  
(alumnus, percussion) BMus

## Jazz

Our Jazz Department offers outstanding tuition from musicians who are active performers, composers, session musicians and band leaders. The fact that they come not only from the UK but also from the USA and Europe gives a real breadth and depth to the range of jazz music represented here, as well as greater scope for you to find a suitable mentor to watch over your individual development.

Your study will focus on developing not only your skills in improvisation, but also in small group, large ensemble performance and original composition. The bespoke nature of our courses means that you will learn among a body of highly-motivated and committed students, which is a natural result of the stimulating and inspiring culture we aim to create for you as jazz musicians.

As well as nurturing individual development, we place a great deal of emphasis on artistic exchange between students and staff, both within the Conservatoire and on the wider public stage: from local venues to international festivals.

“

In the first two years, the course provided a structure and rigour to learning, which gave me a solid foundation in harmony, theory, melody, composition and facility on my instrument. In the latter years the increased freedom allowed me the time and space to develop projects and use the material from the first two years to work out a more personal approach to playing and writing music. Lluís Mather

”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/jazz](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/jazz)

## Conducting

Our postgraduate choral and orchestral conducting courses build on the success of all our other departments, including the Vocal and Operatic Department, whose Chamber Choir regularly releases CDs to critical acclaim. You will also work with our expert staff, including renowned conductors Paul Spicer (Finzi Singers), Jeffrey Skidmore (Ex Cathedra Choir), Daniele Rosina, Michael Seal and Edwin Roxburgh.

Choral conductors benefit from a dedicated chamber choir and will enjoy regular rehearsal and performance opportunities. To build your skills in conducting, interpretation and vocal technique, your individual study will be split between conducting and singing lessons according to your needs. You will also have coaching in editing music and managerial skills.

Orchestral conductors will work with our experienced staff conductors and with many distinguished guest conductors who visit for occasional projects, as well as lead orchestral sectionals, direct new music and conduct some orchestral projects. Classes learning core repertoire with a pianist, along with podium time with symphony orchestra and a variety of other ensembles, encourage the development of the wide range of skills orchestral conductors need.

“

The best part of the course was the extraordinary amount of podium time we were given – I was conducting nearly every day for a year. I don't think any other conducting course in Britain offers such an opportunity. Richard Laing

”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/conducting](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/conducting)

## Composition

Now, more than at any other time in history, composers can express themselves in any number of musical and artistic genres.

In contrast to most other composition courses at this level, at Birmingham Conservatoire we celebrate this diversity and make it our mission to foster artists who challenge, innovate and transform notions of artistic practice today.

Through individual tuition and small classes you will develop an understanding of differing compositional styles, particularly contemporary art music, pop, jazz and fusion, experimental and conceptual music, film and theatre music, electroacoustic and studio-based composition.

From the outset, you will be encouraged to explore your own ideas both within the context of a specific genre and using genre as a jumping-off point for the creation of new artistic concepts.

“I had a wonderful time at the Conservatoire. Having switched course I had many performer friends so immediately started writing pieces for them. This was a blessing too, as I was able to hear very quickly almost everything I wrote. I benefited greatly from BCMG workshops and composition lessons with various established composers, including Michael Finnissy and Luca Francesconi. Charlotte Bray”

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/composition](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/composition)

## Alumni profile



Laura Mvula, a singer-songwriter, specialised in composition and graduated from the Conservatoire with her BMus in 2008. She landed her first record deal with Sony Music Entertainment's flagship label, RCA Records, and in March 2013 released her debut album, *Sing to the Moon*, which reached the UK Top 10.

Also a director of the Lichfield Community Gospel Choir, Laura is a rising star whose talents have seen her winning two MOBO awards in 2013 - Best Female Act and Best R&B/Soul Act - plus nominations for an Ivor Novello Award, the Mercury Music Prize, BRIT and Q awards. She also came fourth in the BBC's Sound of 2013 new music list. Laura has wowed audiences with renditions from her album - acclaimed by the Sunday Times as 'a masterpiece' - at Glastonbury, South by Southwest and Coachella Festivals.

When she was younger, Laura hated performing and she admits that when she arrived at Birmingham Conservatoire she was very shy and uncertain of which direction she wanted to go in musically but her confidence soon developed.

“I studied composition with the wonderful Joe Cutler. Being around a lot of excited musicians who were happy to be doing what they're doing was an amazing experience. Studying at the Conservatoire taught me confidence. A year after graduating I took up a part-time supply teaching post as a music teacher. The next three years saw me composing and arranging for a *capella* group Black Voices and teaching composition and vocal workshops in various citywide projects.

In 2011 I began sketching song ideas using my own small studio set up. I was signed to Sony RCA and Universal Music Publishing in 2012 and recorded my debut album as a singer/songwriter. The album [*Sing to the Moon*] is a collection of songs I've written and performed featuring a group of musicians in west London. The album was produced by myself and TV composer, Steve Brown.

Joe Cutler inspired and supported me tremendously throughout my studies at the Conservatoire, and it was he who suggested I develop my songwriting and performing. Without Joe giving me a first platform on which to begin experimenting and develop my confidence I'm quite sure I wouldn't have had this opportunity to record a whole album of songs!

**Laura Mvula**  
(alumna, composition) BMus



## Music Technology

Music Technology is a first study area designed for musicians who want to specialise in creative uses of music technologies. Whether you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate, this area will allow you to develop your creativity and skills to professional level using our state-of-the-art facilities.

You will be offered tailored tuition in your specific area of interest, as well as training in core skills such as studio and sound recording techniques, electroacoustic composition for fixed media, synthesis, sampling, production and music for the moving image. A programme of masterclasses with industry professionals will supplement your individual training and you will have the chance to share ideas and discuss topical issues with your colleagues in group activities.

There is a strong focus on the real-time interaction between performers and computers and you will be encouraged to collaborate with performers in the creation of interactive works to be performed in our unique live electronics performance venue, the Recital Hall.

“All the lecturers have such a huge enthusiasm for the subject, it makes it really interesting and really brings music technology to life. It's obvious that the staff love their subject and are very knowledgeable in the area, which is great for me to be able to learn from them.” Luke Aziz

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/music-tech](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/music-tech)

## Performance opportunities

Playing in orchestras and other large ensembles at Birmingham Conservatoire represents one of the most important steps for you, en route to becoming a professional musician.

The range of experience, from period music training through to the newest developments in contemporary music, via the great classics, opera and even pops concerts, will help you develop the kaleidoscope of skills required for the variety that professional music-making demands.

The Conservatoire also takes bookings for student performers from the general public for functions, weddings and the like, providing professional, paid experience for our students.

## Guest performers

The breadth and scope of the music you will encounter will be enhanced further by the opportunity to work with the many great artists that regularly visit the Conservatoire.

Each artist, whether they are conductors, soloists or professional orchestral members bring their own style to their work to engender an important learning experience for the budding professional musician.

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/performance-opportunities](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/performance-opportunities)



Guest performer Tasmin Little



## Academic Study (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

All our courses are designed with the aim of producing thoughtful, well-informed and therefore highly employable musicians. At both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, work in your first-study area will be complemented by a range of supporting academic studies intended to equip you with knowledge and skills that will give you the edge in the professional world.

In the first two years of our BMus programmes the emphasis is on giving you a firm grounding in aural skills, harmony, music history and performance traditions. As you progress through years three and four, you are given more choice and can specialise in particular areas that interest you and, ultimately, devise your own projects.

Our postgraduate courses allow you to develop your interests still further, offering modules ranging from chamber music to editing, music criticism to film music, which will give you the opportunity to pursue areas of study in line with your own strengths, enthusiasms and career goals.

## Pedagogy, Learning and Participation

Preparing you for a portfolio career is central to our courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Alongside your busy performing schedules, you study, observe and practise workshop-leading and instrumental/vocal/compositional teaching techniques through our Pedagogy and Community engagement modules.

You are supported by a range of vocational placements offered by local music services, providing the opportunity to work alongside professional practitioners in one-to-one, small group and whole class instrumental lessons, or get involved with choir, composition and ensemble training.

You can gain further experience through our vibrant Learning and Participation programme, collaborating with primary, secondary and special needs schools and a diverse range of charitable and social music and arts organisations. There are a number of voluntary schemes available for you to build your portfolio, while other schemes offer small bursaries for successful candidates, in many cases leading to employment opportunities.







Paul Spicer directs Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir, who produce a professional album most years

## Tutors

Our tutors represent all aspects of the music profession. From our heads of department to our visiting tutors and masterclass guests, every one of them has enjoyed a successful professional career and in most cases continue to practise as musicians and composers in their own right. Their combined expertise ranges from world-leading research to award-winning compositions through to the highest levels of instrumental and vocal performance. Not only have they worked alongside some of the biggest names and greatest performers in the profession, often they are the names in the profession you want to learn from.

What they share is a desire to provide you with the most robust and individually tailored training possible, as you prepare for a challenging but hugely rewarding career as a professional musician.

Profiles of our tutors can be found in the department pages on our website:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/departments](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/departments)

## Research

Our teaching is underpinned by high-quality staff research in many areas of musicology, composition, music technology and performance.

The 2014 Research Excellence Framework reconfirmed the extremely high level of our research. All of our research was deemed to have 'outstanding' or 'very considerable' impact, while our research environment achieved a 90% rating as being world-leading or internationally excellent. Musicological research covers a wide historical range, notably through our French Music Research Hub, as well as late Medieval music, Italian Baroque music, British Music Criticism, Film and Television music.

Composition research is similarly wide-ranging, from notated work via conceptual approaches, through to highly advanced use of technologies, both for purely electronic works and for the live interaction of digital technology with human performers. Birmingham Conservatoire has been one of the leading players in the emergence of performance research in the last 20 years. The Conservatoire is part of the Midlands Three Cities Doctoral Training Partnership, which provides AHRC-funded studentships to outstanding candidates.

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/research](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/research)



## The courses we offer

At Birmingham Conservatoire we offer a wide range of courses at undergraduate, postgraduate and research levels, including:

### Undergraduate

- BMus (Hons), which includes instrumental performance, vocal performance, composition and music technology. Direct entry to the second year of this four-year course is available for exceptionally talented applicants.
- BMus (Hons) Jazz  
Direct entry to the second year of this four-year course is available for exceptionally talented applicants.
- BSc (Hons) Music Technology (not delivered solely by the Conservatoire, this is a three-year course as opposed to a four-year BMus)

### Postgraduate Research

- MPhil
- PhD

### Postgraduate Taught

- Instrumental Performance (PgCert, PgDip, MMus)
- Jazz Performance (PgCert, PgDip, MMus)
- Vocal Performance (PgCert, PgDip, MMus)
- Orchestral Performance (PgDip, MMus) – for suitably advanced stings players only and delivered in partnership with the CBSO
- Conducting – Choral or Orchestral (PgDip, MMus)
- Composition (PgCert, PgDip, MMus)
- Musicology (MA)
- Music Technology (PgCert, PgDip, MMus)
- Professional Performance (AdvPgDip)  
Specialisms in Instrumental Performance, Vocal Performance, Collaborative Piano, Chamber Music and Opera Repetiteur.

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/courses](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/courses)

## Electives

Whatever your course, there will naturally be an emphasis on your first-study area and the supporting academic and musicianship skills. For those seeking to widen their professional development even further, we offer an extensive programme of 'electives' that are mostly open to all, though a few require an audition.

These options can vary, but recently they have included: Alexander Technique; Jazz Big Band; Brass Band Scoring and Arranging; Chamber Choirs; Chorus; Conducting (beyond the core level of the BMus programme); Creative Ensemble; Early Music Performance; Folk Ensemble; Gospel Choir; DJ Techniques; Sound Recording; Jazz Improvisation; Kodály Musicianship; Performing with Technology; Techniques of Electronic Music; and Improvisation Skills for the Classical Musician.

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/electives](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/electives)

Joe Broughton, a Conservatoire alumnus himself, has been the director of the Conservatoire Folk Ensemble since 1998 and has built the band into a 50-piece touring entity in its own right. Depending on the performance venue, the ensemble can have up to 100 members!

They go on a UK tour at the end of May or start of June each year. Apart from being an incredible show for the audience, the ensemble has become something of a training ground for the young folk generation, many of the stars of the folk scene today having been members.

Their performances continue to earn reviews like "Tremendously exhilarating and joyously life-affirming..." and "You MUST, MUST see this to understand just how fantastic it is!"

[www.folkensemble.co.uk](http://www.folkensemble.co.uk)



# How to Apply

To apply for any of our undergraduate or postgraduate courses (apart from research degrees and those listed below) you will need to use the UCAS Conservatoires at **www.ucas.com/ucas/conservatoires**

- Apply directly to us for Research Degrees (MPhil/PhD)
- Apply via UCAS for Popular Music Practice (HND) and Music Technology (BSc)

## To apply via UCAS Conservatoires you will need to:

1. **Register with UCAS Conservatoires** by entering your personal details (e.g. name, date of birth, address).

2. **Login to UCAS Conservatoires** with your username and password to continue your application.

3. **Provide contact details for two referees.** One of your referees must be able to comment on your academic ability; the other must be able to comment on your musical ability. The reference forms are available to download from the UCAS Conservatoires website, and you should email or post them to your referees.
4. **Fees and payments.** There is a one-off application fee, payable to UCAS. An additional non-refundable audition fee is payable to Birmingham Conservatoire; this is collected through the UCAS Conservatoires system.

5. The **deadlines** for on-time applications is on or around 1st October in the year prior to entry. You are advised to apply as early as possible. Late applications may be accepted until the end of August (annually) but the later you leave it, the less likely it is we will have space on your chosen instrument.

Once we have received your completed application and you have paid your audition fee, we will invite you to audition.

Following you audition you may be

- a. offered a place (either conditionally or unconditionally) depending on whether you have completed the pre-requisite qualifications.
- b. offered a place on our Reserve list.
- c. unsuccessful in you audition.

More detailed guidance on applying through UCAS Conservatoires is available on our website at **www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/how-to-apply**

# Auditions

## Preparing for your audition

The audition requirements for each instrument area are available on our Department pages on our website. You will need to download and read these, then decide on your repertoire.

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/departments](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/departments)

We will contact you by email to arrange an audition time. When arranging your audition time, please remember that our timetables are extremely tight, and it will not normally be possible to offer a different date or time.

## Tips for your audition day

Given the unforeseen travel delays often experienced by candidates in the past, please aim to arrive earlier than your official arrival time, especially if a long journey is involved. On arrival, please follow the signs to the Audition Reception Centre on the first floor. Travel and parking information is available at:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/auditioning](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/auditioning)

## Making the most of your audition

Competitive auditions can be daunting. If you haven't already seen it, you might want to download Making the Most of Your Audition from our website. Produced in collaboration with other conservatoires, these practical hints and tips explain how to get the most out of a conservatoire audition.

## On the day

All candidates and their parents are invited to attend a meeting with the Principal or appropriate Head, who will be happy to answer any questions you may have. If you wish, you will be able to look round the building in the company of one of our current students, who will also lead walking-tours of the city centre and the immediate Conservatoire surroundings.

As you would expect at a conservatoire that trains musicians to the highest standards, you will also find world-class venues, state-of-the-art studios and equipment, and a wealth of supporting facilities.

While we will be without our **Adrian Boult Hall** from September 2016, this does mean that you will benefit from performing and rehearsing in prestigious venues local to the Conservatoire, such as Town Hall, Symphony Hall, the CBSO Centre and Birmingham Cathedral. And of course, from September 2017 our state-of-the-art concert hall at the new building will be open, providing a rich and diverse schedule of concerts and events. More information on page 40.

Our 150-seat **Recital Hall** is a flexible, modern performance space with adjustable acoustics. Well-suited to solo and chamber music performance, it has also been redesigned to accommodate performance with live electronics. It is home to a highly-sophisticated multi-channel sound system, which allows performers complete control over amplified sound within the entire performance space. The Hall also benefits from the installation of a new organ.

An interesting, modern area, our **Arena Foyer** backs on to the Adrian Boult Hall. With an audience capacity of 100, the Foyer

can be used for a variety of concerts and events, as its space is entirely flexible.

Our **music technology facilities** are some of the best of their kind in the country. All of our studios are capable of recording from any of our concert halls or live rooms. Our studios and live rooms provide a variety of recording and production equipment, including digital audio workstations and software.

All students have full access to the **Birmingham Conservatoire Library**, an integral part of the University's Library Services, which links all its central and specialist libraries and enables students to borrow items from any of them.

Alongside wide-ranging and substantial collections of books and journals, specialised print and computer-based sources are available to support various projects and research needs. The Library's collections include thousands of books, CDs, orchestral and band sets, vocal scores, individual scores and parts, and sound recordings. Our Audio Room has a suite of listening and recording equipment, plus two separate cubicles for listening and viewing.

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/facilities](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/facilities)







## Birmingham Conservatoire: moving into the future

In September 2017 we will be moving into a new £46 million home, which will be purpose-built for our needs alongside Millennium Point, adjacent to Jennens Road in Eastside.

The new building is set to be unique and contemporary, and will incorporate two major performance spaces including a fine new concert hall for orchestral training and public performance, private rehearsal and practice rooms, recording and technology in addition to providing teaching spaces for musicians from a variety of disciplines.

Building work began in August 2015 after Professor Julian Lloyd Webber put the first spade in the ground at a turf cutting ceremony. The building is scheduled for completion in summer 2017.

Keep up-to-date with the latest news on the new building at:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/newhome](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire/newhome)

## Policies and Procedures

The University brochures and web pages are intended as a guide to the University's courses and facilities and form no part of any contract between you and the University. When you enrol at Birmingham City University, either for the first time or as a returning student, you enter into a formal agreement with the University, with responsibilities on both sides.

### Full terms and conditions, including legal information:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/policies-and-procedures](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/policies-and-procedures)

### Equal Opportunities

Birmingham City University promotes equality of opportunity in every aspect of its provision. Our Equal Opportunities Policy Statement can be found on the webpage below:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity)

### Employability

Birmingham Conservatoire, part of Birmingham City University, is committed to preparing students for successful, professional careers.

Birmingham City University's Employability Statement:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/employability-statement](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/employability-statement)

### Disability

Birmingham City University's Disability Support Team aims to enable students with disabilities or learning support needs to make the most of their time at university. We regard disclosure of a disability as a positive thing and think it is important that you feel you can tell us about any disability you may have so we can try to support your individual needs. If you have not made us aware of your disability or you feel you may have a disability please contact the Disability Support Team on [disability@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:disability@bcu.ac.uk)

More information on Student Services, including disability:

[www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-services](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-services)







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### **Birmingham Conservatoire**

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**[www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire)**



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