

## **School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London**

### **The Department of Music**

**The Department of Music at SOAS is the only Music department in the UK dedicated to the study of world music, and it is the largest centre of ethnomusicology in Europe.**

SOAS Department of Music aims to promote in-depth understanding of the musical traditions of Africa and Asia through teaching and research, and to provide training in ethnomusicology and related academic disciplines. Staff of the department specialise in the music of the main regions of Africa and Asia and associated diasporas.

Uniquely combining language scholarship, disciplinary expertise and regional focus, SOAS has the largest concentration in Europe of academic staff concerned with Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and has a staff-student body comprising more than 100 nationalities. The SOAS Library houses a major collection of books and journals on world music, as well as thousands of audio-visual materials. Music Department students draw on the rich life of SOAS in many ways, participating in the diverse array of seminars held around the school, studying joint degrees, learning a language to support their doctoral research, or taking ‘floater’ courses from other departments.

The Music Department achieved excellent scores in all the recent Research Assessment Exercises. We have a faculty of internationally distinguished [academic staff](#), who publish their research in books, articles, and reference works. They also produce CDs, host radio programmes (e.g. [BBC Radio 3](#)), and even find time to play music. We produce our own series of books on world music, the [SOAS Musicology Series](#).

### **Type of Programmes**

Music can be studied at all levels: BA, MMus or MA, and MPhil/PhD.

### **Undergraduate Degrees**

#### ***BA Music***

The BA in Music at SOAS recognizes no geographical, cultural or social boundaries to the study of music. But you will study in particular depth the music of specific regions of Asia and Africa, selected from East Asia (China, Korea, Japan), South Asia (India and surrounding countries), South East Asia (especially Indonesia and Thailand), Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the African diaspora including Cuba, or the Jewish world. You will also study at least one instrument or vocal style from these or related regions, learning directly from expert teachers representing London’s rich musical diversity. You will study traditional genres and contemporary musical forms, classical and popular music, musical structures and social contexts, and relationships between music and religion, gender, business, or healing. We offer you training in the principles and methods of ethnomusicology, and in practical techniques such as transcription and analysis of music, fieldwork methods, sound recording, and

radio presentation (we have a dedicated sound recording studio, and our students are actively involved in the SOAS student radio station, SOAS Radio). Students with a background in Western music can take courses in music history and composition at King's College, London. A unique advantage of studying music in its cultural context at SOAS is that a vast range of courses in languages and other subjects is open to you to take as "floaters" units or a joint degree.

Practical engagement with music is an essential part of the degree. Performance courses are offered at all levels of undergraduate study, including kora, ud, tabla, gamelan, cuban piano, shakuhachi and many other instruments, ensembles and styles. The Department also hosts a high-profile concert series, workshops, seminars, conferences and a World Music Summer School.

***BA Music and ...*** a combined degree, combining Music with a language, Anthropology, Study of Religion, History of Art, Development Studies or other discipline available at SOAS.

- See the [Department of Music website](#) for full details of BA programmes.

*Note:* We are currently seeking approval for a new *BA World Music* programme. Details will be posted on the above website when available.

## **Master's programmes**

### ***MMus Ethnomusicology***

This programme enables you to study the musical traditions of a selected area in their cultural context. Courses may be chosen from the following regions: East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, Cuba, Africa, or Jewish music.

In addition, the MMus introduces the aims and methods of Ethnomusicology as a discipline, and offers options to pursue further issues in ethnomusicology or to take non-Music courses relating to your primary area of study. It is suitable for anyone wishing to deepen their understanding of world music, and may be studied as a stand-alone degree or as preparation for future research. Convenor: Prof Keith Howard ([kh@soas.ac.uk](mailto:kh@soas.ac.uk)).

### ***MMus Performance***

This programme has been designed primarily for practising musicians who wish to specialise in world music performance in the context of an academic degree. Students study an African or Asian performance tradition in relation to its cultural and musical context, performance theory and practice-based research.

In addition to practical performance tuition, students take one of the regional music courses offered at SOAS (taught through lectures and tutorials), a Performance Theory course, Performance as Research, and a course from a list of options. The programme includes a practice-based research training component that may enable students to continue to a practice-based MPhil/PhD. Convenor: Dr Nick Gray ([ng18@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ng18@soas.ac.uk)).

### ***MMus Music in Development***

The aim of this programme is to develop critical understanding of music as a communication tool and process in a variety of development contexts; relevant theories in Ethnomusicology and allied disciplines; participatory research methodologies and applications; workshop modelling and management skills; and a critical knowledge of musical practices from select regions of the world.

The programme is designed to prepare students for entry into a range of professional sectors, including international development, social music therapies, cultural research and policy, sound and audiovisual archiving, media for development and intangible heritage programmes. Convenor: Dr Angela Impey ([ai6@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ai6@soas.ac.uk)).

### ***MA Global Creative and Cultural Industries (School of Arts)***

This multi-disciplinary programme is designed to develop a thorough understanding of the global creative and cultural industries. ‘Pathways’ allow students to focus on music, art/archaeology, media or film. Students can elect to take practical multimedia skills courses, and to gain experience through ‘Directed Study in Industry’, taking maximum advantage of the opportunities available in London as a global creative capital city.

The MA is designed for two types of students. The first will be interested in pursuing careers as practitioners, managers, consultants, policy advisers and entrepreneurs in the creative and cultural industries in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The second will be more concerned with developing academic research in the creative and cultural sectors, and the intersections between industry, cultural policy and international development. Further details: [School of Arts degree programmes](#).

- See the [Department of Music website](#) for full details of Masters’ programmes.

### **Research degrees (MPhil, PhD)**

Staff and students of the Department of Music pursue research on a wide range of subjects, mainly but not exclusively focused on the music of Asia and Africa. Staff have special interests in the music of China and Central Asia (Harris), Korea (Howard), Japan, Indonesia and Thailand (Gray), India and Nepal (Widdess), the Islamic Middle East (Wright), the Jewish world (Wood), West Africa and Cuba (Durán) and South and East Africa (Impey). But research is not limited to these areas: projects have been undertaken on American jazz, and on Caribbean, Mediterranean and Eastern European music, for example. Staff often have research interests in issues that cross regional boundaries; see the [Department Staff page](#) for a summary of their interests, and select the name of a lecturer for further details of their individual research specialisms and activities.

Whatever its regional origin, music is studied as a cultural phenomenon, from social, analytical, historical, development and performance perspectives. Instrumental and vocal, sacred and secular, art and popular, traditional and modern musical forms are all of equal interest. Research methods employed include fieldwork, interview, archive research, recording and filming, performance, transcription and analysis, and composition. Extensive training is provided for research students in their first year, integral to which is participation in a regular Research Seminar; and in preparation for fieldwork, training is available in recording and editing techniques for sound and film.

Postgraduate students of the Department come from a wide variety of backgrounds in the UK and from overseas. Most are performers of music as well as researchers, and there is a lively interchange of musical skills and interests. After graduating, they go on to an equal diversity of careers in music and other fields. See the [Department of Music Website](#) for information about recently completed theses and current PhD students.

### **Student numbers (approx)**

Undergraduate: 60

MMus: 30

Mphil/PhD: 20

### **Performance Options**

Available in all degree combinations and compulsory in some (refer to the department website).

For 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduates: Practical performance in an Asian or African ensemble taught within the department. Available traditions (varying slightly from year to year) include: Zimbabwean mbira, Indian tabla, Thai mahori ensemble, Middle Eastern ensemble, Korean percussion ensemble. Students will normally have weekly group lessons. Students are assessed continuously throughout the session on the basis of their effort and progress, and keep a Learning Diary.

For 2nd- and 3rd-year undergraduate and postgraduate performance options, the tradition chosen should relate to the same geographical region as a student's major regional music course. It is the student's responsibility to select both the tradition and an appropriate teacher, and to arrange regular lessons throughout the academic session; reimbursement for lessons will be made up to a financial limit agreed at the beginning of the academic session. Recent students have learnt mbira, tabla, congas, guqin, koto, 'ud, sitar, saz, Ewe drumming, Yoruba singing, Persian singing, klezmer, Cuban piano and others. Students are expected to keep a Learning Diary of their progress. Assessment is in two parts: 1) a practical examination, consisting of a recital (public except for 2nd-year undergraduates) lasting 20 minutes, and followed by an oral examination; 2) a portfolio of written work.

### **Special Resources**

Room 520 contains the Department audio-visual archive and facilities for Research Students. We have a recently refurbished suite of teaching and practice rooms on the ground floor which also house our large collection of African and Asian instruments. A recording studio is used for teaching and individual recording projects, and Music students can also access the SOAS radio recording suite. Various other facilities in the School also hold specialist AV and IT equipment relevant to music. The Department makes regular use of two large performance venues within the school: G2 and the

Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre.

The [SOAS Library](#) holds books, journals and recordings, including standard major reference works on music such as the *New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* and the *Garland encyclopedia of world music*. Through the Library website electronic resources such as *Grove Music Online*, the *Garland encyclopaedia of world music*, the *Smithsonian Global Sound* archive, the *JSTOR* collection of journals etc can be accessed online, on or off campus. The Library also holds thousands of audiovisual materials relevant to Asia and Africa. Listening and viewing facilities are provided in the Library, and most CDs are available on short loan.

Among special items in the Department's collections are: field recordings, films and slides of South Asian music made by Arnold Bake from the 1920s to 1956; a large working collection of musical instruments from Asia and Africa; and extensive staff collections.

### **Staff**

**Dr Lucy Durán** *BMus MMus PhD (Lond)*

Music in the Mande world; Music of Mali, Guinea, Guinea Bissau; gender and music in West Africa; popular musics of Atlantic Africa; childhood music learning in West Africa; Cuban music, especially son and rumba; radio as a medium; and the world music industry.

Tel: 020 7898 4374 Email: [ld@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ld@soas.ac.uk)

**Dr Nicholas Gray** *MA MPhil (Cantab) PhD (Lond)*

Music of South East Asia; Indonesia; Bali, especially music for the Balinese shadowplay; composition; improvisation; analysis; music and religion.

Tel: +44 (0)20 7898 4686 Email: [ng18@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ng18@soas.ac.uk)

**Dr Rachel Harris** *BA (Oxon) MMus PhD (Lond)*

Ethnomusicology; musics of China and Central Asia, especially Uyghur; recorded music; music and ritual, music, identity and politics

Tel: 020 7898 4513 Email: [rh@soas.ac.uk](mailto:rh@soas.ac.uk)

**Professor Keith D Howard** *BA (CNAAB) MA (Durham) PhD (Belf) PGCE LTCL FRSA*

Ethnomusicology; music of East Asia, especially Korea; Korean culture and society; composition; music education; shamanism; music in religion

Tel: 020 7898 4687 Email: [kh@soas.ac.uk](mailto:kh@soas.ac.uk)

**Dr Angela Impey** *BA (Durban) BMus (Cape Town) PhD (Indiana)*

Music of southern Africa and the African Horn (Sudan); advocacy ethnomusicology; sound/music, memory and place; forced migration, cultural mapping and borderland identities; human rights and development.

Tel: 020 7898 4433 Email: [ai6@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ai6@soas.ac.uk)

**Professor Richard Widdess** *MA MusB PhD (Cantab) MA (Lond)*

History and theory of Indian classical music, dhrupad, Newar music of Nepal, historical ethnomusicology, analysis of musical performance, cognitive approaches to music, music and meaning, music and religion.

Tel: 020 7898 4685 Email: [rw4@soas.ac.uk](mailto:rw4@soas.ac.uk)

**Dr Abigail Wood** MA MPhil PhD (*Cantab*), Joe Loss Lecturer in Jewish Music

Jewish Music, especially contemporary Yiddish song and klezmer; the sounds of urban Jerusalem; music among minority and immigrant communities in Israel; music and religion; urban and internet-based fieldwork

Tel: 020 7898 4243 Email: [aw48@soas.ac.uk](mailto:aw48@soas.ac.uk)

**Professor Owen Wright** BA (*Leicester*) BA PhD (*Lond*)

Music of the Islamic Middle East; historical musicology

Tel: 020 7898 4334 Email: [ow@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ow@soas.ac.uk)

### **Financial support**

SOAS offers a number of scholarships, bursaries and awards to support students undertaking our degree programmes. A range of scholarships are also provided by external organisations. For full details go to the [Scholarships and Bursaries](#) page of the SOAS Website.

### **Further information**

#### **SOAS World Music Summer School**

Every summer SOAS offers an exciting summer school of world-wide music. Our course programme is unique, varied and truly multi-cultural. If you are passionate about music and cultures, there is something for everyone: Intensive and inspiring courses, practical workshops, taster sessions and master classes for students of all backgrounds, beginners to advanced, amateur and professional.

For a full course list, dates & costs see our [timetable pages](#).

Enquiries: Tel. +44 (0)20 7898 4500, E-mail: [musicevents@soas.ac.uk](mailto:musicevents@soas.ac.uk)

#### **SOAS Concert Series**

With an ever growing popularity and profile, our [Concert Series](#) has established itself as the place to go for some of the most interesting and varied multicultural music in London today, with consistent high quality and a great concert atmosphere guaranteed. Most concerts are free of charge to SOAS students. Our season runs from October to May every year, and features 12 concerts.

Departmental URL: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/music/>

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