Vocal Training in the Contemporary UK Conservatoire

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Curriculum for the 21st Century Singer

UK conservatoires are experiencing a ‘paradigm shift in specialist education in the performing arts’ (Gaunt 2016:269) and burgeoning singers are facing increasing industry demands for versatile ‘portfolio careers’ (Bennett 2008:81). Now is the time to evaluate these changes and current debate is focused on whether the UK contemporary conservatories curriculum meets present industry needs, whilst continuing to produce ‘performers who uphold the classical tradition’ (Ford 2010:14).

Whether acoustic or amplified, the human voice is the most versatile of all musical instruments and since the mid-20th century vocal pioneers and scientists’ innovations have gifted us with a variety of singing styles and a wealth of new vocal understanding. The diversity of industry opportunities for singers has expanded and in response the UK classical music conservatories have incorporated new ideas into the existing vocal curricula and introduced a range of diverse vocal genre programmes.

This poster presentation forms part of my PhD research which is principally focused on curricula studies and vocal training: employability and resilience; versatility and genre, transferable skills.

Data & Methods

Nine of the eleven members of Conservatoires UK (CUK) which provide vocal programmes were included in the initial data as shown in the central table. The programmes are at all levels from undergraduate through to post-masters that provide specialist vocal training.

The case studies as shown in the figure below were chosen by comparing the conservatoire prospectuses for the academic year 2017-2018. The three selected were founded as classical music conservatories towards the end of the nineteenth century (1872-1893) and have initiated additional musical genre programmes since the millennia. The programmes are all awarded degree level status.

Limitations

Data was sourced from the conservatories’ public websites and prospectuses. This may not fully represent the conservatories’ practices or policies at a more detailed level.