

Musicum20 2025 – New forms emerging from the old

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I have just returned from the 2025 Musicum 20 Symposium, held this year in Greenwich, just outside London. A great conference is one from which you come away feeling enriched, enlivened and refreshed and this was as good as it gets. Over three days the members had a packed series of presentations which looked at all aspects of the what the next five years may hold. What was very interesting was the crossover of ideas and thoughts with one presentation illuminating the concepts of another.

AI featured heavily

Artificial Intelligence (AI) featured heavily in discussions as it will no doubt influence what happens in higher education in the immediate future. Some views were somewhat pessimistic while others saw it as an opportunity to reimagine how we teach and assess and interact with students. I was particularly impressed by the work of *Professor Hadas Wittenberg* who talked about the need to establish human relationships with our students and develop portfolios of work to show that they have learned. There were provocative statements such as “the era of the 5000-word research paper is dead” challenging us all to rethink what we do and how we do it.

New forms emerging from old forms

The sense of new forms trying to emerge out of old ones was underscored by the venues in which the conference took place – *Trinity Laban Conservatoire*. It is made up of a modern building designed for dance and the possibility of other creative arts. The other build is the former Royal Naval College; a building steeped in history. Formerly, a royal refuge, Queen Elizabeth I was born there. Anne Boleyn was held there and taken by boat along the Thames to her execution at the Tower of London. When it was given to the Royal Navy, the likes of Captain Cook studied there. Now it is home to a modern music school with everything from Steinway pianos to Fender electric guitars.

Modern music and dance education

We were treated to a concert of West African music one evening. But there is no doubt that the requirements of modern music and dance education put strains on a building from the 16th century. It is a maze of passages and staircases. The basement contains all the historical doors which had to be replaced but may at some time in the future be returned to their original frames.

For me it was a fitting metaphor for the theme of the Conference - new ideas straining against the strictures of history and the way things used to be. These are challenging times in higher education where we need to hold on to what has been valuable and look for an answer as to where we go next.

Also worth reading –

About Musicum20 - [6113ad_2aaf8aeb2bf649a19101f8b447d52b16.pdf](#)

Greenwich - [6113ad_e79885b052a84201a8f2d8cabd6aacd7.pdf](#)

About Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance -
[6113ad_c525b623d55141b2b7d93211ff6fe52f.pdf](#)

The importance of international conferences -
[6113ad_d4388806e326431189b5ecc10ec799c2.pdf](#)

About Associate Professor Tom O'Connor - [Assoc. Prof. Tom O'Connor | musicum20](#)

Associate Professor Tom O'Connor is currently Academic Director at the *Australian Guild of Education* (Melbourne). He is also a member of the Musicum20 think tank.