



Guildhall School of Music & Drama appoints Simon Purcell as International Chair in Improvisation

PRESS RELEASE
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Guildhall School of Music & Drama is delighted to announce that **Simon Purcell**, one of Britain's most accomplished contemporary jazz pianists is returning to the School as International Chair in Improvisation in the 2018 autumn term. Purcell taught at Guildhall as Professor of Jazz Improvisation and Piano from 1988-2005 before spending twelve years as Head of Jazz at Trinity Laban between 2005-2017.

As a performer, he has worked both as a leader and sideman with, among others, Red Rodney, Kenny Wheeler, Eddie Henderson, Stan Sulzmann, Jean Toussaint, Valery Ponomarev, Dale Barlow, Gene Calderazzo, Julian Argüelles, Bobby Shew, Julian Siegel, Conrad Erwig, and Steve Williamson.

Simon Purcell says: *'I am excited to be returning to the Guildhall School and to be part of such a forward-looking institution. I feel honoured to be offered this position alongside such prestigious musicians, both in the Jazz department and across the School.'*

Joining Purcell in the jazz faculty this year are three visiting artists, providing masterclasses throughout the year: alumnus **Yazz Ahmed** (Improvisation with Electronics), **Jason Singh** (Voice Sculpture) and **Tom Walsh** (Trumpet).

Both Purcell and Ahmed are performing in the Jazz Faculty Showcase on **Thursday 25 October** at the end of the three-day annual Guildhall Jazz Showcase, where Milton Court Studio Theatre is transformed into a jazz club bringing a diverse range of performances to celebrate the very best of jazz today.

Biographies

Simon Purcell originally came to prominence during the UK jazz boom of the 1980s through his band 'Jazz Train', a quartet with Julian Argüelles and numerous appearances with visiting American artists (Red Rodney, Kenny Wheeler, Eddie Henderson, Jean Toussaint, Valery Ponomarev, Dale Barlow, Bobby Shew, Conrad Erwig). His recent CD "*Red Circle*" was released to critical acclaim and features some of the most important contributors to the UK's creative music scene during the last two decades with bassist Steve Watts (Loose Tubes et al), drummer

Gene Calderazzo (Pharaoh Sanders), saxophonist Julian Siegel (Partisans etc) and trumpeter Chris Batchelor (Hermeto Pascoal, Loose Tubes).

Simon was Head of Jazz at Trinity Laban Conservatoire (2005-2017) and member of the Pop and Jazz Steering Group for the Association of European Conservatoires (2008-2018). He is the author of educational research and a highly respected teacher. As a passionate music educator and thinker, Simon has been active in the conservatoire sector since 1987, contributing to the development of jazz education in the UK for many years. In 2006 he received the Jazz Educator of the Year by the All Party Parliamentary Jazz Appreciation Group (nominated again in 2016). His research into teacher-development in jazz education was published in 2005.

Yazz Ahmed is a British Bahraini trumpet and flugelhorn player. Her music, through which she seeks to blur the lines between jazz, electronic sound design and the music of her mixed heritage, has been described as ‘psychedelic Arabic jazz, intoxicating and compelling’. In recent years she has lead her ensembles in concerts in London, around the UK and abroad. Yazz has also recorded and performed with Radiohead, Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry, ABC, Swing Out Sister, Joan as Police Woman, Tarek Yamani and Amel Zen. During her recent year as an LSO Soundhub composer, she explored writing music for her newly developed quarter-tone flugelhorn, which enables her to get closer to the spiritual nature of the blue notes in Arabic music. Her first album, *Finding My Way Home*, 2011, marked the beginning of her exploration of fusing jazz and Arabic music. This was followed in 2017 by her critically acclaimed album, *La Saboteuse* (Naim).

Jason Singh is a composer, musician, sound artist, creative producer, facilitator and performer. His creative output includes unique live beatbox film scores, large scale ambisonic sound installations, sound design for gallery/museum exhibitions, collaborative experiments with sound, ceramics, textiles and museum objects. He also vocally recreates birdsong and entire forestry environments and his work has featured on the BBC TV shows *Imagine*, *Springwatch* and *CountryFile*. Singh has collaborated with a wide range of artists and organisations, including Hull City of Culture 2017, BFI, BBC, V&A Museum, Unity Theatre, Whitworth Gallery, Tate Britain, Royal Exchange Theatre, Nitin Sawhney, Rokia Traore, Shabaka Hutchings, Stuart McCallum, Yazz Ahmed, Sarathy Korwar and Sebastian Rochford. Singh is deeply committed to music and art education and has been devising and facilitating creative projects since 1999. He has mentored and toured with musicians from Rajasthan, India, he is currently music director of *Frequencies*, a music project run by Music for Youth. Singh facilitates national and international workshops exploring the voice, body and technology, and works with mainstream and young people with special educational needs (SEN).

Tom Walsh, aged 26, is based in London, where he graduated from the Jazz Course at the Royal Academy of Music with 1st Class Honours in 2013. In his first year at college, Walsh was the inaugural recipient of the Humphrey Lyttelton Jazz Prize, an award for outstanding jazz performance. Upon leaving college he had also received other awards including the Wolfson Prize (2012) and the Alumni Development Award (2013). In September 2013, Walsh was appointed the trumpet chair in the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, where he has worked alongside international jazz luminaries such as Benny Golson, Branford Marsalis, Kurt Elling, Bob Mintzer and Mike Stern. He has also played trumpet with the WDR Big Band & Vince Mendoza. Tom has also played with some of the UK's other top big bands including: The BBC Big Band, The Stan Sulzmann Neon Orchestra, The Laurence Cottle Big Band, The Gareth Lockrane Big Band, The Ronnie Scott's Jazz Orchestra, NYJO and The Mark Nightingale Big

Band. Walsh has also performed with John Wilson, The RTE Concert Orchestra, RPO, Philharmonia, English National Ballet Orchestra and the English Session Orchestra as well as on multiple West End shows, X Factor Big Band shows, BBC Proms, and the ongoing BBC TV series Bruce's Hall of Fame. In pop and commercial music he has played and recorded with the likes of Van Morrison, Blur, Mark Knopfler, Jessie J, Gary Barlow and Shirley Bassey and has co-produced and played a series of concerts with Al Jarreau at London's famous Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club.

Guildhall School of Music & Drama is provided by the City of London Corporation.

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Notes to Editors

About Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Guildhall School is a vibrant, international community of young musicians, actors and production artists in the heart of the City of London. Rated Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework and ranked as the UK's top conservatoire in the Guardian University Guide 2019 for Music, the School is a global leader of creative and professional practice which promotes innovation, experiment and research, with over 1,000 students in higher education, drawn from nearly 60 countries around the world. The School is also the UK's leading provider of specialist music training at the under-18 level with nearly 2,500 students in Junior Guildhall and the Centre for Young Musicians.

Guildhall School is one of the world's leading conservatoires, highly regarded in the profession for intensive, dedicated training taught by renowned international teaching staff and through partnerships with the Barbican, London Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Opera House and the Academy of Ancient Music. Guildhall School offers state-of-the-art facilities to match the talent within its walls, including a world-class concert hall and three theatres at Milton Court, and has a distinguished list of music graduates, including Thomas Adès, Alison Balsom, Sa Chen, Sir James Galway, Tasmin Little, Zara McFarlane, Anne Sophie von Otter, Sir Bryn Terfel, Roderick Williams and Debbie Wiseman. www.gsmd.ac.uk/music