



## **Report on a Cathedrals Group Conference on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Newman University, 8-9 September 2017**

***Stephen Clift and Persephone Sextou***

With support from the Cathedrals Group committee of Vice-Chancellors, a two-day conference was organised at Newman University 8-9 September 2017, on Arts, Health and Wellbeing. Across the Cathedrals Group there is serious interest in this developing field of work, and the conference provided the opportunity for academics from member institutions (see Appendix 1) to come together and share their interests and explore opportunities to work together on joint projects.

The conference was opened by Professor Scott Davison Vice-Chancellor of Newman, who welcomed delegates to the university and extended his best wishes for a successful event. A full programme of talks, demonstrations and discussions followed, with key note presentations from Professor June Boyce Tilman, University of Winchester, and further talks from Polly Wright, Director of the Hearth Project, and Professor Norma Daykin and Dr. David Walters, University of Winchester.

Professor June Boyce Tilman

*June discussed how far music can provide us with a space that was once occupied by religion but now is occupied by something called 'spirituality'. She based her presentation on the idea that as human beings our wellbeing depends on four things: our bodies, our environment, our society and the cosmic.<sup>1</sup> The cosmic, she suggested is often excluded from conventional senses of wellbeing, but as humans we need to make meaning and the music is one way of doing that. As human beings, she explained, music affects the body, it links us with the environment, it makes us feel that we belong and it links us with the cosmic meaning, which is what human beings need in order to achieve a fully rounded sense of wellbeing.*

Polly Wright

*Polly presented on her work in drama but also about initiatives using reading and creative writing to promote wellbeing. She shared with the group ways in which people with mental health challenges improve their confidence and self-esteem as they become involved in a reading or writing group and that this promotes their mental wellbeing. She also described ways in which theatrical productions explore issues in health, and can be used to powerful effect within the professional training of doctors and other health professionals.*

Professor Norma Daykin

*Norma discussed her work in developing best practice in evaluation in arts, health and wellbeing where arts are used to support people with long-term conditions and address issues such as social isolation among older people. She argued that frameworks for evaluation are not necessarily agreed upon and so her work has attempted to bridge*

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1 Taken from *An Ecology of Health*, Rowan Williams: <http://www.gci.org.uk/speeches/Williams.pdf>

*these two different worlds. Major contributions include: the Creative and Credible Project - an evaluation website produced in association with Willis Newson Associates;<sup>2</sup> the Public Health England Evaluation Framework for Arts, Health and Wellbeing<sup>3</sup> and reviews through the What Works Wellbeing Centre on the role of music and singing in promoting wellbeing.<sup>4</sup>*

Dr. David Walters

*David described initiatives at Winchester University with the Centre for Arts as Wellbeing,<sup>5</sup> that bring together organisations in arts, and arts practitioners, with the health sector, including Clinical Commissioning Groups. The model adopted is one of co-production, which allows arts professionals to understand what are the priorities of the health sector and public health, and health professionals to appreciate what assets the arts and culture sectors can offer in promoting health and addressing health inequalities within local communities.*

Delegates also learned about the work of the Community and Applied Drama Laboratory (CADLab) led by Dr Sextou at Newman University,<sup>6</sup> and watched a demonstration of a *Bird Island*, a CADLab bedside theatre project for children in NHS hospitals and children's hospices in West Midlands performed by Newman Drama graduates and funded by BBC *Children in Need*.

Discussions during the first day focused on sharing potential interests in further work. A total of sixteen areas of interest were identified (see Appendix 2), and these were prioritised in a workshop on the second day. The top five areas of interest were:

1. A directory of academics with interest in arts, health and wellbeing across the Cathedrals Group, with a page and links on the Cathedrals Group website. (wide interest with leads: Prof. Stephen Cliff and Dr. Persephone Sextou)
2. A research project associated with the 2018 Choirs Festival taking place at Newman University (Prof. Stephen Cliff, Prof. June Boyce-Tilman, Gulliver Ralston, Chris Bartram, David Walters, Wesley Rolston)
3. A project on the experiences and needs (training, support, resources) of creative artists (Wide interest, including: Prof. Norma Daykin, Dr. Sara Houston, Sharon Manship, Angus McLewin, Matthew Hahn, John Rimmer, Eleni Hatzidimitriadou)
4. Welfare of children facing adverse childhood experiences and the value of arts-based interventions (Wide interest: Nick Ponsillo, Eleni Hatzidimitriadou, Matthew Hahn, Deborah Steele, Sharon Manship, Ali Franks)
5. A common Cathedrals Group framework for arts, health and wellbeing courses and training together with an on-line forum to explore opportunities for exchange (Jon Pugh, Ali Franks, Nicola Forshaw, Nick Ponsillo, Persephone Sextou, Deborah Steel, Florbela Teixeira)

In addition, Professor June Boyce Tilman and Gulliver Ralston agreed to take forward a proposal to edit a book on music, wellbeing and health, and invite contributions from

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://creativeandcredible.co.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arts-for-health-and-wellbeing-an-evaluation-framework>

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/music-singing-and-wellbeing-what-works-new-review-of-evidence/>

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.winchester.ac.uk/research/health-and-wellbeing-research-group/>

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.newman.ac.uk/applied-drama-lab/2647>

Cathedrals Group academics and researchers. This will be part of the *Music and Spirituality* series edited by Prof. Boyce Tilman and published by Peter Lang.<sup>7</sup>

These six ideas can be organised into three themes which relate to broader strategic concerns of all universities in the Cathedrals Group:

RESEARCH ACTIVITY	TEACHING ACTIVITY	COMMUNITY IMPACT and KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
Welfare of children facing adverse childhood experiences and the value of arts-based interventions.	A common Cathedrals Group framework for arts, health and wellbeing courses, training and teaching exchanges. Also, a Teaching & Learning Forum on Arts, Health and Wellbeing on the Cathedrals Group website	A directory of academics with interest in Arts, Health and Wellbeing across the Cathedrals Group, with a page and links on the Cathedrals Group website.
A research project associated with the 2018 Choirs Festival taking place at Newman University	A project on the experiences and needs of creative artists and training opportunities to meet needs	A proposal for a book on music, wellbeing and health with contributions from Cathedrals Group academics (eds: Boyce Tilman and Ralston)

### ***Deering Lecture***

There was also interest in the possibility that the 2018 Deering Lecture might focus on arts, health and wellbeing, or draw upon the resources of creative arts in exploring whatever theme is decided for the 2018 lecture.

### ***Film of the conference***

The proceedings of the conference were filmed and a short film is available in which keynote speakers summarise their contributions and delegates reflect on what they gained from the two days.

The film includes reflections from a number of delegates attending the two-day event:

"It's been a really interesting couple of days. It's been really good to meet like-minded people, people working in a similar spaces and places and share ideas and knowledge, and I really look forward to keeping in touch with these people, following up the ideas shared over the last couple of days." Ali Franks, Wales Trinity St. David

"A great conference from a wide variety of disciplines and universities. Lots to learn and very good networking too." Gulliver Ralston, Roehampton

"It's been a fantastic couple of days. It's been important to make connections between disparate elements of the field and see how we can all mutually work together and develop some of the idea that have been floated this weekend." Jonathan Pugh, Wales Trinity St. David

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.peterlang.com/view/serial/MAS>

"It was a very interesting experience attending this conference and I think it is very important that at the end of this today we have a plan, we have a way to move forward now, and I think all of us have to go back to our institutions and start discussing how we are going to take this forward." Eleni Hatzidimitriadou, Canterbury Christ Church

### ***Next steps***

We are keen to build upon the work of the two days, and would be grateful if the Committee of Vice-Chancellors would consider allocating further funding for a following up meeting next year, and to provide some support in taking forward the principal ideas listed above. In particular, we are keen to have space within the Cathedrals Group website to provide information on the aims, membership and activities of our developing network with priority to the top five areas of interest generated at the conference.

If the Vice-Chancellors are willing to consider further support in principle, we would be happy to produce a costed proposal.

Stephen Clift and Dr. Persephone Sextou  
October 2017

## **Appendix 1**

### **Delegates attending the conference**

Bishop Grosseteste

Tracy Jeffery  
John Rimmer

Canterbury Christ Church

Stephen Clift  
Eleni Hatzidimitriadou  
Sharon Manship  
Nicole Holt  
Angus McLewin

Chester

Nick Ponsillo

Newman

Persephone Sextou  
Alison John  
Wesley Rolston  
Deborah Steele  
Florabela Teixeira

Roehampton

Gulliver Ralston  
Sara Houston

St. Mary's

Matthew Hahn

Wales Trinity St. David

Jonathan Pugh  
Ali Franks

Winchester

June Boyce Tilman  
David Walters  
Norma Daykin

York St. Johns

Chris Bartram  
Nicola Forshaw

## Appendix 2

### Ideas for further collaborative work

1. A bank of information about members' arts, wellbeing and health interests and activities in each CG university
2. A survey of current education and training provision in arts, wellbeing and health across the CG universities at all levels
3. Collaborative working to produce a common modular framework for an arts, wellbeing and health programme?
4. Networking of PhD students working on arts, wellbeing and health projects.
5. CG Annual Choirs' Festival – survey, evaluation, research linked to the Choirs Festival at Newman University in 2018
6. A project on the experiences and needs (training, support, resources) of creative artists
7. Survey of creative arts opportunities provided by CG universities to support the wellbeing of students and staff
8. Examination of arts and humanities provision in the CG universities, in the context of the loss or contraction of provision
9. 'Adverse childhood experiences' – impacts on development and education of children and young people – can the arts/music help mitigate impacts?
10. 'Artists in Residence' – to what extent have CG universities had artists in residence?
11. New edited book drawing together contributions from the CG universities on arts and health.
12. Co-writing of a peer-reviewed article reflecting on the contribution of the CG universities to the field of arts, health and wellbeing.
13. The Deering Lecture – future focus on links to the arts, wellbeing and health work across the CG universities. Highlighting the contribution of the arts/creativity to the issues focused on in the lecture.
14. Validation of training provision from external organisations/charities. The Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies (BCAT) for example, runs a 10-week experiential course on creative arts therapies. Live Music Now runs a five-year training programme for musicians.
15. Links between CG universities and outside organisations through the arts and creative activities? For example, local hospitals, prisons, social care etc.
16. Arts for wellbeing in the context of PGCE courses and other teaching training provision