

Laidlaw Research and Leadership Scholarship –
Personal Impact Report

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My Laidlaw Scholarship has enabled me to do things I did not think would be possible for me as an undergraduate. Both my summer projects have helped me develop skills in research and leadership that have set me up for life. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to discover more about myself and grow as a leader over the course of these two years. Now that I have started my final year at Durham, I feel well equipped to achieve my goals in my degree and move on to leadership roles in the working world. This report will discuss my personal growth throughout the Laidlaw Scholarship Programme over the last two years.

Research

During my first summer I stayed in Durham to pursue a research project entitled 'An historical network of Clara-Wieck Schumann's Piano Concerto Op. 7'. In this period I addressed the issues in the problematic analysis of Clara Wieck-Schumann's Piano Concerto Op. 7 by Stephan Lindeman by creating a new approach to musicology: the historical network. This framework allows for forgotten works by marginalised composers to be understood in their contexts and appreciated for their form. I understand how important it is for people to feel represented in their life and this paper was one step towards that by emphasising the validity of Clara Wieck-Schumann as a composer without the shadow of her husband.

This research not only allowed me to practice my time management and planning skills but made me more adept at networking. I reached out to researchers across the world from Scotland, England, Cymru, Canada, USA, Austria, and Germany. This meant that my skills at being succinct and crafting effective communication massively improved by communicating across different cultures and time zones. This paper also set me up for writing my dissertation this year, which is based on the research I did in my first summer as part of my Laidlaw Scholarship Programme. The intense weeks of research also means that I am now familiar with a lot of the practices of academia and understand more about what working in academia might look like. It has reminded me the joy of research but also that I must ensure that my research outcomes help disseminate my research in an accessible way. To which end, this paper is available freely on the Laidlaw Scholars network and I am looking for organisations that help pay academics to host papers but also provide papers for free online.

This summer of research resulted in an article written with the same title as the project and a presentation at the International Conference for Undergraduate Research 2022. The latter presentation was a fascinating challenge for me as I had to reconsider the manner in which I communicated my research to tailor it to a non-musical audience. This meant that I had to unpack difficult terminology and determine language that was integral to understanding my research. As part of this, I decided to create some graphics to help communicate the importance and relevance of my

research. Doing this really highlighted the 'network' side of my methodology and showed how interconnected performers and composers were in the nineteenth century. Together with the original article, this presentation forms the basis for my dissertation. The addition of graphics and diagrams really aided understanding for non-musicians as it moved the focus away from technical musicological terms.

This research also led to working with Molly McCann at Hensel Pushers on an edition of one of Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's string quartets, and further work on an edition of her Overture, making it accessible for all orchestras to play without a score being behind a paywall. I hope this will finally lead to a performance of this piece in Durham before I graduate. I am continuing my work with Hensel Pushers because I see the value of creating equitable and accessible music for all; the organisation has allowed so many more people to play music by a woman who has been largely forgotten in the shadow of her brother, Felix Mendelssohn and his associates such as Robert Schumann.

Leadership in Action

In my second summer I created my own Leadership in Action project working with the Boulanger Initiative, an NGO looking at improving gender inequality in the classical music scene. This group works by providing already well-established orchestras with more diverse repertoire (such as music by Black people, people of colour, LGBTQ+ people and women) and educating young people and teachers about how to make music education equitable. My aim within this organisation was to bring my unique perspective as a trans and disabled person to further their agenda of creating equity in the music industry.

Although my initial proposal was to travel to Washington, D.C. where Boulanger Initiative is based, both the organisation and I felt it would be equally useful for me to work with them remotely. This allowed me to tailor my LiA experience to my access needs and contribute fully to the six weeks without being burnt out from travelling or finding it difficult to adjust to a new area. Instead of delivering teaching in-person, I created resources to facilitate that in-person teaching and discussed the best ways to deliver experiences in an inclusive manner before the events. Working with the Boulanger Initiative, I provided resources for teaching, created materials to disseminate information about marginalised composers such as Louise Farrenc, guided discussions for Transgender Day of Remembrance and contributed articles about a composition I wrote for that day, amongst various internal logistics surrounding these events.

I found it fascinating to learn about Louise Farrenc and create resources to share about her life and works. She was the only woman in the long nineteenth century to hold a position as Professor at the Paris Conservatoire and was one of the first women to take composition lessons there too. Farrenc is a model for strength and determination and I for one felt empowered reading about her story and sharing that with the world. Though it was concerning to hear how little recognition she receives now, I discovered there are several orchestras programming her works so more people can hear her compositional voice; I worked with the National Symphony Orchestra in the USA to help educate people on this amazing composer.

The most impactful thing I did was writing an article about how I composed my piece 'We Will Remember Them', aimed at acting as a piece for remembering those lost to transgender-related hate crimes. The piece consists of a canvas with lines of red paint on it symbolising each person who died to transgender-related hate crimes; the canvas itself looks like blood running down the page and provides a very stimulating idea of what a life can look like. A list of the names of those who died that year is read out. Each performer picks a line they want to articulate in musical form and plays when they hear a person they wish to remember. This piece won the 2021 EDI Prize in the Music Department at Durham University. It was fascinating to share my compositional process with other people so they can understand why I wrote such a deep and meaningful piece, why the score looks the way it does, and what kind of impact that had on me, the performers and the audience. I remember the first time this was performed and it brought me to tears in the recording studio reading out the names of people who had died because of trans-related hate crimes. It was incredibly moving to share this experience further with people who may not have understood the importance of this act of remembrance. Doing this work also led me to collaborate with the Durham University Joint Anglican and Methodist Society and offer music for their vigil on Transgender Day of Remembrance this year. I wrote a new piece reclaiming the famous text by Laurence Binyon 'For the Fallen' with the aim not to glorify war but to repurpose this text for a focus on remembering the lives lost. I did this because it felt important to include music by trans people for trans people at a vigil remembering their lives; I wanted it to be known that each person has a life worth remembering, regardless of how short lived it may or may not have been. I say this because of the sheer volume of children murdered.

In terms of my skills, I feel like I have improved my leadership abilities because I am able to work without authority or need for supervision and I am both culturally aware and empathetic. Learning about the struggles of Black composers getting programmed and reminded me that despite being part of several minorities, I have white privilege which absolutely impacts the way the world interacts with me. This also reminded me of my own heritage and upbringing in Wales and how important it is to

remember where I come from and how that affects my compassion and reactions. It is paramount to being a global citizen that I listen to different viewpoints and try to understand different cultures.

Working with an organisation in another country meant I had to be incredibly efficient in terms of time management. I was working with people 5 and 4 hours behind my time zone and so in meetings would have to take into consideration what time it was in each person's time zone to allow effective communication. It was helpful to be mindful of what might have happened in each person's day so I could enquire how they were doing and check in. In terms of my organisation, this meant that I would often be working from 2-10pm rather than the standard 9-5pm. This works particularly well for me as I have disabilities that make sleep and rest difficult; by being able to tailor my LiA experience to the evening it meant that I had the most energy possible to undertake any tasks set. It also meant I met these tasks and meetings with enthusiasm and fully enjoyed my experience working with Boulanger Initiative.

Whilst not directly related to the LiA, I found the Laidlaw Conference at LSE in 2022 incredibly interesting and beneficial for my growth as a leader. I listened to several effective leaders share their story and found it particularly fascinating to understand the concepts of high ego and low ego. This really made me think about the examples of good and bad leaders in my life and how easy it is to fall into the trap of bad leadership through focussing on personal goals rather than the growth of the organisation within which you work. I particularly enjoyed meeting Susanna Kempe, the CEO of the Laidlaw Foundation as it has led to an opportunity for me to work as a leader within the Laidlaw Schools Trust. I am excited to take on this role and explore applying my research and leadership skills within the school context.

Over the course of the two years, I have learnt many new skills necessary for leadership and seen myself grow not only as a leader but as a person too. I never used to think of myself as a leader, but now I direct St Cuthbert's Society Choir, have been President of two societies at my University, and presented at conferences around the world. It is undoubtedly because of the Laidlaw Scholarship programme that I was selected for an internship to look at accessible and equitable music education in schools in Canada. This scholarship has granted me access to places I thought unreachable, to work with people I have considered great leaders for a long time. I am incredibly proud of the progress I have made over these two years and feel so much more confident being a leader and my ability to lead only continues to grow. I look forward to seeing what the next steps in my career look like and how I will change and adapt to become the best leader I can be.