

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Nottingham		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UOA 33 Music		
<b>Title of case study:</b> The Solfeggio Tradition: Enriching Contemporary Music Education, Performance and Museum Practice in the UK, Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland and Singapore.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2013 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Nicholas Baragwanath	Associate Professor	4/01/2010 – ongoing
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 August 2013 – 31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Through uncovering a forgotten 18<sup>th</sup>-century performance and improvisation technique, that differs markedly from all modern methods and is significantly easier to learn, Baragwanath's research has led to: i) Curriculum changes at leading European conservatoires and HEIs, culminating in the adoption of the historical solfeggio method as a core curriculum subject at the Amsterdam Conservatorium, Maastricht Conservatoire, and Bern Academy of Arts, changing the way musicians are trained and how HEIs deliver music degrees including in Milan, Pavia and Rome. ii) Changes to Music Education in Schools, Private Learning and Summer Camps in the UK, Switzerland and Singapore, improving the understanding of the centrality of improvisation in historical music performance at children's music schools and through workshops, and online through 'The Art of Solfeggio' group with over 1,700 members, and online teaching materials used by parents and teachers worldwide. iii) The transformation of the rehearsal and performance practice of professional performers in Amsterdam. iv) Public engagement through media engagement and a partnership with the Foundling Museum (London), telling the story of how orphans were lifted out of poverty through music. This has in turn led to an enhanced understanding of this aspect of the history of the Foundling Hospital and a change in practice of the Museum's curatorial team.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research explains, for the first time, several fundamental aspects of music practice c. 1680-1800, including: how musicians learned to read 7 clefs and 12 key signatures with just two staff layouts by way of a system devised for medieval plainchant; how they used simple syllabic frameworks as bases for complex melodic improvisation and composition; and how they learned to 'speak' music like a language. This 18th-century solfeggio method bears no relation to similarly named modern methods. It is radically different from all current teaching systems (Kodály, Suzuki, European Solfeggio) as well as existing research on historical pedagogy, performance, and improvisation (including, e.g., 'Modernizing European Higher Music Education through Improvisation' <a href="http://Metricimpro.eu">Metricimpro.eu</a>, the <a href="http://Orgelpark.nl">Orgelpark.nl</a> project, partimento, schemata, counterpoint, and chord progressions). It is based on six-note 'hexachords' rather than modern seven-note scales and involves a mode of study akin to language acquisition.</p> <p>The research began with an AHRC Research Leadership Fellowship in 2013 [6], through which Baragwanath set out to explain how over 12,000 manuscript sources, called 'solfeggi', were used to teach skills in score-reading, performance, improvisation, and composition. The aim was to fill the last major gap in our knowledge of 18th-century music pedagogy. Scholars had discovered much about contemporary keyboard improvisation and harmony (partimento) but almost nothing was known about the first three or four years of sung training, nor how musicians acquired skills in creating melody and what is now called 'form'. Indeed, although solfeggi are the most common type of pedagogical music manuscript, no-one had ever asked, let alone answered, how they were used by musicians. What did they teach?</p> <p>In [5], Baragwanath traced an unknown Italian theory of melody from the 16th to the 19th century, as a preparatory study for work on solfeggio manuscripts. He collaborated with European colleagues in 2014 to produce [4], a survey of the ways in which historical music pedagogy was already transforming education through keyboard improvisation, although at this stage there were no publications on solfeggio. In [3], Baragwanath applied historical solfeggio to 18th-century composition for the first time, showing how it offered insights into forgotten notions of structure and form. The real breakthrough came in [2], when Baragwanath set out in condensed form the results of six years of research: an account of how solfeggio manuscripts</p>		

were sung and what they taught. [2] demonstrated that musicians learned a note-naming method unfamiliar to modern scholars and that they practised improvisation upon its syllabic frameworks. These were identified in manuscripts through the discovery of 'traits': straight pen strokes that showed where the singer should place the syllables. A written solfeggio turned out to be just one of many possible 'performed' versions of a simple underlying melodic schema. Finally, in [1], Baragwanath published the first major study of the fundamentals of music education in the 18th century. By deciphering hundreds of manuscripts, he reconstructed the initial years of lessons taught to music apprentices. This 160,000-word monograph sets out how they learned to improvise instantaneously, compose fluently, and read in any clef. The first part provides an account of apprenticeship and the rudiments (which, through another original discovery, turned out to have been taught in medieval notation), the second part offers a course of genuine historical lessons in the art of melody that enables readers to become proficient in the method, and the third part sketches a history of the tradition and classifies sources into types and genres. [1] also contains the first comprehensive bibliography of 1,200 solfeggio collections, drawn from 99 archives worldwide. Its findings are directed at today's musicians and show how it was (and therefore still is) possible to learn music not by following fixed scores, but in a more creative way, by encouraging individual expression through improvisation and composition. Knowing how musicians in the past could create complex compositions instantaneously is of interest to everyone currently learning an instrument, including children, teachers and parents. A volume of essays edited by Baragwanath on the improvisatory art of the castrato singer Luigi Marchesi is in-press to be published in 2021. Baragwanath is in discussion with Oxford University Press (OUP), the world's largest publisher of music educational materials, to produce a series of textbooks that will bring the method to teachers and learners worldwide.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] **Baragwanath, N.**, *The Solfeggio Tradition: A Forgotten Art of Melody in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 432pp. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197514085.001.0001. ISBN: 9780197514085.

[2] **Baragwanath, N.**, 'Porpora's Page, Traits of Vocalization, and the Art of Improvised Melody', *Pergolesi Studies* 11 (2021), 23-55. [Publication delayed due to COVID-19]

[3] **Baragwanath, N.**, 'Bungled Schemata, Accent, and Class Prejudice in Haydn's "Joke" Quartet', *Proceedings of the Ninth European Music Analysis Conference* (Strasbourg, 2018).

[4] **Baragwanath, N.** et al., 'Partimento, Waer bestu bleven? Partimento in the European Classroom: Pedagogical Considerations and Perspectives', *Music Theory and Analysis* 1/1-2 (2014), 146-69. DOI: 10.11116/MTA.1.9.

[5] **Baragwanath, N.**, 'Giovanni Battista De Vecchis and the Theory of Melodic Accent from Zarlino to Zingarelli', *Music&Letters* 95 (2014), 157-82. DOI: 10.1093/ml/gcu010.

**Grants** [6] 'Haydn, Solfeggio, and the Art of Melody: A New Approach to the Classical Style'. Arts and Humanities Research Council, Research Leadership Fellowship. September 2013 to March 2015. PI: Nicholas Baragwanath. £175,000. AH/K007041/1

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Millions of children worldwide discover music by learning to play an instrument. In the mainstream classical tradition, they train their minds and bodies through years of punishing practice, like initiates in a monastic martial arts cult, to be able to sonorize the same printed scores as flawlessly as possible. If successful, they will produce millions of near-identical renditions of the same pieces. Baragwanath's research challenges this mind-set and provides alternatives. By reconstructing a forgotten historical method – an art of melody known as solfeggio, c.1680-1800 – it shows how it is possible to learn music in a more creative way, by encouraging an individual mode of expression through improvisation and composition.

#### **Changes in practice and curricula at leading conservatoires and music HEIs**

The findings have underpinned radical changes to the teaching practices and curricula of key institutions providing professional training for new generations of musicians. Through a series of workshops Baragwanath toured Europe and the US delivering teaching to 5 sector-leading institutions and over 250 students. The initial success led to an invitation to lead two-day workshops in 2018 and 2019 with (c.30) music staff and students at Northwestern University USA, the Amsterdam Conservatorium (c.35), the Maastricht Conservatoire (c.45), the Royal Academy of Music in London (c.30) and Schola Cantorum Basel (c.100). In 2018 he was the

keynote speaker at the 'Music Theory and Integration' professional teacher conference in Leuven, addressing c.200 music theory teachers from across Europe. Subsequently, as the Professor of Music Theory at the Amsterdam Conservatorium remarks, Baragwanath's '*visits resulted in an international study group, in which we developed methods for teaching "Italian Solfeggio" on an academic level*' (A 1). This resulted in the incorporation of historical solfeggio practice into the core curricula in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years at several prestigious conservatoires, influencing a shift in core performance practices of a new generation of musicians and music teachers across Europe.

The **Amsterdam Conservatorium** is the largest music institution in the Netherlands, drawing an international student body and influencing the teaching canon: '*Anything that happens at the Conservatoire of Amsterdam has a certain influence on the music theoretical community in the Low Countries in general*' (A 1). Since 2020, around 50 second-, third- and fourth-year students study Baragwanath's research intensively in a year-long series of two modules: 'Historical Solfege' and 'Improvisation in the Galant Style' (both delivered through 12 weeks of 90 minute classes). The former provides grounding in the method while the second explores more advanced improvisation techniques. As a Professor of Music Theory remarks on this significant change to the curriculum, '*Whereas partimento classes are already offered at various institutions, Italian solfeggio is at the beginning of its advance*'. The evaluation of the first term confirms that the historical solfeggio increased the students' confidence in performance and resulted in '*very positive feedback on the course, saying that the course challenged their creativity and increased their stylistic awareness*' (A 1). Summarising the value added to activities at the Conservatorium, the partner notes that as a result of the curriculum change, '*the students (and the staff) of our Early-Music Department acknowledge Italian Solfeggio as a valuable contribution to their artistic development*' (A 1). Elsewhere in the Netherlands, at the **Maastricht Conservatoire** the curriculum has been reformed in line with the changes seen in Amsterdam, the restructured modules approved for teaching to commence in early 2021 with a capacity of 30 students. The course is year-long and consists of two modules: 'Prima Vista' and 'Speaking Mozart's Language' (both with two hours of classes each week). The lecturer notes the '*huge potential of the research*' not just for history and musicology but for '*style composition, improvisation, ornamenting, and solfege*' (A 2). The new modules add significant value to the entire curriculum. As the Conservatoire comments on the newly overhauled curriculum; '*Once students and (future) performers reach a certain level of fluency, they will look at 18th-century music with different glasses, resulting in musical performances from an inner understanding of the music itself*' (A 2). While the conservatoire is not large, its location '*nearby the borders with both Germany and Belgium, not far from Luxembourg and France*' means that it draws students coming '*from different countries and from different theoretical traditions*' (A 2), who go on to perform across the Low Countries, France and Germany.

In Switzerland, at the **Academy of Arts in Bern**, 50 students study historical composition and improvisation by way of Baragwanath's research on the third-year module 'Die Kunst der Melodie im 18. Jahrhundert (Komposition und Improvisation)'. In 2019/20 eight were enrolled in this course with a practical focus on singing, embellishment, improvisation and composition (B). The lecturer is persuaded that '*the integrative Neapolitan teaching approach of the time has so much to offer that is largely missing in today's music pedagogy*' and that the work provided '*practical access to the workings of 18th-century melody composition and improvisation that would otherwise have been entirely inaccessible to me and my students*' (B). As the Lecturer states, beyond the dedicated module, Baragwanath's influence also '*entered my teaching in my aural skills classes for students in their first and second years*' and '*in elective courses accessible to bachelor and master students*' (B). In terms of career benefits for the students the new curriculum '*will doubtlessly bring a new understanding to their performance of music*' (B).

In Italy, the **University of Pavia** has already initiated the integration of the method into the curriculum: '*The incredible method of the art of solfeggio [...] perfectly integrates with my new teaching approaches [...] I am already applying Baragwanath's research in my teaching at undergraduate level*' (C 1). Elsewhere in Italy, at the **Catholic University of Milan** the research has fed into the content of undergraduate courses in music history (c.150 students) and music pedagogy (c.100 students) with the first cohort enrolled in 2020-21. '*The original analysis of the "scale" as a teaching device for singing as well as for accompanying at the keyboard has proved most fruitful in terms of the teaching potential for my students*' (C 2). Elsewhere in Europe, the



findings have fed into the design of courses for musicians at the **Norwegian Academy of Music** who use the research in their aural skills lessons. As the teacher comments, *'the practical pedagogy of the Italian conservatories has a growing impact on today's conservatories (D)*. At the **University of Nottingham**, Baragwanath's work underpinned a new 11-week module in 2019-20 and 2020-21 called 'The Art of 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Performance-Improvisation'. One of sixteen students commented that this *'shows us that eighteenth-century approaches to teaching musical composition and performance used a profoundly different type of pedagogical method than what contemporary musicians use today, which has radically changed my perspective when reading and performing music.... I will definitely apply what I have learned from this research in my career' (E 1)*. Another student felt that *'this course has transformed my understanding of not only classical music but all music' (E 2)*.

### **Changes to music education in schools, private learning and summer camps**

Since 2013, Baragwanath's research has garnered international public attention through BBC iPlayer, BBC News, CNN and numerous other international media outlets and generated a reach of over 179,000,000 (F). To harness the public interest in his research, Baragwanath set up a **website with learning materials** in 2014 ([www.historicalmusicpedagogy.ac.uk](http://www.historicalmusicpedagogy.ac.uk)). It is complemented by a mail list, which currently has over 200 members

([historicalmusicpedagogy@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:historicalmusicpedagogy@jiscmail.ac.uk)). Baragwanath's Facebook Group, 'The Art of Solfeggio', has over 1,700 members and facilitates discussion and sharing of materials. Over 90 members have confirmed through public posts and private messages that they are using the method in their own teaching or learning (G). A choir master at the Cathedral of Roskilde in Denmark, comments: *'your research has been such an eye-opener for me, so please count me in as a future teacher of solfeggio'*. One typical response from a professional performer is *'Very interested ... fascinated and eager to apply it'*. A parent who had started to teach their child the method also expressed thanks: *'I am so glad I ran into your work, I think it could really make a difference in making musical education more intuitive and rewarding for students of all ages'*. A piano teacher comments *'I am presently teaching my own children and working on lesson plans in keyboard and solfeggio for the upcoming term in this "forgotten art of melody" (G)*.

Baragwanath explored education applications further through two **public workshops** at the Cheltenham Festival 2015, which later fed into his work at an intensive **seven-day summer school** for music learners aged 7-16 in Basel, Switzerland in 2018, attracting 30 students and 20 teachers. This has influenced the learners: *'I want to practise solfeggio and try all this out on my own'; 'I plan on devoting a lot of my time to the study of solfeggio'; 'I'm really interested in how this subject will develop'; 'I plan on incorporating this into my daily singing practice and studying the solfeggio to improve as a musician' (H)*. The summer school organiser confirmed the influence on the students and his own teaching practice: *'This research has deeply influenced and transformed my perspective ... in my current practice as a teacher'*. It has had *'a huge impact on both creative and analytical musical skills. Nicholas' research ... opens a door to a new practical and artistic understanding of creative processes in music making, both from a historical as well as from an improvisational point of view' (H)*.

An initial engagement with the Solfeggio website led to the research transforming the curriculum at the **Songbird Academy in Singapore**, a music school with 30 students of all ages. The school decided to *'re-interpret all melodies in terms of hexachords and syllables and view them in this lens, which is a rather radical overhaul of the pedagogical system' (I)*. Its CEO further explains: *'Your research on the 18th-century art of melody has radically changed our approach [...] By far, the most thrilling aspect of this research is the generative concept of composing and improvising quickly and with genuine beauty and contrapuntal craft. This new research promises to teach music theory, composition, counterpoint and a whole host of sympathetic skill sets' (I)*.

### **Influencing professional performance practice**

Baragwanath's research enables performers to experience music in the same way as 18th-century musicians, to embellish and re-compose melodies in a more creative way. In modern practice musicians learn how to superimpose ornamentation onto a given melody. Through solfeggio, by contrast, they learn how to create the entire melody from scratch and to realize it in multiple ways. Baragwanath trialled this with the music ensemble 'Stile Galante', an established

international group with large audiences via regular concerts at national opera houses. They are currently working on an album that will juxtapose solfeggi by Pergolesi with performances of his scores, to demonstrate aurally how the method worked. The Director confirms the transformative effect of the research on the ensemble's performance practice: Baragwanath's research has *'inspired deep changes to our performance practice and our approach to rehearsals'*, making ornamentation much faster and easier. Using the method *'enables us to write a da capo [with embellishment] in 30% of the time, with few chances of error'* (J).

### **Public Engagement through the media and collaboration with The Foundling Museum, London leading to changes in curatorial practice**

In April 2014, Baragwanath wrote and presented a BBC Radio 3 documentary ('Educating Isaac'). Its story of how orphans were lifted out of poverty through music lessons attracted the attention of staff at The Foundling Museum, London, and *'directly inspired the Foundling Museum's decision to stage an exhibition on the topic of solfeggio and orphan musicians'*, entitled 'Street Child to Superstar: Orphanages and the X-Factor' (K). Originally scheduled for early 2020, but due to Covid-19 delayed till 2022, the exhibition has a predicted footfall of 20,000. The Foundling Museum tells the story of the UK's first children's charity. The exhibition supports the museum's strategic mission as it *'is especially fitting: resonating as it does with our historic story'* and *'supporting our primary object, to educate the public [...], challenging public perceptions of orphanages, by showing how creativity was and continues to be, a powerful tool for helping disadvantaged children'*. In June 2018 Baragwanath hosted a workshop at the museum and took four curators to Naples, Italy, to *'learn more about the story and to explore possible artefacts for display'* (K). Preparations have enhanced staff understanding of the connection between music and orphanages and helped them to incorporate sound and artefacts into their storytelling. As the Director attests, *'[his contributions] were incredibly useful in clarifying the objects that would most effectively engage the public with his research and in identifying potential lenders and devising strategies for securing loans'* (K). This is having a lasting legacy on the museum's capacity and international reputation as *'his academic support is also helping us identify lenders and secure loan agreements with collections across the UK, strengthening existing partnerships and creating new ones [...]. The exhibition is strengthening the museum's international relationships, particularly with cultural institutions in Naples, by supporting our curatorial staff, who will be negotiating and collaborating with Italian lenders'* (K). Beyond international loans, *'the exhibition is providing an opportunity to highlight some of the museum's collection treasures, as well as objects from the Foundling Hospital Archive that have never been publicly displayed'*. Remarketing on the impacts on curatorial practice, the Director notes that Baragwanath's work *'influenced the choice of artefacts and the critical narrative of the exhibition'* and that: *'his guidance helped us familiarise ourselves with a range of material and devise ways to successfully stage an exhibition focused on solfeggio, which is outside the museum's specialist subject area'*. Adapting to Covid-19, Baragwanath's work has enhanced the Museum's engagement strategy as the ongoing work on the *'digital content will provide exciting and stimulating ways for diverse audiences to engage with this little known but fascinating subject'* (K).

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- (A) Testimonials from Netherlandish Conservatoires (Amsterdam, Maastricht).
- (B) Testimonial from Bern Conservatoire
- (C) Testimonials from Italian HEIs (University of Pavia, Catholic University of Milan)
- (D) Testimonial from the Norwegian Academy of Music
- (E) Testimonials from students on Baragwanath's module 'The Art of 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Performance-Improvisation'
- (F) Baragwanath Media Coverage 2013-2018
- (G) Dossier of Facebook comments and responses
- (H) Director Testimonial and Student Feedback from Solfeggi Basel Workshop Summer School, July 2018
- (I) Testimonial from the CEO Songbird Academy, Singapore
- (J) Testimonial from the Director of ensemble Stile Galante
- (K) Testimonial from Director of The Foundling Museum, London