

# Opening doors

Trinity Laban's Richard Carne Junior Fellowships support artists as they make the transition to a full-time professional career. Harry White asks 2016/17 fellows Stephen Upshaw and the Dulcinea Quartet how the scheme helped them

For young professionals, the transition from full-time conservatoire education into the music industry has long been fraught with difficulty. Translating years of practice into the professional skills, contacts and practical experience to make money in the real world requires a degree of support beyond the seminars on employment and portfolio career development which are found on most degree programmes. The Richard Carne Junior Fellowship at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance is designed specifically to tackle this head-on. The fellowship, which includes awards for individuals and string quartet, is funded by the Carne Trust, which was established back in 2006 to assist talented young people entering the music and theatre industries.

Coming to the end of his term is the 2016/17 recipient of the Richard Carne Junior Fellowship for Individuals, violist Stephen Upshaw. Originally from Atlanta, Upshaw was awarded the fellowship having completed studies at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, receiving £6,000 towards musical projects and additional tuition as well as full access to Trinity Laban's staff and resources.

Upshaw says that key creative points of contact between the conservatoire and his own artistic strategies were vital to his success in receiving the award. 'After finishing my postgraduate studies in 2011, I began to create a life filled with a range of musical activities, focusing on solo work, contemporary music, artistic direction, and interdisciplinary educational projects, including some focused on nurturing young choreographic and compositional talent,' he says. 'These are all strong areas of focus for Trinity Laban as well and I felt that

► Strengthened resolve: Stephen Upshaw



my combination of experience and interest would mean an exciting partnership with the school.'

What was Upshaw's vision for the fellowship in terms of furthering his own professional development and catalysing prospective creative projects? 'I wanted to use the fellowship to share, learn and create, and leave a legacy of influencing how students envision collaborative projects through a combination of performances and education work that link Trinity with other artistic partners and commissioning projects involving premieres of student work.'

A recent highlight was joining together The Riot Ensemble, one of London's premiere new music ensembles, with students at Trinity for a concert at Blackheath Halls. This created a wonderful opportunity to share with the students our experience of working in and running a professional ensemble, the opportunity to play a range of newly commissioned work and rarely-heard repertoire pieces, and the chance to work alongside and exchange ideas with our group of international artists.

'I also created a project called "Found Sounds" in which the composers were given the brief of writing a work for solo viola and

electronics derived from sampled exterior sounds. The range of work they created was very exciting and it was a wonderful experience to be able to discuss the viola and its many possibilities with such a bright group of students.'

How much have the experiences of the fellowship focused Upshaw's perspective on his own career? 'It certainly has helped to encourage my vision for what a career as a musician can look like, strengthened my resolve to pursue my own varied interests and served as a reminder to celebrate the breadth of possibility and opportunity available to us as musicians. The experience has really allowed me the time and focus to further hone the skills necessary to undertake future projects over the next year, including performing at the BBC Proms with the Chineke! Orchestra, appearances at the Huddersfield Festival and a month-long residency at the Aix-en-Provence Festival with Klangforum Wien.'

The 2016/17 term of Richard Carne fellowships also saw the Dulcinea Quartet pick up the Junior Fellowship for String Quartet, a £10,000 sum aiming to provide resources, platforms

and contacts to bridge the gap from student to professional ensemble.

'When we auditioned for the fellowship, the quartet had already been together for eight years, and while we had managed to establish regular connections in Japan through annual tours, we were looking for a platform to further our career here in the UK,' says leader Minn Majoe.

'We also wanted to combine our passion for contemporary music and education, by working with student composers, and in particular giving them the opportunity to write for a live film project we are closely involved with called Anima,' adds violinist Haru Ushigusa.

Violist Martin Wray says that the projects enabled by the fellowship have been particularly important to the quartet's progression. 'The whole year has been a great chance to develop,' he says. 'We've been offering coaching to chamber ensembles throughout the year, which was useful for us to develop our teaching skills. Also, after some tweaking of the initial idea, we were able to bring our ANIMA ensemble to the conservatoire. In fact, it has formed part of the postgraduate composers' final submissions, which we are thrilled about.'

Cellist Kirsten Jenson believes the fellowship has allowed the quartet to refine skills that will be of inestimable value in their professional lives. 'The year has given us the opportunity to focus on our development as a quartet technically, in terms of honing our rehearsal technique, learning repertoire, but also to begin to develop our identity,' she says. 'Over the year we've been exploring modern and contemporary music and we make a real effort to balance our concert programmes with core quartet repertoire and new music. It's been a real pleasure discovering music by Judith Weir and Kevin Puts, to name just a couple.'

The ensemble will be taking the fruits of its labours on the road following the end of the fellowship, with performances in November at the Bath Recitals as part of the Carne Trust series, a tour of Scotland and a number of education projects. Forging a sustainable career in the music industry will always be a challenge for even the most gifted and hardworking, but the Richard Carne Junior Fellowships are ensuring that these particular musicians have the best possible chance. ■

▼ A chance to develop: Dulcinea Quartet



© AIGA PHOTOGRAPHY