

In Their Words

Life as a postgraduate in Music at Manchester

profile of an electroacoustic composer

Sam Salem studied creative music technology before deciding he wanted to find out more about composition. His work is mostly installation based, with an interest in audio-visual elements. He also composes for fixed media.

Sam decided to apply to Manchester firstly because of the city – it wasn't London, there's lots going on in terms of local artistic activity and there is some fun nightlife. Other benefits include the talented and active postgraduate community at the University, the fact that his supervisors are active creative researchers themselves, and that there are new electroacoustic music studios to work in. In the past year he's been to Valencia with MANTIS (Manchester Theatre in Sound) for a digital media festival and to Berlin for a conference about concert diffusion systems. He's performed with the improvisation group KAIROS at the Sonorities festival in Belfast, with local artist Michael Mayhew at the Manchester International Festival, and at regular slots at Manchester arts venue The Green Room.





profile of a musicologist

Ivana Medic undertook undergraduate and postgraduate music studies in Serbia and was editor-in-chief for the classical music station Radio Belgrade 3 before coming to Manchester as a PhD candidate in Music in 2006.



When looking at music courses, she wanted to find somewhere that provided the opportunity to teach while studying, which might offer a scholarship, and which could offer support for her young family. She also wanted to find a supervisor with expertise in her field, Eastern European music. Manchester ticked all the boxes: the University offers childcare (the City Council is also helpful); she was awarded a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (as well as ORS and School funding); and Professor David Fanning is not only an expert in her field, but has proved to be an approachable and supportive supervisor.

Ivana praises the University of Manchester for its library resources, and for the system of having doctoral research panels monitor candidates' progress every six months, which 'keep you in good shape'. She hasn't found the GTA workload overwhelming, and the Music Department is stimulating for both research and its sociable atmosphere. As a city, Manchester has provided Ivana with a good balance of accessible activities, a lively calendar of imaginative cultural events on a more manageable size than London.



profile of a musicologist

Before I came to Manchester, I gained my undergraduate and first master's degrees (both in Musicology) from the Tokyo National University of Arts. Then I worked at the musicological department of the same university as a teaching and administrative assistant for two years.

I have always had an interest in Western musical thought (especially of late 16thC and 17thC English music theory), and wanted to learn more about the topic, as well as to enhance my musicological skills. I also wanted to deal first-hand with materials from the country where the music and musical thought had been produced: in other words, I sought an opportunity to study in UK. I decided to come to Manchester when I knew that Dr Rebecca Herissone was moving here from Lancaster University, and I feel fortunate to have been given the chance to study at Manchester, one of the most high-profile music departments in the UK.



I have especially found useful the many online sources which we can access through the University library website, even when we are off campus (such as EEBO, RILM and JSTOR), and the good quality of libraries in Manchester (the John Rylands University Library and the Henry Watson Music Library at the Central Library). There are sufficient numbers of computers in the department, in the library and in the computer clusters (the 24hr computer cluster is especially useful) for students to use on site, so I rarely wait in a queue to use them.

Since I'm an international student and from a different background, at first some parts of student life in Manchester were challenging for me (e.g. language problems, how to find out how things work), but all staff at the University are approachable and supportive of international students and there was a welcoming atmosphere whenever I needed any help. Academic staff have also given me helpful feedback about things I need to focus and work further on. The flexibility of course modules on the MusM have also helped me to gain the skills I needed the most, and allowed me to take appropriate modules for my individual interests.



My supervisor helped me throughout the MusM course in all areas, both in our scheduled meetings and individually at other times. Regular supervision sessions have greatly helped me during my course, from facilitating me to settle into my first year quickly and to the last phases of writing up my MusM dissertation. Through two years of my study so far in Manchester, I have had valuable experience not only of acquiring knowledge of my topic but also learning about time management, communicating, and presentation skills.

I feel that the departmental postgrad community is about the right size: everyone gets to know everyone. I owe a lot to my Manchester friends who willingly share their experiences and knowledge to broaden my point of view in a friendly atmosphere. The University Chorus has provided me with the opportunity to get involved in practical performance, with a variety of repertoire, and also to get to know students from other faculties as well as people outside university who enjoy making music.

There are people from all over the world in Manchester, and much mutual support. Outside the department, I enjoy living in the hall of residence, experiencing and sharing multicultural life with students (mostly international students) of diverse backgrounds. I think Manchester is a student-oriented city, especially in terms of living cost. It is also a very musical and artistic city with many facilities, such as the Palace Theatre, Royal Exchange Theatre, Bridgewater Hall and Academy, which students can learn from and enjoy many types of entertainments. For me, the location of the University and the city centre is convenient: they are not too close, but within walking distance, with good bus services.

I have found the local people are also friendly to international students, which is good as it is important for us to live in a foreign country with a sense of security.