



Royal Conservatoire  
of Scotland

# *Making It Happen*

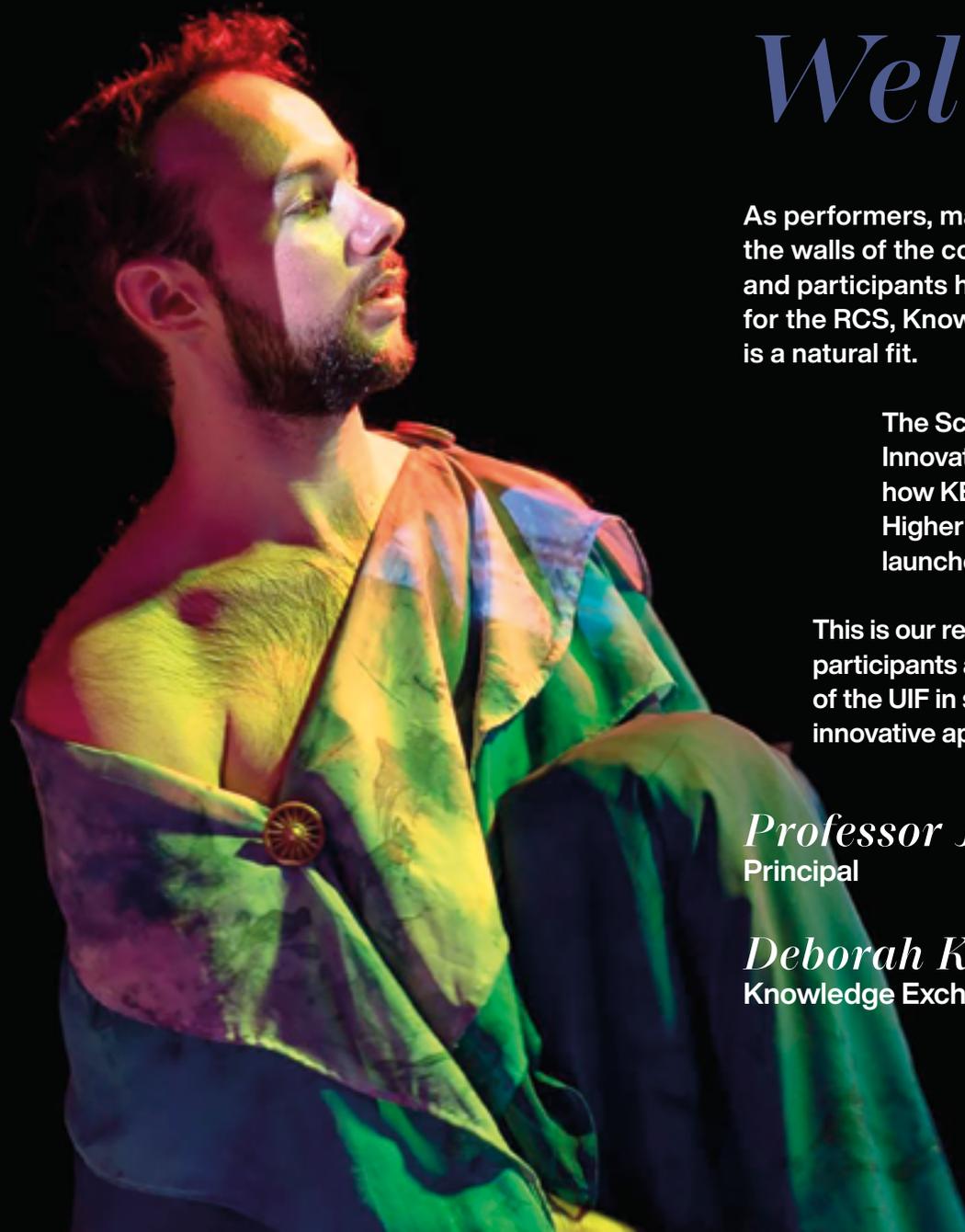
*5 years of transformation in  
Knowledge Exchange at RCS through  
the University Innovation Fund*

[rcs.ac.uk](https://www.rcs.ac.uk)

# *Making It Happen*

*5 years of transformation  
in Knowledge Exchange at  
RCS through the University  
Innovation Fund*

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## *Welcome*

As performers, makers and educators reaching outside the walls of the conservatoire to audiences, partners and participants has always been our mission: for the RCS, Knowledge Exchange (KE) and Innovation is a natural fit.

The Scottish Funding Council's University Innovation Fund (UIF) marked a step change in how KE and Innovation was funded in Scottish Higher Education Institutions when it was launched in 2016.

This is our reflection, in the words of both participants and professionals, on the impact of the UIF in supporting us to develop our innovative approach to KE.

*Professor Jeffrey Sharkey*  
Principal

*Deborah Keogh*  
Knowledge Exchange Manager

# *Making It Happen*

*5 years of transformation  
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# *Making a difference*

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## *Making It Happen*

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*“The UIF has  
allowed us  
to be proactive,  
not reactive.”*

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## *Making a difference: The role of the UIF as a strategic facilitator*

Five years of UIF support has allowed us to ramp up our KE and Innovation activity (see *Making it work*, p.8). We have designed an extensive programme of delivery centring on entrepreneurship aimed at students and graduates, and facilitated and supported staff KE. Our enterprise support initiatives are now embedded in student life at the RCS; our research and development work has sharpened our focus on our distinctive offer and its further potential; our KE infrastructure is better able to sustain and support our evolution.

And, for the first time, as **Professor Stephen Broad**, Director of RKE comments, the UIF has enabled us to be truly proactive in how we support, facilitate and promote KE and Innovation.

RKE at the Conservatoire got underway in 1999 with a grant from the Scottish Funding Council to develop research and knowledge transfer (as it was then known). From the outset, KE and Innovation was a vital part of the picture. Catching the wave of newly recognised practice-as-research, research at RCS flourished, supported by ring-fenced funding, but our matching ambition in KE and Innovation was held back by more modest enabling support from the Knowledge Transfer Grant. We appointed part-time development staff and funded small-scale initiatives such as public engagement talks and the Athenaeum Awards, but we struggled with capacity to make a real difference.

The UIF has enabled us to step up, responding to national priorities in our own way from our unique position. ***The 7 UIF outcomes*** shared by all Scotland's Higher Education Institutions were ambitious but the approach was not prescriptive. It allowed us to prioritise activity, initially in areas that would create the strongest impact, around enterprise and collaborative working with other institutions.

It supported thinking and strategic development on global challenges such as the climate crisis and the role of the arts in society, but it also made an immediate difference to students and graduates - linking to the curriculum ethos of the RCS and preparing them for life as an arts professional.

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## *The creative industries: a hard act to support*

**The creative industries are one of Scotland's major growth areas and there is a long history of attempts to support them effectively.**

The performing and production arts sector, made up of large pools of portfolio-working freelancers and clusters of microenterprises, has proved to be a tricky fit with conventional KE policy. There is also a mismatch of scale with funding vehicles such as **Innovation Vouchers**; relatively tiny amounts of resource can be disproportionately productive in our sector, but matched funding from company partners is often unrealistic for microenterprises working on very tight margins and subsidy.

Research and development resource is particularly needed in the sector. Whether it's being able to pay professional rates for workshopping a new show or taking a week off teaching to finish a new album, recipients of our UIF-supported KE funding (***see Making their way, p.19***) all emphasise the importance of this support. We also have ample evidence of how much our programmes are valued by graduates starting their professional lives as artists, helping them deal with the shock and precarity of life as a freelancer.

Our work over the past five years initially focussed on programmes and interventions to help our community of students and graduates. But the UIF has also provided the opportunity to look at our KE more broadly, to sharpen our KE thinking and to gather data.

*“UIF support has helped focus and frame the KE conversation.”*

Conventional wisdom has been that KE's role is to solve a perceived problem in higher education – that it exists in a bubble by itself and doesn't affect wider society as much as it could. The RCS is in a somewhat different position from that imagined ivory tower

by working in a much more networked, much more practically-orientated way with our audiences, professional partners and participants. We knew that KE and Innovation happened in every part of the RCS in different ways and would continue to happen with or without our intervention and facilitation. The danger was that we were missing it, not gathering the stories and the data, not finding ways to strengthen the work our staff are doing by connecting it into the KE conversation.

In 2019 we directed UIF funding to commission consultancy by EKOS to explore ways and means of developing and promoting innovation. We also appointed and commissioned a Senior Fellow in KE to audit current activity across the RCS. This started to make visible work that we were not framing as KE and to drive a response to the first **KE Concordat**. Our submission has opened up many strategic possibilities and allowed us to see the enormous potential of what KE and Innovation means for our mission and position in society.

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*“The Innovation Studio gives us a new lens and a new catalyst for discussion.”*

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Knowledge exchange is **defined** as a collaborative, creative endeavour that translates knowledge and research into impact in society and the economy. In terms of policy, this covers a vast array of potentialities. For **Stephen Broad** KE feels like “a tool for thinking about what we do: a tool for analysis – what we do well and not so well; and a tool for strategic planning – what we’re going to prioritise”. Strategically, KE highlights what we’re for as an institution, our place, our influence, our potential. Exclusive ivory towers and old-style notions of a conservatoire simply ‘training’ performers and mounting a performance programme to show them off were never the sum of what we were about.

KE encourages a frame of thinking about how our staff, students and graduates engage effectively with diverse audiences, participants, professional partners (and more) and how, as makers and innovators, we reflect and positively impact wider society.

We are in a period of developing UK policy including promotion of KE as the third arm of higher education alongside teaching and research. However, whereas the endeavour of teaching and research is clear, KE still needs definition and (often long-winded) explanation. So does KE need to be better understood? does everyone in the institution need to know and use it as a term?

**Deborah Keogh**, KE Manager, sees KE as a driver and facilitator of engagement, as a vehicle for understanding our civic role and potential as a national and global conservatoire, not as an end in itself and certainly not static or codified.

We’re on a journey of continuous development and evolution. Deborah sees new possibilities for innovation at the RCS via the **Innovation Studio**. “Up until now innovation and enterprise have been closely associated in terms of support infrastructure - we now have a chance to decouple them and dig further into new possibilities for connecting artists with support for social and cultural innovation. Of course entrepreneurship can be part of this, but doesn’t have to be the driver. The artistic community is at the forefront of conversations around de-growth and sustainable practices, and our hope for Innovation Studio is that this can be a space to experiment with these new ideas.” Creative exchanges on how we understand the fit - as well as the tension - between artistic innovations and innovation policy will inevitably result.

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# *Making it work*

## Making It Happen

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“Turbo-charged blasts of entrepreneurial content.”

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**THE ROAD AHEAD**  
MONDAY 11TH – FRIDAY 15TH MAY

<b>MONDAY 11TH</b> TIME WITH THE TAXMAN 12:00 - 13:00	<b>WEDNESDAY 15TH</b> ATTRACTING FUNDING IN CHALLENGING TIMES 13:00- 14:00	<b>THURSDAY 16TH</b> A QUICK GUIDE TO SUPPORT FOR FREELANCERS DURING COVID-19 13:00-14:00
<b>TUESDAY 14TH</b> PERFORMANCE ANXIETY: WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO YOU MANAGE IT? 13:00-14:00	<b>FRIDAY 17TH</b> A FUTURE WITHOUT FRINGE- WHAT COMES NEXT FOR EMERGING PERFORMERS? 12:00-13:00	

A WEEK OF EVENTS TO ENERGISE AND STRENGTHEN YOUR FUTURE PRACTICE, PROJECTS AND CAREER.

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## Making it work: our approach to programmes and support

**Our approach involved two distinct strands: delivery programmes and facilitative support. Underpinning both are partnerships and co-creation – with other Higher Education Institutions, with the performing arts professions, national companies, local authorities, not for profits.**



**Deborah Keogh** was appointed in late 2016 as the RCS's first KE Manager. Deborah came from outside higher education as an arts and enterprise professional with a cocktail of skills and experience that she adapted to our context; and this focused her initial approach in programmes aimed at students and graduates. Deborah comments:

*"I saw my role as assessing RCS's existing offer in terms of enterprise development and freelance skills and really getting under the skin of what happens and how we prepare students and graduates for their professional life. At RCS, career development is deeply woven into the fabric of the teaching programme – so what else could we provide and where were the gaps?"*

Performing arts students are naturally entrepreneurial, but specific support and coherent intervention had been missing – this is what the UIF could facilitate. The added value that Deborah and her team built was wrapped in a new, buoyant and energetic brand providing 'turbo-charged blasts of entrepreneurial content', accessible at the right time and right place (e.g. just pre and post graduation), flooded with industry professionals, practising artists and producers and, above all, fit for artistic purpose rather than off the shelf.

The new programmes focussed on understanding practicalities: core areas like starting companies, when to formalise into a legal structure and when not to; workshop sessions with professionals on costing and pricing your time (including R&D time that artists at all stages of their careers do for free – something that rarely happens in any other sector); developing your brand and maximising your funding potential in a crowded market. This formed the shape of the Make it Happen month which initially took place every November.

In addition, 10 awards of £1,000 for new graduates to support them in the early stages of their careers, became the Make it Happen fund. The power of seed funding and how it creates different kinds of benefits cannot be underestimated: as well as providing financial support (and in this sector of the creative industries a little goes a very long way), it leverages other funding and in-kind support; but it also provides confidence and validation at an important moment in the professionalisation of a career.

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# SHIFT

Now into its fourth year, **SHIFT** is a partnership between the RCS, Glasgow School of Art and Queen Margaret University. SHIFT is for students transitioning into the creative industries from HE and brings together creative entrepreneurs, freelancers, artists, musicians, producers and performers from across all the creative disciplines.

Co-created with the **Creative Entrepreneurs Club** and a dynamic team of creative practitioners, facilitators, founders and sole-traders, SHIFT equips participants with the tools, the plans, the contacts, and the skills they need for a life working in the arts and creative industries.

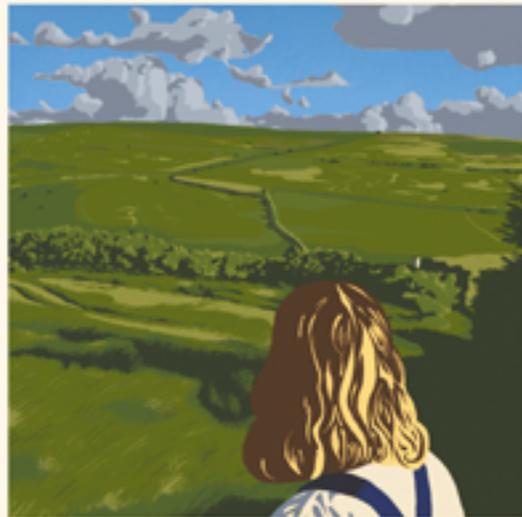
*“It’s not so much about how much you spend, but how you do it that makes a difference.”*

Hear more about our approach to programmes and the power of Make it Happen support and SHIFT from some of our emerging artists (*see Making their way, p.19*) and see our timeline (*p.14*). Read more about our approach to research and evaluation including the results of a recent longitudinal survey in Making an impact, (*p.24*).

In the same way that UIF support links to common outcomes but is not prescriptive, we learned how to provide support and then get out of the way. Programmes of support aimed to provide useful and appropriate tools, not recipes for success.

We also learned the value and importance of personal connection, with our KE Development Officer **Stephanie Edwards** always there as a point person for individuals, mentoring, check-ins. All of these were highly valued by our emerging freelance professionals and as **Stephen Broad** says *“this makes a massive difference; it’s not so much about how much you spend, but how you do it that makes a difference.”*

## The Road Ahead



MONDAY 12TH TILL FRIDAY 16TH OF APRIL - 2021  
Brought to you by the RCS Students' Union of Make it Happen

A week of bite-sized online lunchtime workshops to energise and strengthen your future practice, projects, and careers. The Road Ahead of us will mean working in the so-called 'new normal' and these workshops will help to ensure your practice is futureproofed for the post-covid world. Find out more by visiting [rca.ac.uk/TRA](https://rca.ac.uk/TRA)



Make it Happen



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## Making the fit: social, cultural and artistic innovation

A programme aimed at staff and their partner organisations (called Make it Work) was not such an early win. We wanted to make support more accessible to staff for the many kinds of innovative work they produce - often in social or cultural, rather than economic, innovation.

An ongoing challenge was the translation and fit between the policy and funding mechanisms of KE (for example Innovation Vouchers) and the financial circumstances of potential partners. We had difficulty in getting early pilot projects over the line: in our sector partners can rarely provide additional capacity without additional resource.

Working closely with our colleagues at **Interface** we have subsequently been successful in securing funding from Innovation Voucher projects, particularly those with high societal impact such as **Dr Rachel Drury's** work with Scotland's arts and early years organisation **Starcatchers**, part of a larger initiative exploring how the arts can enable very young children to realise their human rights.

Importantly, the flexibility of the UIF meant that we could experiment: we tested and trialled ways of making the Innovation Voucher sum of £5,000 work in a way that was more flexible and fit for purpose. One such project was with **Chamber Music Scotland**. We funded musician, entrepreneur and part-time RCS staff member **Lee Holland**, an expert in performance psychology, to work with **Paul Tracey**, CEO of Chamber Music Scotland to coach musicians in post-COVID recovery as part of the Musicians' Recovery, Resilience and Growth Project.

Both programme delivery and facilitative support has been driven by an ethos of right time/right place and fit for purpose and the UIF has enabled us to be agile and flexible in our approaches. We are taking this thinking forward to the next stage in our Innovation Studio, now within the strategic framework of our three **Innovation Challenges**: Green Recovery, Placemaking and Health and Wellbeing.

*“Importantly, the flexibility of the UIF meant that we could experiment.”*

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# *Timeline*

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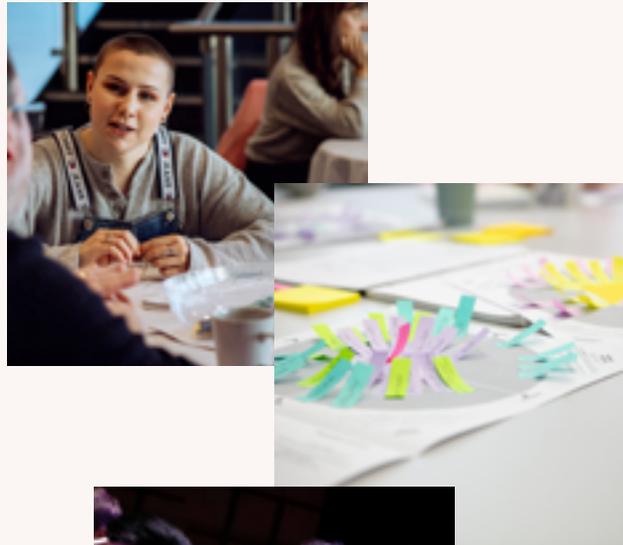
*A selection of significant  
moments in ULF-supported  
Knowledge Exchange and  
Innovation development  
2016 - 2022*

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## 2016

- UIF funding starts Autumn 2016
- Knowledge Exchange Manager **Deborah Keogh** appointed



## 2017

- **Movers and Shakers** report  
[\*Read the report\*](#)
- **Survey of Athenaeum Award holders**  
66% of awards collaborations between RCS and an outside partner
- **SHARE**  
Interdisciplinary collaboration for artists and researchers in arts and non-arts fields between RCS and St Andrews  
[\*Visit the SHARE site\*](#)
- **First Make it Happen Month**  
*“A jam-packed series of workshops, seminars and events to give you the tools that you’ll need to succeed in the arts and creative industries.”*



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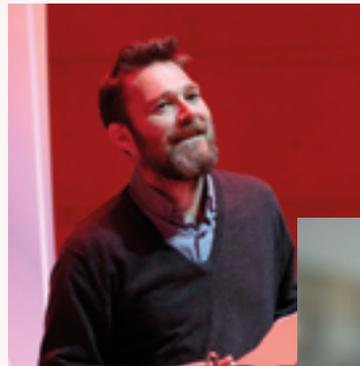


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## 2018

- **Make it Happen Fund**  
First iteration of micro funding awards for recent graduates
- **MODUAL**  
Partnership with GSA and University of the Arts London
- **David Greig** gives a Make it Happen talk
- **Stephen Roe** becomes an RSE Entrepreneur in Residence at RCS  
[Read more](#)



## 2019

- **Launch of SHIFT**  
A bespoke entrepreneurial programme for freelance artists and micro enterprises in partnership with GSA and QMU and a roster of industry professionals  
[Read more](#)
- **EKOS Innovation Hub research report**
- RCS staff member **Liz Jenkinson** wins Best Pitch in final of Converge Creative  
[Read more](#)
- Knowledge Exchange Development Officer **Stephanie Edwards** appointed
- Senior Fellow in Knowledge Exchange **Celia Duffy** appointed
- **What's Going on Now report**  
[Read the report](#)



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# 2020

# 2021

- **SHIFT in Lockdown switches to online**
- **The Road Ahead**  
A week long lunch time series preparing students for life after graduation
- **Make it Happen Lockdown Fund**  
[Read more](#)



**BRUCE MILLAR**  
Graduate Fellowship

- **Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowships redesigned**  
£10,000 support to launch a career, R&D or a creative company and additional bespoke support
- **Institutional Knowledge Exchange Audit (IKEA)**  
A comprehensive picture of 'under the radar' staff KE and pathfinder for KE strategy led by **Professor Celia Duffy**, Senior KE Fellow
- **RCS at Home** becomes lockdown success as the world pivots to online performances

- **SHIFT team present to OECD conference**
- **COP 26 Climate Portal funded by the British Council**  
[Read more](#)
- **Additional funding for Make it Happen Fund secured**  
[Read more](#)
- **Submission to first ever Knowledge Exchange Concordat**  
RCS commended for impact and positive approach, leading towards systemic change
- **Make Your Own Musicals** by Bruce Millar-supported graduates **Isaac Savage** and **Jonathan O'Neill** runner up in [Converge Creative Challenge](#)
- Knowledge Exchange Administrative Assistant **Gallia Young appointed**

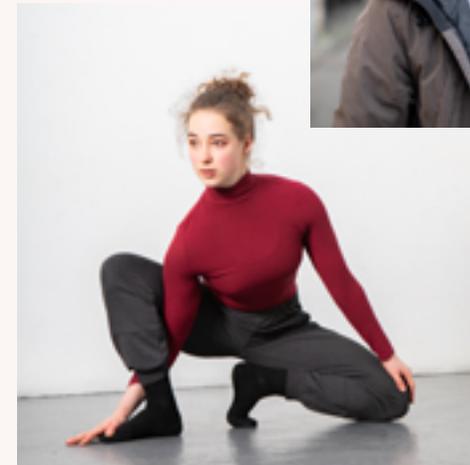
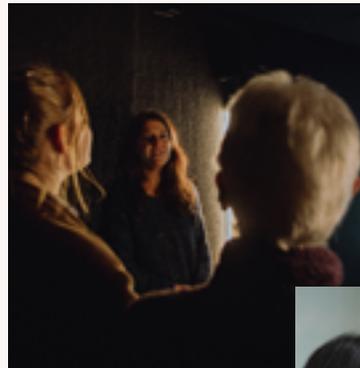


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# 2022

- **'Where are they now?'**  
A survey of entrepreneurship  
programme participants  
**74% now self-employed**  
**89% reported portfolio careers**  
*See Making an impact, p.24*
- **Innovation Studio**  
Launched as two year pilot  
*[Read more](#)*



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# *Making their way*

A woman with long dark hair in a ponytail is shown in profile, looking upwards. She is wearing a dark, textured jacket. The background is a bright blue sky with soft, white clouds. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunset or sunrise, with a bright light source behind her, creating a silhouette effect and highlighting her hair.

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*“The Make it Happen  
fund was **exceptionally**  
**important** in  
supporting our  
**graduates to get back**  
**on their feet in a post-  
Covid society.**”*

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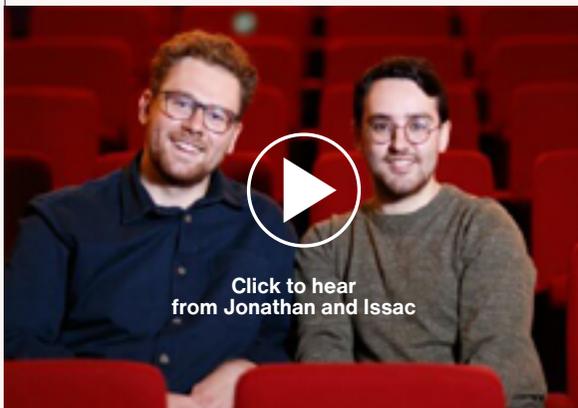


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## Making their way: stories from emerging professionals

In this section first-hand accounts from emerging arts professionals talk about how targeted support from KE programmes at RCS made a difference to their careers. We hear about making your way as a creative: juggling funding, the pandemic, the challenges of a freelance life with time and space to make and promote new work. And they cast light on what innovation means for performers and makers in the performing arts.



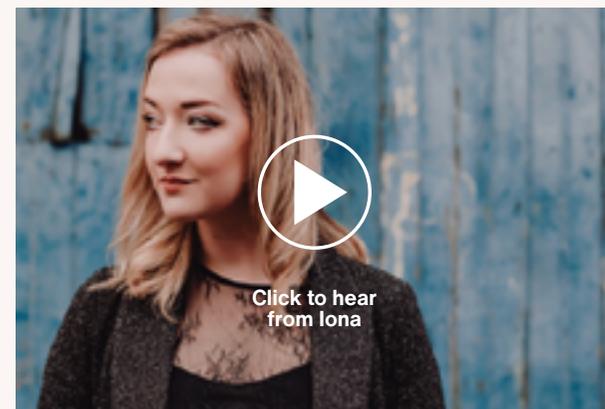
Click to hear from Jonathan and Issac

**Jonathan O'Neill** and **Isaac Savage** are musical theatre innovators. Here they discuss what support through the Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowship Award meant to them, the importance of R&D in a creative setting and how the KE team supported them - not just with financial resources but through check-ins and mentoring.

**Click to hear the extended interview from Jonathan and Isaac** about their professional connections including the Dundee Rep and the National Theatre of Scotland and how support from KE helped them to be as confident about their business skills as they are about their creative skills. And they argue their case for innovation in the musical theatre genre, creating accessible work that moves beyond tired old adaptations and 'jazz hands' clichés.

**Iona Fyfe's** career was soaring and then the pandemic hit. Make it Happen helped her make and promote two new singles to re-set her career. Iona is both a singer and an activist: she speaks passionately about inclusion in practice at RCS, as well as the effects of Brexit for touring musicians.

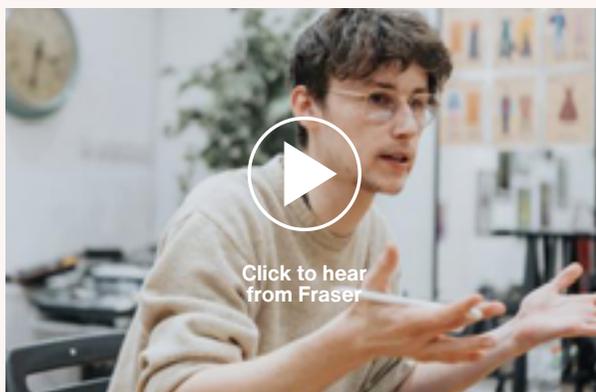
**Click to hear the extended interview from Iona** about her campaigns to raise awareness of the Scots language, her advocacy against sexual harassment and discrimination in the folk music industry (recognised by winning Scottish TUC Equality Award) and getting back on her feet professionally after the pandemic hit just before her month-long tour of Australia.



Click to hear from Iona

**Fraser Scott**, award-winning director and writer talks about the complicated business of juggling finances and planning in film making, as well as premiering his new musical *Thread*. Like so many of our graduates, Fraser is a multi-disciplinary artist, equally at home in directing and writing, film making, theatre and musical theatre - and an avid collaborator.

**Click to hear the extended interview from Fraser** about the importance of support from Make it Happen to see a short film through the many stages of development. He talks about networking, promotion, scheduling, funding and developing his own voice and unique artistic direction.



Click to hear from Fraser

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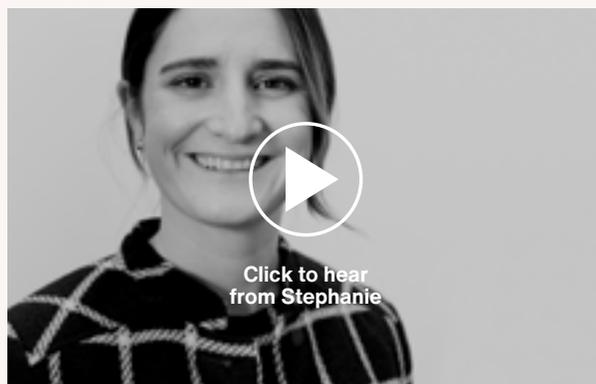
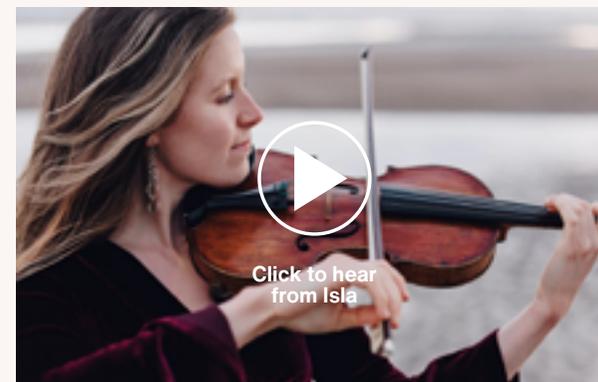


**Anya Sirina** and **Sinéad Hargan**'s year-long research into performance-making in and around tidal sites was supported by the Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowship Award. They talk about their process of 'slow making' and creating connections and support networks with artistic partners.

**Click to hear the extended interview from Anya and Sinéad** about their unique approach to navigating the professional art world at the time of the pandemic: moving out of the studio and off-line at a time when everything else seemed to be on-line and indoors. They talk about the nature of their work, its relationship to the environment in the context of climate action, and its often playful relationship with impromptu audiences. They emerged more confident in their practice and feeling fierce about the value of arts work.

Performing musician and teacher **Isla Ratcliff** talks about balancing elements of a freelance career and how the support and camaraderie of the SHIFT programme came just at the right time.

**Hear more from Isla**, a musician with a portfolio career, about how concentrated and undisturbed time to focus on her music (funded by Make it Happen) was hugely important. She also discusses the way the traditional music industry operates, including the importance of touring an album – and negotiating those tours with part-time employers.



Our emerging artists had someone at RCS looking out for them, with **Stephanie Edwards**, KE Development Officer, that all-important point person for participants. A well-kent face to all the interviewees above, Stephanie's role is to help connect students and graduates with support, training and funding. She talks about our programmes' aims of meeting people where they are rather than putting up barriers, and, particularly during the pandemic, the importance of a friendly face at the end of a line.

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*“The Make it Happen fund  
allowed me to make two new  
singles and two new videos  
that I can promote to festival  
programmers, promoters  
and agents.”*

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# *Making an impact*



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**“A wonderful boost  
to a creative idea  
that wouldn’t have been  
able to get off  
the ground without  
such support.”**



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## Making an impact

Measuring impact is never straightforward. We evaluate our programmes by gathering feedback at the moment of each intervention and we track participants via surveys. We have carried out an extensive audit of our KE activity. We take a number of approaches, and an ear to the ground in our highly networked environment can be just as important as formal external peer review. We look forward to developments in the HE-BCI annual survey that will allow reporting of data from more nuanced KE practices. But we know we have more work to do in measuring the impact of our activity on the wider creative sector and society as a whole. Here we look at various ways of assessing the impact of our interventions and our plans to take this work forward.

### Institutional impact

We know from our detailed audit of KE in 2020 that KE as a concept is not widely recognised institutionally, but we also know that there's a huge amount of KE activity going on. We also know informally that our KE brand is recognised through our energetic internal communications work.

We welcomed external expert peer review in the form of the feedback on our 2021 KE Concordat submission, as one of only three Scottish institutions to submit. Impact was explicitly recognised in the summary feedback.

The suggestion from the reviewers that the RCS 'should be encouraged to adopt a higher profile in the sector given their positive approach and practices' was, of course, particularly welcome and the present document is part of that ongoing work.

### Impact on graduates

The UIF was driven by seven overarching strategic outcomes, but without the restrictions of a 'one size fits all' approach. We welcomed the opportunity to prioritise and made a commitment initially in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

We heard from our emerging artists (*Making their way, p.19*) about the impact of our interventions and programmes: helping them overcome the effects of the pandemic on their careers, getting work off the ground, being able to pay themselves and others proper rates, time for R&D, the value of personal contact and regular check-ins with the team. And importantly, the boost to their confidence and sense of validation for their work that our support provided.

Careful review and evaluation of feedback allowed us to remain tuned in to participants' needs and able to adapt programme design accordingly, based on data. A pre-programme questionnaire for SHIFT is a great way of assessing needs and finding out what artists need and want; we try always to keep some flex in programmes.

We are currently testing SHIFT Plus – a new bolt on micro credential of 20 credits at SCQF Level 11 for participants as a means of supporting them to critically evaluate and action their learning and development from their week on SHIFT.

We needed better data on the medium- and longer-term impact of all our programmes. A detailed survey sent to 124 student and graduate participants in April 2022 gave us a more precise picture of their employment circumstances and the impact of KE programmes on their career trajectory.

*“The professional KE team have clearly achieved considerable impact and the policy engagement and online courses are considered good practice.”*

KE Concordat 2021 feedback

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*“Early support means we have been able to take the proper time needed to create a great product.”*

The overwhelming majority of respondents were self-employed (74%) and a massive 89% reported having a portfolio career. Responses emphasised the challenges of freelance work and lack of preparation for it as undergraduates.

There was a high level of support for KE initiatives, with funding as the highest rated element; significantly, the next highest rated element was how these programmes gave participants confidence. Creative experimentation, skills and career development (qualifications and additional credibility in a CV) and access to professional networks also featured.

Responses about the biggest professional challenges faced by graduates revealed that life as a freelancer is top of the list - both the day to day aspects of finance, tax, and the realities of finding work as well as the larger perspectives of career planning, often balancing low and better paid employment e.g. relatively better paid teaching alongside low-paid artistic work. Equality Diversity and Inclusion aspects including disability, dealing with sexual harassment and economic deprivation figured prominently.

Recommendations for our future KE offer included ongoing support after graduation including entrepreneurial support for creatives, career mentoring, maintaining technique, networks and contacts, and building a knowledge base for funding applications.

Our programmes of support targeted at life as a freelance artist were validated by respondents. But a significant number suggested a need for continuing artistic R&D - ‘more than just a workshop’ - and ongoing creative support; this provides food for thought on how to nurture and sustain our graduates and the nature of our impact on the wider creative sector.

### *Our wider impact*

Impact in the REF sense is defined as an effect on or change to the economy, society, culture, and policy. Our outcome for impact in the REF 2021 was the highest of any Scottish HEI in the Unit of Assessment to which we submit and the largest submission to that Unit.

Our Institutional Knowledge Exchange Audit classified KE activity at the RCS using headings from the **McMillan Framework** and found a wealth of examples under every one of the Framework headings. There was particularly strong activity

under skills development (e.g. short courses, CPD and CLPL (Career Long Professional Development) in education for practising artists), knowledge networks and community and public engagement.

One of the RCS’s longest standing and highest profile contributions in what might be termed ‘traditional’ KE (e.g. KE that stems directly from research interests) is that of its consultancy and policy development in youth music provision - work that has, over more than two decades, made a direct impact on government policy in this area. Interventions like our extensive programme of provision for young people and the seriousness of RCS’s commitment to widening access is evidenced by a separate Directorate of Fair Access. Simply stated, public engagement is what we, as performers, makers and educators, do.

*“Our outcome for impact in the REF 2021 was the highest of any Scottish HEI in the Unit of Assessment.”*

# Making It Happen

5 years of transformation  
in Knowledge Exchange at  
RCS through the University  
Innovation Fund

Our staffing profile means that the majority of our staff (particularly part-time hourly paid staff) work professionally in the creative sector and there is only the thinnest barrier between the RCS and the professions. Our extensive networks enable us to staff our KE programmes with working professionals and to facilitate that seamless professional exchange. But we still have work to do in refining our measures to develop a more precise understanding of our institution's place in this ecosystem.

Rather than struggling to adapt measures of economic impact in a sector composed of individual freelancers and microenterprises, a new lens, such as that of the so-called 'purpose economy' may be productive. In this view artists may be seen as productive solution-finders and 'impact entrepreneurs'. This clearly aligns with current KE thinking that entrepreneurship is driven by other types of value as well as the purely economic and, along with others in higher education, we are committed to refining our understanding of social impact.

In the next phase of development we will continue to research and develop new frames for impact. We will continue to embrace the constant tension between numbers and narrative: making better use of existing quantitative instruments such as HE-BCI survey or our own institutional audit of partnerships as well as digging deep with participants' reflections and ensuring systematic stakeholder input into our developing KE strategy. Over the next two years, in collaboration with senior colleagues, we will also work on implementing our key actions from the KE Concordat many of which are critical to strengthening KE and Innovation infrastructure and institutional visibility.

*“The Make it Happen support will have a tangible effect for longer than one or two years. It will have a lasting effect.”*

Menu



# *Making It Happen*

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Menu

A photograph of a man in a blue suit and green tie pointing at a screen, with a woman in a red patterned dress looking on. The scene is dimly lit with red and blue lighting.

# *Making it sustainable*

## *Making It Happen*

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*“In KE nothing  
stands still  
and we know we  
have a long  
way to go.”*

Menu



# Making It Happen

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## Making it sustainable

The UIF has been a game changer for KE and Innovation at RCS. It led to the programme of targeted entrepreneurship support described [here](#), seamlessly connecting through to the emergence of the [Entrepreneurial Campus](#). It enabled research and development, it supported KE and Innovation infrastructure.

That infrastructure has enabled us to drive collaborations with industry partners such as Scottish Ballet and Starcatchers. All our REF impact case studies were collaborative and exemplify how research supports sustainable development goals.

The UIF also set in motion higher education sectoral collaborative working that, particularly for a small specialist institution, has had significant impact. In [SHIFT](#) we made a highly productive working partnership between RCS, GSA and QMU that adds value to the creative industries ecosystem through the creation of a tailored programme of business and freelance skills development. [SHARE](#), a collaboration between the RCS and the University of St Andrews, brings together researchers and artists working in an interdisciplinary way in arts and non-arts fields.

And in policy terms, a seat at the table and the support of a network of larger institutions, for example throughout the KE Concordat development process, as well as the collegiate Universities Scotland RCDG, is invaluable to us.

In the KE field nothing stands still and we know we have a long way to go – our goal is to continually enhance, develop and innovate. As we enter the next stage we turn our focus towards our role in 21st century society and the creative economy, developing and refining how we understand our impact. We continue to interrogate our relevance, contribution and value; we are thinking big, grappling with the challenging themes of the [Innovation Studio](#). We will prioritise civic engagement, seeking to optimise our mosaic of external partnerships.

We made important new commitments in the KE Concordat process. Chief among these is directly involving all areas of the institution in the evolving KE conversation and collaborating with the RCS senior team on specific enabling actions.

The KE department continues to be relentlessly outward-facing: our new [Innovators in Residence](#) are there to inspire our community and to challenge our thinking. We are building additional external review and formal external representation into our planning processes and more robust mechanisms to learn from and act on data and feedback from our many external project partners.

As we reflect on the past five years, trying to understand our influence and impact and planning how best to shape our future work, we tend to reach for metaphors. Our reach and role in helping to grow and sustain a [‘mycelium network’](#) is particularly apt: connecting higher education, the creative economy, community, education and more.

Menu



# Making It Happen

5 years of transformation  
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## Credits

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Royal Conservatoire  
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