

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Creative hotspot: a cultural history of Dartington
International Summer School of Music, 1953-1959

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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Certificate of original authorship

I, Harriet Cunningham, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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To Jeremy Wilson and Clare Addenbrooke-Brittain,
always there with me, at home and out to sea

Abstract

Creative hotspot: a cultural history of Dartington International Summer School of Music, 1953-1959

Britain, 1948. Across Britain and Europe, deep scars remained as communities rebuilt bombed town centres and broken lives. Artists were displaced; study, cultural exchange and critical thinking were all, to a greater or lesser extent, on hold. In Britain there was a profound sense of isolation from the artistic vibrancy of old Europe.

Culture and the arts were widely seen as a way to heal a fractured physical, social and economic environment. The Arnoldian vision of culture as a civilising, revitalising force led to a dramatic flowering of arts activity in Britain and Europe immediately post-war. But what kinds of arts activity should there be? Was the aim to entertain or to ennoble, to escape or engage? To rebuild, restore or reinvent?

This thesis investigates one response to the situation.

The International Summer School of Music is a residential school and festival founded in 1948 and established permanently at Dartington Hall in 1953. Its first artistic director, William Glock, pursued an approach of juxtaposing a diverse and rapidly expanding range of program elements, from the artists he invited to the music he programmed.

The Summer School's archive, an extensive and unexamined collection of photos, letters and printed material, provides the starting point for my research, which uses mixed methods informed by the historiographic philosophy of R. G. Collingwood, combined with Antoine Hennion's application of Actor-network theory (ANT) to music and listening. The thesis encompasses empirical analysis using a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches in dialogue with creative responses to the archive, including short stories and historical re-constructions. Both are grounded in data and both are intended as ways of making meaning.

My findings reveal that the Summer School represented a pioneering approach to music-making which actively engaged with conditions of modernity and tradition, becoming an

‘intensified contact zone’ for different people and different ideas. I argue that this approach resulted in a hotspot for creativity which had a lasting impact on music in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century.

This case study builds on existing research in the field of ethnography and music sociology, offering an original contribution to knowledge on two dimensions. First, as a methodological experiment, it engages with and extends an ongoing discourse on historiography. Second, it is a case study of an artistic phenomenon drawing on ethnographic and sociological research, suggesting the ‘intensified contact zone’ has significant implications for creativity on a broader stage.

Keywords: music, post-war Britain, British music, William Glock, Dartington Hall, modernism, classical music, avant-garde music, 1950s Britain, music festivals, music education, creativity

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