



BROCKHURST & MARLSTON HOUSE

Individual Lessons at Brockhurst and Marlston House

Meet The Teachers

Director of Music

Cliff Rowley BA (Honours) Music and Humanities, MA Music (OU)



Cliff Rowley has been our Director of Music since September 2008. In that time he has developed music in every way and brought fun and professionalism to our school in great abundance. He has been teaching for over 40 years and is an ex member of the RAF in which he served as a musician for 23 years. During that time he performed all over the world in such famous venues as Carnegie Hall in New York and the Royal Albert Hall in London, often with the Royal Family in attendance. He also served in the Gulf War and was awarded 4 medals for his conduct.

As well as teaching all the children classroom lessons, directing all the choirs, orchestras, swing band, R & B band, flute groups and violin/recorder groups, he also teaches the Piano (both Classical and Jazz styles), the Flute and the Trumpet. Although his spare time is limited, he enjoys playing classical music and Jazz, and still on certain occasions performs with big bands and local orchestras. He is also a composer and has written many songs and works for our ensembles and choirs.

Melanie Jones - Vocal Tuition ABRSM



Originally a classically trained singer, Melanie went on to study Popular Music Performance at Vocaltech, London (now BIMM); where she won the coveted 'Performer of the Year' award. As a sought after professional vocalist, Melanie has performed internationally, on prime-time television and with celebrities. She has also played lead roles in UK Theatre tours and on P&O cruise ships. Some of her proudest moments are booking The Savoy three years in a row to provide their New Year's Eve entertainment in their main ballroom; touring with The Osmonds as their backing singer; and being the England Netball National Anthem singer with its associated TV appearances and huge stadium performances. She leads her own band.

Melanie loves teaching and has taught singing and performance since 2012, joining Brockhurst and Marlston House in 2018 where she teaches the Associated Board syllabus. Previous students have gone on to perform in Hairspray (UK Tour), Saturday Night Fever (UK Tour) and with the Pussycat Dolls. She has also successfully coached students for music scholarships, auditions and theatre schools. She has a particular interest in mental health and performance anxiety and is currently studying towards a Masters in Psychodynamic Practice at the University of Oxford.

Christine Evans - Piano and Violin



Christine was born in Malaysia. At 17, she won a scholarship to Trinity College of Music to study violin and piano. During her final year, Christine won the prestigious Leonard Smith Duo Prize for Strings and Piano.

Since graduating, Christine has had an active career as a soloist and chamber musician in performances that have taken her to Europe and Asia.

Christine is currently a pianist at the Royal Ballet School, London.

Jemima Parrish - Piano



Music has always played an integral part in Jemima's life. The first instrument she learnt to play was the guitar at the age of 7. It was when she started learning the piano in her mid-teens that she really began to appreciate classical music.

Jemima began classical training in piano at the age of 15, just over two years later achieving ABRSM Grade 8 Distinction and the following year, in 2014, the Associate Diploma in Piano Performance from Trinity College London.

Jemima has since attended the renowned Dartington International Music Summer School, with the piano and guitar. It was there that she was introduced to the use of guitar and percussion in Brazilian music. She currently plays guitar in a duo with an accordionist, covering various musical styles, ranging from Gypsy Jazz to traditional Greek folk music. In addition, she enjoys playing chamber music, particularly in the form of cello and piano duets.

In the past few years she has played for weddings, firstly with the piano and then with the lever harp. Jemima also enjoys composing and will often spend hours improvising at the piano, particularly pieces in the style of nocturnes and impromptus; she greatly admires the music of Chopin and Schubert.

Jemima has been a member of Mensa since 2023 and thoroughly enjoys reading up around various musical, historical and scientific related subjects in her spare time. In addition, she is currently studying towards a music degree with The Open University.

Teaching enables Jemima to share her passion for music and encourage others who are interested in discovering the joy of music and the piano, whether that be for sheer enjoyment or working towards completing graded exams!

Qualifications and Experience

Associate Diploma in Piano Performance (ATCL) from Trinity College London

ABRSM Grade 8 (Distinction)

A level Music (Grade A)

Teaching the piano in and around Newbury since January 2015

Davina Hastings - Vocal Tuition ABRSM



Davina Hastings trained at The Guildhall School Of Music and Drama. She studied with Rudolf Piernay and Linda Esther Gray. Davina has performed with The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in productions of "The Mikado", "Pirates Of Penzance" "HMS Pinafore" and "Iolanthe" at The Savoy Theatre and also on tour. She has performed with Opera De Lyon, Opera De Nancy in several operatic productions and in The Spoleto Music Festival. Davina also enjoyed working in the West End for two years in Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom of the Opera" in the Ensemble, understudying and playing Madam Giry. She then took a break to have a family and returned back into the show for a six month contract.

She performed for the Army Benevolent Fund in 2015 and 2018 at Exeter Cathedral in their Waterloo Concert a piece written for soprano, harp and cello. "A Song For Our Soldiers" composed by Elizabeth-Jane Baldry and especially commissioned by the Army. Davina also sang in Salisbury City Hall with the Band of The Scots Guards and Hereford Cathedral for the ABF. She will also be performing for them again in Exeter Cathedral in October 2021. She has been teaching singing at Downe House School in Berkshire since 2011 and Brockhurst and Marlston House since 2013.

Graham Saunders - Vocal Tuition



Graham is our pop singing vocal coach and has been with us since 2009.

He has successfully guided many of our past pupils to attaining the level of singing needed to get into their next school of choice.

Graham is a professional studio and touring musician and also a writer, and is the current live tour vocal coach for the UK X Factor, having worked with One Direction, Little Mix and Olly Murs to name but a few.

He will encourage the pupils to compose their own original material as well as teach them all aspects of the recording process.

Every lesson is professionally recorded and he will send you a mix of the song when it is finished, which allows you to keep track of how your child is progressing and also get some beautiful keepsakes.

Steve Laurie - Drums and Percussion



Steve joined the peripatetic teaching staff in 2014 and brings his enthusiasm for playing drums to teaching at Brockhurst and Marlston schools and also at Hogan Music in Newbury.

He makes playing drums accessible to all ages and ability levels - whether to help focus on improving techniques, coordination and reading skills, or just the basics to get started.

In a long professional career in the music business, Steve is still adding to his track record of 9 albums, numerous singles, international and UK tours, festivals, TV and radio sessions. He has worked alongside many notable musicians and producers including his long-standing collaboration with the Tom Robinson Band.

Drum and percussion lessons with Steve include:

- One to one tuition on dual kits, left or right handed for all ages from 7yrs old.
- Preparation for grade exams, Debut/Grade 1 to Grade 8.
- Specific focus on improving hand and foot coordination, tom fills, improvisation and sight reading from foundation to advanced level.
- Taster lessons with Steve are free, with the opportunity to discuss goals and create a taylor-made lesson plan.
- Over 12 years tutoring experience

Andrew Townsend LLCM - Brass Tuition



I started my musical career in the British Army as a very young Military Musician, progressing to principal cornet to leading my section in the REME Corp Band. After 16 years 'service performing all over the world, I have been able to take my knowledge and extensive performing experience to now teach brass instruments and help our young people to see the benefits of learning to play an instrument and how much of a wonderful platform this can be for their social and leadership skillsets.

I have been teaching for over 25 years with my first school, Cheam and I now also teach and direct ensembles and bands at Abingdon School, Cothill School and my more recent position at Brockhurst & Marlston House. Performing is extremely important to me and I feel fundamental in being able to teach and I regularly gig with a variety of genres, although jazz remains by biggest passion. I am also the MD for the Goring & Streatley Concert Band and have a strong desire to share my skillset with community learning.

Alexis Sheppard - Violin, Viola & 'Cello Tuition



My teachers included Mary Bollard (Lecturer in Violin at Cork School of Music, Ireland) and then at the age of 12 I was awarded a scholarship to study under the tutelage of Cristian Persinaru (Head of Strings at Trinity School). During this time, I had the opportunity to perform the Bach Double Concerto in the National Festival Hall and The Royal Albert Hall in London.

I studied Piano with Daniel Nicholls, who frequently accompanied me for recitals during my teenage years, and with whom I performed frequently.

At the age of 15, I began performing as a member of the Dell String Quartet, playing on weekends for local hotels during Sunday Lunch to entertain their guests. In later years the quartet went on to perform for Society Weddings, Garden Parties, Private Events and Charity Functions across the South of England. I have also performed solo in recitals, participated in various orchestral groups, played as part of the Petersfield Festival, and in theatre productions ranging from Gilbert and Sullivan to Contemporary Ballet.

In 2011 I gained my Post Graduate Degree in Music Teaching in Professional Practice from the University of Reading, which has enabled me to teach in schools in the West Berkshire area. I currently teach in six schools, including Brockhurst & Marlston Preparatory School.

Songeun Choi MA, BMus(Hon), LRAM, DipRAM, Royal Society of Musicians



Pianist Songeun Choi is a soloist and chamber musician. She has performed internationally, including Steinway Hall, Fazioli Concert Hall, Barbican, Wigmore Hall, King's Place, The Venue in Leeds, and The Arts Club. She was the winner of the Open Concerto Prize at the Ealing Festival in 2017 and was awarded 3rd prize at the 2015 EPTA Composers Competition. Songeun's fanfare composition was a winning entry for the Royal Opera House competition.

Songeun is also a member of the Odora Trio formed in 2017. They won 1st prize at The Paris International Music Competition 2024 and were winners of the Platinum Prize at the Saint-Saëns International Music Competition 2023. They were also prize winners at The Issac's and Pirani Competition 2017, The Harold Craxton Chamber Music Prize 2020, and were semi-finalists at the St Martin in the Fields Chamber Competition in 2020. The trio has performed widely throughout London and the UK with major performances including recitals for the National Trust and broadcasts for BBC Radio. They have performed at venues including Lake District Summer Music, Hay Music, Whitstable, Southwark Cathedral, Grantham Music Club, Canterbury Music Club, The London Charterhouse and The Korean Cultural Centre. They were also sponsored by the SPOFF foundation to take part in the Wye Valley summer residency in 2018. They released their debut album 'Evergreen' in December 2022 with generous sponsorship from The Nimbus Foundation and The John Ireland Trust.

Songeun is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music and The Purcell School. Supported by numerous scholarships including the Alfred Knight Award, she received her Bachelor of Music with First Class Honours and Master of Arts with Distinction. Upon graduation, she was also awarded the Dorothy Bryant Award and DipRAM, the highest performing award. Songeun has been under the tutelage of William Fong, Diana Ketler and Carole Presland.

Songeun is a member of the Royal Society of Musicians. She currently teaches piano at Brockhurst & Marlston House Schools and runs a private studio. Her students have had many successes at ABRSM exams, won music scholarships and numerous prizes at music festivals.

Victoria Benjamin - Saxophone & Clarinet Tuition



Victoria studied saxophone at the University of Leeds with Richard Ingham and Carl Raven and at the University of North Texas with Sarah Roberts, where she also played under the direction of Nicholas Williams.

She played Principal Alto Saxophone and featured as a soloist with the National Saxophone Choir of Great Britain from the age of 15, touring to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Prague, Holland and China. Victoria also played with the Sax family alongside Nigel Wood and Gerald McCrystal. She recorded extensively for Secret Publications in Birmingham.

Victoria played on two tours with the Manchester Camerata as part of the 'Hacienda Classical, headlining the Isle of Wight Festival consecutive years and opening the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury.

She currently teaches woodwind and cello in Berkshire and Hampshire as well as working as an instrument repairer having qualified from Merton College, London.

Victoria founded the Newbury Saxophone Choir in 2015 and directed the group for seven years. She was then appointed Musical Director of Beenham Wind Orchestra.

Max Hunter - Guitar Tuition



I have been playing guitar since I was seven years old and from that moment it has been my greatest passion. After finishing school I completed a foundation degree in professional musicianship at Brighton Institute of Modern Music. Whilst studying I formed a band (MarthaGunn) which I have extensively toured Europe and the UK with as well as spending a lot of time in the studio with.

I have been teaching guitar for the last two years. It brings me so much joy to see children's progress and watching them play through songs that they have asked to learn. I try to keep my lessons as relevant and fun to each child as possible by learning songs/music that they listen to and enjoy in their day-to-day lives. I like to include some theory and talk about examples of songwriting techniques as we work through different songs.

Kirsty Dixon - Flute, Recorder and Piano Tuition



I started playing the flute when I was 5 years old. Since then I have performed many times in different ensembles and as a soloist. I started teaching the flute and Recorder at Brockhurst and Marlston house school and loved working with the children on their playing and building their skills. Music is a wonderful form of expression and I have seen how much it helps to develop children's confidence and love of learning.

I went to the university of Reading for 3 years and achieved a degree in primary education with music specialism. During my time at the university I had training on teaching children using different approaches to support their learning. All children are different and learn in different ways. I also had training in directing ensembles such as an orchestra or choir.

After I finished at Reading University I worked at a primary school for 6 years and I was the subject leader for music. I also directed the school choir, small ensembles and school musicals. I also taught children the flute and piano. I recently returned to Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools to concentrate on teaching music and I love teaching and supporting the children to grow as musicians and seeing how much they enjoy making music.