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Michael Wilson

Michael Wilson joined the Cranleigh family from Kenya in 1982 as a teacher of Chemistry, hockey and tennis. Since then he has taken roles as Deputy Housemaster in 2 North, Warden of the Girls’ House and Housemaster of Loveday, interspersed with stints at other schools in Thailand and the UK. More latterly he returned to the fold with a ten-year tenure as a popular Headmaster at Cranleigh Preparatory School. This year he takes the helm of the Cranleigh Schools in Abu Dhabi and is looking forward to spreading more of the Cranleigh magic across the globe.

In Kenya people talk about having Africa in their blood, it is described as like having another sense that doesn’t fit into the categories of sight, touch and smell but is rather a joyous combination of all of them. My perception of Ex Cultu Robur is of something similar, the phrase and its importance is simply something that is captured in the blood of the people who are part of our school community.

Cranleigh was established in 1865 to support the families in the local area and build a community, similar to Cranleigh Abu Dhabi on Saadiyat Island. People live in those areas because there is a school that is the beating heart of the community.

When we were planning the development of Cranleigh in Abu Dhabi we showed Saeed Al Hajeri around the schools in the UK and when he had finished his visit he told us emphatically that whatever we did in the Middle East must be the same, that we must capture that atmosphere in a bottle. I thought about how we could do that and it was then that
LIVING THE MOTTO, EX CULTU ROBUR, LEADS TO THE CREATION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL HUMAN BEINGS

realised what culture actually is, it is the sense of sense of belonging, a common purpose, a sense of place and feeling. Abraham Maslow’s paper A Theory of Human Motivation, published in 1943, proposes a hierarchy of human needs. He states that once the most basic needs for warmth, safety and shelter are met, the next most important building block of the human psyche is a sense of love and belonging. This sense needs to be secure before we can go on to develop ourselves as achievers and doers in the world, or for that matter to attain self-esteem.

What Cranleigh has always done well is to give its pupils a sense of belonging from which they can grow. As a school which is not rigorously selective we have never told children that they had to act a certain way to be accepted and it is my belief that the spirit of Ex Cultu Robur is what allows such a small school to punch above its weight, because the pupils all have a sense of belonging and support and as a result they all push themselves to achieve in every sphere.

Cranleighians are expected to give their best, in sports, academics, art, music and drama. They are expected to look after the younger members of the community and to become a part of the soul of the place. Our aim at the Prep School has been articulated as a ‘soul and spirit that inspires’ and this is something which resonates right through into the Senior School and into the international schools. At the junior level it is learned, but by the time pupils reach Sixth Form they are teaching that soul and spirit, the culture of Ex Cultu Robur, to the younger children in the community. We have many Old Cranleighans who return as parents, to give their own children the experience of the Cranleigh Culture and they all recognise that the spirit they left is still here.

Living the motto leads to the creation of multidimensional human beings. It is not just about academic success but about nurturing people who are genuine all-rounders, who want to try everything and do it all to the best of their ability, and who, as a result, excel in their chosen field. The skills learned in each sphere are the same, performing in public, taking a hockey penalty or working under pressure in an exam are similar and transferable skills.

In the pages of this magazine you will hear from many of the people I have had the privilege to teach, or to tutor in my boarding house. They are people who have excelled in their fields, but who are also living testament to the phrase Ex Cultu Robur. At school, Victoria Turner was also a top-class sportswoman and musician; Sarah Ioannides was always streets ahead of the other musicians but, more than that, she was always prepared to give other things a go; James was one of the pupils who was the soul of a boarding house; none of them just specialised early and stuck to their thing, but all of them are exceptional.
Flt Lt Victoria Turner was one of the first girls to attend Cranleigh prior to Sixth Form. Following her university degree, she became a commissioned officer in the Royal Air Force, undertaking training to become a jet pilot. Following flying training she was streamed to fly the Eurofighter Typhoon. Since completing her training as a Typhoon pilot, she has been deployed to a number of locations for both operational and training purposes, which has seen her travelling over much of the globe. She has just started her training as a flying instructor, conveniently coinciding with her status as a new mother. Both she and her husband are learning the ropes of parenthood whilst trying to maintain the activities they enjoyed prior to children. They are having limited success, but are still enjoying themselves immensely.

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dealing with competitiveness, and more advanced formation (flying at 1.5 nautical mile splits, maintaining visual, carrying out low level attacks whilst on the look-out for another aircraft coming to intercept and fight you – it certainly gives you a bit to think about). R.A.F Valley is the place where you discover whether you really want to fly. If your heart isn’t fully in it, you simply won’t get through. After completing 18 months at R.A.F Valley, you then move onto a frontline fast jet aircraft.

Flying on the frontline is first and foremost, a huge privilege. As Villiers once said (and more recently Ben Parker in Spiderman), with great power comes great responsibility: “As long as I’m good enough and I want it enough, I’ll keep going. I have every opportunity to do what I want to do; it has been up to me to first of all, be good enough, and then to develop my ability, and then to develop my desire. This couldn’t be truer than for me as a female pilot. The universal concerns, which may be experienced by anyone who becomes a new parent, are the same for me as a female pilot. Eleven months ago I gave birth to our first child, a son. He is incredible, and we had a fabulous first seven months together while I was on maternity leave. In April I returned to work, and while things on the whole are progressing smoothly, I have certainly encountered what I expect are the usual speed bumps that everyone experiences when they return to work, leaving your child with someone else for the first time, not always being able to get home in time for bath, having to leave for work before he wakes up, etc. I have also encountered things that I am gauging not everyone experiences – there was a moment for example during my first flight back when I realised that if something went wrong and I didn’t land safely, there would be a little guy at home who wouldn’t have a mum any more. Statistically, I am far more likely to die from something else than I am in an air accident; I used this argument whilst trying to convince myself to not give up, which I very nearly did.

Returning to work after a baby is not for everyone (indeed for many people it is impossible, what with the cost of childcare), however I am so glad that I stayed. I am a much nicer person, my relationship with my son is much better and I am much more content. Returning to work after a baby is not for everyone (indeed for many people it is impossible, what with the cost of childcare), however I am so glad that I stayed. I am a much nicer person, my relationship with my son is much better and I am much more content. Returning to work after a baby is not for everyone (indeed for many people it is impossible, what with the cost of childcare), however I am so glad that I stayed. I am a much nicer person, my relationship with my son is much better and I am much more content.

One thing however that I feel may hinder women who wish to become R.A.F pilots is when someone makes a comment like this they run the risk of preventing an individual from pursuing an individual, such that both parents are involved in the first year of raising their children. Whilst most of them are not taking the same period of time away from flying as I have been, I have encountered challenges that I am sure that they will experience. When your mind is full of things there will be similar double to those that I experienced when I returned to flying: My partner and I don’t think that these are female speciﬁc concerns – I believe they are universal concerns, which may be experienced by anyone who becomes a new parent.

I was always taught that I could do whatever I wanted when I grew up. I still believe that: but with a caveat. I can do whatever I want, but I can’t do everything, and more importantly, I have a certain degree of latitude but ultimately I have to make the choices of what to do. This is not to ignore the actual diﬀiculties that many individuals face as a consequence of their sex (or other bias), but I don’t think that these obstaces exist if you want to be an R.A.F pilot. I was fortunate enough that throughout my upbringing I was surrounded by both strong men and women who always said, “Go for it!” rather than, “Are you sure you want to do that?” These obstacles exist if you want to be a pilot, but I don’t think that these obstructions exist if you want to be an R.A.F pilot.

Having this responsibility can lead to a significant personal investment; it’s down to you whether somebody lives or dies, so you’d best be damn sure you know why you are doing what you’re doing. This is not to say that there are no diﬃculties that I had (I also could not fly whilst pregnant), I don’t doubt that in the back of some of their minds there will be similar double to those that I experienced when I returned to flying: My partner and I don’t think that these are female speciﬁc concerns – I believe they are universal concerns, which may be experienced by anyone who becomes a new parent.

One thing however that I feel may hinder women who wish to become R.A.F pilots if they are asked, “Isn’t it difficult, being a girl in that world?” My belief is that everyone has the opportunity to learn, build and develop yourself, and Cranleigh helped to guide me through that.

Definitely more difficult than I expected. Although I was fairly convinced of my own immortality, and you need to convince yourself to not give up, which I very nearly did. Having this responsibility can lead to a significant personal investment; it’s down to you whether somebody lives or dies, so you’d best be damn sure you know why you are doing what you’re doing. This is not to say that there are no difficulties that I had (I also could not fly whilst pregnant), I don’t doubt that in the back of some of their minds there will be similar double to those that I experienced when I returned to flying: My partner and I don’t think that these are female speciﬁc concerns – I believe they are universal concerns, which may be experienced by anyone who becomes a new parent.

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Classical drama is incredibly important for children and schools should never shy away from allowing pupils to be really challenged by the great plays. I was lucky enough to have had teachers that understood this and I knew from an early age that acting would be the career for me. I attended a convent school before joining Cranleigh Prep and, looking back, I can see that the theatricality of the nuns with their costumes and services really appealed to me and instilled a love of dressing up. From my first year at the Prep I got involved in all the drama I could possibly find. There was a teacher called Lance Marshall who put on the most incredibly ambitious plays for prep-school aged children: Marlowe’s Tamburlaine the Great and Doctor Faustus, and of course plenty of Shakespeare. I loved it all, even the learning of speeches in Latin for the Marlowe plays.

By the time I moved across to the senior school I added parts in Hamlet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Henry IV part 2 and Julius Caesar. There, too, the drama department, headed up by Pat Maguire and Warren (Bunny) Green, was not afraid to stage difficult plays and I enjoyed the role of Thomas Beckett in TS Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral. Like many actors I’m a true romantic with a love of stories and playing kings, fuelled by the great plays, that I took with me from these beginnings right through my career. My romantic outlook has always given me optimism and I never really worried about how anything would turn out, just took it all in my stride. I auditioned for RADA, got in first time and spent three very happy years there. Although I loved watching movies, I had never thought of myself as a movie actor so I was amazed when I tried for To Sir with Love and got the part. It was exciting to work alongside stars such as Sidney Poitier and to work on material that brought up social and racial issues but none of us had any idea at the time what a ground-breaking film it would turn out to be. It was one of the top-grossing films of 1967, costing just £600,000 to make and it grossed £50 million at the box office – it is still up there as one of the highest grossing films of all time.

I never wanted to be famous, it wasn’t something I ever considered. I just wanted to do good work. But the success of the film meant I got to work with people like Bette Davis who played my mother in The Anniversary, which I really enjoyed because it was a stage play that they turned into a film and it retained a highly theatrical quality. Perhaps my personal favourite film was The Desperadoes, with Jack Palance playing my father, because I loved playing cowboys as a child and the whole experience was such fun.

But my great love was always the stage, where actors get a more genuine and intimate response, where they and the audience can experience real emotion. In film there is always someone standing behind you. So I joined a rep company and began to thoroughly enjoy performing a different play every two weeks, rehearsing one during the day and performing the other in the evenings. You get to learn things very quickly because, strangely, the more lines you learn the easier it is to learn lines, something that non-actors find it difficult to understand.

Return to the Forbidden Planet appealed to me right from the outset because the story is based on The Tempest with the exile being to the forbidden planet from the 50s B movie, rather than the island where Prospero learns his magic. It was long before jukebox musicals really took off but the marriage of wonderful 1950s songs with the dialogue of Shakespeare seemed like a match made in heaven for me. It was largely funded by Old Cranleighans and had a slow start but had a breakthrough when it was featured on a TV clip after which the sales went through the roof. We did eight shows a week and I loved every single one. It’s so important to keep people entertained. If you can educate them

“SCHOOLS SHOULD NEVER SHY AWAY FROM ALLOWING PUPILS TO BE REALLY CHALLENGED BY THE GREAT PLAYS.”

"CHRISTIAN ROBERTS IS A FILM AND STAGE ACTOR AND ONE OF FOUR GENERATIONS OF ROBERTS TO HAVE STUDIED AT CRANELEGH. HE STARTED HIS CAREER IN THE SEMINAL TO SIR WITH LOVE AND WENT ON TO MAKE OTHER FILMS WITH COLUMBIA BEFORE RETURNING HOME TO THE STAGE. RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET, THE MUSICAL HE PRODUCED AND STARRED IN, IS CREDITED WITH THE BIRTH OF MODERN MUSICAL THEATRE AND EARNED A LAURENCE OLIVER AWARD IN 1990."
through that entertainment, then even better. Forbidden Planet made Shakespeare accessible for all kinds of people who would not otherwise have seen it.

My love of Shakespeare also led me to produce A Caribbean Dream, in the years I spent in Barbados. It is based on A Midsummer Night’s Dream and features both Barbadian and English actors. The film has just won Best Drama at the Barbados National Film Awards 2018.

Musical theatre is still enjoying an absolute heyday, with new shows appearing all the time. Theatre itself is very vibrant, despite the constant pessimism that Netflix will kill it off, and I think that classical stage drama has an enduring appeal. So many people want tickets that are hard to get hold of that many small theatres and arts centres now show film of the West End shows. Film itself has changed a lot over the years, not always in a good way. There is too much computer generation now, I prefer to see real actors and actresses really acting, rather than CGI, and that emotion is possibly the reason the stage is still so popular.

My advice to budding actors would definitely be to go to drama school, to learn technique. But, before that, to get involved in everything you can, not just the drama. At school I loved sport and music too and enjoyed everything opportunity that was provided at Cranleigh. On the sports field and in the choir, playing and singing your heart out, is where character really develops.

“AT SCHOOL I LOVED SPORT AND MUSIC TOO AND ENJOYED EVERY OPPORTUNITY THAT WAS PROVIDED AT CRANLEIGH”
Five books later, The White Silhouette is now published, and I find I’m writing pretty much about the same things. I have always been fascinated by questions relating to the nature of ultimate truth – is there a God, is there life after death, is there a cosmic intelligence that we call Fate, are extraordinary coincidences a matter of luck or design, are we merely assemblages of atoms blundering around, are our lives a matter of birth, copulation, and death? For my explorations of these questions I have always thought that poetry – the best words in the best order (Coleridge) – was the most apt medium. Poetry combines music (rhythm and meter) with painting (imagery) with meaning, and making a poem work involves playing three-dimensional chess with oneself. A word may convey the right meaning but sound ugly in itself – but by changing that word you may then upset the rhythm of the line. There is an infinite knock-on effect with every change you make; removing a comma can be the poetic equivalent of the flap of the butterfly in Shamley Green that causes a tornado in Australia.

The White Silhouette has debts to Cranleigh both directly and indirectly. For example, I have in the book a couple of short translations from Homer, Virgil and Horace, which would have been impossible but for the dedicated and patient teaching of Chris Richardson and Stephen Winkley (I’m told I was the last pupil to study A Level ancient Greek at Cranleigh). More directly, I include in the book three poems from ‘In Loco Parentis’, a sequence of poems I’m writing about my time at Cranleigh (watch this space!).

My literary career began at Cranleigh in a small way. I was blessed with inspiring English teachers – John Savage, John Vallins and Pat Maguire come to mind (a tradition carried on by the likes of Peter Longshaw, the late Paul Leggitt, Gordon Neil, and James Brookes, who have all welcomed me during later visits to the school). And my first foray into verse came as early as the Fourth Form, when an Upper Fifth boy called Dominic Sasse asked me to contribute to the 2 North House magazine, Phantasy. At the time, social protest verse was in vogue, and I came up with a short iambic couplet saying something like, ‘Man has come a long way since the Stone Age: shame about Vietnam.’ Sasse took it at face value and published it; my first printed poem. Other verse challenges at school included writing a poem in a Geoff Boult chemistry lesson to help out a friend who had to hand in his English prep to Lance Marshall in the following lesson; and versifying in a punning way the names of the entire 2 North House to the tune of ’The Twelve Days of Christmas’ for an end-of-term party at Andrew and Gay Corran’s house.

Poetry, as a vocation, began for me at Cambridge. I entered a Trinity College competition called the Powell Prize (named after Enoch Powell) and won a prize of £5, meagre even in those days. But it was encouragement enough to set me on the royal road to poetic dreams. After Cambridge I taught English on the island of Crete, pretending to be (a wimpish) Lord Byron, and that’s where I began writing in earnest; the combination of being away from home, struggling with a foreign language, and feeling close to the ancient civilisation of the Minoans activated my Muse, and the resultant poems formed the basis of my first book, A Vision of Comets. Since then it’s been a constant struggle to juggle poetry, which earns little money, with more remunerative forms of employment, but that’s always been the way. TS Eliot himself said that poetry ‘was a mug’s game’.

James Harpur (2 North 1970-75) is a poet living in Co. Cork. At school he studied Latin, Greek and Divinity for A Level before going to Trinity College, Cambridge (where he studied English). He has taught English on Crete, worked as a lexicographer and now concentrates solely on poetry. He has won a number of poetry prizes, including the 1995 National Poetry Competition and an Eric Gregory Award, and has been elected to the Irish Academy of the Arts. He has visited Cranleigh on a number of occasions to read and discuss his poems and conduct workshops. His latest book is The White Silhouette (Carcanet).
It irks me I don't remember much about the days between the last exam and the end. Did we party, or slouch towards that unbearable freedom? Weren't there rumours and plots? Smuggling a sheep into Herbie's study, streaking at supper, an alarm clock primed to go off during Speech Day? So I ring you, ahead of our weekly ritual, tightening my grip on the receiver until the click, sound of a shuffle, TV blaring, wheelchairs. We sound like beret-wearing veterans forgetting we've spoken the week before, eager to re-live anything we can. I guide us gently, to our final summer and hear your brain working hard as if you're in the middle of French Oral. Eventually you say: "I was feeling good. The last exam – History? – went well. It was a long hot summer, wasn't it? I remember walking by Gatley's Pond and stopping, feeling at ease... that's right – I heard youngsters in the swimming pool. It was so hot I'd taken off my shirt, wearing just my corduroy waistcoat. I can't remember where I'd come from... or where I had to go... just the heat, laughter and happy shouts... And then there was the first eleven, my final match – fifteen not out! – the shock of mum arriving with a wig on. Wigs were really awful at that time. They never told me she was so ill; they didn't want to ruin my exams. She died the day before my results. Three 'A's. That morning... I didn't know what..." You stop-start to the end of the sentence, but your words are merely sounds, for I have drifted back to school, the sunny path beside the pond, and there you are, weightless, peaceful, listening to the laughter of children, happy and invisible.
The Cranleigh motto was the phrase at the heart of the School when it was founded in 1865. Ex Cultu Robur (from Culture comes Strength) informs a robust education ethic and a heartfelt belief in the holistic development of young people. All Schools in the Cranleigh family share our motto, our two Surrey schools, our sister School in Abu Dhabi and our partner School in Zambia. Over the years Cranleigh has stuck by Ex Cultu Robur, strengthened this core ethos and continued to explore the meaning of culture. This humane educational ethos is what makes the Cranleigh community so special.

Cranleigh’s day is built around a strong academic timetable that also prioritises time for sports, music, drama and the creative arts, enabling every child’s talent to flourish. Old Cranleighans – our celebrated academics, politicians and business leaders, our national standard athletes, our musicians, artists and actors – are testament to its success.
Peter Henry Emerson (1856-1936) was a pioneer photographer who promoted photography as an art form and developed the aesthetic of naturalistic photography. He was educated at Cranleigh, where he excelled as both a scholar and an athlete, going on to study medicine at King’s College Hospital, London. He later received a BA (1883) and a Bachelor of Medicine degree (1885) from Cambridge University, where he also studied photography for the first time, and joined the Photographic Society of Great Britain. It became his passion and, after a brief period of medical practice, he left the profession in 1886 to pursue a full-time career in photography and writing. In his handbook, Naturalistic Photography (1889), he outlined a system of aesthetics, which decreed that a photograph should be direct and simple and show real people in their own environment. It became highly influential and formed the rationale of much 20th-century photography. In true Cranleigh style Emerson continued many interests outside his chosen field; he was a naturalist, a skilled billiards player, the founder of a rowing club and an active member of the Royal Meteorological Society.

“THE ARTIST...ONLY AFTER LONG AND CLOSE OBSERVATION DO THE SCALES DROP FROM HIS EYES AND HE SEES A BEAUTIFUL POSE, EVEN IN A CHILD DIGGING UP POTATOES OR A MAN THROWING A HAMMER OR RUNNING A RACE, OR HE SEES SUBTLE BEAUTIES OF COLOUR IN A REED-BED...AND THIS IS FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO SEE THAN IT IS TO LEARN TO SEE THE SCIENTIFIC TRUTHS”
FROM THE ARCHIVES: PETER HENRY EMERSON

Towing the Reed

Throwing the Cast Net
There is much misconception as to the use of the word “creator” in the arts. Some think only those gentlemen who paint mythological pictures, or story telling pictures, are creators. Of course such distinction is absurd; any artist is a creator when he produces a picture or writes a poem; he creates the picture or speech by which he appeals to others. He is the author, creator, or whatever you like to call him; he is responsible for its existence.

Verse-writing, Prose-writing, Music, Sculpture, Painting, Photography, Etching, Engraving and Acting, are all arts, but none in itself a fine art, yet each and all can be raised to the dignity of a fine art when an artist by any of these methods of expression so raises his art by his intellect to be a fine art. For this reason, everyone who writes verse and prose, who paints, photographs, etches, engraves, is not necessarily an artist at all, for he does not necessarily have the intellect or use it in practising his art. It has long been customary to call all painters and sculptors artists, as it has long been customary in Edinburgh to call medical students doctors. But in both cases the terms are equally loosely applied. Our definition, then, of an artist is a person who either by verse, prose, sculpture, painting, photography, etching, engraving, or music, raises his art to a fine art by his work, and the works of such artists alone are works of art.

By Naturalism we mean the true and natural expression of an impression of nature by an art. Now it will immediately be said that all men see nature differently. Granted. But the artist sees deeper, penetrates more into the beauty and mystery of nature than the commonplace man. The beauty is there in nature. It has been thus from the beginning, so the artist’s work is no idealising of nature; but through quicker sympathies and training the good artist sees deeper and more fundamental beauties and he seize upon them. “Tears them out,” as Durer says, and renders them on his canvas, or on his photographic plate, or on his written page. And therefore the work is the test of the man – for by the work we see whether a man’s mind is commonplace or not.

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Taken from Naturalistic Photography for Students of the Art, by Peter Henry Emerson and Alfred Stieglitz, 1890
Will Collier is an English Rugby Union player and tighthead prop for Harlequins in the Gallagher Premiership. He started with Rosslyn Park FC at just six years old and joined the Harlequins Academy in 2011, while still a pupil at Cranleigh. Will made his England Test debut against Argentina in 2017.

My Housemaster, Mr McConnell-Wood, was an amazing man. I met him during a tour of Cranleigh School – a very old and grand building – and instantly I thought: wow, he is an unbelievable person. I knew from that day that I wanted him to teach me and guide me into adulthood. As he took me around the boarding house, it was immediately obvious the amount of respect he commanded from all the guys. Mr McConnell-Wood knew every nook and cranny of the school building, and would pop up unexpectedly anywhere there was mischief. He was very short and very stocky, but thanks to his military background – he was an ex-Gurkha – he was so stealthy. If any other teacher was coming, you’d hear them thumping along the corridors, but not Mr McConnell-Wood. He could give you the fright of your life.

What I remember most was his kindness: he took me under his wing and taught me really important life lessons. I was a bit naughty at school and I got caught up in the wrong circles. I was distracted very easily and I was always getting told off. I was never malicious, just typically cheeky, and I often got sent out of class. I was distracted very easily and I was always getting told off. I was never malicious, just typically cheeky, and I often got sent out of class.

But Mr McConnell-Wood knew exactly how to speak to me. He would never shout or get angry. He would always say: it’s all about thinking before you act. I remember him telling me that he knew I could achieve more, and knew that my actions weren’t a reflection of who I was. That stuck with me.

However, he didn’t use the same approach with each individual. He would always tailor it to each boy’s character. Taking the time to do that just really worked. And of course, there was the added bonus that he also coached the rugby team. I had a really great three years under his guidance.

Another unforgettable character from my time at Cranleigh was Mr Leggitt. He sadly passed away recently, and I can’t imagine a more colourful character.

As well as sport, I loved English, especially creative writing. And in Mr Leggitt’s English classes he really enabled every single student to thrive. There were absolutely no boundaries in his lessons – whatever you wanted to do, whatever you wanted to explore, he encouraged.

At school, I loved fishing, and one day we had to take part in a show-and-tell activity for English. You had to bring in an item, do a presentation to the class and write up an essay about it. I asked Mr Leggitt if I could bring my fishing rod and of course he said yes. So I was in this English class, casting my fishing rod up and down – something that I don’t think would have gone down well in other classes – and he was in hysterics, absolutely loving it. I can’t imagine that happening with any other teacher.

I never, ever saw Mr Leggitt lose it. He was a brilliant man who was passionate about what he did, and who always had time for every single student.

This article first appeared in The Times Educational Supplement in May 2018. Will Collier was speaking to Kate Parker.
"Conducting is truly an art" I told one of my students at a recent conducting masterclass. I remember my first experimental appearance in front of the orchestra at Cranleigh, wafting my arms through the air to Elgar's 'Serenade for Strings', wondering how one was supposed to connect all these notes between impulses of the beat as well as inspire from the podium. Long has my search for those answers continued, throughout my ascent to three Music Director positions in the US, as well as guest conducting across continents in a rather unpredictable "business". My journey in pursuit of the musical dream has certainly had its share of valleys and peaks, but when the going was tough I turned always to my heart for direction.

Even before I knew this would be my path I was fully absorbed in every available musical opportunity. My direction only became clear when I began to trust the mentors and teachers around me. One of the most important from school days was Elizabeth Ovenden, both a Computer Science teacher and a professional violinist, who changed my attitude and directed the application of my talent. She guided me from practice room to library study, where I put in the countless hours necessary to join both the National Youth Orchestra and Oxford University as an instrumental scholar. Cranleigh gave me the leeway to follow my passion for music whilst maintaining my academics, training for the person I later became: instrumentalist, conductor and Music Director. It also enabled me to devote countless hours to the French Horn, Violin, Piano, Singing Lessons, Choir and Orchestra practice, even a term in guitar and saxophone lessons. It was a huge awakening to find that I could set what seemed like a far-fetched goal and achieve it with determination and diligence. From this point I began to allow myself to dream and to believe that I could become not just "another conductor" but the ultimate version of myself, the most powerful communicator of music that I could be.

I knew that this quest would require great perseverance and, although I claimed it as mine, I gave myself permission to take another route if this proved no longer fitting for me. Along my way, I was reminded by my brother, Kinyras, to enjoy the journey and not worry about the result! Most recently while working on my knee rehab from two surgeries and determined to start running again for my overall health and fitness on the podium, I was reminded by my physiotherapist and Olympic Trials Marathon Runner Alison Unterreiner, that even though a long hard journey must enjoy its way bit by bit. 'To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain which sustain life, not the top. Here's where things grow. But of course, without the top you can't have any sides. It's the top that defines the sides. So on we go… we have a long way… no hurry… just one step after the next.'*

The many phases of my journey led me through the tough training of a young conductor, learning the discipline of lengthy study to absorb the multitude of details in any single score required for preparation: its structure, harmonic journey, melodic language, stylistic idiosyncrasies, idiomatic language, instrumentation, tempi and transitions, and articulations. Then came the way in which I personally might choose to lead the music, through phrasing, in adherence with the depth of my understanding about this or that particular composer and the traditions that may have developed over centuries regarding its performance.

*Sara Ioannides is an Old Cranleighan and is recognised as one of the top 20 female conductors worldwide by Lebrecht's "Woman Conductors: The Power List". An active guest conductor internationally with orchestras such as the Tonkünstler, Royal Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lyon, Cincinnati Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, she serves as Music Director of Symphony Tacoma, WA and former Music Director of the Spartanburg Philharmonic and Paso Symphony. A graduate of Oxford University and Lehigh School of Music, she is active on advisory boards, an adjudicator, public speaker, and educator, and she has also served as NEA Panelist for the US Government.

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THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF MUSIC

SARAH IOANNIDES

Sarah Ioannides is an Old Cranleighan and is recognised as one of the top 20 female conductors worldwide by Lebrecht’s “Woman Conductors: The Power List.” An active guest conductor internationally with orchestras such as the Tonkünstler, Royal Philharmonic, Orchestre National de Lyon, Cincinnati Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, she serves as Music Director of Symphony Tacoma, WA and former Music Director of the Spartanburg Philharmonic and Paso Symphony. A graduate of Oxford University and Lehigh School of Music, she is active on advisory boards, an adjudicator, public speaker, and educator, and she has also served as NEA Panelist for the US Government.

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Next, I embraced a vast variety of technical possibilities since there were so many different philosophies and approaches to “beating”, “baton technique”, etc. I read every available book in the necessary various original source languages on the "art of conducting", as well as biographies of conductors, and manuals about every conductor a conductor needed to KNOW in order to be a conductor. Other critical skills I needed to master included the language of communication when rehearsing or teaching, such as how much to say, how often, and when. Essentially my rehearsal technique was a critical area in which to become confident, requiring leadership skills and an understanding of psychology. Without this knowledge I could not see how it's in a position to advise my colleagues. I wasted little time and got to work!

Overall it took a further 10 years after Cranleigh to prepare me for the podium. From Oxford University, to the Guildhall School of Music, the Curtis Institute of Music and, finally, the Juilliard School of Music. Yet I was still not ready for the "business" of becoming a conductor finding a manager, setting up websites, networking, job-hunting and auditioning. After a few close misses I secured a job as Assistant Conductor to the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Director of the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra, and a few years later took on my own orchestras as Music Director (El Paso Symphony, TX and Spartanburg Philharmonic, SC) where I began to understand the subtleties and structure of running a mighty ship. Here, the necessary interpersonal skills became essential, important for interacting with, and relating to, the board, staff, patrons, donors, sponsors, the press, and other community leaders (both arts and other nonprofit collaborations), as well as managing the key musical and artistic relationships with orchestra members, soloists, composers, and other collaborators. Although others have traversed the terrain before me, my international experience has often been as the "first female conductor" and the glass podium was, and still is, very much in discussion. I have seen the business gradually change and open up to more women on the podium, yet I have also seen multiple examples of women being pulled back down and criticised. Even for instrumentalists there is still discrimination within the orchestral world. Every day there are articles about issues that we know are discriminatory and we wish had disappeared long ago. Yet I have never wished to dwell on the negative, but on balance there have been many opportunities for the children to grow; to develop multiple perspectives, to be flexible, and to believe that they could live their dreams; this, accompanied by hard work and healthy living could take them far. Their well-being will always be paramount.

I have had to be flexible. But throughout my career I will always believe in, and hold at my core, the power of music. I directly witnessed this power as a child exploring the sounds and form of music, as a young impressionable teen, and as an adult watching the countless responses of people of all ages being moved by and moved to music. Yet I was doing the right thing with my life, as hard as it was. Seeing this emotional response to music, the moving moments where time almost stands still, remains a powerful inspiration to my ongoing journey.

I have been thankful to mentors along the way along for their belief and encouragement. Also to the many musicians, friends, supporters, and colleagues that have helped me to recognise that my quest was to make a difference for people through music. Last but not least, to all those, including our families, who helped us manage all the difficult travels and multiple locations in which the children (now eight, eight and ten) have been schooled, lived and made homes and friends within my and my husband’s professional lives! For us, it is the inspiration of music, its ability to empower and be an expression of our world that gives us belief and hope. It is essential for our planet to have the inspirational gift of live orchestral performance, inspiring community, bringing compassion and the joy of life, and overall bringing people together through music.

Nevertheless I have lived with the pressures of juggling a family life with a career as a conductor, which requires a lot of travel, constant planning and continual flexibility for all involved. This, I am sure is equally applicable to women in top leadership positions in all spheres. I have had the joy of mostly being able to bring my children with me and to school them in many different places, for several years they attended schools in three different cities, going back and forth between them multiple times in an academic year. This has been achieved thanks to the support and open-mindedness of many that wished to support our family. Of course some sacrifices have had to be made, but on balance there have been many opportunities for the children to grow; to develop multiple perspectives, to be flexible, and to believe that they could live their dreams; this, accompanied by hard work and healthy living could take them far. Their well-being will always be paramount.

Indeed, it is the inspiration of music, its ability to empower and be an expression of our world that gives us belief and hope. It is essential for our planet to have the inspirational gift of live orchestral performance, inspiring community, bringing compassion and the joy of life, and overall bringing people together through music.
THE LIBERATION OF LEARNING

DR JOHN TAYLOR

John Taylor is Director of Learning, Teaching & Innovation at Cranleigh and is responsible for the development of independent learning across the three schools in the Cranleigh Foundation.

We all have a view about what education should be like – and we know what it looks like in reality. In the currently dominant model of education, the focus is on learning prescribed syllabus content, determined by what can be easily assessed by written examination, namely, factual recall, divorced from much consideration of relevance or interest and driven by a remorseless concern for successful examination results. The watchwords of traditional education are rigour, knowledge, examined assessment and opposition to student control over the learning process.

This is, of course, not the only way to think about education. By way of contrast, the educational progressive favours independent learning, arguing with Dewey that the centre of gravity must be nearer the child: their interests, concerns and questions matter when we are determining what is to be learned. Progressivism draws on simple but often neglected insights into the learning process, such as that students learn better if they are interested in what they are studying, are able to make significant choices about the learning process and the form in which they exhibit their knowledge, and have time to develop a deep understanding rather than simply memorising facts for short-term recall.

Progressive education embraces the realms of the unknown, the imaginative, the evaluative and the creative. Learning is connected much more directly to life itself. It is an active process of inquiry and exploration, involving the individual construction of meaning within the domains of study. Skillful exploration of such domains is often not susceptible to assessment by means of a written examination, not least because the choice of question lies with the student, it can however be assessed, and rigorously so, by means of extended projects, a form of assessment which is for many purposes more valid than an examination, not least because students have many skills other than those which lead to success in short, sharp written tests.

Amongst these polarized views of education, where should we stand? For some years now, I have believed that we need a new movement of educational liberation. The processes of teaching and learning have been shackled by an approach which values only what can be measured and which sees only examinations as a valid form of assessment. Education, which should be about the examination of life, is reduced to a life of examinations. As far as teaching, since the goal is to succeed in the next round of tests, the dominant method is that of direct instruction. ‘Tell us what we need to know’, the student insists, taking for granted that the ‘need to know’ is determined by what is on the test, and that the best way of learning is for the teacher to provide the ‘right answers’ (meaning, once again, those to be written in the exam).

The effect of this process of the reduction of education to test preparation is to lock education into a mode in which it stifling, uninspiring, uncreative (much of what is learned for tests is thereafter forgotten), psychically damaging, pedagogically shallow, economically misguided (for the workplace needs creative critical thinkers, not well-trained sheep) and destructive of the roots of liberal democracy.

IN MY EXPERIENCE… IT IS WHEN WE GIVE STUDENTS FREEDOM TO CHOOSE AND THINK FOR THEMSELVES, WITHIN A CAREFULLY STRUCTURED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, THAT THEY DO THEIR VERY BEST WORK.
Despite the ubiquity of this scheme, it is not difficult to describe a better alternative, and some of us have dedicated much of our professional lives to building it. What is manifestly the case is that we need more radical measures to find a way ahead and to give progressive educational methods space to feed into the educational mainstream. In my book, I review some of the research evidence which shows clearly that the best education combines the core insight of a traditional approach (some things need to be taught directly) with the insight of progressivism (deep learning begins with the learner’s own questions). We need what I would call ‘directed independence’; a process in which we teach students the skills and knowledge they need in order to be able to go on to learn for themselves.

This approach requires space and time for open discussion and debate in the classroom and for students to be able to work on extended projects of their own choosing. In my experience, and the experience of many teachers, it is when we give students freedom to choose and think for themselves, within a carefully structured learning environment, that they do their very best work. Currently, though, this type of rich, deep learning is confined to small pockets and the margins of the syllabus. It should be at the heart.

*John Taylor, Bloomsbury CPD Library: Independent Learning, Bloomsbury, 2018

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Henry IV Part 1, taken in 1936