

# ROYAL CENTRAL

SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

**PROF. PAUL BARKER,  
PHD, MMUS, GGSM**

**Job title**

Course Leader, MA Music Theatre

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## PROFILE

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I trained at Guildhall School of Music and Drama (where I won several prizes) and began my professional career as an MD and composer in contemporary dance. My first opera was based on a novel by Doris Lessing, under whose guidance I wrote the libretto. As a result director Chris Newell and I set up Modern Music Theatre Troupe, which won Arts Council grants and for several years toured many new operas by myself and others around the UK. I have worked internationally as composer in residence with several groups and institutions, producing community operas and theatre works. My writing for the concert hall includes a violin concerto for Tasmin Little, a clarinet quintet for Brodsky Quartet and Joan Lluna, and a work for Tambuco percussion which has been performed all over the world. My sixteen operas and music theatre work include *El Gallo*: an opera for six actors and two string quartets without text, performed over a hundred times in three continents as well as being recorded, filmed and televised. Before Central, I lived in Mexico (1999-2005), where I was artistic director of another new opera company OpTeMús and worked as a pianist, conductor, writer and stage director while continuing to compose. I have created works for installations, helped design one of the earliest web-based operas and lately collaborated through research and creative practice with projects involving synthetic speech. The voice is at the centre of my musical and theatrical fascination, so there are many songs, ensemble and choral works, as well as a book, *Composing for Voice*, now beginning a second edition. There are several other published works, but I am particularly proud of my contributions to *The Oxford International Encyclopaedia of Peace*. From a pedagogical perspective, my interests are interdisciplinary; I do not differentiate between creators and performers; I have no experience of being one without the other. I consider theatre and music as a continuum, both essentially social art-forms; In my experience, collaborative practice lies behind all successful performances, and this is reflected in the structure of Central's MA Music Theatre, which I lead.

## COURSES

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Music Theatre, MA

Research Degrees (MPhil/PhD)

## TEACHING AREAS

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Music

Composition

Performance

Vocal coaching  
Actor training  
Actor-musicianship

## RESEARCH AREAS

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Voice  
Text and music  
Lyric theory and practice  
Composition as research  
Concepts of meaning including musical dramaturgy

## PHD SUPERVISION

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I have supervised PhDs at the Royal College of Music, Royal Academy of Music and Trinity College of Music, as well as several UK universities. Subjects include extra-musical performance and composition; collaboration in composition and performance; actor-musicianship; spirituality in music; opera, music theatre, opera, and musicals.

## KEY PUBLICATIONS

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### CDs of my music include:

*El Gallo*: Opera for 6 singers and two string quartets without text. Quindecim 2012  
*Entre Palabras*: OpTeMús performs opera *The Pillow Song* and excerpts from *Songs Between Words*. Quindecim 2005  
*Turquoise Swans*: Sarah Leonard, soprano; Paul Barker, piano. *Three Songs for Sylvia Plath*; *The Thief of Songs III*; *Some Dirty Tricks*. Sargasso 2000

### Book:

2004. *Composing for Voice* (London: Routledge, 2004)

## PRACTICE

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### Some key compositions:

*El Gallo* opera for 6 actors and 2 string quartets without words; Claudio Valdés Kuri, director of *Teatro de Ciertos Habitantes*, premiered Festival de Mexico en el Centro Historico, March 2009. Performed in Chicago, Seattle, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Portugal, Colombia etc. and the UK. Recorded for CD on Quindecim. [View on YouTube](#)  
*In Memoriam: for those who fall in time of war Chamber Music Theatre*. Clarinet quintet commissioned by Joan Lluna and the Brodsky String Quartet, with funds from the Arts Council of England. Premiered Oxford University, 2005. [View on YouTube](#)  
*Stone Song*; *Stone Dance*. For 4 players with stones; commissioned and premiered by Tambuco Percussion Ensemble, Mexico, 2001. [View on YouTube](#)  
*Of Zoe and The Woman I Sing*. Act 1; Melodrama for pianist, actor and avatar; Zoe Lister's avatar was created by Toshiba Research, Cambridge through the Xpressive Talk © programme. Premiered Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival Kings Cross, 9th August, 2015, Kings Place, London. [View on YouTube](#)  
*La Malinche*. Libretto by the composer drawn from historical documents of the conquest of Mexico, composer conducting. Directed by Caroline Sharman with Modern Music Theatre Troupe, toured under the auspices of the British Council. Commissioned by the Festival del Centro Historico, Mexico, 1992. Recorded on Mexican National TV. [View on YouTube](#)

## AWARDS

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McElwee Family Fellowship, 2005;  
Royal Philharmonic Society Prize for Composition, 1978  
Countess of Munster Trust Scholarship, 1983;  
Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust Scholarship 1983;  
AHRB Research award to create web-based opera *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, 1998;  
Commissions from national, local and International Arts Council institutions and private institutions;

## POSITIONS

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### I am or have been, at various times:

Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts: HKCAAVQ Panel member  
A lottery assessor for ACE;

A London Arts Board panel adviser;  
A founder member and chair of the Opera and Music Theatre Forum;  
Research Consultant for Toshiba Research (Cambridge);  
Advisory Board Member, Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies (Intellect)  
Panel Member: International Jury for Colombia Music Composition Award;

## **REGISTER OF INTEREST**

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Nothing to declare.