

‘Autodidacticism, apprenticeships and vocational education: How do luthiers learn their craft and teach their tradition?’

Introduction

My name is Joss Winn and I am a teacher and researcher in the School of Education at the University of Lincoln. This information sheet explains my research so you can decide if you would like to participate. You can find out more about my work on the university website: <http://staff.lincoln.ac.uk/jwinn>

What is the research about?

This research is about how luthiers (specifically, classical guitar-makers) in the UK currently teach and learn their craft and how this has changed over the last century. I am speaking to professional and retired luthiers as well as conducting a case study of Newark College’s guitar-making and repair course.

Who will benefit from this research, and how?

I hope that the research will help us better understand the way people learn the knowledge and skills of being a luthier and ensure that the tradition keeps being passed on from one generation of luthiers to the next. I expect that the research will be of interest and benefit to students, teachers and professional luthiers because it will tell the story of your craft over the course of the 20th century and how the teaching and learning of guitar-making is practiced and evolving.

What are the aims of the research?

I want to document and understand the 20th century history of Spanish/Classical guitar-making in the UK by looking at how the knowledge and skills are taught and learned.

Overall, I am looking at three categories of teaching and learning guitar-making: People who are self-taught (autodidacts); people who learn one-to-one with an experienced luthier, and people who teach on and attend college courses. I want to understand the benefits and drawbacks of each approach and the issues that students and teachers of guitar-making have to deal with today.

What questions is the research trying to answer?

I hope my research will help answer questions such as the following:

- How has the experience, knowledge and skills (i.e. craft) of classical guitar-making in the UK been transmitted since the early 20th century?
 - Can a ‘genealogy’ of luthiers be established?
- What has been the role of colleges/institutions in the education and training of aspiring luthiers?

- What are the current risks and challenges that such institutions face?
- What is the contemporary experience of lutherie students on formal programmes of study?
 - Who are they? How are they taught? What are their motivations and aspirations? What challenges do they face after graduation?
- What role has autodidacticism (i.e. self-taught luthiers) played in the development and maintenance of the tradition of classical guitar-making?
 - What can we learn about the experiences of autodidacts and the literature (e.g. books, magazines, internet forums) that they draw upon to teach themselves.

Who can be involved?

I want to focus specifically on UK classical guitar makers and will survey and interview many teachers, students, professional and retired luthiers over the next year or so.

What sorts of methods are being used?

The research involves different methods of research: Observations, interviews and a survey. I am also doing archival and historical research.

Do you have to take part?

Although I hope you will, you don't have to take part in my research. If you agree to being involved in the research but then change your mind, please let me know and I'll destroy the data immediately.

Can you be more involved in the project if you like?

If you are happy to be involved in the research, then I'll need you to provide me with contact details so I can make arrangements to interview you. If you're really interested in the research and want to be more involved, then please let me know. It could be that we have follow up interviews, or that you help me analyse the data, or maybe you have an idea for how to improve or extend the research. You can participate as much or as little as you like.

Who is funding this research?

Currently, there is no external funder of this research. I am a full-time paid employee of the University of Lincoln and conducting the research under my normal employment contract. I have a small grant from the university to cover travel and accommodation costs.

Who can you contact for more information or to get involved?

You can contact me via email (jwinn@lincoln.ac.uk). You might like to read more about my own experience of making a guitar with luthier, Roy Courtnall:

<http://makingmasterguitars.org.uk/journal-introduction/> Thank you for your interest in this research.