

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Alexandra  
Leonzini

These memories were put together by Alex's friends,  
mentors, colleagues, and students from  
across her life and travels

Your laugh, your incisive biting humour, your self-deprecating playfulness, the ability to have a crystal view through the clutter that clouds people's perceptions of what matters was so well choreographed within you: light, always with a smile and a twinkle in your eye and a deep sense of truth and of what is right told in no uncertain manner. My children will miss your strict pirate persona, as well as the chants of "I am a pain in the tuchus" and "I am a nihilistic" which you pulled out probably in desperation as they were misbehaving. I will miss our conversations in my kitchen during this or that Jewish holiday, discussions on career choices, strategies on writing and how to truly balance a full self with a life of the mind. Fly freely and deeply Alex, your joy and depth is within each one of us evermore. We will miss you on this plane. Thank you for being.

VANESSA PALOMA ELBAZ

*FRIEND AND MENTOR*



Alex was a light in the darkness for me during my studies in Berlin. I struggled to find friendly, sincere people there, but Alex thankfully was one of them. She was the first classmate to comfort me after my grandfather passed, a simple gesture of kindness that I will never forget. She's one of the smartest, most well spoken people I've met. Always quick at the draw with a clever, funny comment. Full of wisdom and humor, and never too busy to be a good friend. I hope her family knows just how many people she touched, from all over the world. With love, David Lang from Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

DAVID LANG

*COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND*

We were new in Berlin and Alex was one of the first people we both bonded with. We met Alex at Lush and had such a nice conversation we decided to exchange phone numbers and soon we went from customers to friends.

It was so easy to fall into deep and meaningful conversations with Alex. We especially appreciated her insights about her favourite Jewish foods and traditions.

(Rick) My family is Ashkenazi Jewish, and getting to know Alex has given me a deeper, wider, more detailed understanding of our culture-especially from a Sephardic perspective. Talking about our different experiences, attitudes, and customs with her was not just illuminating, it was great fun. I will miss her, and I will think warmly of her every time I have rice at Pesach.

(Sophie) I am an absolute nerd for cooking tips and I was delighted to learn of Alex's idea to try latkes with cranberry sauce instead of apple. Nearly 10 Hanukkahs later and cranberry sauce is still a must whenever I make latkes. I think of Alex every year when I make the cranberry sauce - this year she will be especially on my mind. I will also greatly miss her perspectives on life in general. I knew that whenever I saw her name come across my Facebook timeline she'd have something wonderful to share.

Alex, it was a privilege to know you. We miss you.

SOPHIE WATSON AND RICK BLOCK

*FRIENDS FROM BERLIN*

My dearest Alexandra, that the world is now without you is the cruelest theft of joy. I'm still in shock, disbelief, denial. You lived so deeply, and that depth lives on in the hearts of the countless people who cherish your memory. We were but children playing as scholars when we met. The beauty of your voice moved me. We found a common passion for history and bonded over Robert Johnson's lute songs as undergraduate students. I was in awe of your determination when you left Perth for Berlin. Fate would have me move to that very same city just a couple years later. You saw my struggles then and became my family. It all seemed so difficult at the time, but I'd give anything to climb those precarious stairs to your apartment again – to share one more terrible German pizza as you summarized for me the most recent romance novel you had read. Your interests were varied (that's an understatement) and you had a voracious appetite for research – that your first publication was on werewolf erotica, and you ended up a scholar of North Korean opera is testament to that. Last year we strolled through Harvard Yard, brushing pastry crumbs from our clothes, and hatched a plan for you to come stay with me in Illinois after you submitted your PhD. That I'll never see you walk through that front door is almost too much to bear. But this isn't farewell as I know I'll see you in the images you loved and hear you in the songs you once sang. Until next time, my friend.

MAKOTO HARRIS TAKAO

*FRIEND FROM UNDERGRADUATE DAYS AND OUR YEARS IN BERLIN*

Alex was not only one of the most talented students but also very personable and witty. She possessed a wonderful soprano voice. I heard her practicing one day. During her next lesson I suggested that she should concentrate on singing. I jokingly mentioned to her that when she becomes famous to remember me and my advice to pursue singing. She retorted that she will tell people that she pursued singing because I said that her tuba playing "sucks". That was typical Alex. Alex continued playing tuba in a community orchestra long after graduating from high school as well as singing in the West Australian Symphony Orchestra Chorus. Alex went on to win a scholarship in Berlin to study singing. After that she began researching North Korean opera.

BOB BENTON

*HIGH SCHOOL TUBA TEACHER AND FRIEND*





ALEX AND MAKOTO AT HARVARD

Alex, you were a genuine, caring, inspiring, and generous friend and I will always hold on to your powerful spirit. I feel so lucky to have called you a friend. I miss you and I will always cherish the times we spent together.

IRENE DIAMANTOULI

*FRIEND*

For me, Alex, you will always be Miriam The Prophetess.

NICHOLAS BANNAN

*LECTURER AND FRIEND*

For all of us in Cambridge's musical and research community, Alex's death has taken from us something extraordinary. We have lost someone we cared about enormously, and we are all the poorer for her missing out on the future we all wanted her to enjoy. She is a huge loss to us all.

Alex was a wonderful, vivid character, the centre of many parties and suppers. She always spoke of her family, her work and curiosities in ways that were captivating, insightful, always interesting and leaving us wanting to know more. She was also light-hearted and funny – a tremendous person to know.

I knew Alex for only two years, but she was a superb colleague and support. In my first year here, she was the leading organiser of events for music PhD students, always the first with questions, always with a knowledge that went far beyond her specialty. Then she was more often in the US and in Korea, but we kept in touch. I last saw her in January at a supper for a large group of us, when she kept kosher, seemed in terrific form, and her company entertained us with all sorts of stories. We spoke by whatsapp just a few weeks ago and I was jealous of what she said she was seeing in South Korea.

I cannot begin to understand how painful this is for her family and those who knew her for far longer. I want her family to know that we will think of her often with love and carry her memory with gratitude. May her memory be for a blessing.

TERENCE SINCLAIR  
*FELLOW RESEARCH STUDENT*

Every time I try to talk about you I keep thinking that nobody would ever believe your story is real with all the remarkable things you did. I still remember us working together in Panto all those years ago and how hard it was to stay in character while you had that ridiculous mustache...

I still can't paint within the lines but I'm trying.

BRAD KINSELLA  
*FRIEND*



ALEX AND BRAD

Alex was a lovely person, who had a particular interest in the garden and improving the environment she lived in.

DEBORAH HOY  
CLARE COLLEGE ESTATES DIRECTOR



Alex was part of our Cambridge family. From the day we met, it seemed we had so much in common... Berlin, Korea, ethnomusicology and Cambridge. She was my Samulnori student, friend, nanny to my son, Maxwell, and so much more. She has left a big gaping hole in our lives, in our CU Samulnori Society and in the academic community here in Cambridge but also in the ethnomusicology world. Her research was unique and I believe very firmly that she had a promising academic future ahead of her. She was so passionate about all things Korean and her research subject most of all.

Alex and my son were inseparable and she really “got” him. She would delve into his world, whatever he was currently into, dinosaurs or Pokémon for instance, and he admired her endless knowledge on these subjects (I smile as I think about how my son enthusiastically told me how Alex knew SO much about the things he loved). She was so wonderful with him and I don’t have the heart to explain to him that she’s no longer here. One day.

Alex is the reason my Samulnori group was resurrected three years ago and I’ll always be grateful to her for this. She made sure it was properly recognised by the Music Department at Cambridge and helped to set it up properly. She was such a fun and funny, easygoing, smart, supportive, frank, irreverent, warm and loving friend. I wish we had had more time to get to know one another even better. She had so many interests and got involved with such a variety of causes and activities. A real tour de force. I miss her so, so much.

NAMI MORRIS

*FRIEND AND SAMULNORI TEACHER*

Her voice was a ‘musical instrument’: her laugh and cheerfulness were melodies for the soul. May Alex sing with and among angels.

ESTER SALGARELLA

*MEMBER OF THE CAMBRIDGE SAMATHA MEDITATION GROUP*





ALEX AND NAMI

Alex was an extraordinary and deeply vibrant person at the UWA Music Department with an extraordinary voice, a big heart – and who could forget her soul-filling laugh? She was never retiring and was fiercely passionate in and of her interests. She was also deeply and truly funny and cunningly observant. This is something she very clearly took into her budding professional academic career. I am hugely saddened by her loss, even though time and distance had meant we hadn't spoken in a couple of years. Her memory and unexpected loss has led me to reflect on my own interests and passions, and to live with more fullness and presence: which I think has been an expected gift to many who knew her. I continue to hold her family and those who were close to her in my thoughts. I have no doubt this Condolence Book will be full of similar stories and epic tales of Alex's life and passions: and I hope this can somehow be of comfort to a life that was all too brief.

ANDREW O'CONNOR

*FRIEND FROM UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA*

I met Alex for a 20 minute meeting, but it turned into a meeting that was over an hour as she filled it with stories that had me laughing for the rest of the day. We talked politics, music and many other things... she was a delight, a woman full of passion and light, one of those people that will stick in your memories and be remembered.

NAOMI  
*COLLEGE NURSE*

I first got to know Alex when we both ended up on a student committee at the Faculty, where we and Nicky worked for a year putting together a weekly lecture series. It was impossible not to be struck by this new colleague's sense of humour, a very special humour, hearty and mordant, all her own but irresistible. (Once when I announced that I had to miss a colloquium, leaving the others in the lurch: "No problemo! Well... little problemo, but manageable problemo." It was funnier when she said it. Another time, when we learned that an eminent personage wanted to come to the post-colloquium dinner: "Great, I'll wear my finest hoodie.") This was covid times and there were moments of stress, there were moments of panic and they may indeed have involved some flailing as we struggled to understand why Zoom wouldn't work or the microphone refused to turn on, but whatever happened it was such a relief to know that Alex was there, with her good humour, carrying us along, always confident, radiating enthusiasm, lightening the atmosphere. I'm sure each of the speakers who came that year would agree that without her, their Cambridge excursion would have been much less than it was. Among the PhD students, I remember Alex as an extraordinarily friendly presence, someone who could immediately talk to anybody about absolutely anything. She and I were about as different as can be, but I was always struck by how little that mattered and how easy she was to get along with. There was nothing that didn't interest her (or that she didn't have an opinion on!). Yet even with this outgoing character she knew what you were feeling, and she cared. I remember talking to her once during a miserable time of my PhD. She asked me how I was, and I said, "I'm fine", and she said, "Is that an 'I'm not really fine' kind of 'I'm fine'?" I don't remember exactly what else was said, but I know that it meant a lot to me at the time. It still does.

TADHG SAUVEY  
*FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE*

I would like to express my sincere condolences to Alex's family, to her friends and loved ones, to her cohort at Cambridge and all those who have worked, lived, and laughed with her.

I first met Alex via email in March 2022, to discuss her request to come to Yale as a visitor later that year. When I mentioned my scheduled leave for Fall 2022, she immediately adjusted her plans to come in the Spring of 2023. When I asked her to jump on a quick Zoom so we could briefly get to know one another (and so that I could conscientiously testify to her language skills on the required form!), she immediately made time--and then turned our conversation into one of the most delightful Zoom calls I can remember, humorous yet efficient, full of smiles and cheer. When her visa was delayed, she made light of the inconvenience and dove into the semester all the more eagerly once she arrived, in January 2023.

Once at Yale, Alex seemed like she belonged here. I was impressed by the ease and seeming effortlessness with which she settled, made friends, jumped into the semester, and contributed to my seminar, no matter that her non-Yale-email wouldn't allow me to add her to the class server. Nothing was a hurdle for her, and she became one of the key shapers of our seminar discussion. I can still see her sitting at the front right table! Also memorable was a townhall discussion with faculty and graduate students about our guest-lecture series. Just a few weeks after arriving here, Alex volunteered fruitful suggestions and ideas that had worked in Cambridge in her upbeat manner that seemed to suggest anything was possible.

Alex was such a force of nature, such a presence and sparkling generator of ideas that it is hard to imagine her gone. It is a tremendous loss for musicology, and a shocking loss for all those who knew her. I am so very sorry and will keep her and her loved ones in my thoughts.

GUNDULA KREUZER  
*ACADEMIC HOST AT YALE IN SPRING 2023*

When I think of Alex, I think of how easy she was to approach and begin a conversation with, how excited she was to find common ground and a shared love of something with everyone, and how passionate she was about seeing the world. Her openness was unmatched: you could go to her for a laugh or for advice or for a hug, and she was ready to meet you where you were on each occasion. I've truly never met anyone more accepting of everyone she met.

Alex and I had desks next to each other in the music library at Yale while she visited. Whenever I would scurry down the stairs into the basement area to grab a book I'd left at my desk, I'd see Alex there hard at work — grading student papers, filling out fellowship applications, writing bits of her dissertation. She was such a hard worker. We also took a couple of trips to Target, partially to restock on groceries but mostly to look at and admire the home decor section and American candy brands. We shared a love for the show RuPaul's Drag Race, and dissected episodes in the car and over Facebook Messenger chat.

My favorite memory of Alex, though, has to be when I visited her in Cambridge in January of this year. I visited on a day trip from London, and Alex took the entire day to be my tour guide (a role I know she'd inhabited before in various cities, and so she was an amazing one). We met at the original Fitzbillies for lunch, and from there she proceeded to show me the city and the uni campus. We wandered all over the grounds of Clare College, where I took this photo of her. It was such a lovely day and it was so nice to catch up with her.

I am really going to miss Alex, and know this is a feeling shared by so many all over the world. I'll think of her when I work at my desk in the library, when I wander the candy aisle at Target, whenever I visit Cambridge, and each time I watch Drag Race.

I am sending you all love. May her memory be a blessing.

Sincerely,  
Hannah Schiller, a graduate student in music at Yale

HANNAH SCHILLER  
*FRIEND FROM ALEX'S SEMESTER AT YALE*





## ALEX AT CLARE COLLEGE

*PICTURE FROM HANNAH'S VISIT TO CAMBRIDGE*

Alex was a force of nature for whom the word 'difficult' was simply an encouragement to action. She could command a room; the most incisive seminar questions were very often hers; her energy levels were legendary. I still find it unfathomable that the Faculty will no longer hear her voice, and my heart goes out to her family and close friends. Rest in peace, Alex.

KATHARINE ELLIS

*MEMBER OF MUSIC FACULTY STAFF*

Alex was so bright and warm and funny. She had such a generous way of conversing - when she shared a thought or asked a question with the group, it was like she was inviting you into it, to really work on it together. I will miss her.

EMILY SANDFORD

*FRIEND FROM MEDITATION GROUP*

I knew Alex at the beginning of her tertiary academic journey, as a classmate in UWA's music department, and have watched online with great pride since, as she blazed a completely unique professional path. In a university vocal department, her stupendous singing voice stood out, as did her passion in pursuing her varied research interests. She combined excellence with humility, kindness, and a wicked sense of humour. I was lucky enough to be at some of Alex's performances with the UWA Panto soc and her operatic recitals, and remember these vividly many years later. Alex was a shining example of how to live life fully, and she will be so missed.

CATHERINE BAPTY

*FORMER CLASSMATE FROM UWA*

I was deeply saddened to hear about Alex's passing. Alex was a jovial individual blessed with a great sense of humour. She had a remarkable ability to make everyone around her feel comfortable in her company. Despite her own struggles with PhD life, she always extended an open arm to her peers who needed support. Her passing is a great loss to the scholarly community in music and to all who have had the privilege of crossing paths with her. My deepest condolences to all who have been touched by Alex's passing, and may we find peace and comfort in her beautiful memories.

NICHOLAS ONG

*FRIEND*

Alex was very kind and friendly with good feelings. I would like to express my condolences to her family.

DAMIÁN

*MEDITATION CLASSMATE, FELLOW PARTICIPANT IN MEDITATION RETREAT*

“I don’t know what to do with all the love I have for her.” That’s exactly how it feels. Since Alex died, which has already been almost two months now, not a day goes by that I don’t think of her. Various images come to mind: her laughter, where her whole body would shake. Our time together was so intense and so varied. We were both in the master’s program, not really knowing where our journey was headed, and we were both a bit unhappy about that. In hindsight, it’s almost cute to see how much we worried.

Or that strangest breakfast I’ve ever had. Alex worked in a sex shop in Berlin near the university library, and I brought her coffee, and we ate our croissants and drank coffee amidst all the interesting toys. I even remember her giving a customer a tip for a sex club while I was nibbling on my croissant.

But there were so many other moments, too. I remember how she was looking for a student job and kept getting rejections, until suddenly she landed one with Professor Becket. I remember a somewhat chaotic move and drinking endless cups of coffee in her apartment. Or our attempt to write our master’s theses together, which ended up with us talking for three hours without putting a single word on paper.

And then, the farewell at Tegel Airport. I knew I wouldn’t see her again for a long time, but I never imagined it would be the last time. When I said goodbye to Alex at Tegel on her last day in Berlin as a master’s student, I noted down a Goethe quote on Instagram: “The world is so empty if one only thinks of mountains, rivers, and cities; but to know someone who thinks and feels with us, and who, though distant, is close to us in spirit—that makes the earth for us an inhabited garden.” She made me feel less alone in this world.

I grew up with Alex. Together with her, I found my professional path, even if that meant staying at the university a little longer for both of us. I wished we could have celebrated our graduation together....She often reminded me to speak German with her, so here is my final letter to her in German—this wonderful person who made me feel less alone in the world.

*continued...*

Liebe Alex,

Wie oft habe ich die Worte „... aus dem Leben gerissen“ gelesen und doch erst heute kann ich sie verstehen. Liebe Alexandra Leonzini, du bist zu früh gegangen.

Ich kann es nicht fassen, dass es dich nicht mehr gibt. Wie oft hast du befürchtet, du würdest Zeit verschwenden und hast doch dein Leben voll ausgeschöpft, wie kaum ein anderer. Wie gerne hätte ich deine Doktorarbeit gelesen. Insgeheim hatte ich gehofft, du bleibst danach in Europa.

Wir verlieren eine wunderbare Freundin, eine brillante Wissenschaftlerin, eine außergewöhnliche Frau. Ich vermisse dich und kann es nicht fassen, dass wir uns nie wieder sehen werden.

Ich werde dich vermissen. Du fehlst!

COSIMA VON HOHENTHAL  
*CLASSMATE IN THE MASTERS PROGRAM*

I met Alex in my first week at UWA, in vocal workshop in Eileen Joyce Studio. I loved her voice, I loved her mind, and I loved talking to her about anything and everything. Whenever I was having a tough week at uni, going to chat to her whilst she was working in the music library always made things better. Every time I read an article, I'm reminded of the time I watched her take notes - a best practice example that I'm still working towards. Whenever we caught up, the first thing to report was always that we were both still singing. Shovelling dirt into her grave will forever be one of the most heartbreaking things I've done. I loved her so much.

LAURA  
*FELLOW SINGER, BIGGEST FAN*



Alex was incredibly kind and generous, with a fierce intellect and wit. Alex will be carried with me through her stories, her joy, and the thrill of a niche library book and a crisp Club Mate. Vale Alex.

KATIE DAVY  
*FRIEND*



ALEX ON THE CAM  
*FROM KATIE*

I first met Alex when we were both at the start of our Cambridge journey — me beginning my undergrad and her her PhD. That first supervision is one of my favourite memories of Cambridge: her humour, wisdom, humility, and encyclopaedic knowledge meant she quickly became one of my favourite people in the University. We spent that first supervision talking, of course, about North Korean film and music, and East Asian studies. At a point where I was feeling unsure about myself in academia and the university, she gave me loads of advice on pursuing an academic career on East Asian music. I am certainly not the only person who she inspired — everyone I have talked to about Alex mentioned her approachability, her extraordinary talent for teaching, her unique and enlightening topics of research. This year, she gave an incredibly well attended talk on ‘The Do’s and Don’t of Fieldwork in the DPRK’, where she captured the imaginations of people from undergrads to faculty members with her stories of her time in the country. Every time I met her, from bumping into her in the faculty or on the street, to our formal supervisions, was the highlight of my day. It was an honour to be supervised by Alex and I miss her dearly.

WILLIAM WANT  
*SUPERVISEE*

I was fortunate to meet Alex a few times at samatha meditation sessions. She had an incredible power of making others feel welcome and seeing the funny side of any situation. Eventhough, I have met her only a few times, she had a personality I will remember for long.

VIHANGA MUNASINGHE  
*KNOW ALEX THROUGH SAMATHA MEDITATION*

Alex, thank you for helping me always feel comfortable and reassuring me that it is okay to have a brain that works differently to others. Your humour, bright energy and beautiful personality brought so much light to every conversation we had. I will miss this, and you.

JASMIN BATH  
*FRIEND*

Alex was always there for me. Through undergrad we got to know each other and became fast and close friends. While life took us in different directions our friendship never waned. We'd catch up any time she was back in Perth and it was like no time had passed at all.

Alex was one of my people. One of the people who always had time for me. One of the people who guided me through the hard times, always making me a better person. She was quick to ask the questions that she knew would guide me back to where I needed to be when my mind was spiralling. I can't in words describe how important she was to me, she wasn't just a friend she was a part of my normal. Few people have come close to knowing me the way she knew me, and few will in future.

I'm so thankful that we managed to find an afternoon to spend together on her last visit. Both of us were busy but we managed to say hello on the last day she was in Perth. I wish that last hug lasted longer, but I'm so glad it happened either way.

The world is short one amazing human. I miss you Alex.

ADAM LEWIN

*FRIEND*



Alex's passing is devastating but I'm so grateful to have gotten to know her. We had a lot of great chats - some very serious about academic work and life, others just fun (and funny) - but it was always a pleasure to talk with her. My favourite moment, though, was at the end of the Samulnori concert in West Road Concert Hall, when the ensemble invited kids from the audience to come up and try the instruments out. Alex made a concerted effort to help my daughter feel comfortable trying to play, following her around and patiently explaining and demonstrating things. That consistent care for others characterized pretty much all my interactions with Alex. We'll miss her warmth, kindness, insight (academic and just, you know, human) and good humour. Rest in peace.

PETER MCMURRAY

*ACADEMIC MENTOR*

Alex and I met while doing our PhDs at Cambridge. During those few years, we got to work on many exciting projects together as part of a small circle of friends who shared the same passion for music and politics. Alex was exceptionally talented and yet humble - to take just one example, I only found out about her beautiful operatic voice three years into working alongside her. She was an incredible friend, too, cheering me up, keeping me company and giving me hope during some of the hardest times in my life. She had so many friends around the world and yet was always there for each and every one of us. Her unique personality, addictive laughter and pragmatic yet highly ambitious attitude to life meant that she immediately became a close friend of anyone who entered into her life. The mark she left in my life, and the lives of everyone who knew and loved her, shall never fade.

EKATERINA PAVLOVA

*FRIEND AND FELLOW PHD STUDENT*

In meeting you, I learned the true meaning of friendship and I will forever carry this meaning in my heart. Rest peacefully my friend.

ALEXANDER AIVAZIDIS

*FRIEND FROM MEDITATION CLASS*



I regret that I did not have more time to hang out with Alex while we were both working on our PhDs at the Music Faculty. The throws of PhD life sometimes force you to focus on your work alone. Regardless, Alex and I always managed to have a good laugh together whenever we met in person for various faculty events and training sessions over the course of our PhD journey. The first time I met Alex, I felt like I had known her for years. She was so easy to talk to and her witty sense of humour always elevated my mood no matter how stressed I was feeling about my work. She was also an amazing representative for our PhD cohort, always going the extra mile to respond to our concerns and initiate conversations with the faculty. Watching her juggle her research alongside her leadership and teaching duties inspired me to take on more supervision work and to push myself at times when I was feeling hesitant. Her natural capacity to support and encourage others was a gift felt by everyone who knew her and interacted with her beautiful spirit. She will be greatly missed. Rest in peace and blessings dearest Alex.

DUNYA HABASH

*FELLOW PHD STUDENT AT THE MUSIC FACULTY*

Alex was always the most open, welcoming, and engaged person in the room, such a bright presence and exciting person to be around. I remember talking with her the first day of classes in Spring 2023, and how interested she was in everyone's work and how much she lit up when talking about what she did. Even after her short time in our department, she was always active in our group chat, writing supporting messages for people's exams, talks, and milestones, always with happy thoughts looking forward to her next visit to New Haven. I so wish we all could have welcomed her back one more time – I know so many people miss her, here and around the world, and my heart and condolences go out to her family and her many other friends.

ANNA B. ALDINS

*FRIEND FROM HER TIME AT YALE UNIVERSITY*

I didn't know Alex very much but the few times we were at faculty events or when I bumped into her randomly, she was very friendly, warm and kind, and had a great and unique sense of humour that I haven't seen in anyone else at the Faculty of Music.

The last message she sent in our faculty PhD students Whatsapp groupchat was her calling me 'a mensch' because I sent her a link to a music theory website she requested. I had to google what mensch meant, and found it quite funny and was also quite honoured. She was a great person to interact with and I wish that I could have bumped into her and spoke to her on more occasions.

I was deeply saddened to hear about her passing. She was a very intelligent and popular person from what I remember, and made me and new students feel very welcome when we first started our studies. She will be dearly missed by all of us, and may she rest in peace.

SUREN

*FELLOW STUDENT IN MUSIC FACULTY*



ALEX AND ELISA

I still can't believe the news about my dear friend Alexandra Leonzini passing away. She was such an amazing person, funny, brilliant, easygoing, smart, with great sense of humor, always surrounded by friends, and always up to new challenges. It was hard to keep up with her, since she was often moving, and changing continent/timezone, but we have never missed an opportunity to stay in touch and/or meet when possible. I have lots of wonderful memories with her, that I will treasure forever, and I will keep telling Henry of when, for his birthday, auntie Alex tangled all his balloons while attempting to decorate his party, and how we all laughed.

I can't wrap my head around how unfair, and unexpected your death is. You will be missed badly. I love you, honeybun ♥

ELISA

*FRIEND LIVING IN BERLIN, WORKED TOGETHER AT LUSH*



Alex was so full of positive energy and had the most incredible laugh. I only knew her briefly but she will be remembered so fondly.

CAT DARSLEY

*POSTGRAD NETWORK FRIEND*

Dearest Alex, you were a force of nature. You are one of the brightest and strongest people I've ever met.

Thank you for the tight hugs that made life seem less scary. Thank you for the beautiful botanical garden walks. Thank you for the tiny midsummer's eve scented candle you gave me the evening I submitted my dissertation. It was such an unexpected and generous gift that warmed me through the cold Cambridge months, as did our friendship. In a place where people get caught up in their own tornado of deadlines, you went out of your way to mark a day that mattered to me.

Thank you for the tears of laughter you gave us all with your ridiculous, wry humour. You were such a thoughtful and surprising person, many of my favourite memories of university were alongside you.

We miss you so very much Alex. I am thinking of you and sending my deepest condolences to your family.

אני משתתף בצערך

ani mishtatefet betsa'arecha  
(I participate in your sorrow)

All my love

Asya x

ASYA OSTROVSKY

*FRIEND FROM MEDITATION GROUP (AND OCCASIONAL BAND MATE)*





ALEX, ASYA, AND ALEXANDER

Loss of a formidable scholar, mentor, peer, and friend. Forever grateful for the support over the years, while lamenting the loss of further conversation and missed opportunities to work together. From codifying new methodology to kickstarting a radio-podcast for First Nation artists with your prospective list of guests from around the world (and our proposed solution for "avoiding" censorship of their music — curtesy of Rage Against the Machine's 2009 BBC Christmas performance xD), to co-writing a paper together on Aboriginal Hip Hop. It's disheartening that these collaborative projects will never be.

Thank you for bringing the Aussie-ness and cultural ethos of mateship to Cambridge; super refreshing and much needed. The absent silence of your bellowing laughter will remain painfully felt. It's tragic that you never got to see the end of the PhD, leaving the world without seeing your finalised thesis.

We were blessed to have you in our lives for the short time we did; you've made an indelible mark with your scholarly insights, benevolence, and loving spirit. God bless your soul, rest easy, mate ❤️

MICAH PATTERSON

*CONVERSATION PARTNER, MENTOR, PEER, FRIEND*

Radio artist composer list - First Nation

Snotty Nos Red Kids

Drezus

The Halluci Nation

Supaman

Napalm Nation

DJ Shub

Taboo

Prolific The Rapper

A Tribe Called Red

Tia Wood

Jayli Wolf

Morgan Toney

Laura Niquay

Handsome Tiger

OLOX

The Hu

Kuular

Batzonig Vaanchig

Barkaa

Baker Boy

Mark Atkins

William Barton

Briggs

Brothablack

Warumpi Band

Bernard Carney

Troy Cassar-Daley

Deborah Cheetham

Jimmy Chi

Seaman Dan

Reggae Dave

Kutcha Edwards

Gawurra

Archie Roach

A.B. Original

Munkimuk

Thelma Plumb

Xavier Rudd

Frank & Isaac Yamma

Gurumul

Lonely Boys

Spin FX

Yothu Yindi Typo

ALEX'S LIST OF PROSPECTIVE GUESTS  
ON THE RADIO SHOW



The first time I met Alex was at the Maypole in Cambridge. Nicky had brought me along to meet some of his fellow PhD students just after we'd moved to the UK. I remember finding Alex really intimidating at this first meeting. I was sure that she would not find me interesting, since I wasn't doing research, I wasn't a PhD student, I wasn't super informed about politics or history or any of the things she seemed so incredibly knowledgeable about. She soon made me realize how totally wrong I was. Alex could talk to absolutely anyone and showed everyone's ideas and feelings respect, even if they were totally different from her own. She was a deeply humane and thoughtful person and I had as much fun talking to her about her research as I did gossiping about mutual friends, talking about TV, and dissecting her paper on werewolf porn.

She was also hysterically funny and had amazing sense of humor. Her ability to laugh was completely infectious and some of my favorite memories from Cambridge are of having her over to our apartment for dinner, laughing ourselves silly at the most random things. I knew that our paths might take us to different parts of the world and that our time together in Cambridge was a transient one, but I always felt that Alex would somehow stay in my and Nicky's lives - she was a keeper. I still can't really comprehend that we won't see her again... but I want to thank you, Alex, for being in my life, for being my friend, for being so unforgettably you.

GEIRÞRÚÐUR

*FRIEND*

Alex was the closest friend I made at Cambridge. We met in the first days of the PhD program and for almost the entire duration of our studies, we got together to chat every couple of weeks. Sometimes we discussed research, but more often we talked about the latest movies and TV shows, our families, our pasts, our anxieties and insecurities. She understood how to laugh about serious stuff without losing sight of its seriousness, a quality that is rare in people and that I sorely miss. Her death is a tragedy for me and for her many friends in England, for the Cambridge community, and for music scholarship more broadly.

NICKY

*FRIEND*

Dear Alex,

You ingratiated yourself with everything you did with bundles of enthusiasm, this in turn rubbed off and provided a safe space for others from 'all ages and stages' to be themselves, shedding their protective layers.

You were so hyper-focused as well as kinaesthetic with everything you did in life whether it was blowing bubbles with the kids or reading stories. You made people feel important and you were skillful with the ability to pitch yourself with various people from all walks of life showing a depth of respect and kindness to all!

Children and adults looked up to you and found that adults can be funny, charming and silly too: a lesson the children learned was a shared joy and connection and a real love for curiosity.

You were a wonderful at our forest school. Keep whittling my dear xxx

MARTY  
COLLEAGUE

Alex was one of the first people I talked to properly when I joined Cambridge in 2020. It was during lockdown and we had a long and intense chat on Zoom, the first of several. We had a shared interest in global history and she helped to translate that into a Faculty reading group, and later became a stalwart supervisor on my Music and Global History course. We also had a lot of fun dinners after colloquia, where Alex was invariably the motivating force. The thing I appreciated most about Alex was her lack of nonsense. She was totally down to earth, unpretentious and genuine in a way that is rare in academia. She was also full of ideas, enthusiasms, opinions, jokes, complaints, insights, and vitality. I can't express how sad it is that she was taken in this unexpected and untimely way. I pray that her family will find solace in her memory and in everything she meant to so many people around the world. Rest in peace, Alex.

JACOB OLLEY  
COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND IN CAMBRIDGE MUSIC FACULTY





PICTURE FROM SYLVIE FIELD  
*FRIEND, SAMATHA MEDITATION GROUP MEMBER*



I first met Alex online at an ethnography workshop. She shared her research experience in North Korea. I thought immediately, I needed to meet this person. So we exchanged emails and met in Michaelhouse some weeks later. She shared her stories in North Korea and showed me some pictures. It was very nice to see a friendly guy in places like Cambridge. It was so smooth that our virtual conversation led to an actual face-to-face meeting, and did not end up with "let's meet sometime".

Later we met again in the Samulnori workshop in Sept 2022. I played the small gong with Alex. I was stressed and she was stressed too. It was such a comradeship to share the stress. I remember we two were asked to get out of the main rehearsal room because the small gongs were too loud. She found some calm outside the main group, and we practised. She taught me a lot too. She was a good KKangari player. Thank you for being our Sangsuea.

I learned a lot from Alex, one of them is showing vulnerability, not everyone had the courage to do so. She has such a great power to make the person in front of her on her side.

GEONYOUNG KIM

*FRIEND FROM SAMULNORI SOCIETY AND FELLOW PHD STUDENT*

When I first met Alex, she was on her way to a master class by Christa Ludwig. I thought she was joking. When she was preparing to go to North Korea, I thought she was joking. She always did something unexpected. We didn't live far from each other in Berlin-Wedding. So we ran into each other again and again. I took it for granted that our paths would continue to cross in the future. I am incredibly sad and I keep reading the last message that Alex wrote to me: Best of luck!

STEPHAN AHRENS

*FRIEND FROM BERLIN*

I first met Alex in October 2014, when we started the Global History MA together. She quickly became a most beloved friend with her wit, her enthusiasm, and her joy for life.

I will always fondly remember the time we spent together, full of humour, anecdotes, and adventures. She loved to share her experiences and was quick to find the absurdity of any situation. She had such a wide variety of interests; she always had several projects on the go at once, and had plans for many more. Whatever hurdles stood before her, once she set her mind to achieve something she always found a way.

She had a wonderful ability to make friends everywhere she went, and I am so glad that I was lucky enough to be one of them. I will never forget her warm infectious laughter, her bright vivacious energy, or her unique and incredible dress sense!

My family and I were privileged to have her over for Christmas each year while she was studying at Clare College. It won't be the same without her. My mum Gill would also like to add: "She shone brightly."

We will remember her with love.

ALEXANDRA HOLMES  
*FRIEND*



PICTURE FROM GAËL KEMP

Thank you to all who contributed their thoughts, memories, and pictures. We plan to update this booklet periodically, so if you would like to add something to this, you can continue to do so using the QR code below. Feel free to share this book, and the update form, with anyone else who knew and loved Alex.

With love,  
Geirprúður and Nicky

