

M3C DTP Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Project Brief

Project Title			
Songs without borders			
LEAD INSTITUTION			
Name of HEI institution	University of Birmingham		
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION			
Name of organisation	Oxford Lieder		
Website URL	www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/		
THE RESEARCH PROJECT			
<p>Reshaping audiences is the driver for many arts organisations today. Classical art song has a long and illustrious heritage, but it is also associated with ‘elitist’ audiences (typically from white upper-middle-class backgrounds). This can restrict access to powerful creative materials which combine words in a range of languages with music of the highest calibre in the intimate genre of song. Recent programming in the UK has begun to explore the role of translation in song performance contexts (including Oxford Lieder’s Song in Translation study event as a key part of their 2015 festival), but there is much still to be done to change audience perception and extend understanding and appreciation of the art song genre across the UK in particular. The questions which underpin this research project include: How do we translate for song? Why might song in translation enable audience development (especially the role of languages used by diverse audience communities)? What are the barriers to the appreciation of art song? Does the choice of corpus affect audience engagement?</p> <p>To answer these questions, this collaborative research project will explore the existing theoretical framework of words/music research (including work by Walter Bernhart, Peter Dayan, Lawrence Kramer, and Steven Paul Scher). It will combine a theoretical analysis with hands-on research, which will include developing programming for song festivals, and interviewing performers, composers, translators, and concert-going audiences to generate key data findings which will then be subjected to detailed analysis. Where a specific corpus of songs is selected for investigation, the project may also use a new digital song analysis method devised and tested by Professor Helen Abbott at the University of Birmingham which uses Sonic Visualiser to analyse the network of connections that form a song (for which specialist training will be provided).</p> <p>‘Songs without borders’ aims to show how song programming has the opportunity to shape the agenda for the modern era, recognising that new approaches are needed, notably around translating texts heard on the song stage and understanding the role of translated texts and language choice in relation to more diverse audience communities. Peter Low’s work on ‘Translating poetic songs’ (2003) remains the reference work in this area, while Laura Tunbridge’s more recent work on German song in English translation (‘Singing Translations’, 2013) has also advanced our understanding. New ways of analysing song are also being</p>			

developed to enable digital analysis which meshes audio and score analysis with conceptual understandings of the role of the human voice and language in the performance space (Abbott, 2017). 'Songs without borders' addresses these issues by interrogating a set of questions which place voice, performance, and language at the heart of the analysis.

Working in collaboration with Oxford Lieder, a leading classical music organisation which runs a world-renowned annual festival every autumn and operates year-round programming in diverse venues within and outside of Oxford, the 'Songs without borders' project will be located primarily in the Birmingham city region. The project speaks very clearly to the aim of positively impacting audience engagement and diversity in the region, by opening up fresh and different ways of accessing classical music traditions through song, and providing opportunities to hear world-class musicians in the intimate format of song recitals. By the end of the project, the PhD researcher will be responsible for the programming and delivery of a major song in translation / songs without borders event (to include, where possible, new commissions of songs and translations, as well as innovative performances). The interdisciplinary nature of this project means that applicants will have a background which draws on a range of areas of expertise such as audience research, composition, community languages, modern languages, music, performance, or translation.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

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