

<b>Institution:</b> Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33B Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> John Hardy Music: Real-time composition in support of the Welsh film and TV industry		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> January 2013-October 2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> John Hardy	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Head of Composition	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2010 to present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> October 2013-December 2019		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Led by Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD) Head of Composition John Hardy, John Hardy Music (JHM), which provides disciplinary opportunities for staff and students, was commissioned to write, perform and record the soundtrack for two bilingual TV series: <i>Y Gwyll</i> ('Hinterland'- first broadcast in Welsh on S4C in October 2013) and <i>Craith</i> ('Hidden' – S4C 2018). Both series have fulfilled the commitment made in April 2013 by Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director of BBC Cymru Wales, to increase the mainstream representation of Welsh culture. 'Hinterland' was produced by the Fiction Factory with major funding from BBC Cymru Wales and S4C, and global distribution from All3Media. 'Hidden' was produced by Severn Screen with financial support and co-production involvement from BBC Cymru Wales, S4C, BBC 4 and All3Media. Informed by John Hardy's research, the group's innovative, improvisatory approach to composition and performance in real time enabled high-quality content to be delivered to budget and contributed significantly to the world-wide success of both series as measured by size of audience (<i>Y Gwyll</i> was viewed 4.93m times in its first broadcast, and eventually streamed globally by Netflix), viewer ratings (IMDb median score of 8/10 for both series), and number of industry awards, including between them 9 Welsh BAFTAs. Additionally, the work of early-career practitioners on these projects has enhanced their employability in the creative industries.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>John Hardy Music (JHM) is a team of composers, sound engineers and multi-instrumentalists based in Cardiff and led by John Hardy, Head of Composition at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. JHM works closely with directors, producers, film makers, choreographers and other artists to compose bespoke music that reinforces emotion and encapsulates story. John Hardy has been firmly established over the last thirty years as one of the leading composers of music for film, television and theatre in Wales, and has composed soundtracks for previous bilingual productions such as <i>A Mind to Kill</i>, series 3 and 4, 2001-2002 [3], and also for several episodes of flagship BBC One arts show <i>Imagine</i>, initially in 2009 for <i>The Year of Anish Kapoor</i>, which was later shown at the 29th the International Festival of Films on Art in Montreal, Canada in 2011 [4].</p>		

In 2012, JHM was approached by the Cardiff-based production company Fiction Factory to work on a projected 8-part TV crime drama, *Y Gwyll* ('Hinterland'), which would be first broadcast on S4C in October 2013 [1]. The series would be set in west Wales—a hinterland rich in history and myth—and be shot in Welsh and English for broadcast by S4C, BBC Wales and BBC4. In the event, the series achieved world-wide distribution via 11 national TV companies and Netflix (see Details of the impact).

Both budget (GBP4.2m) and timescale (6 months) were extremely tight for a project of this size. The requirement was for nearly 8 hours of music (4 standalone feature-length films, each split into 2 episodes) to support the script and production values of a crime drama positioned competitively within the successful 'Scandi-noir' genre that had become so popular with British audiences. The music had to underpin a quasi-mythical treatment of the Welsh landscape – timeless, misty when not windswept, sometimes dreary, cold and overcast – and at the same time convey the hard cutting edge of a contemporary police procedural. Each film would have its own texture and feel within an overall unified visual and musical language.

In tackling this demanding brief, John Hardy and his team produced an outstanding example of practice-based research, in which an unusually intense process of collaboration resulted in the blurring of traditionally defined roles. Their intervention has been timely: As the technological options available to composers have proliferated, academic interest in the collaborative production of music for film and TV has also risen. This academic research is sometimes framed around the concept of individuals holding responsibility for distinct parts of the process (Cooper, D (2018) 'Creative Practices and Technical Processes in Music for Cinema and Television', in Donin, N (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Creative Process in Music*. Available at: DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190636197.013.26). Working with two recent graduates of the RWCMD, Victoria ('Tic') Ashfield and Benjamin Talbott, Hardy's approach was to dispense with the conventional written score and re-engage on 21<sup>st</sup>-century terms with two techniques drawn from earlier treatments of music drama: real-time improvisation, characteristic of the silent film; and the *leitmotif*, here extended to include location, situation and mood as well as character. Through the use of the historically grounded method of improvising to the moving image, and through encouraging each member of the team to contribute to every part of the process, Hardy found a scheme that allowed not only for invigorating artistry, but also speed and efficiency through the entire production process.

Between them, the three team members brought a broad range of skills, both instrumental (piano, harmonium, violin, cello, guitar, bass guitar, percussion and synths) and technical (specialist recording and mixing techniques and sophisticated sound manipulation). From these resources Hardy developed a palette of musical motifs—not just melodic cells, but harmony, timbre, sampled and synthesised sounds—and a suite of recording techniques, including very close microphones to capture the naked, grainy quality of the sound world. The group then used these materials, plus Hardy's own title music, as a common language from which they improvised the entire soundtrack in front of the video monitors. Because everyone attended all the cutting room briefings, each member of the team was fully informed and ready to work on any aspect of the project as required. This was especially useful when schedules and budgets continually shifted and slipped: flexibility and ability to

close ranks and respond creatively without delay was tactically crucial and strategically achievable.

The resulting series was so successful that a two-part 'special' and two further series of 8 episodes were commissioned, using the same writers and production team, including JHM. Upon completion of 'Hinterland' in 2016, JHM was commissioned by BBC Wales and S4C to provide the soundtrack for a new Welsh and English bilingual serial called *Craith* ('Hidden'), set in north Wales, and first broadcast in 2018 [2]. To date, two series of 8 and 6 episodes have aired. Together with other subsequent commissions, *Craith* has enabled JHM to develop further the research into contemporary improvisatory composition that began with *Y Gwyll*. This new project has brought a wider range of musicians and sound technicians into the team, extending their technical capacity and equipping them with new skills in support of the creative industries in Wales. Both projects form part of the REF2 submission for the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. *Y Gwyll* ('Hinterland'). (2013-2016). S4C and BBC Cymru Wales. Series 2 and 3 listed in REF2.
2. *Craith* ('Hidden'). (2018-2019). S4C and BBC Cymru Wales. Listed in REF2.
3. *A Mind to Kill*. (2001-2002). Channel 5 and HTV.
4. *Imagine...The Year of Anish Kapoor*. (2009). BBC One, 17 November.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

JHM made a significant contribution to the artistic and commercial success of *Y Gwyll* ('Hinterland') and *Craith* ('Hidden'). Both series reflect the commitment made in April 2013 by Rhodri Talfan Davies, then Director of BBC Cymru Wales, now BBC Director of Nations, to show more Welsh language, life and culture on the main BBC channels.

Looking back at the creative impact of John Hardy's music within *Y Gwyll* and *Craith*, Rhodri Talfan Davies described the musical contribution to the overall feel of both productions as "simply indispensable". John Hardy's music, he added "was not merely incidental but intrinsic to both productions in helping to bring alive a range of cinematic landscapes and emotionally challenging scenarios" [R1].

Rhodri Talfan Davies also emphasised the legacy of both productions for the creative economy of Wales. "It's unarguable", he noted, "that these productions have made the rest of the UK and the World sit up and take notice of Wales as not only a place to base productions within but also as a place where we have great stories to tell and on our terms" [R1]. Reviews of the music for *Y Gwyll* include: "a haunting soundtrack" (*Guardian*), and "surely one of the loveliest soundtracks to grace a crime drama" (*Radio Times*). The music for *Craith* has been described as "an ominous, skin-prickling soundtrack skilfully employed to heighten the sense of dread" (*Guardian*) [R8].

*Y Gwyll* ('Hinterland') was first broadcast in Welsh on S4C in October 2013. The series met with great acclaim and viewing figures were very strong, with a total of 4.93m viewings and

an average audience per episode of 616,250. This figure represents an impressive 72% of the total potential audience of Welsh speakers (n=855,200) [R4].

The bilingual version (not all actors spoke Welsh, so some scenes were shot in Welsh with English subtitles and others in English with Welsh subtitles) was then shown on BBC Wales from January 2014. Finally, the bilingual version was shown again on BBC4, the corporation's go-to channel for international drama, from April 2014. The series won 3 Welsh BAFTAs in 2014 with 6 other nominations [R6] and was nominated in the outstanding actor category for the Monte-Carlo Television Festival and the craft and design category for the Royal Television Society Awards [R7].

The success of the series generated two kinds of take-up, nationally and internationally. A one-off special and two further series aired in January and September-November 2015, and in October-December 2016, each with average audiences per episode of 543,750 and 641,250 respectively. BBC4 gave the show the strongest possible endorsement by scheduling it on Saturday evenings immediately after the final series of *The Bridge*. IMDb viewer ratings (n=9,906) average 7.8/10 with a median score of 8/10 [R4, R5].

International take-up was equally strong. Danmarks Radio (producers of *The Killing*) bought the show from the outset, before filming commenced and 10 other European national broadcasters (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Netherlands, France and Ireland) have aired it, usually in the bilingual version, and two have entered into the spirit of the series by dubbing the Welsh into Flemish or Breton. The series is now streamed world-wide by Netflix (182.8m subscribers).

Among the most significant consequences for the Welsh TV industry in particular was a new project for which JHM again provided the soundtrack: the bilingual serial *Craith* ('Hidden'), commissioned by Severn Screen for broadcast in 2018 (again, on SC4 first, then BBC Wales followed by BBC4) with a second series in 2019. Viewing figures for series 1 were an average of 443,750 per episode in Welsh and 738,750 bilingual; and for series 2, 413,333 and 540,000 respectively. IMDb ratings (n=2,585) are an average of 7.4/10 and a median score of 8 [R4, R5]. The series won a Welsh BAFTA in 2018 with 4 further nominations [R6] and was nominated in the best photography: drama category for the Royal Television Society Awards. A third series is planned. The success of *Y Gwyll* and *Craith* also created the conditions for two more very successful Welsh-language dramas, *Requiem* and *Keeping Faith*.

The creative industries sector is one of the fastest growing in Wales, with an annual turnover in excess of £3.5bn [Komorowski, M and Lewis, J (2020) *The Size and Composition of the Creative Industries in Wales*]. Immediately prior to the onset of COVID-19 Welsh creative industries employed some 80,000 people, with 98% of these being small and micro businesses. The sectors in which JHM's work has had its greatest impact include film, TV and the performing arts, sectors that employ over 15,000 people across Wales.

The success of these creative industries depends upon a highly skilled workforce, and JHM has made a significant impact in this area. Aside from generating skilled work for musicians and music technicians, JHM has provided many career development opportunities for graduate students. Benjamin Talbott and 'Tic' Ashfield have both become highly respected

and established composers in films, TV dramas, documentaries, as well as in theatre and dance. In 2016 they were awarded the Welsh BAFTA 'Best Original Music Score' for their joint work on the Welsh/Argentinian art movie *Galesa* [R6].

Talbott has also composed music for a number of niche action film dramas [R2] and Ashfield has gone on to create the music for several educational animation films, radio dramas, theatre performances, dance projects and education projects, including music for games production company Frantic Assembly and music and sound design for five Sherman Cymru plays [R3].

Talbott has written, "I am proud to have composed for John Hardy Music in a variety of capacities, leading on some and collaborating on others. As always, all projects at JHM are true collaborations, and the music would never turn out to be what it is without all of the composers' inputs. Working with others to create something greater than what each of you could imagine alone is perhaps one of the most exciting things in life, and certainly so when making music" [R2].

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

R1. Rhodri Talfan Davies - BBC Director of Nations. Testimonial.

R2. Talbott, B (2020) *Music*. Available at: <https://www.benjamintalbott.com/music>

R3. Ashfield, T. Available at: <https://ticashfield.com/about/>

R4. *Broadcasters' Audience Research Board*. Available at: <https://www.barb.co.uk>

R5. *Hinterland (TV Series 2013-2016)* IMDb. Available at: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2575968/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2575968/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1) (Accessed date: 16/2/21)

R6. BAFTA Cymru Awards

2014 <http://awards.bafta.org/award/2014/cymru>

2017 <http://awards.bafta.org/award/2017/cymru/original-music>

2018 <http://awards.bafta.org/award/2018/cymru>

R7. Other awards

RTS Awards [https://www.televisual.com/news/rts-craft-and-design-awards-announced\\_nid-6281/](https://www.televisual.com/news/rts-craft-and-design-awards-announced_nid-6281/)

Monte Carlo TV Festival Awards

<https://www.digitalspy.com/tv/cult/a565167/sherlock-nominated-for-golden-nymph-award-at-monte-carlo-tv-festival/>

R8. Reviews

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/jul/30/hinterland-tv-noir-wales>

<https://www.radiotimes.com/tv-programme/e/dwshm7/hinterland--series-2-episode-2/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/jul/02/missing-the-bridge-already-hidden-could-be-the-perfect-replacement>