

Institution: Newcastle University		
Unit of Assessment: 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: <i>The Experience of Tudor Music</i> : Increasing Understanding of Early Music Among Publics, Practitioners and Professionals		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Magnus Williamson	Professor of Early Music (2016-) Senior Lecturer (2006-16) Lecturer (1997-2006)	1997-to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

The Experience of Tudor Music (=ETM) has increased public understanding of Renaissance music through its most vivid physical traces: manuscripts. Understanding the interaction between musical practices and the spaces and objects that shaped them creates new ways to experience sonic artefacts. ETM has therefore undertaken four actions: raising public awareness of music manuscripts and their interactions with spaces and rituals; increasing practitioners' understanding of English Renaissance musical sources, their contexts, and contents; enlarging the concert repertoire through innovative, historically-informed programming; and providing professional advice, leading to the Eton Choirbook's inscription in UNESCO's Memory of the World register.

2. Underpinning research

Magnus Williamson's early research was on the origins and context of the Eton Choirbook (copied between 1500 and 1504). This large-format manuscript was intended to be placed upon a lectern and read by a huddle of singers standing in the middle of the performance space (or 'in medio chori'). His findings, later published in a prize-winning facsimile, quickened his interest in the spatial contexts of musical sources, as well as their wider materiality and practical implications for performers.

In [PUB1](#), Williamson linked the musical contents of the Eton Choirbook to the iconography of its architectural context. This focus on the spatial and visual contexts has remained at the core of Williamson's work. As one of the *Experience of Worship* (= *EoW*) project's research team, he investigated interactions between sound, space and visual symbol (2009-2013), contributing to *EoW* as a scholar-performer, devising historical scenarios for parish worship c. 1500, and drawing upon typological methods previously developed in [PUB2](#). These typologies entailed reconstructions of lost artefacts and spaces, a method further explored during a fellowship at the Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours (2013-2014); the resulting output, [PUB5](#), provided a spatial and dynastic context for music by Thomas Tallis, during the presumed pregnancy of Mary Tudor in 1554-1555.

Williamson's studies of early music sources, and their impact upon the performance and experience of polyphony, took practical form in 2011, when experiments into singing at the lectern produced measurably beneficial effects upon performers. Themselves a form of impact

(and therefore discussed below), these findings were reported in [PUB4](#) and underpinned subsequent collaborations with professional and amateur ensembles.

These two research themes, contextual reconstruction and practical investigation, came together in the *Tudor Partbooks* project (2014-2017). *Tudor Partbooks* stemmed partly from Williamson's experience reconstructing incomplete church music by John Sheppard ([PUB3](#)), a process that cast doubt on the objectivity of editorial reconstructions. *Tudor Partbooks* investigated the practical relationship between physical artefacts and their musical contents; how various book formats impinged upon performers' and listeners' experiences; and how incomplete artefacts can be restored. *Tudor Partbooks* was a collaboration with Oxford University, where Julia Craig-McFeely digitally reconstructed the acid-corroded Sadler Partbooks; Williamson led a parallel polyphonic reconstruction of the incomplete Baldwin Partbooks. This task was undertaken collaboratively: a mixed team of academics, performers and volunteers provided multiple versions of polyphonic reconstructions; reconstruction methods were demonstrated at public workshops. A parallel project used Tudor improvisatory methods to create keyboard verses for Nicholas Ludford's Lady Masses, in order to render performable this previously inaccessible repertory; described in [PUB6](#), the methodology was devised by Williamson for the Early English Organ Project (2003) and refined during the collaborative *EoW* project.

3. References to the research

Publications

[PUB1](#): M. Williamson, 'Pictura et scriptura: the Eton choirbook in its iconographical context', *Early Music*, 28 (2000), 359-80: <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/XXVIII.3.359>. *Early Music* is the leading peer-review journal of its kind; this article was republished by invitation in *Sacred and Liturgical Renaissance Music*, ed. Andrew Kirkman (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

[PUB2](#): M. Williamson, 'Liturgical music in the late medieval parish: organs and voices, ways and means', in Eamon Duffy & Clive Burgess (eds.), *The Late Medieval English Parish*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 14 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 177-242: ISBN 1900289768: available on request. This study stemmed from an invitation to speak at the Harlaxton Symposium, a leading interdisciplinary conference; it is the definitive study on music in the pre-Reformation parish.

[PUB3](#): M. Williamson (ed.), *John Sheppard, III: Hymns, Psalms, Antiphons and Other Latin Polyphony*, Early English Church Music, 54 (London: British Academy/Stainer & Bell, 2012): ISBN 9780852499023, ISMN 9790220222023: available on request. This 269-page edition was prepared for the British Academy's flagship editorial series, *EECM*.

[PUB4](#): M. Williamson, 'The fate of choirbooks in Protestant Europe', *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*, 7/ii (2015), 117-31: <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.JAF.5.108470>. This article, reporting findings from *The Experience of Worship* project (see below), was written at the request of *JAF*'s editors. Published by Brepols, the peer-reviewed *JAF* is one of the leading European journals devoted to early music.

[PUB5](#): M. Williamson, 'Queen Mary I, Tallis's *O sacrum convivium* and a Latin litany', *Early Music*, 44 (2016), 251-70: <https://doi.org/10.1093/em/caw045>. This was a project output from Williamson's Le Studium Fellowship at the CESR, Tours, in 2013 and 2014.

[PUB6](#): M. Williamson, 'Playing the Organ, Tudor-Style: Some Thoughts on Improvisation, Composition and Memorisation', in *Studies in Early English Keyboard Music*, ed. D. Smith (Routledge: 2019), 99-122: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315109701>. This was commissioned by Prof. David Smith, general editor of the Ashgate Historical Keyboard Series.

Associated Grants

The Experience of Worship in Late Medieval Cathedral and Parish Church (AHRC AH/H017445/1, 2009-2013; GBP385,533; Principal Investigator John Harper).

Dispositifs de la Performance Musicale à la Renaissance (CNRS/Le Studium Loire Valley Institute for Advanced Studies, France, 2013-2014; GBP26,666; PI Xavier Bisaro).

Tudor Partbooks: the manuscript legacies of John Sadler, John Baldwin and their antecedents (AHRC AH/L006952/1, 2014-2017; GBP583,773; PI Magnus Williamson).

4. Details of the impact

Williamson's research has led to four kinds of impact. First, it has significantly increased public understanding of early music. Second, it has had lasting impact on musicians, their performances and repertoires. Third, it has directly informed and inspired new recordings and broadcasts. And fourth, it directly contributed to a major policy statement on Tudor music, the designation of the Eton Choirbook as one of only 58 documents inscribed onto the UK Memory of the World Register as part of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.

Public Encounters: increasing public understanding

Williamson's work, particularly during the *Tudor Partbooks* project (from 2014 to 2017), has involved a series of events designed to reach a wide range of audiences: specialists, performers, students, amateur musicians and publics. This has been effected partly through practical workshops, such as the residential *Tudor Partbooks* courses on polyphonic reconstruction (in 2015 and 2016), attended by international audiences of mixed ability and all ages from 15 to 75 (combined participants 68). Daily feedback showed >90% positive response. There were three patterns of impact: increased awareness of the topic and its attendant techniques; extension of personal skills and intellectual horizons; and appetite for more of the same ('an incredibly rewarding experience...I didn't imagine in advance that collaborative reconstruction would be possible, but delighted to see that it is...a good spirit of working together') [IMP-REF3a]. Consequently, Williamson gave three further *Tudor Partbooks* workshops for the North-East Early Music Forum and Viola da Gamba Society (from 2015 to 2017: 107 participants).



Figure 1: Participants workshop new polyphonic reconstructions: *Tudor Partbooks*, 2015

Other events targeted audiences without specialist knowledge of Tudor polyphony. In 2015 and 2016, Williamson gave public lectures and concerts as part of *Tudor Partbooks* (combined audience 250); a recurrent theme of these events was the relationship between sound and space, music and image. Williamson developed this idea through collaborative performance-based investigations of early music in specific historic spaces, such as at Heckington church (Lincs) in 2016 and 2017. Drawing upon PUB2, the Heckington project enabled community leaders to understand their architectural heritage as a witness to long-forgotten rites: '...that's the fun of it: we're learning all the time... it's giving us more ideas for our musicians too' [IMP-REF1]. The Heckington project led in turn to an educational collaboration with the choral scholars of St Wulfram's (see below).

Developing skills among practitioners

Williamson has always worked in close partnership with performers, for instance in his investigations of lectern singing. In 2011 the *Experience of Worship* project supported experiments which yielded early impact, by way of changed perceptions [IMP-REF2]. This led to collaborations with the Binchois Consort for which a Tudor-style choirbook lectern was made in 2014. The lectern has facilitated collaborations with two other ensembles. Stile Antico used partbooks and choirbooks in performance (in 2015 and 2016, during *Tudor Partbooks* 'RECON' workshop; combined audience 300); they reported changes to ensemble and the psychology of performance ('the lectern has completely transformed how I see choral performance') [IMP-REF3a]. Since 2018 the lectern has stimulated a collaboration with the young professional group Ensemble Pro Victoria: EPV invited Williamson to devise a development programme and concert series around choirbook singing and polyphonic reconstruction (Hexham/Newcastle, March 2020; London autumn 2020). EPV have thereby developed a distinctive performance format, giving them the edge as international competition winners [IMP-REF5].



Figure 2: Ensemble Pro Victoria using choirbook lectern, Hexham Abbey, March 2020

Following an initial collaboration at Heckington (2016) Williamson was asked to develop an all-age chorister training programme for St Wulfram, Grantham. This focuses on improvised polyphony, lectern singing, early notation, singing at Tudor pitch (a=475), and Grantham's musical history; it also includes concerts (October 2018; audience 100) and workshops. Participants reported enhanced skills, expanded repertory and better historical understanding: '[it] is very good for forcing you to concentrate more whilst singing... choirbook singing made the choir feel a lot more unified' [IMP-REF4]. In 2020 Williamson adapted this programme into Zoominars, helping St Wulfram's to defy Covid and explore new repertoires. Meanwhile, Williamson was commissioned to record a documentary for the Royal College of Organists (August 2020), and give the inaugural Royal School of Church Music Friday lecture (13 December 2020: >1,200 YouTube views), both events on the theme of musical sources and their meanings.

Enlarging the repertoire

Williamson's research insights have provided models for programming Renaissance repertoires in performance. Two recordings by St Mary's Cathedral Choir, Edinburgh, have drawn upon his musicological expertise and included polyphonic reconstructions from *Tudor Partbooks* and PUB3 [IMP-REF6] ('the most exciting project in recent years to feature Tudor music', *Early Music Review*).

Another recording developed Williamson's collaboration with Caius College Choir [IMP-REF7]. He devised its programme and provided Tudor-style organ interludes that were subsequently re-used by Westminster Abbey Choir in their own Williamson-advised recording [IMP-REF9]. His discoveries reported in PUB5 provided the conceptual core of a fourth CD and live broadcast (March 2017: 'a terrific idea', *Classical Source Review*). This featured in BBC's *Early Music Show* (October 2017: 75,000 listeners) [IMP-REF8]. Finally, collaborators Ensemble Pro Victoria have commissioned polyphonic reconstructions and expert advice for their 500th anniversary CD of music by Robert Fayrfax, the first in a series of collaborative CD projects between Williamson, EPV and Delphian.

UNESCO Memory of the World Register

The Eton Choirbook is the most iconic source of Tudor music. Williamson is the world-leading authority on the manuscript, having produced definitive contextualising scholarship ([PUB1](#)) and a prize-winning full-colour facsimile (2010). This work was essential in the inscription of the Choirbook in [UNESCO's Memory of the World Register](#) (2018). As the world-leading expert on this manuscript, Williamson acted as referee for the UNESCO application (whose text drew significantly upon his published research). UNESCO inscription symbolises this choirbook's importance as a monument of Britain's cultural heritage.

UNESCO recognition is leading to further opportunities to public understanding of early music. In Autumn 2019, Eton College held a commemorative exhibition which Williamson co-curated by invitation. It included a visual reconstruction of the college chapel circa 1500 and an enactment of the *Salve* ceremony: 'Williamson's scholarship has been fundamental in establishing the public reputation of the Eton Choirbook upon which the recent UNESCO inscription and the current exhibition at Eton rest' [**IMP-REF10**].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

IMP-REF1: Transcription of post-project interviews with local stakeholders (Heckington), 12 March 2018;

IMP-REF2: *Experience of Worship* project: participant/observer reflections, September 2011;

IMP-REF3: participants' *feedback from polyphonic reconstruction workshops (3.a: *Tudor Partbooks* project; 3.b: North-East Early Music Forum, 26 September 2015);

IMP-REF4: Church choir, St Wulfram, Grantham (4.a: *feedback from performers; 4.b: testimonial from director);

IMP-REF5: Professional ensemble, EPV: Ensemble Pro Victoria (5.a.: feedback from singers, Ensemble Pro Victoria; 5.c: testimonial from director);

IMP-REF6: Cathedral choir, St Mary's Edinburgh (6.a: *CD and reviews, *Sheppard: Sacred Choral Music*, Delphian DCD 34123, 2014; 6.b: *CD and reviews, *William Mundy: Sacred Choral Music*, Delphian DCD 34204, 2018; 6.c: director's testimonial);

IMP-REF7: Collegiate choir, Caius College, Cambridge, *CD and accompanying reviews: *Chorus vel Organa: Music from the Lost Palace of Westminster*, Delphian DCD34158, 2016;

IMP-REF8: Professional ensemble, Gallicantus (8.a: *CD and accompanying reviews, *Queen Mary's Big Belly: Hope for an heir in Catholic England*, Signum SIGCD464, 2017; 8.b: testimonial letter from director);

IMP-REF9: Abbey choir: *CD and correspondence: *Nicholas Ludford: Ave Maria ancilla Trinitatis, Missa Videte miraculum*, Hyperion CDA68192, 2018;

IMP-REF10: UNESCO Memory of the World inscription, Eton Choirbook (10.a: exhibition catalogue, Verrey Gallery; 10.b: testimonial from College Librarian, Eton College).

[*Hard copies available on request]