

<b>Institution:</b> Guildhall School of Music & Drama (GSMD)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Cultural inclusion, cross-curricular education, and new inter-institutional production mechanisms through practice-based research in opera and libretto composition		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-ongoing		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> J Philips S Plaice	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Head of Composition Professor of Dramatic Writing	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 1 Sept 2004-ongoing 18 Sept 2014-ongoing
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-ongoing		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		

### 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

A series of 5 practice-based research projects in opera and libretto composition has: exposed new constituencies to opera; opened new routes to participation; led to the establishment of new inter-institutional and inter-sectoral production mechanisms; harnessed music as a tool for language education; and embedded cross-curricular learning in primary schools. This body of work by researchers at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, incrementally developed over a decade, has increased opera's capacity to act as a vehicle for cultural inclusion and education *beyond* music and drama. Its constituent projects operate at the interfaces of the research and development of new operatic work (including participatory and co-creation processes), arts education and outreach, public policy on languages, and school curriculum design. The principal beneficiaries have been the young people participating in the creation and reception of these works, most recently pupils at 6 schools exposed to modes of learning that increase literacy in the neglected subjects of languages and music simultaneously, and also foster social and cultural inclusion for those with English as an additional language. Schools, individual teachers, and local government education policymakers have also been influenced, in the areas of curriculum design and pedagogical practice, by the demonstrated advantages of cross-curricular education.

### 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research is located in the conception, design and construction of 5 operatic works, and associated production, education and outreach mechanisms, connected by shared research questions (below): *Doffin* and *Wild Cat* ('*Cat*', together R1, 2005-06), *Knight Crew* ('*Crew*', R2, 2010), *How the Whale Became* ('*Whale*', R3, 2013), *The Tale of Januarie* ('*Januarie*'; R4, 2017) and *Henny Penny* ('*Henny*'; R5, 2020). In each successive project GSMD researchers Philips (composer) and, since 2014, Plaice (librettist) experiment with the utility of opera and various kinds and degrees of participatory involvement as a vehicle for cultural inclusion and education. Findings suggest that the art form can be effectively democratised and deployed for educational purposes beyond itself, as much in languages as in music.

#### How can new models of opera reanimate a traditionally exclusive form for new audiences?

Philips' first participatory opera research project, *Crew*, was the focus of a REF2014 case study based mostly on its enquiry into, and impact as, a new model for co-creative involvement of young and amateur performers. It investigated the potential of new operatic forms and methods of development and selection of performers, and how the resulting works could most effectively be realised for audiences. *Whale*, participatory to the extent that it was designed as a kind of Christmas pantomime, asked complementary questions: how can opera harness the apparently non-operatic notion of play-as-creativity (i.e. at all levels, story, design and realisation) so as to appeal more to young audiences? Given a five-week run at the Royal Opera House (ROH), *Whale* interpreted Ted Hughes' creation tales to cast God as a mad inventor. It invited children to respond to the idea that even so-called high-art creativity is messy. Their reception of the piece suggested that using found objects as instruments and a 'scrapbook' style stage design could immerse young audiences in the imaginative potential of opera as a multi- and cross-discipline 'toybox'.

#### What new institutional development, production, education and outreach mechanisms are needed to do so?

*Crew* was developed in the context of a researcher/composer-in-residence scheme in partnership with the AHRC, the first ever at Glyndebourne. This model became integrated, through various

means and partnerships, into later iterations of Philips' enquiries. *Januarie* brought it to a higher education context, as the outcome of a similar partnership between a producing institution (with an embedded researcher/composer, now joined by a librettist) and a wider research project: 'Cross-Language Dynamics, Reshaping Community', led by the University of Manchester and funded by the AHRC's Open World Research Initiative (OWRI). A main-stage work, tailored to GSMD's student community (the score written for certain voices on the Opera programme and for the full Symphony Orchestra), *Januarie* was designed to explore the full production and performing resources of a modern multi- and cross-discipline conservatoire. Conceived to stretch young performers with co-creative challenges (like *Crew*, but with more emphasis on design, set and staging), *Januarie* also built on research begun in the bilingual projects *Dolffin* and *Cat*. *Januarie* explored how our understanding of language functions inside opera's different musical contexts, how synergies of linguistic and non-linguistic elements work, and how language-as-instrument can project meaning through music. The translanguing possibilities created by systematically investigating the audience's relationship with the language(s) of the work also opened up new potential for this technique to be used in other ways in future projects (e.g. *Henny*).

#### How can opera be deployed for educational purposes beyond itself?

*Dolffin* and *Cat*, which were designed to be sung in varying proportions of English and Welsh depending on the location of the performance, set out to explore how to make language and regional/national language policy part of the experience of the operatic work. *Januarie* (based on Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*), the first British opera to be performed in Middle English, sought to press further on what the choice of sung idiom could communicate, investigating the potential of its sounds (strange yet familiar) and implicit social codes (respectively from Latin, Norman, and Anglo-Saxon) to sensitise audiences to language. *Henny* (also a GSMD/AHRC OWRI research/production partnership) went further still, combining enquiry into opera as a tool for understanding audience relationships with their language and its near neighbours with the possibilities of opera as a vehicle for cultural inclusion and education. Building on the co-creative and multi- and cross-discipline approaches of *Crew* and *Whale*, *Henny* explores the possibilities for opera to support not only music but also modern languages (ML) teaching in years 5 and 6.

*Henny* draws on the new knowledge incrementally generated by the preceding projects, building on their education-in-opera approaches to explore opera-as-education. An in-school production requiring minimal resources, it is a participatory opera whose research and development explored the various models of opera education and outreach to determine best practice for use in ML learning, and in cross-curricular approaches in primary education generally. Any participating school can create and perform its own *Henny* opera in a range of languages: French (*Cocotte Chocotte*), German (*Hennig Pfennig*), Spanish (*Pollita Chiquita*) or Italian (*Sabrina Gallina*) as well as English (*Henny Penny*). The *Henny* project also addresses wider research questions around the survival of both ML and music learning in schools over the last few decades, and around respect for foreign languages amid post-Brexit 'linguaphobia'. The adaptation of the folk tale *Henny Penny* provides a thorough immersion in language by being 'through-composed' and by the device of the child participants becoming both commenting chorus and characters, interacting with the central figures of Henny Penny and Fox Lox and a clarinet/violin/piano ensemble. Its 'poor theatre' aesthetic allows room for creativity, enabling everyday school spaces to be theatricalised, and the focus on learning is facilitated by the libretto's source folk tale, with its five word-for-word repetitions of an inductive 'meet-and-greet' dialogue. The piece retains elements of high operatic aesthetic through intertextual stylistic resonances (Rossinian bel canto) and a structure where sequences of libretto patterns intersect with character-driven musical registers. This allows for opera's non-verbal tropes to be explored, but to explicitly educational ends, with splintering of language into phonemes and onomatopoeic text that transcends language specificity. The investigation of education-in-opera and ML learning synergy exploited by *Henny* aims at an embodied experience of each, enriching participants' understanding of the world through active engagement with languages and the cultures they represent.

The rollout of *Henny* workshops in London schools has achieved its impact both through local participatory experience and a wider digital offer (comprising two full audio recordings of the French *Cocotte Chocotte*, one in 'karaoke' form, a 'making of' video, and an animation of *Cocotte*

Chocotte's aria) that has been shared with participating schools, schools interested in participating, OWRI partners, and other stakeholders.

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

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[R1] Philips, J. (composer) *Dolffin* and *Wild Cat* (Welsh National Opera, 2005 and 2006)

[R2] Philips, J. *Knight Crew* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera, 2010). London: Edition Peters. [accepted as being of at least 2\* quality in REF2014]

[R3] Philips, J. *How the Whale Became* (Royal Opera, 2013). London: Edition Peters.

[R4] Philips, J. and S. Plaice (librettist). *The Tale of Januarie* (GSMD, 2017). London: Edition Peters. [Funded by AHRC-OWRI, award no AH/N004647/1, submitted in REF2 (PHIJULC).]

[R5] Philips, J. and S. Plaice. *Henny Penny* [partially delayed output; see appended statement]. An animated excerpt of *Cocotte Chocotte* [can be found here](#) and a ['making-of' video here](#). [Also funded by AHRC-OWRI, and scored 3\* or higher by 3 external expert reviewers.]

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

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The impact arising from this body of work reflects the research itself in that it has developed iteratively, incrementally and cumulatively. *Crew* and *Whale* led, directly and indirectly, to new development and production practices being concretised in inter-institutional partnerships, enabling *Januarie*. The linguistic elements of *Dolffin*, *Cat* and *Januarie* provided the main focus of the *Henny* research and resulting changes to practice and policy on cross-curricular learning; additional impact on cultural inclusion was recorded. *Henny* in particular generated quite unanticipated impact, too, in its disruption of existing business models for disseminating opera.

#### New inter-institutional development and production practices

The impact of the new collaborative production practices modelled in *Crew* (on Glyndebourne, its audiences, and the participants) inspired a 'radical' [E1] new approach to opera R&D at the Royal Opera House, 'which resulted largely [from] *Crew*' [E1]. In 2014, the 'researcher/composer in residence' model that produced the project was adopted, in a developed form, by ROH when the director of *Crew* moved there: 'working on the [*Crew*] project led directly to my decision, as Associate Director of Opera at the Royal Opera House, to institute a partnership between the Royal Opera House and Guildhall School' [E1]. (The first doctoral student under this model was admitted to the programme in 2013, and the first work produced, *4.48 psychosis* in 2016, won several national awards and went on to be staged in Dresden, Strasbourg and New York.) As part of the same initiative, the two institutions also created a complementary MA in Opera-Making and Writing, providing a pipeline to the doctoral programme and increasing opera-making capacity in the UK through training a new generation in a unique academia-industry context. (Since validation in 2014, the MA programme has produced 18 chamber operas and composer-librettist pairs, some of which have received international commissions.) The new inter-institutional production mechanism also included the appointment of a full-time librettist, Plaice, creating, for the first time in higher education anywhere in the world, a professional training offer embracing every aspect of operatic creation and production. The Librettist Network ([www.librettistnetwork.com](http://www.librettistnetwork.com)), newly founded from the MA and funded by GSMD, has built on this development, bringing together emerging writers and established exponents such as Martin Crimp, and has worked in partnership with ROH on its Engender scheme for female artists.

Similarly, findings from the opera-for-schoolchildren research projects *Dolffin* and *Cat* (together awarded a Royal Philharmonic Society Education Prize in 2007), *Crew*, and *Whale* ultimately resulted in the establishment of a second partnership in 2018 between GSMD and Islington Council to create a new Music Education Hub. Supported by Arts Council England and Music in Secondary Schools Trust, and run from the Cultural Enrichment department of the Council, the hub contributes to Islington's ambition to promote cultural inclusion among schoolchildren. This partnership and the development and rollout of *Henny* are direct products of the inter-institutional development and production practices established from the findings of *Crew* and *Whale*.

#### Increased cultural inclusion among primary school children

For native English speakers encountering *Henny*, the embodied and rhythmic nature of operatic performance enabled swifter embedding of language learning [E2]. For those with English as an

additional language, the opportunity to work in (i.e. not simply *on*) their first language, or for language to be equally foreign to their peers, was transformative. A teacher notes that '50-60% of those children had English as an additional language and it [...] works for them because it tends to promote the idea that other languages are valid and can be celebrated [...] quietly they all begin to take a little bit more pride in their home language' [E3]. This is also corroborated by Islington Council, who confirm that 'the project's first few outings have evidenced its capacity to improve social and educational inclusion, because it speaks directly to those who otherwise would be less likely to see themselves as part of our rich and creative culture' [E4]. Similarly, the Bishop of a large UK multicultural diocese, exposed to *Henny* through Advisory Board membership for the Cross-Language Dynamics project, has been impressed by the fact that even in its nascent stages 'this project's engagement with socially marginalised and ethnically diverse young communities is beginning to foster increased cultural participation' [E5]. The Bishop is particularly interested in *Henny's* potential for community integration both by virtue of his general pastoral role and his specific responsibility to refugee populations in his local community.

A related impact on cultural aspirations was also observed. *Henny's* carefully calibrated exposure of schoolchildren to opera has opened a cultural door for participants who, put off by unfamiliar and/or daunting art-form labels like 'opera', were previously unaware of the range of potential careers in the creative industries. Where *Januarie* allowed students of opera-making integration into the profession and *Whale* revealed the operatic of the everyday and vice versa, *Henny* intervenes directly to open new routes to participation by demystifying unfamiliar creative processes. As one teacher testifies, '[o]ne of the things the children got was the sense of, with an opera production, seeing all the different roles [...]. [I]t gives the notion that in that industry there are a huge range of things you could go into [...] so definitely of value especially at a time where it's being made to look as if creative work in general is a waste of time' [E3].

#### Cross-curricular learning embedded in primary schools

Work on *Januarie* under the aegis of the 'Cross-Language Dynamics' project revealed the problem that in turn provided the central research questions for *Henny*. In meetings with partners who were primarily located in modern language departments, parallel plights in ML learning and music education became clear: a long-term gradual decline in applicants at A-Level and beyond, largely due to their removal from the UK primary curriculum. The *Henny* outreach project addresses the imminent death of these subjects by drawing on mechanisms researched in the preceding projects: it is a participatory work that brings opera to new groups, like *Crew*; a text for young children, drawing on folk literature, like *Whale*; music with high aesthetic values and a questioning relationship with language, like *Januarie*; and it focuses on languages and overlapping communities, like *Dolffin* and *Cat*. It is deliberately not, as many outreach projects are, 'opera-lite'.

For most children at the 6 schools initially exposed to it, *Henny* represented a first interaction with operatic style. Designed as a cross-curricular learning opportunity, the workshops brought children into contact with new and stimulating combinations of subjects. This expanded their familiarity and confidence with both, as observed by one teacher: 'from children who often in their music sessions might just sit there and never really talk to me or really give me anything [...] all this stuff started happening and they were coming up with all these ideas' [E3]. In addition to *Henny's* impact on the pupils there have been wider repercussions for education providers. The opera provides a strong framework to support the creative input of the children as they interpret the songs, contribute to staging them, and create their own unique production for public performance. This framework is analogous to a 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL) approach that teaches language through other subjects (in this case music/drama), anchoring learning by applying it in real time. A headteacher from one of the participating schools that already offered both music and language teaching found *Henny* to be persuasive evidence for CLIL as it 'introduced and demonstrated the learning potential of bringing music and language learning into conjunction' [E6]. Consequently, that school is 'now exploring further ways to link these curricula, having seen a deeper understanding of both French (and foreign experience generally) and music in the children who participated' [E6]. As well as enhancing the uptake of language skills, the evidence was that cross-curricular learning like this achieved two goals simultaneously, which is especially important for subjects that have to fight for resources. According to one headteacher,

'the most significant impact on us as a school is due to the evidence of enhanced learning provided by [*Henny's*] cross-curricular immersion in music, foreign languages and drama simultaneously. This embodied mode of learning has been incredibly successful and enables us to [explore] creative ways to embed cross-curricular education across the school' [E6]. The Bishop also notes the significance of this: '*Henny Penny's* combination of composition as research—which I learnt about through this project—and progressive educational theory was most striking in its impactful application to language learning' [E5]. Furthermore, for decision-makers at Islington Council '*Henny Penny* has confirmed [their] policy of developing cross-curricular pathways in order to ignite pupil curiosity in these and other potentially under-served subject areas' and 'changed [their] thinking about pedagogical practice to the extent that [they] feel the project offers exciting training opportunities for music and MFL leads' [E4]. The impact on teachers is notable; one headteacher reflects that whilst '[t]he opportunity to understand opera through direct involvement with professionals has opened up new imaginative worlds for our children, [...] teachers were inspired by what *Henny Penny* showed was possible artistically in school settings' [E6].

#### Disruption of existing business models

*Henny* generated unanticipated impact in two commercial areas, initially arising from the pivot to online teaching due to Covid-19, which represented an opportunity to augment schools' digital curriculum with audio-visual resources derived from the project. This, as Islington Council observes, 'will make a significant contribution to remote learning and support schools' online teaching and learning delivery beyond the current crises' [E4]. These multi- and cross-media enhancements enable broader engagement, not just as an alternative format bringing new dimensions to the project's learning potential, but by allowing a different kind of participation for schools unable to host a physical workshop. *Henny's* audio-visual materials have also inspired film creators such as Positive Note Productions, who made the digital animation content. As outlined by its Director, 'it was not until we produced *Cocotte Chocotte* that we realised languages could both be taught simultaneously with music and benefit from the incorporation of film like music does' [E7]. This new discovery has implications for the future of both the creative industries and those who interact with their outputs: '[a]s a result [of this realisation], we are changing our business model to focus more on films like *Cocotte Chocotte*, having been deeply impressed by the power of its cross-arts, cross-curricular concept to enhance learning and engagement' [E7].

The success of *Henny* as a high-aesthetic but intrinsically in-school project is also proving disruptive: Philips' publisher Edition Peters has reconsidered its business and production model as a result of *Henny*. The project has shown the highly concentrated value of opera in the primary school context but also that traditional hire materials and licensing agreements are 'obviously inappropriate' and 'represent a financial barrier for school participation' [E8]. Peters' Director of New Music has confirmed that *Henny* cannot be published 'on the same terms' as previous works (whether by Philips or others), and therefore 'this project has been a catalyst to [Peters] scoping new models of delivery of copyright works within the context of access and widening participation' [E8]. Thus, as observed by the Artistic Director of Mahogany Opera, whose 'Snappy Operas' is a leading development programme in the children's opera sector, for the future of publishing, as with primary education, '*Henny Penny* stands as a paradigm for inclusion and accessibility' [E9].

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

[E1] Testimonial letter from the former Associate Director of Opera, Royal Opera House.

[E2] *Henny Penny* 'making of' video. <https://vimeo.com/488586185/70adb95b2a>

[E3] Transcript of interviews with 3 teachers at participating schools.

[E4] Testimonial letter from Head of Cultural Enrichment, Islington Council.

[E5] Testimonial letter from the Bishop of a large UK city.

[E6] Testimonial letter from Head of a participating school.

[E7] Testimonial letter from the Director, Positive Note Productions.

[E8] Testimonial letter from Director of New Music, Peters Edition Ltd.

[E9] Testimonial letter from Artistic Director, Mahogany Opera.

[E10] Emails confirming sales figures for *Whale* and *Januarie*.