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| Institution: University of Cambridge | | |
| Unit of Assessment: UoA 33 | | |
| Title of case study: Performing Lost Songs: Changing professional, amateur and pedagogical practice with a reconstruction of 11th-century music | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 to the present | | |
| 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: |
| Dr Sam Barrett | Reader in Early Medieval Music | 2002 to the present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: April 2016 to 31 December 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Research carried out by Sam Barrett at Cambridge, between 2000 and the present, to reconstruct a lost body of 11th-century songs based on Boethius's <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i>, has achieved significant reach and attracted international attention. Since 2016, it has brought medieval music to new public audiences through performances, workshops, talks, a CD recording, radio broadcasts, videos, and a project website. Barrett's collaboration with medieval music ensemble Sequentia has led to significant changes in professional as well as amateur creative practice, and established an innovative methodology that is being taken up by other performers to recover further lost repertoires. This research, and the resources it has generated, have enriched Secondary and Higher Education teaching, not only in musicology, but medieval studies more broadly, in Ireland, Chile, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK, benefitting educators and their students.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Sam Barrett is Reader in Early Medieval Music at the Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge. His two-volume study and transcription, <i>The Melodic Tradition of Boethius' De consolazione philosophiae in the Middle Ages</i>, was published by Bärenreiter in 2013 [R1]. This publication collected together and analysed surviving notations for a previously overlooked repertory. Specifically, following a systematic study of neumed manuscripts dating from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, Barrett identified principles underlying the melodic tradition, and transcribed mnemonic notations, in order to attempt reconstruction of anonymous 11th-century song-settings of Boethius's <i>On the Consolation of Philosophy</i>, one of the most widely-read texts of the Middle Ages. While this scholarly approach was successful in establishing about 90% of what these songs might have sounded like, the leap from scholarship to modern performance remained substantial. Collaboration with Benjamin Bagby and other members of his internationally-renowned medieval music ensemble Sequentia, provided the key.</p> <p>Founded in Cologne in 1977, Sequentia, under Bagby's direction, has made over 30 recordings dedicated to Western European Music from before 1300, establishing a reputation as the world's leading exponents of this repertoire. From the autumn of 2014 onwards, Barrett worked with Bagby and Sequentia's musicians, Hanna Marti and Norbert Rodenkirchen, to explore ways in which creative practice might supplement scholarly knowledge [R2]. This collaboration achieved success through posing new research questions, facilitating the formation and exploration of hypotheses, and providing recourse to memorised practices built up through sustained engagement with early medieval repertoires and instruments. Together, Barrett and Sequentia explored possible reconstructions of the work, drawing on the extensive practical experience of Bagby, gained through decades of experimentation with his own reconstructions of early medieval song repertoires now lost (most notably, his <i>Beowulf</i> project).</p> <p>The decision was made at an early stage to focus on a particular manuscript (the 'Cambridge Songs' leaf), whose songs were associated with reports of highly-skilled instrumental performance. Proposals for melodic versions emerged through intensive periods of collaboration between 2014 and 2018. Barrett's role as a researcher involved explanation (summarizing recoverable principles and procedures) and evaluation (assessing possible reconstructions in relation to surviving evidence). The collaborative research then identified unforeseen issues relating to performance practice, and new questions concerning the</p> | | |

implications of surviving notations led to further checking of sources between periods of consultation. The results of this collaborative approach were the refinement of initial solutions, discovery of new meanings of specific notational features, and greater insight into the rhetorical features of melodic settings as recorded by notators from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. This research process is described in detail in Barrett, 'Creative Practice and the Limits of Knowledge in Reconstructing Lost Songs from Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy* [R2].

Barrett's research collaboration with Sequentia culminated in a selection of the resulting reconstructions being performed at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in April 2016 – the first performance of this body of songs in over 1,000 years – and subsequently released as a CD, *Boethius: Songs of Consolation* [R3]. The content of the book, article and CD underpin a project website (<https://boethius.mus.cam.ac.uk>) launched in 2018 and designed to bring Barrett's research within practical reach of a wider public (see **Section 4/E10**).

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

[R1] Barrett, Sam, *The Melodic Tradition of Boethius' De consolazione philosophiae in the Middle Ages*, 2 Volumes (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2013) ISMN: 9790006496105 [Major international publisher]

[R2] Barrett, Sam, 'Creative Practice and the Limits of Knowledge in Reconstructing Lost Songs from Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, *Journal of Musicology*, 36/3 (Summer 2019), 261-294. DOI 10.1525/jm.2019.36.3.261 [Externally-funded research published by leading generalist journal in musicology]

[R3] CD: Sequentia, *Boethius: Songs of Consolation. Metra from 11th-century Canterbury*, with Benjamin Bagby, Hanna Marti and Norbert Rodenkirchen. Glossa: GCD922518 (22 June 2018). [As outlined in section 2, this CD represents the outcome of collaborative research undertaken by Barrett with members of *Sequentia* between 2014 and 2018. The CD received a 5-star review from *Diapason d'or* (France), 4-star reviews from *The Times* and *BBC Music Magazine* (UK), and *Kulturradio* (Germany), and was nominated for the International Classical Music Awards in 2019. **E9, pp. 2-14**]

Funding: Research for [R2] was funded by a two-year British Academy Small Research Grant, 2014–2016, GBP4,646.50.

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

Impact on professional creative practice and concert programming

The project has had a significant impact on the creative practice and reach of professional musicians. As Benjamin Bagby, director of medieval ensemble Sequentia, notes, the process of reconstructing the songs 'finds its way from the solitary scholar, through a small group of musicians, to a widest imaginable audience. This ... brings us into direct contact with listeners who otherwise might never have heard of Boethius or his magnificent songs'. Bagby writes that work on the project 'has had a profound effect on the way I think about notation and manuscript sources in the interpretation of medieval song, and has changed my professional practice to an enormous degree ... and [the experience] will certainly become the standard against which all future projects will be measured' [E1, p.1]. Similarly, as a result of the project, Sequentia member Hanna Marti intends 'to establish such collaborations wherever possible, as it can lead to new insights for both parties, to new discoveries in medieval musicology, and to a more profound hearing experience for concert audiences' [E1, p.3].

The methodology developed by Barrett is being used to recover and reimagine further 'lost' repertoires. In October 2020, composer/performer Stef Conner released her CD *Riddle Songs* (Delphian), which explores how lost Anglo-Saxon songs, for which only the text survives, might have sounded. As Conner explains, 'for models ... I looked to Sam Barrett's analysis of early medieval settings of Latin *metra* from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*... I adapted this formula to Old English accentual patterns'. The CD was MusicWeb International Recording of the Month (October 2020), Presto Classical Editor's Choice, finalist for Presto Recordings of the Year 2020, and entered the Top 40 Official Folk Albums Chart in December 2020 [E2, pp. 4, 8, 9, 12].

The reach of Barrett's research can be shown through its impact on Sequentia's concert programming: since 2016, the ensemble has performed to over 3,000 people at 19 concerts

across Europe and America, with a programme – ‘Monks Singing Pagans’ – that features the reconstructions of the lost songs of Boethius’s *Consolations of Philosophy* [E3, pp.2-17]. The cultural significance of the programme is shown through the critical response and prominence that it has received. According to the Russian magazine *Apraksin Blues*, ‘even for these performers, veteran rescuers of music from oblivion, [this programme] stands out as extraordinary’. The Executive Director of the San Francisco Early Music Society described Sequentia’s performance at the Early Music Festival in Berkeley (June 2018) as ‘a revelatory, once in a lifetime artistic experience’. Sequentia’s performance of this programme as part of the Music Before 1800 series in New York was selected as one of the top ten performances of 2017 by critics for the *New York Classical Review* [E3, pp. 18, 14, 37].

Impact on amateur musicians

The significance of the research can be shown by the impact it has had on amateur as well as professional musicians, not least through a workshop (ten participants and six observers from professional and amateur groups across the East of England) and open rehearsal (20 attendees) held by Barrett and Sequentia (April 2016, Cambridge), and a Study Day at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (March 2018, Basel, 19 attendees). Amateur musicians who attended the events suggested that they would change their creative practice as a result: ‘this event will aid in my confidence of performance greatly. I need to practice stepping outside the pulse’, ‘it showed me I should allow myself more freedom’, ‘it was an inspiration to try more idiomatic improvisation’ (Cambridge [E4, pp. 7, 5]); ‘inspired me to be creative in my own projects, using the tools that were described’, and to ‘concentrate on early neume reconstructions much more’ (Basel [E4, p.15]). They also noted how the events changed their perception of the repertoire: ‘This was wonderfully eye-opening and has greatly changed how I view modal song – not as fixed repertory but as living tradition’; ‘It was transformative – opened up so many possibilities and sound worlds I’d never imagined’ [E4, pp.6, 10].

In November 2018, a series of four performance practice videos with Sequentia was launched on the project website for amateur musicians to use as a model for their own performances (viewed 11,904 times) [E5, p.2; E10]; one of the videos has prompted an extensive Facebook debate among amateur and professional musicians on the use of lyres in early medieval music [E5, pp. 4-9]. In January 2020 Barrett published on the website an open-access performing edition of the reconstructions in order to provide both amateur and professional musicians, as well as students and teachers, with all they might need to create their own interpretations of the songs. As one student from the Netherlands commented: ‘this document gives a clear and concise overview of certain songs and how they can be performed, and as such has proven to be a valuable resource which I will likely continue to use in my own practice’ [E6, p.6].

This project has also benefitted medieval re-enactors, introducing them, through a talk given by Barrett in Lichfield in April 2018, to a new repertoire, and to the methods behind reconstructing this sound world. All of the 13 attendees confirmed that the talk had made them think differently about early medieval music and its reconstruction, one participant noting that it had ‘pushed back my knowledge of early music by several hundred years’, and another that it would affect the way they performed medieval music, by using ‘dyed strings!’ [E4, pp. 18, 19].

Cultural Impact on general audiences

The reach of the project can be shown by the impact it has had on wider public audiences. The world premiere of the reconstructed ‘Lost Songs of Boethius’ in April 2016 caught the public imagination. It was reported in over 80 international radio, print, and online media outlets across 17 countries, including: mainstream radio news programmes in the UK (Radio 4 *6pm news*, BBC World Service *Newsday*), France (*France classique*), US (NPR *Morning Show*), Canada (CBC) and Australia (ABC Radio Melbourne *Morning Show*); in mainstream press, including *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph* (UK), *CNET*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *CBS News* (US), *LCI*, *L’Obs* (France), *Le Vif* (Belgium), *Adevărul* (Romania), *El Universal* (Mexico), *Zee News* (India), *RT espagnol* (Spain); and on popular social media platforms such as Reddit and IFL Science [E7, p.3]. A film about the project, together with two videos from the premiere, have been viewed 717,422 times [E7, pp. 111, 117-118]. This public interest in the project has continued: over 250 children and adults attended a half-term event at Cambridge University

Library in 2019, at which Barrett performed, and spoke about, the Boethian reconstructions [E4, pp. 40-42].

Members of the general public have emphasised the ways in which the reconstructions have enhanced their understanding of history. Comments included: 'I can almost FEEL the 11th Century around me while listening' (IFL Science); 'Thank you so much for bringing back to life the most beautiful period of European history by its charming music'; 'We are literally listening to history, if that's not cool I don't know what is' (YouTube) [E7, pp. 121, 116, 113]; 'This performance made medieval music alive in my mind – before it was merely an impression of something long forgotten' (post-concert feedback, 2016) [E4, p.12].

The project also changed perceptions about early medieval music: 'I'm really shocked that it's as complex as it is... Really beautiful' (IFL Science) [E7, p.122]; 'It's closer to jazz than I imagined!', 'I have never thought about early medieval music before, but now I will' (post-concert feedback, 2016) [E4, pp. 8, 10]. Members of the general public in addition expressed their new appreciation of the research methodology behind the project: 'absolute amazement. Did not have any idea how such notation was interpreted'; 'I was totally unaware of the scholarly dimension of the reconstruction' (Open Rehearsal in April 2016) [E4, pp.4, 3].

Radio programmes dedicated to the project have included BBC Radio 3's weekly *Early Music Show* (25.11.2018, average live audience figures, 92,000; available as a podcast indefinitely), described by a listener as 'one of the very best Early Music Show broadcasts'; Catalunya Musica's *Sons de l'edat mitjana* (22.09.2018), described by the producer as 'one of the great moments' in the programme's history; and WFMT Radio's *Early Music Now* programme (17.08.2020; broadcast to 43 main stations across the US with a weekly audience of 47,000 unique listeners; also broadcast in the Philippines and Australia). The project has also been featured on Polskie Radio (3.02.2019), as well as on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune* ('Astonishing, spine-tingling stuff', June 2018). These broadcasts have continued to extend the global reach of the project to a more targeted audience of classical music lovers [E8].

Response to the CD co-produced with Sequentia [R3] indicates further public reach and cultural impact. The CD achieved critical and popular acclaim alike. In addition to industry awards and critical acclaim [see Section 2 and E9, pp. 2-14], it entered the UK Specialist Classical Charts at no. 14 (re-entering at no.17 five months later following the BBC Radio 3 *Early Music Show*); earned a 100% five-star rating across Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.de, and Amazon.fr; and was one of allmusic.com's recordings of 2018. Musicwebinternational.com described it as 'genuinely revelatory in its restoration of what we had lost, and profound in the resonances it adds to one of the greatest European classics' [E9, pp.15-16, 17, 19, 22].

The growing significance of the project can be seen following the launch in 2018 of the website (which the British Library has asked to archive [E10, p.5]). This has increased the reach of the research by improving the accessibility of the new repertoire, and the research methods that led to its reconstruction, for all key beneficiaries: from professional and amateur performers, to interested members of the general public. The website has had 4,911 visitors, and has been viewed from every continent (as of 31.12.2020) [E10, pp.2-3]. As one such visitor tweeted: 'for anyone interested in recovering the music of the remote past, this website is a must-visit! Exemplary methods and beautiful results!' [E10, p.4]. A series of seven manuscript-based videos were developed for the website, in which the neumes are illuminated as each song progresses, in order to illustrate the relationship between the notation and the sound. These videos open the research further to a general audience, while offering a model for medieval digital musicology: as one twitter comment noted '[we] should explore something like this for #PolonskyGerman!' (a Polonsky Foundation Project to digitise Manuscripts) [E5, p.20]. The videos, described as 'genius' on Twitter, have been viewed 15,790 times since launching in July 2020: viewers have praised the 'nice animation for those of us who are new to this sort of notation', and noted that it is 'Brilliant to hear Boethius' songs revived. An added layer of richness to the manuscript' [E5, pp. 21, 9, 22].

The impact of the project's public engagement activities was recognised by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, which longlisted the project for an Engage Award for Public Engagement with Research in December 2016 [E7, p.125].

Impact on teaching

Testimony from lecturers has shown that the project resources (the project film, videos, website, and CD) are being used to enhance Higher Education teaching not only in medieval music but in medieval studies more broadly, in Ireland, the Netherlands, Chile, Germany, the UK and Switzerland. One lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, who uses the resources for an interdisciplinary MPhil course in Medieval Song, wrote: '[The project film] is an excellent example of dynamic collaboration between research and performance [...] encouraging performers to be more research-aware, and also demonstrating that exchange of knowledge and expertise can be two-way, something which is sometimes overlooked in pure research on silent sources'. She added that 'Because the 'Lost Songs' project itself is inherently interdisciplinary, it speaks to people from a variety of backgrounds, thus not only students of music'. The interdisciplinary reach of the impact of this project is further demonstrated by a Professor of Philosophy in Chile, who said he would include recordings of the songs in his seminar on *De consolacione* 'so we may have a richer vision of this complex literary and philosophical work'; a leading German Classical Philologist who planned to 'treat the [musical] setting [of *Die consolacione*] in his next Boethius seminar'; and a UK academic who noted 'I've taught *The Consolation of Philosophy* to MA students at the University of Bristol, but knew nothing about this music. I will teach it differently next time' [E6, pp.3, 4, 2; E4, p.11].

The project website has facilitated the integration of historical reconstruction into music curricula. In November 2020, discovery of the website led to a group of music theory students from the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague focussing on one of the Boethian songs as a case study – a departure from their usual focus – and inviting Barrett to give a seminar to eight students, teachers, and professors [E6 p.9]. Attendees described the impact the seminar and website would have on their teaching, providing them with resources, understanding and confidence: 'Using the knowledge I have received today I will be able to show my students much more specific parts and examples of medieval music and how to perform it (or at least how to research it before performing) than I have been up to now'; 'I would dare to speak more about medieval music when teaching teenage students elemental music theory in my home country, Greece' [E6, p.6]. A Swiss musicologist has also stated that he 'will integrate the results [of the project] into [his] lessons' [E4, p.14].

The project has in addition had an impact on teaching for schoolchildren. In response to the launch of the manuscript-based videos, one school music teacher in Monaco wrote that her class would consequently 'be kicking off the year with medieval music' [E5, p.23]. Since January 2019 Barrett has delivered six outreach seminars based on this project to 80 state-school students in Years 10-12, in Cambridge, Bristol, and Swansea. These seminars had a significant impact on the students' understanding of, and engagement with, a subject that was entirely new to them: of the 18 Year-12 students who attended the Cambridge seminar in October 2019, 89% said that they had been inspired to pursue the topic further [E4, pp.21-39].

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

- [E1] Testimonials from individual members of Medieval Music Ensemble Sequentia.
- [E2] CD *Riddle Songs*: liner notes, press awards, entry into Official Top 40 Folk Albums Chart.
- [E3] Sequentia, 'Monks Singing Pagans' programme: dates, audience numbers, and reviews. [Some content in French and German]
- [E4] Participant feedback on and social media coverage of: Cambridge workshop, open rehearsal, and concert (2016); study day in Basel (2018); talk for Medieval re-enactment group (2018); outreach seminar (2019); Cambridge University Library event (2019)
- [E5] Viewing figures for, and social media comments on, video resources.
- [E6] Emails from academics outside of the University of Cambridge (Chile, Switzerland, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK) [some content in German]; feedback from students and professors following a seminar in the Hague (2020).
- [E7] Articles, broadcasts, comments, statistics from the premiere; email confirming longlisting of the 'Lost Songs' project for the NCCPE competition (2016).
- [E8] Listening figures for, and comments on radio broadcasts dedicated to the project.
- [E9] *Songs of Consolation* CD: reviews, award nominations, entry into Official Specialist Classical Chart. [Some content in French and German].
- [E10] Project Website: statistics, user comment, and archive request from the British Library.