

<b>Institution: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 33</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Coorie Doon: "It's there forever, that song."</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015 - present</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Rachel Drury	Lecturer in Learning and Teaching in the Arts	2002 - present
Dr Jill Morgan	Lecturer in Learning and Teaching in the Arts	2015 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - present</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>"It's there forever, that song."</p> <p>Coorie Doon (Scots for 'cuddle up') gives families a chance to make meaning and memories through song. An initiative of Chamber Music Scotland (CMS), led by Conservatoire researcher Dr Rachel Drury, it is both a song-writing project for individuals and families experiencing significant life events, and an ongoing action research project exploring the processes and impact of collaborative song-writing.</p> <p>Over successive iterations of Coorie Doon, individuals and families have felt the power of music to express, celebrate and commemorate the love they feel for their children.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Coorie Doon is both a therapeutic songwriting project and an iterative action research project that explores the processes and impact of writing music with individuals and families, to build memories and articulate the emotions that accompany significant life events. It is an initiative of Chamber Music Scotland (CMS, formerly known as Enterprise Music Scotland) in partnership with Dr Rachel Drury and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.</p> <p>With a team of CMS musicians, and Conservatoire colleagues including Dr Jill Morgan, Drury has led four of the five iterations of Coorie Doon to date: further projects are planned. Drury inhabits two overlapping identities: that of a musician (composer and multi-instrumentalist) and social scientist. Her two identities often result in creative work that draws on the findings of contemporary social science, or contributions to the science that are informed by her artistic background. Her practice can be understood as iterative, spiralling from creative work to science and back again in a continuous cyclical process.</p> <p><i>BabyO</i>, which was composed by Drury and commissioned by Scottish Opera, is an example of the practice on which Coorie Doon builds: it was billed as 'the world's first opera for babies' when it premiered in 2010, and drew on the latest understanding of early childhood development to produce a joyful experience in sound, singing and storytelling for the very young. <i>BabyO</i> was submitted to REF2014, and toured internationally (performances in London, Christchurch, Hong Kong, Singapore and New York).</p> <p>Following a career as a music educator, Morgan completed doctoral studies on the impact of music in families and followed this with postdoctoral work focussing on how music works to enable and disrupt intergenerational relationships between parents and children.</p>		

Drury and Morgan's body of work attracted the attention of Enterprise Music Scotland (as Chamber Music Scotland was then known), which commissioned Drury to lead the first Coorie Doon Project. As the impact of Coorie Doon became apparent, further projects followed.

The Coorie Doon process centres on the act of co-writing songs with participants in a family setting. Drury's approach is not to listen to their stories and write a song *for* them, but to provide the means for each participant to *write their own song* and take ownership over it. Families are encouraged to engage in every part of the process from writing the lyrics to choosing the chords / melodies, to recording and in some cases performing the songs – and for this reason, all are listed as artists on the tracks.

Drury describes her role as 'facilitator' rather than 'composer' and calls herself the 'interface' between the families and the song. She manages the complex emotional and ethical issues that arise from the work and, with Morgan, she has reported the rationale, process of co-creation and impacts that Coorie Doon has achieved in a range of settings, including at the 33rd International Society for Music Education (ISME) World Conference in Baku (2018).

The first Coorie Doon project took place at North Edinburgh Arts Centre, where Drury and the CMS team worked with new and expectant mothers from an area of multiple deprivation in Edinburgh to write songs for their new babies, expressing their hopes and fears as their child's life began. In the second and third iterations, Drury and the team worked at Rachel House in Kinross, a hospice for families with children that have life-limiting conditions. There, Drury led the process of co-writing songs for those children, often with the whole family. The fourth iteration of Coorie Doon took place at the neonatal intensive care unit of the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow, where the team worked with parents to write a song for their prematurely born babies.

Each iteration of Coorie Doon has also been a further cycle in the classical action research paradigm of planning, action, and analysis. Drury's practice has been continuously re-shaped in a process that is informed by the findings of the qualitative impact studies conducted by Jaap and Morgan, which specifically solicited feedback for future iterations from participants, together with her own reflective practice. This case study therefore reflects an ongoing, impactful research practice, rather than reporting the impacts that emerge linearly from (say) a publication.

In addition to references to underpinning research, the 'References to the research' section below includes Morgan and Jaap's impact evaluations, which were part of the action research process, and co-funded by Athenaeum Awards from the Conservatoire.

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

1. Drury, R. C. and Fletcher-Watson, B. (2017) 'The infant audience: The impact and implications of child development research on performing arts practice for the very young', *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 15(3), pp. 292–304. doi: 10.1177/1476718X15614041.
2. Morgan, J. P., MacDonald, R. A. R. and Pitts, S. E. (2015) "Caught between a scream and a hug": Women's perspectives on music listening and interaction with teenagers in the family unit', *Psychology of Music*, 43(5), pp. 611–626. doi: 10.1177/0305735613517411.
3. *BabyO* (2010). Score available on request. Introductory film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5rCdSC57aU>
4. Music written by participants in Coorie Doon, with Drury.
  - a. Coorie Doon at North Edinburgh Arts Centre  
<https://soundcloud.com/chamber-music-scotland/sets/coorie-doon>
  - b. Coorie Doon at Rachel House, Kinross, 2017  
<https://soundcloud.com/chamber-music-scotland/sets/coorie-doon-rachel-house>
  - c. Coorie Doon at Rachel House, Kinross, 2018  
<https://soundcloud.com/chamber-music-scotland/sets/coorie-doon-rachel-house-2018>
  - d. Coorie Doon at Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow

<https://soundcloud.com/chamber-music-scotland/sets/coorie-doon-royal-hospital-for>

5. Presentation of Coorie Doon (Rachel House 2017 iteration) to ISME 2018  
[https://pure.rcs.ac.uk/portal/files/11350096/Coorie\\_Doon\\_ISME\\_2017\\_Drury\\_and\\_Morgan.pdf](https://pure.rcs.ac.uk/portal/files/11350096/Coorie_Doon_ISME_2017_Drury_and_Morgan.pdf)
6. Impact evaluations for Chamber Music Scotland
  - a. Jaap, A., Evaluation of Coorie Doon (at North Edinburgh Arts Centre)  
[https://pure.rcs.ac.uk/portal/files/11350022/Coorie\\_Doon\\_Evaluation\\_Jaap\\_first\\_iteration\\_of\\_Coorie\\_Doon\\_.pdf](https://pure.rcs.ac.uk/portal/files/11350022/Coorie_Doon_Evaluation_Jaap_first_iteration_of_Coorie_Doon_.pdf)
  - b. Morgan, J., Rachel House Coorie Doon Project: Impact  
[https://pure.rcs.ac.uk/portal/files/11350048/Coorie\\_Doon\\_report\\_Morgan\\_Rachel\\_House\\_iteration\\_of\\_Coorie\\_Doon\\_.pdf](https://pure.rcs.ac.uk/portal/files/11350048/Coorie_Doon_report_Morgan_Rachel_House_iteration_of_Coorie_Doon_.pdf)
7. Other references to the research (Coorie Doon at North Edinburgh Arts Centre)
  - a. [The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education - Google Books](#)
  - b. [The Oxford Handbook of Singing - Google Books](#)

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

Whilst the participants did not regard their “need” for music as a means of therapy in their lives it was certainly clear from their comments that its intrinsic powers could alter their moods, generate a feeling of well-being, stimulate ideas, and affect relationships within the family unit. (Morgan et al., 2015: 615)

The four successive Coorie Doon projects discussed here have involved a total of 24 individuals or families: 10 expectant mothers from Muirhouse in Edinburgh (North Edinburgh Arts Centre); a total of 11 families who use Rachel House hospice in Kinross; and 3 families with a baby in the neonatal intensive care unit at the Royal Glasgow Hospital. The principal impact of Coorie Doon has been on these participating families, though there has been an important secondary impact on the mission and direction of Chamber Music Scotland.

##### Impact on participants

The impact of Coorie Doon on each individual or family is necessarily different, with examples across the full range that Morgan et al. identify in their paper. The diversity of impacts is partly because the four iterations of collaborative songwriting have been situated in three very different contexts, and partly because the life circumstances of each participating individual or family - whatever the context - are very different.

The first Coorie Doon, working with expectant mothers in an area of multiple deprivation, had a significant impact on participants' self-confidence - both in terms of expressing their emotions and opinions, but also in signing up to try something new. A lack of self-confidence among the mothers-to-be was a theme of the interviews that Jaap undertook, and Coorie Doon participants identified a change in their self-belief, and confidence in expressing themselves, after writing their own song with Drury: ‘[I feel] that I express more, that I have the confidence to express how I [am] feeling’ said one participant. Another commented: ‘I’ve got confidence with the baby ... I have the confidence to do anything. I’m willing to try.’

A significant aspect of the participants' experience of Coorie Doon at Rachel House, Kinross, was the act of memory-making through songwriting. Parents of children with life-limiting conditions are often encouraged to make and keep memory boxes that will be a store of keepsakes that can assist in remembering and offer comfort after the child has passed away. Both the experience of writing the songs and the song itself acted as a form of memory-making for families at Rachel House:

'It's a memory, it's a memory that can be in his memory box ... it's really important to have that because we don't know how long Calum's life is, it could be a week it could be 20 years. I'm holding all these memories.'

One participant pointed specifically to the quality of a memory in song, rather than words: 'The music is what it was all about ... you remember songs. I don't remember poems, I remember songs, so the song was a big thing.'

For those in the neonatal intensive care unit at the Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow, whose songs each addressed and were named after their baby, hope was the distinctive theme of their Coorie Doon experience: 'During hard times the song helped give us a task and hope.'

Despite the contrasts between experiences of Coorie Doon participants in each of the three settings, there are also striking impacts that are common across all projects. The first of these is the sense of achievement that participants have felt in composing their own song in a carefully facilitated collaboration with professional musicians. One mother from North Edinburgh commented: 'It makes you think "what else can I do?"', while a father of a child at Rachel House said: 'I felt like I've achieved something. Well, I've achieved stuff before, but it felt special, different, warm, it was good'.

The significance of the emotions that the songs reflected, and the power of expressing them through lyrics and music, was another commonality between participants across all three settings. Given the challenging circumstances of participants, it is not surprising that one mother described the 'rollercoaster ride of different emotions' in the songwriting process. The same participant commented that songwriting 'brought out thoughts and feelings that maybe I wouldn't have brought out or shared' and several spoke of a cathartic process. In her report on the Rachel House iteration, Morgan writes:

Creating a song about a loved one, especially a child with a life limiting illness proved to be a highly emotional personal journey for many of the parents ... The combination of music and lyrics appeared to produce a strong emotional reaction in the participants and many admitted to crying when listening to the songs.

Perhaps the most important consequence of Coorie Doon for participants across all the projects was the sense of legacy, of creating something now, in perhaps challenging circumstances, that would continue to have meaning and significance for them, whatever the future might bring. In North Edinburgh, one mother had shared the CD with family around the world; another said her song had become part of the daily soundtrack of family life. The same was reported by some of the families at Rachel House 'Oh we've got it on in the car and we sing it!'. For others, the song encapsulated memories and emotions that were to be revisited only sparingly. Morgan explains:

Those who interact with the song on a less frequent basis appear to use it for more in-depth, emotionally reflective purposes rather than as a song to be sung. Inevitably due to their different approach the song is heard only at specific times when there is a need. When asked what he intended to do with the song [one father] expressed his feelings by admitting that he would inevitably 'cry to it in the future'. He continued by adding that as he rated the song so highly, he had 'a thought to use the song' at his son's funeral. This latter point was also raised by [a mother] who spoke about her conversations with her own mother and how she had 'kind of got it in' her 'head that the song will be used when Katie goes'. The subject of child mortality is clearly ever present in the lives of these families and whilst some admit that they don't like to think about the topic too often, for some the presence of a personally created song about their child could provide comfort

when the inevitable happens. As [one of the fathers] reflected: 'It's there forever, that song is yours and Katie's, it's always going to be there forever ... unfortunately Katie is not'.

### Impact on Chamber Music Scotland

As the development agency for chamber music in Scotland, the mission of CMS had been to support professional musicians in their work with the network of local music societies across Scotland, to bring high-quality chamber performance to communities across the country. Coorie Doon was a new departure for the organisation, opening up relationships with new audiences for music, and establishing a new way of working in chamber music development. Working with experienced researchers who could navigate the complex ethical issues around work like Coorie Doon gave CMS the confidence to bring music to challenging new contexts – such as the children's hospice, or neonatal unit. These experiences, in turn, have had profound implications for the organisation, and Drury is playing a part in wider organisational change. CEO Paul Tracey explains:

The success of Coorie Doon has impacted our focus and values as an organisation. Having a project which clearly evidences the positive impact music and creative activity can have on families at some of their most challenging times of their lives has been hugely important to us. Outside of the project we have also invited Rachel to take part in our board planning day as an external adviser to help create our mission and values as an organisation.

Working with the Conservatoire team has also strengthened the relationship with the institution, resulting in a new project supporting musicians' resilience in the global pandemic (Musician Recovery, Resilience and Growth Project); the two organisations are currently exploring a 'researcher-in-residence' initiative.

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

1. Videos by Chamber Music Scotland (Enterprise Music Scotland) Coorie Doon
  - a. Coorie Doon at North Edinburgh Arts Centre  
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/138102920>
  - b. Coorie Doon at Rachel House, Kinross, 2017  
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/218472543>
  - c. Coorie Doon at Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow  
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/343304183>
2. Factual statement from Paul Tracey, CEO Chamber Music Scotland. Available on request.
3. Factual statement from Dr Joan Burns (Clinical Psychologist). Available on request.
4. Factual statement from Alison Blair Rachel House, Kinross. Available on request.
5. Review of Coorie Doon at North Edinburgh Arts Centre, Keith Bruce, The Herald  
[https://www.heraldscotland.com/life\\_style/arts\\_ents/13576931.music-review-coorie-doon-north-edinburgh-arts-centre/](https://www.heraldscotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/13576931.music-review-coorie-doon-north-edinburgh-arts-centre/)