Network: Singing in Balance: Tuning and Supporting Socio-Musical Dynamics in Group Singing

Network Lead and Co-leads:

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Network partners: Mir Jansen (Arts in Health, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals), Kate Wareham (Choir with No Name), and Emma Baylin (Shared Harmonies)

Network summary

The aim of this network is to enhance understanding of three interacting levels of self-other actualisation and expression in group singing and how this varies depending on context. We consider that to better understand the affordances of singing in different contexts, we need to examine singing experiences at the level of musical expression and coordination (micro-level), social communication and interaction (meso-level), and its interactions with identity and lived experiences and backgrounds (macro-level). The three projects share a common interest in the power of group singing interventions. The research contribution is to investigate this at a musical, social, and sociocultural level, whilst considering in particular how self and others are perceived and merged in singing contexts. With three PhD projects on related topics, we aim to recruit students who bring varying disciplinary backgrounds. In collaboration with our partners, we are in a position to offer
interdisciplinary supervision, covering music performance, music psychology, technology, organisational management, wellbeing and health, musical acoustics and information, and social and cultural identity. The network will come together 4 times per year for progress reports and joint training. Additionally, the postgraduate researchers will meet for peer-learning and support.

PhD students joining the network will benefit from interdisciplinary support, the ability to share methodologies and resources, and measures of musical and social interaction.

**Project Title: Are you a singer? Facilitating the use of voice for people with respiratory conditions through singing and choir participation**

**WRoCAH funded Collaborative Doctoral Award between Department of Music, University of Sheffield and Shared Harmonies**

**Lead Academic and Partner Organisation Supervisors**

- **Prof Renee Timmers**
  - Department of Music
  - University of Sheffield

- **Mir Jansen**
  - Arts Coordinator
  - Arts in Health, Sheffield Teaching Hospital

**Project summary**

Everyone can sing, except when you have respiratory conditions? This project investigates opportunities and barriers of group singing for people who identify as non-singers and have conditions such as long-Covid. It follows successful pilots of dedicated singing workshops, which led to stark improvements in confidence in speaking and singing. It will strengthen the bridge between out-patient treatment and community provision through bringing together relevant guidance and trialling support to make vocal exercises and choir participation safe, accessible, and fun.

**PhD Project description**

Research has reported health and wellbeing benefits of participation in singing groups for people with and without chronic health conditions. However, how is participation made accessible and
enjoyable for everyone including those who self-identify as non-singers, and how are health risks navigated for people with a voice condition? This project investigates the accessibility and potential benefits of group singing for people with respiratory problems affecting the voice, such as long-Covid and inducible laryngeal obstruction (ILO). It follows successful pilots that offered singing workshops specially organised for these groups. With this project, we aim to promote the use of singing in therapy and facilitate the collaboration with

and uptake in community choirs of participants with respiratory conditions. It will trial this through partner organisations, evidencing findings and showcasing the learning to influence practice.

**The research questions** it addresses are:

- What are the risks and opportunities for people with respiratory problems to participate in singing and employ singing-related techniques for voice and breathing development?

- What relevant knowledge and expertise is available within speech- and physiotherapy, singing pedagogy and music psychology to support singing in people with respiratory problems?

- How can confidence and transitions of participants joining community choirs be supported, through guidance, video illustrations and (where relevant) music technology?

These questions relate to the aims of the network of balancing individuality and inclusion at the level of musical performance, social and performance contexts, and organisational structures enabling music participation for health and wellbeing.

**Research methods** are likely to be a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The first year may start with a review of interdisciplinary research literature and existing guidance (therapy, singing voice, music psychology), followed by interviews and observation of practices of relevant experts (therapists and choir leaders). This may feed into an action research project where participants with respiratory conditions join a community choir (e.g. Purple Cats has indicated support) and their experience is monitored and lessons learned, feeding into an action plan developed in consultation with participants, choir leader and therapists. Supporting material is developed to facilitate the participation in the choir. Two opportunities for music technology to support singing are available through network collaborator Professor Helena Daffern (virtual choir), and Sheffield-based composer Dr Chris Bevan (previously involved in Voiceworks).
The PhD candidate will have the ability to define the exact focus of the project, for example whether or not to include music technology as part of the investigation, whether to focus on specific characteristics of voice developments or more on subjective experiences of participants, what social and musical factors to consider in the action research, and how to streamline guidance and support for choir leaders and participants.

Strengthening links between therapy and the community can be a larger or smaller part of the project, on the assumption that the evidence collected in the project will help inform social-prescribing and will help strengthen the bridge between the two.

About the Arts in Health

Arts in Health is part of Sheffield Teaching Hospitals and provides creative activities to the benefit of patients and staff. It has a track record of successful arts projects targeting a range patient groups. In many cases, these projects were specifically designed to fit the needs of the patients. Whilst this has benefits, it requires funding which limits opportunities for continuation. This project will be part of a broader shift from dedicated service to enabling signposting to community services and facilitating the transition and training for inclusive community arts delivery.

Co-supervisor Mir Jansen of Arts in Health brings rich experience in leading community-arts interventions and can will facilitate recruitment of participants. Confirmed collaborators include Karen Esposito (speech and language therapist) and co-supervisor Dr Michael Bonshor. Further connections include network partner Shared Harmonies, who have worked with long-Covid patients, and community choirs in Sheffield.

Engagement, outreach, dissemination and impact initiatives

The studentship will help establish links between health care, community music organisations, the university and other relevant partners in Sheffield. This will support the broader aims of Arts in Health to enable social prescribing, and help promote health and wellbeing through arts engagement as an area of service in our region. The project will help enhancing awareness of respiratory conditions, voice problems and their far-reaching implications, as well as offer tools to develop confidence in speaking and singing. An aim is for the studentship to help reach groups of participants that are often unrepresented in (music) research. The PhD candidate may write their thesis in publication format to promote regular academic dissemination of the research outcomes and participate in academic conferences and knowledge exchange events.
Financial support

Studentships for doctoral research are 40 months in duration for full-time study. Awards are subject to satisfactory academic progress. Awards must be taken up in October 2023; no deferrals are possible. Awards will comprise fees at Research Council rates and a maintenance grant (£17,668 in 2022/23). The grant pays the fees at the Home/UK rate; international students are, however, eligible to apply for this Studentship and the difference between the Home/UK and International fee will be met by the University of Sheffield for a successful international applicant. Awards may be taken up on a part-time basis if a student is eligible to undertake part-time study; international applicants may be required to study full-time by the terms of their visa.

Qualifications

Applications are invited from students with a good first degree in an appropriate subject and a strong interest in the subject area (e.g. music psychology, voice studies, speech and language therapy, psychology, music technology) as well as a Master’s degree appropriate to the topic (or be working towards one). We especially welcome applications from candidates belonging to groups that are currently under-represented in PhD cohorts; these include (but are not limited to) individuals from under-represented ethnicities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people from low-income backgrounds, and people with physical disabilities.

Requirements of the Studentship

WRoCAH students are required to undertake a bespoke training package and to complete a Researcher Employability Project of at least a month, a Knowledge Exchange Project, and to engage with Internationalisation.

All WRoCAH students must submit their thesis for examination with the funded period. This is a requirement of the Arts & Humanities Research Council, which provides the funding for WRoCAH, and is a condition of accepting a Studentship.

Before applying for any WRoCAH Studentship, please first ensure that you have read the WRoCAH webpages about the WRoCAH training programme and requirements, as well as other funding opportunities

http://wrocah.ac.uk/
How to apply

By 5pm Wednesday 8 March 2023, applicants are required to submit to WRoCAH an Expression of Interest, which should include:

1. A CV with details of academic qualifications

2. A covering letter comprising a two-page statement to convey your motivation and enthusiasm for the project, and to demonstrate your suitability for your intended PhD studies with the University and Project Partner.

    The covering letter should specifically highlight the following:

    ■ Your interest in the project and details on why you have chosen that University and Project Partner.

    ■ How you will apply your current skills, knowledge and experience to undertake a PhD and the approach you would take to develop the project.

    ■ How the project fits into your career plans and ambitions.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted via this form.

- 17 March 2023: decision on short-listing
  The short-list of candidates to be invited for an interview will be announced on Wednesday 17 March 2023. Short-listed candidates must complete a PhD programme application before interview. If you are short-listed for an interview you will be sent details of how to apply for a place at the University of Sheffield. At that point you will need to submit the names and contact details of two referees, copies of transcripts of your academic qualifications and (if applicable) an IELTS certificate.

- w/c 17 April 2023: interviews

  Interviews will involve the academic supervisor, Project Partner supervisor and a member of the WRoCAH Studentships Committee. They will be conducted online.

For more information about this project contact

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