

LAHP AHRC Collaborative PhD Studentship

The Cultural Value of the Natural Voice Approach to Group Singing

Partner: Natural Voice Network

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Applications are invited for a LAHP/AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award at the **Royal College of Music in collaboration with Natural Voice Network**. This fully-funded studentship will commence in October 2020.

This Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) project will develop a comprehensive understanding of the cultural value of the Natural Voice Network (NVN), a UK national singing network (Natural Voice Network, n.d.). It will consist of multiple iterative cycles of action research across 3 strands of inquiry:

1. Content analysis of the NVN's historical contribution to peer-reviewed knowledge of cultural value (Months 1-12);
2. Collaborative inquiry with stakeholders using Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) methods to build a phenomenological understanding of Natural Voice group singing as it is experienced by its stakeholders (Months 7-24);
3. Creating case studies of good practice to illustrate the findings of the research and inform future practice (Months 12-30).



Figure 1 photo credit Nick Landells

Natural Voice Network

The NVN is a network of c.700 practitioners who work with voice and song, and who believe that singing is everyone's birth-right, regardless of musical experience or ability. The Natural Voice movement was pioneered by folk singer Frankie Armstrong in the 1970s, and is about:

- celebrating the voice you were born with;
- building non-judgmental communities who sing together;
- welcoming all voices without audition;
- creating a good group sound;
- making learning by ear accessible.

Project Aims

The project aims to analyse the impact and contribution of the NVN as a complex 'grass roots' UK network of singing practitioners, by addressing the following research questions:

1. How can the cultural value of the UK Natural Voice Network best be understood and articulated?
2. How does a phenomenological understanding of group singing enhance or complement a more scientific perspective?
3. How can any effective practices of the NVN be disseminated more broadly, to advance a more comprehensive and practical understanding of the efficacy of group singing for the development of 'healthy publics' (Camlin et al., forthcoming; Hinchliffe et al., 2018) across a broad population?

The project seeks to complement existing scientific understanding of the wellbeing effects of group singing by developing a comprehensive phenomenological understanding of practitioner and participant experiences, leading to enhanced knowledge of the complex ways in which group singing demonstrates cultural value as part of UK cultural life. It will actively address the need to 'put the experience of individuals back at the heart of ideas about cultural value' (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016, p. 5) as well as ensuring that 'singing group leaders are given a voice along with the participants' views, to obtain input from those 'on the ground' (Dingle et al., 2019, p. 10) when it comes to research into group singing. More broadly, this project will explore the contribution that 'grass roots' networks of informal, accessible and participatory arts practice like NVN can make in helping realise the creative capabilities of a broad population, leading to an enhanced understanding of cultural value and cultural democracy (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016; Gross et al., 2017; Neelands et al., 2015).

Studentship details:

The AHRC-funded London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP) brings together eight leading British research universities: King's College London, London School of Economics and Political Science, Queen Mary University London, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Royal College of Art, Royal College of Music, School of Advanced Study and University College London.

The studentship includes a stipend at the Research Council UK Home/ EU rate (£17,009 per annum 2019/20 rates) plus tuition fees for three and half years. The awarded candidate will also be entitled to a £550 per annum stipend top-up. As a LAHP student, the successful candidate will have full access to the LAHP

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Doctoral Training Partnership development activities and networking opportunities, joining a cohort of about 90 students per year. Studentships can be either full or part-time.

Applicants should have a good undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline, and a Masters-level qualification or equivalent which meets AHRC requirements for research training. Applicants with relevant work/professional experience who are considering doing a PhD are also encouraged to apply.

Closing Date: 1st March 2020

For more information and to apply for the studentship, please see the [LAHP website](#).



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