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# ‘But heck isn’t that the point? Art song is representative of life in its wildest, messiest sense’ – Complex Interpretative Song Worlds and the Audiences that Inhabit Them

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## Abstract

The genre of music referred to as *art song* elicits emotionally charged responses in accounts of audience experiences. However, scholarship has neglected the object of inquiry where these responses and experiences materialise—in live art song events. A mixed method approach investigates eighty-two individual participants’ experiences of live art song events. *Complex interpretative song worlds* is established as a concept to describe the multi-faceted interplay between audience members and the system of possibilities afforded by live art song’s distinctive environments. Audience interactions with genre norms and conventions reveals a prized sense of close psycho-social resonance between songs, performers, spaces and everyday experiences. Interactions with musical performers reveal processes of role formation at work, where vocal acts, and non-vocal acts complicate the way audience members derive impressions of musicians. Interactions with the lexical and musical features of songs, demonstrate that the ways audience members process words and music can be additive to their experiences as they can be disruptive. The schema of interpretative activities that make-up the live art song experience, and the genre’s ability to inhabit an *in betweenness* in not being a dramatic form whilst retaining elements of being a dramatic form, evidently create challenging yet satisfying interpretative experiences. Audiences were found to address this plurality in fascinating, fractured and sometimes contradictory ways.

**Keywords**: Art Song, Classical Music, Vocal Music, Audience Research

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# Introduction

> I do find that there is a general problem, in that as a listener, my brain is trying to do at least four things: listen to the music; watch the performers; follow the foreign language text; and read the English translation, and that is something I find almost impossible. [Hugh/RAS6/D]

These remarks are taken from a study exploring audience experiences of classical music concerts, specifically encounters with the art song genre. Art song sets (often independent) poetry to music and is frequently performed in languages other than the vernacular. Since the genre's modern origins in the nineteenth century, a significant body of art songs have been composed, published and performed in a multitude of (predominantly but not exclusively European) languages.[1] As such, the term encompasses the genre's various language-specific iterations which include the German lied (illustrated by a large number of songs by composers such as Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf); and the French mélodie (encompassing songs by Fauré and Poulenc). As a result, live art song performances often incorporate interpretative production features (for example text-based translation resources), which subsequently create interpretative demands on contemporary audiences.

Despite art song's interpretative challenges, an art form that combines human vocality, poetry, language and music as its main mode of expression unsurprisingly elicits emotionally charged accounts of audience experience. Vocality is a fact of cultural, physiological, and epistemological life (Dunsby, 2004), and studies have highlighted the role of songs in supporting the sharing and ritualisation of emotions universally (Potter and Sorrell, 2012; Mehr et al., 2019). Proponents of art song celebrate its intensity, its ability to mirror reality and to connect to the emotional core of the human condition (Ashley, 2003; Baillieu et al., 2016). Yet, as the internationally renowned tenor Ian Bostridge (2005: xvii) summarises, 'one of the great mysteries for singers as well as for audiences is how the weakest of verse … can lie at the heart of some of the most extraordinary and inspiriting music ever written'. Bostridge's identification of the *mysterious* nature of word-music relations aligns with views from musicology and musical-analysis, that art song 'remains an enticing mystery' (Agawu, 2006: 280). As will be shown by the present study, this is true not only for academic scholarship but for audiences too.

Although a rich array of musical-analytical, hermeneutic, and historiographical scholarship has been dedicated to de-*mystifying* the art song genre, a more limited understanding exists of the object of inquiry where these emotionally charged affective dimensions materialise: in the reception of songs as live audience experiences. Just one empirical study has been published to date, examining Australian singers' and listeners' perceptions of German art song (Nafisi, 2011). In this particular study, the focus on German repertoire and participants at a song competition (the majority of whom identified as performers themselves) signals opportunities for methodological expansion and further research. Moreover, the lack of empirical audience work in art song contexts is countered by a growing body of knowledge in other forms of classical music, notably in opera (Rössel, 2011;

[1] The Oxford International Song Festival website hosts the texts of over 4,000 different songs, in French, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Danish, Czech, Latin, Portuguese, Chinese, Hungarian, Polish, Estonian, Icelandic, Yiddish, Greek, and Indonesian; demonstrating the breadth of repertoire and prevalence of multilingualism.

Edelman et al., 2016); chamber music (Pitts and Spencer, 2008); contemporary classical music (Gross and Pitts, 2016); and orchestral music (Kolb, 2001; Thompson, 2006; Dobson, 2010; Price, 2022). These studies show that audiences engage with classical music in multifaceted and complex ways, and draw upon features beyond the music itself to actively shape their listening encounters. Yet, art song's synthesis of poetry, music and (foreign) languages as a mode of expression creates distinct practices that differentiate it from these other classical music subgenres, revealing gaps in knowledge and opportunities for inquiry.

## The Way of Art Song These Days

> A singer in an evening dress, a grand piano. A modest-sized audience, mostly well-dressed and silver-haired, equipped with translation booklets. A program consisting entirely of songs by one or two composers. This is the way of [art song] these days. (Tunbridge, 2020: 1)

Many of the habitual performance practices that pertain to 'the way of art song these days' derive from their introduction to UK audiences at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite being widespread, these practices have attracted criticism in recent years. Commentators have questioned the genre's accessibility and sustainability. The pianist Graham Johnson (2004: 315) gloomily reflects on art song's relevance as 'an esoteric sub-section' of an 'embarrassingly emotional corner' in an 'already doomed species of classical music'. Johnson's formulation highlights the compositional makeup of audiences today who are not in their 'first flush of youth' and have 'begun to enjoy the fact that [art song's] seeming inaccessibility to the common listener has given it the glamour of a minority cult' (Johnson, 2004: 315-316). These negatively inflected comments are strikingly candid from one of the genre's leading musical proponents in the modern era. Moreover, these critiques are contrasted by Johnson's contemporaries who are (un)embarrassed by the genre's 'emotional corner', and advocate for 'the absolute magic of song' and its 'profound statements of love, death and nature' (Middleton cited in Stearns, 2023). Yet Johnson is not alone in highlighting art song's challenges. Views within public discourse hold the genre to be a 'hard sell' and an 'endangered species' where artistic leaders have observed ageing audiences, sporadic programming, and narrowing attention spans of consumers (Gilhooly, 2015). The sustainability of art song outside of established sites in the capital (for example London's Wigmore Hall) is for some 'hanging by a thread' (Canning, 2016). But for others, in consideration of a promising generation of younger talent, the future might be a 'bright one, if only the concert-goers can survive to see it' (Coghlan, 2017).

Commentators have written at length of a need to 'widen the audience' (Hugill, 2018) for classical music's 'least popular' format, questioning the 'future of this seemingly genteel formula, with its old-lace, highbrow aura' (Camilleri, 2016). More imaginative programming has helped grow modern audiences for the genre. However, for some the panacea lies in interventions such as audiences being 'encouraged to sing for themselves, to experience the process directly', which is 'clearly the province of musical education in schools' (Varcoe, 2011: 122). It is undoubtful that interventions of this nature would enhance audience interest and demystification of the genre. However, audiences needing to read music, sing or play the piano, or speak a foreign language to enjoy the genre, paradoxically reinforces the inaccessible stereotype that art song's proponents seek to overcome.

Despite the evidence of prevailing critical stereotypes, art song as an endangered species is by no means a recent characterisation. Hallmark (2009) suggests that reports of the death of the genre have been greatly exaggerated for decades, citing new recordings, re-releases, and the dominance of art song in conservatoire teaching as reasons to suggest otherwise. Other commentators have reported 'a current resurgence of song in the UK' (Maddocks, 2019), pointing to a growing number of regular programmes exclusively dedicated to the genre outside of London. Cardiff Singer of the World, now in its fortieth year, continues to attract global broadcast audiences for art song performances (BBC, 2023), and art song programming remains a staple feature of major classical music promoter outputs in the UK. This proliferation of activity is seemingly at odds with critical views of the genre's demise. Critical reflexes may not have kept pace with developments in modern practice and the present realities of the genre, pointing to gaps in knowledge and scope for inquiry.

## Methodology

Data collection took place at Oxford International Song Festival's programme 'Tales of Beyond', held in Oxford (UK) in 2019. Oxford International Song Festival is the world's largest festival of classical song. It is curated annually over two weeks and engages more than 200 artists from across the world each year. Across this context, mixed methods were used (questionnaire, diary methods and guided interviews) to engage eighty-two participants, comprising of frequent attenders in addition to a sample of first-time attendees. The research design reflected the position that audience experience, be that listening, watching, or reading—or within the present study, the synergetic combining of all three—is a 'motivated activity' (Barker, 2006: 134). As such, data collection took place before, during, and after the Festival, examining participants' experiences within a twelve-month timeline. A request for ethical approval was granted by the University of Birmingham Ethics Review Committee in February 2019.

In an initial phase of research, an online questionnaire was completed by regular attendees prior to the Festival taking place. Seventy-seven questionnaires were completed in total, providing insight on participants' tastes and engagement to date, and their decisions to engage with upcoming events. Collected demographic data was compared with national data on cultural engagement and—in light of translation being a determinant feature of the genre—foreign language competencies (DCMS, 2020; Council of Europe, n.d).

Demographic profiling revealed that participants were both older and more educated compared to classical music attendees nationally, although they conformed to national trends in terms of gender and ethnicity. Participants were mostly retired, had received a formal musical education, and reported significantly high levels of foreign language competencies, compared to UK averages. Audiences were unsurprisingly highly invested in the genre. This investment was evidenced through the stated value participants placed on art song in their lives, their level of attendance at events, and their propensity to invest in the genre financially (through bulk ticket purchasing behaviours and philanthropic giving). Consequently, participants brought significant amounts of cultural capital to their encounters, developed through engagement with the Festival over sustained periods of time, and through high levels of cultural engagement elsewhere.

Questionnaires were supplemented with diary methods. This approach allowed participants to record their reflections on specific art song encounters, generating rich

qualitative accounts of their experiences of the genre. Fifteen members of the questionnaire sample participated, alongside five new attendees. After the Festival had concluded, interviews were held with participants from both samples. Using guided interviews, semi-structured orders of questions were produced for each participant based on their individual diaries, allowing participants to clarify meaning and to share further reflections. Samples of the data collection materials used for the three phases of this study can be found in the appendices to this article.

Individual case files were created for each participant, comprising of questionnaire, diary and interview data. Analysis drew upon Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Line-by-line coding was initially applied to each individual case file, identifying elements of convergence and divergence in each case and broader themes. This process was done iteratively for each participant and subsequently developed into super-ordinate themes that were applied across multiple case files. Pseudonyms and ID codes were created for each participant to ensure confidentiality. In the discussion that follows, direct quotes are attributable only to participant ID codes and not individuals.[2]

## Discussion

### *Complex Interpretative Song Worlds*

In the opening quote of this article, the participant highlights a degree of over-abundance in the schema of activities required in art song encounters: listening to ('the music'), watching ('the performers'), and reading ('the text/translation'). This critique was taken from the diary of a regular attendee, who brings a sufficient degree of capital to his encounters (attendance over ten years, basic provision in French and German, and self-identifying as having 'a lot of knowledge of art song'). However, the characterisation of this phenomenon as a 'problem' can be compared with the remarks of a first-time attendee, who described the need to 'follow the translation and locate [a song] in the German, and then respond to it in some way' as a 'step too far' [Dale/NA3/I]. Literature has shown that intellectual stimulation and challenge is a valued construct in studies of multi-arts audiences (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013). Expositions on the avant-garde similarly foreground the creation of art that does not need to be understood, where audiences enjoy the complexity, and the confusion that complexity creates (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). This enjoyment can also be seen in contemporary music studies, where audiences enjoyed being *challenged by* or sought to *engage with challenging* works (Gross and Pitts, 2016). However, contrary to responding to challenging themes or content, the above participant's 'problem' is the nature of interpretation itself. Consequently, issues of focus and attention were frequently called into question by participants:

> But there's something about song that … it's like someone gets you by the neck and forces your head down and says 'right you do some work on this and listen now'. It's pretty brutal actually, if you're an engaged listener. You end up exhausted. [Grant/RAS2/D]

[2] Participant ID codes are formatted as follows: [Participant pseudonym/participant reference/questionnaire, diary, or interview source].

Notions of exhaustion, whilst recurrent, were not necessarily negatively connoted. In stating that—'Deep listening is so tiring [they are] exhausted. Satisfied' [Harriet/RAS3/D], and that art song 'requires so much concentration and harnessing of emotion' that is 'absolutely engaging, but refreshing' [Grant/RAS2/D]—participants signal the opposite was often true. These observations serve as a reminder that engagement with classical music does not always have to be easy, come naturally, or be fully understood. Nor does every note, piece, or occasion have to be experienced positively every time. As participants in a recent study of contemporary arts audiences confessed, 'it's okay not to like it' (Pitts and Price, 2021). Within art song, considering participants' investment and the value placed on the genre within their lives, art song was often viewed as an enjoyable experience precisely because of the intensity of effort involved and the 'problem' created by the conditions of complex interpretative song worlds.

*Complex interpretative song worlds* is a term I have developed to describe the multi-faceted interplay between audiences and the deceptively large system of possibilities afforded by art song's distinctive environments. The intensity of effort invested in managing the schema of interpretative actions expressed above, and the way participants prioritise these activities at any given time, naturally shape audience engagement with the complex interpretative song worlds they seek to navigate. To help explain this, I will frame the discussion on complex interpretative song world theorising that follows across three themes: *domain interactions*, which I define as the social glue that governs *the way of art song these days*; interactions with, and between, *human actors* (predominantly performers); and interactions with the lexical and musical materials that comprise *song objects.*

## *Domain Interactions*

Interactions with the art song domain coalesced around a number of subthemes: *Collecting, Connecting,* and *Venerating*. *Collecting* activity revealed a desire for participants to scrutinise the art song corpus in detailed ways, adopting a connoisseur-like approach to knowledge acquisition. The value placed on art song environments as dedicated spaces for 'keen' and 'real enthusiasts' who 'literally go to everything' [Derek/RAS13/D] was evident, with 73% participants claiming art song was *extremely important* or *very important* in their lives.

*Collecting* unfamiliar repertoire was an important part of the experience where 'discovering some new gems made everything worthwhile' [Derek/RAS13/D]. At the same time, the perceived lack of diversity within participants' song *collections* emerged as an issue. Pleas for promoters to 'dig a little deeper' beyond the 'staple diet of Schubert and Schumann' [Hugh/RAS6/D] supported a strong desire to *collect*. However, an important distinction was made between the need to dig deeper into *available* repertoire and *newly available* repertoire. Contemporary music was viewed less favourably throughout the sample, in favour of 'the music of deceased composers' [Rose/RAS5/Q].

Searching for new insights into familiar repertoire was also a valued part of *collecting* activity. Reappraising repertoire on multiple occasions was vital in order 'to get the full value out of a song' [Hugh/RAS6/I], since 'elaborate songs reward repeated listening' [Douglas/RAS1/D]. This accumulation of different examples of performances, that can be appraised and enjoyed as *collecting* activities in their own right, resonates with wider literature on fandom, echoing the shared activities of fans elsewhere (Duffett, 2013).

Art song *collectors*, or to borrow Fiske's characterisation of fans as 'excessive readers' (Fiske, 1989: 46), placed value on art song environments as 'atmosphere[s] of real concentration' for 'superbly behaved' individuals [Herbert/NAS4/D]. Evidence of (un)superbly behaved audience members was an unsurprising repercussion of this positionality. Aligning with existing research on (un)reasonable audiencing in other art forms (Burland and Pitts, 2016; Sedgman, 2018), the 'coughing', 'scrummaging in handbag[s]', 'hearing aid action' and the presence of an 'every ten second sniffer' [Barnabas/RAS12/D] tended to disrupt the conditions deemed essential to foster *collecting*. Observations of 'provincial clapping' by 'twerps' [Brian/RAS9/I] between individual songs (instead of groups of songs) reflect the desired intensity and immersivity of *collecting* encounters. Given these concerts did not take place in the capital, but in Oxford, the 'provincial' characterisation suggests that superiority in this instance derives not from location. Instead, this comes from attending an established (and the largest) art song festival, and being familiar with longstanding conventions that enable conditions of 'solemn intensity' [Douglas/RAS1/I]. Evidently, the 'provincial clappers' simply did not experience art song's intensity in the same way to disrupt these conditions in the first place. Or, as members of the new attendee sample admitted, '[they] didn't know how to act' [Isobel/NAS5/I].

Art song *collectors* balanced concert hall intensity and its occasional risk of disruption with knowledge-formation techniques at home. The temporal limitations of live performances which saw songs 'slipping away from [participants] in the moment', prompted them 'to go home and dig out [their] records … and do the work there' [Barnabas/RAS12/I]. *Collecting* activity forced complex interpretative song worlds to extend across time and space. The use of the term 'work' again signals the intensity of effort required of audience members. Remedial art song (home)work took on several different forms: listening to recordings in response to experiences that were pleasurable and to purge recollections of negative encounters; re-reading printed programmes, books, or CD liner notes; and writing, keeping diaries of their engagement (beyond those produced for this study). Art song *collecting* therefore combined live ephemeral experiences and physical resources, some of which had been brought home from the concert hall, thus providing a direct connection to the live performance while extending it and transferring it into a different space.

The urge to *collect* worked in tandem with the way participants *connected* with art song environments and performers. The physical proximity between musicians and audiences enabled audience-performer *connections* to flourish in smaller spaces. As a distinctive long-standing venue built for musical performance at modest scale, the Holywell Music Room was identified as the ideal space for live art song. The venue's 'democratisation of seating' [Barnabas/RAS12/I] that lacks a 'hierarchy of experience' [Grant/RAS2/D] was deemed superior to traditional venues where 'you're underground and looking up at the stage' [Barnabas/RAS12/I]. Comments of this nature invoke theoretical criticism of traditional concert spaces, where the division of the concert hall into two performing and audience spaces symbolises a separateness between musicians and audiences (Small, 1998).

Venue features worked alongside art song's relative austerity in production, enabling *connections* to be formed through the genre being 'wonderfully spare' [Harriet/RAS3/I]. *Connectivity* was facilitated to a greater degree than 'the dynamic of production' found in other genres, which 'impose a vision…that distracts from the experience rather than being honest and true to the music' [Grant/RAS2/I]. Participants attributed a desire to *connect* in this way to musical tastes maturing later in life, where transitions from the enjoyment of larger musical forms to more small-scale experiences were not uncommon. Conversely,

members of the new attendee sample correlated this austerity in production with observations of audience decline, noting 'the absence of a significant visual element, in a world dominated by the visual, might put some kids off' [Herbert/NAS4/D]. Paradoxically, the value placed on *connecting* was as encouraging as it was discouraging in terms of audience engagement across the different samples. These observations signal the practical challenges for promoters to reconcile this dichotomy and grow audiences for the genre.

*Connecting* activity also drew together experiences of art song with those from life itself, as seen in the provocation 'but heck, isn't that the point? Art song is representative of life in its wildest, messiest sense' [Harriet/RAS3/D]. Participants placed value on 'the obvious things…the intimacy of [art song], the directness of it, the simplicity of it' [Barnabas/RAS12/I]. References to 'intimacy' and 'directness' were recurrent, described in both physical and emotional ways, and observed in the way participants made *connections* between songs and personal experiences. Examples included making comparisons between songs and childhood memories, day-to-day realities, and the processing of trauma. Constructs such as 'authenticity', 'truth', 'believability' and 'conviction' were in that sense offered as important hallmarks of *connecting* activity. Art song *connecting* therefore reveals a prized sense of close psycho-social resonance, taking place between songs, performers, spaces, and everyday experiences, going beyond musical performance as a 'pure exchange from one human doing something, in the human voice which we all understand' [Barnabas/RAS12/D].

A strong desire to *connect* and *collect* made audience members resistant to changes in how they experienced art songs. Observations that '[art songs] are so sacred…holy things, that one must not alter one's aspects of them' [Hugh/RAS6/D], demonstrate participants *venerating* the genre. As such, audience members conferred an element of inviolability on the art song form, resonating with historical observations of the sacralisation of the classical canon (Levine, 1988; Locke, 1993); where the theoretical construct of the 'work' defines the norms and expectations that characterise classical musical practice (Goehr, 1992). Prominent examples of *venerating* can be seen in attitudes towards translation. The recent (re)introduction of sung English translations into the corpus was contentious, with 89% participants stating it was *important* or *very important* for songs to be sung in their original language. The sense of consternation imbued in the response: 'Oh for heaven's sake, do I need to explain this really? What a question from an [art song] organisation!' [Dorothy/QS62/Q], shows the deeply-held nature of this positionality and the perceived inviolability of song in its supposedly originally-conceived format.

Arguments in support of art song's inviolability coalesced around a series of distinct rationale. In stating 'the music is written for the text, the music fits the language like a glove, and this can never be achieved with a language for which the music was not composed' [Dorothy/QS62/Q], technical differences in vowel sounds, rhythm, stresses, alliteration and other verbal devices made sung translations sound 'false' or 'artificial' [Harriet/RAS3/D]. For some participants, criticism was more ideological in nature. Sung translations were considered to 'trivialise the genre' [Matilda/RAS8/I], challenging a level of sophistication *venerated* in its status as a high art form. Importantly, violating songs created a fracture in the psychological *connection* between the audience member and composer. It was important for participants to not only preserve, but to *connect* in their mind with what the composer envisioned. Art songs represented 'a marriage of music and text' [Maxwell/RAS7/Q], were therefore 'the best combination', and it was considered 'vital' to present music 'as the composer imagined it' [Sarah/Q23/Q]. Without doing so, participants could not 'make sure that [they] understand what the composer/poet wants to say' [Michael/Q46/Q].

The notion of one 'best combination' is questionable, not least as hearing different musical settings of familiar texts was relished as an enjoyable *collecting* activity. However, sung translation criticism highlights a feature of art song craft that is different from other forms of song making. Art song composers rarely write the poems themselves, and the collaborative process between a poet and composer is often conducted at a physical and temporal distance. The 'onus is on the composer to treat the defenceless text with courtesy and honour' (Johnson, 2002: xiii). In that sense, through *venerating*, participants established a position whereby the original artistic output (the poem) was not so sacrosanct to permit it being adapted or 'forced' 'to fit' the music in the first place; even if participants subsequently conferred a level of inviolability on a song's lexical and musical pairing. In essence, for many participants, it was acceptable for a composer to violate a poem; but for other creative actors, violating a song amounted to 'heresy' [Brian/RAS9/I].

Despite the prominence of *venerating* attitudes, there was evidence of participants taking a heretical turn. Some, all the while being sceptical, adopted more accommodating positions on changes to translation practices. For these participants, sung English translations enabled an enjoyable slant on familiar *collected* songs, allowing them to more closely relate or *connect* familiar works to modern day experiences. Changing songs in this way 'brought something fresh' and helped participants 'realise other aspects as to what [a particular song is] about' [Derek/RAS13/I]. Participants often deviated from hallowed art song practices because they conferred a level of trust on a performer, stating 'if he thinks it's a good idea in English, there must be a lot of merit in it. Because I like him, respect him, sort of trust him' [Hugh/RAS6/I]. Participants therefore took risks due to the *connections* forged with performers through prior *collecting* activity, admitting '[they're] not sure anyone else doing it would get away with it' [Hugh/RAS6/I].

Participants who had a greater tolerance for risk, often did so out of concern towards a wider set of stakeholders beyond the composer-audience *connection*. Audience members suggested that performers might be happier singing in their vernacular, and expressed admiration for the translator, acknowledging the craft is a 'skilful job where there is lots to admire' [Brian/RAS9/Q]. Participants also questioned if sung translations improved access for new audiences, speculating on the practical translation challenges faced by new attendees. In fact, *venerating* attitudes were entirely absent in the accounts of new attendees who had yet to *collect* art songs and forge *connections* in intimate and meaningful ways. Instead, new attendees were overwhelmingly supportive of sung translations as their preferred translation type, which helped overcome barriers associated with text-based translation in real time being 'a step too far' [Dale/NA3/I]. In that sense, art song's cherished affective qualities are propagated by the practices of *collecting, connecting*, and *venerating* that make up *the way of art song these days*. Yet all the while, it is precisely these constructs working together in this way that enables criticism of the genre, and, in terms of being a 'step too far', resonates with concerns about its accessibility and relatability for new audiences today.

## *Actor Interactions*

Descriptions of complex interpretative song worlds often foregrounded interactions with other human beings, particularly performers. Both vocal acts and non-vocal acts complicated the way participants formed impressions of musical performers. Within compositions and performances that feature the human voice, scholarship has established the existence of multiple personae that are present at any given time (Cone, 1992; Frith, 1999; Auslander,

2006). I draw upon these concepts, and sociological discourse on impression management (Goffman, 1959), to develop a tripartite framework to analyse the constructed performer identities revealed across this study. These identities are: the performer in a professional role (*performer as a professional*); the performer as a human being (*performer as self*); and the performer representing the poetic material found in songs (*performer as song*).

Throughout the study, a clear trend emerged in audience-singer relationships taking prominence over audience-pianist ones. Within questionnaires and interviews, participants were unequivocal in their view that the relationship between singer and pianist was that of an equal partnership. However, a recurrent feature in participants' diaries was a failure to mention pianists at all. Pianists were seen but *not* seen, surfacing issues of focus and attention. Instead, participants' accounts featured a plethora of commentaries on singers, describing qualities of the singing voice that allowed evaluative judgements to be made.

Vocal timbre, pitch, and intensity were commonly used to form evaluative vocal judgements. Within these judgements, stereotypes emerged of the different voice types that pervade the art song domain. For example, higher voice types were sometimes described as 'harsh', 'tended to 'screech', and had 'excess vibrato', whereas lower voice types 'sound warm', and 'mellow', and were the 'most natural medium'. Although these constructions derive from personal preferences and prior *collecting* activity, universal approaches to vocal pedagogy, globalisation, and technological advances in the quality and dissemination of recordings, have led to a degree of homogeneity in desired vocal traits (Halliwell, 2014). This feature was also seen in references to iconic art song singers of the past, who featured as benchmarks of vocal quality, against which participants could evaluate the success of a *performer as a professional*.

Despite the singing voice being deployed as part of the identity of a professional musician, in live art song contexts it cannot be disembodied from the person who produces it. Consequently, participants drew upon wider features to rationalise vocal traits. In suggesting the reason for a singer's 'strange, unnatural, tense sound' was 'because he is French' [Matilda/RAS8/I], participants highlight the importance of nationality in evaluating the singing voice. Equally, age was brought into question, and gender, revealed in comments observing a 'more mature performer' finding it 'harder to capture the youthful naivety of a song' [Maxwell/RAS7/D], and criticisms that 'diction is particularly poor with female voices' [Matilda/RAS8/I]. Comments of this nature must be appraised in the context of their origin; in a single genre music festival which represents an intensified context for comparative based impression management work. However, the ensuing blurring of identities is clear, as audience members combine the *performer as a professional* and *performer as self* to form evaluative judgements of vocal acts.

Vocal acts were not limited to the (*professional*) singing voice but also included the spoken voice. Performers seldom spoke to audiences, despite being volunteered as a desired feature, and something the 'younger lot tend to do more' as 'the more established a singer becomes, the less it is likely to happen' [Lydia/RAS10/I]. In suggesting '[the audience] need all the help [they] can get!' [Douglas/RAS1/I], access to the spoken voice was coveted to provide additional context, where the *performer as a professional* can facilitate the interpretation of their craft. More common was the desire to 'see [the performer] more as a person when they talk' as 'otherwise, they're sort of mechanical things' [Beatrice/RAS15/I], signalling a strong desire to access the *performer as self* to foster performer-audience *connections.*

The use of spoken dialogue in concerts can enhance performer-audience rapport, seen in both academic studies and public commentary (Dobson, 2010; Sawer, 2018).

However, within art song, the switch between the *performer as a professional* and *performer as self*, results in a momentary disruption to the immersivity of the (vocal) experience of the *performer as song.* The presence of a performer's speaking voice, although a desirable feature for some, was also viewed as a challenge, because 'hearing a spoken voice is distracting' and 'confusing when you're expecting a singing voice…and you haven't asked for that' [Barnabas/RAS12/I]. This phenomenon was evidenced clearly in critiques of singers interspersing songs with spoken readings, where participants observed that 'when she reads a poem, she's suddenly like a schoolgirl' and 'stopped being a top professional and became an amateur actor' [Douglas/RAS1/I]. This instantaneous juxtaposition of identities marks a significant shift in impression management work. Engaging in practices that encourage audience *connectivity* (by bringing out aspects of the *performer as self*) simultaneously impaired impressions of the *performer as* a *professional* and the *performer as song*. This complexity further demonstrates the imbrication of performer identities and the inherent presentation challenges for singers and promoters in art song contexts.

Impression management work was not limited to vocal acts, but visual acts too. Gesturing, posturing, positioning, expressing, concert dress, and performer interactions with instruments, scores, and music stands—are just a few examples of the visual features that impacted impression management work. There was a strong expectation that singers should perform from memory. This positionality often derived from a need to see the *performer as a professional,* as singing from memory 'speaks [of] great dedication to the art' [Brian/RAS9/D]. Equally, when singers performed from a score, inhibited gestures, body language, expression, and eye contact were viewed as barriers to *connecting;* resonating with empirical studies that show performing from memory influences audiences' ratings of musical performances in a favourable direction (Williamon, 1999).

Impressions were also formed as much around performances as they were within the immediacy of consumption. Programmes and marketing materials played an important role, with 'Dame Blankety Blank has performed in most of the world's major opera houses...' being offered as an example of 'musicians [being] so unimaginative when it comes to writing an account of themselves' [Brian/RAS9/D]. Alongside printed paraphernalia, the degree of physical access to performers was also important, and participants placed value on speaking to, and *connecting* with, performers post-concert. In these encounters, singers held a reputation for being modest. Described as being 'affable' and 'relatable', art song singers were sharply contrasted with archetypical characterisations of opera 'divas', in being 'less prim-donna-ish' or 'lionised' and not 'surrounded by a bubble of servants or aides' [Herbert/NAS4/D]. These comments ignore the fact that several singers enjoyed dual concert and opera careers, highlighting that participants draw as much upon the invisible and unknown as they do upon the visible and known in their impression management work. In that sense, conscious and unconscious biases played an important part in constructions of performer as *profession, self, and song.*

In making comparisons between art song and dramatic forms such as opera, participants highlight art song's hybridity as a genre. Art song is *not* a dramatic form but retains elements of *being* a dramatic form, where the voice of the poet, narrator, or character can be present and coexist at any given time. Multiple songs within a concert demands the existence of numerous textually defined entities that change in quick succession. Terms such as 'transformation', 'chemical reactions', and 'shape shifting' were employed to describe this activity, where performers had to be 'altered, totally attuned and able to turn in a blink of an eye' as 'one moment [they] are a bee and the next a lovelorn youth' [Maxwell/RAS7/D]. This

intensified and fast-paced work creates demands on impression management. Given authenticity was an important hallmark of *connecting* activity, participants expressed a need for performers to draw upon a range of human emotions that needed to be communicated in a way that was *believable*. The management of performer identities—and the impressions derived from observing them—constantly developed, changed and permutated in this regard. Singers tread a delicate balancing act between acting, emoting, performing at a professional standard, whilst simultaneously trying to show themselves. In that sense, the intensity of impression management work within live art song contexts represents 'a tough arena for a singer' as 'however sympathetic the audience is [they're] isolated and vulnerable' with 'nowhere to hide' [Herbert/NAS4/D].

## *Song Object Interactions*

Interactions with *song objects* (defined as the lexical and musical features that comprise art songs) revealed the ways audience members processed words and music, and prioritised either or both, during their experiences. How audiences navigate these resources is akin to what Steven Feld (1984: 8) terms 'interpretive moves', defined as patterns of discovery organised by the 'juxtapositions, interactions and choices' that 'emerge dialectically from the human social encounter with a sound object or event'. Art song creates a peculiar phenomenon in the way lexical and musical materials are presented. Ultimately, when individuals draw upon lexical–musical materials to navigate complex interpretative song worlds, they encounter stimuli that blurs senses (sights and sounds), temporal dimensions (texts used by participants before, during, and after performances), which are produced through the outputs of an array of personnel (performers, producers, translators, poets, and composers). Audiences hear music and hear words, yet seeing words and reading words were also important, revealing dynamism in the way audiences managed these tensions.

There was evidence of self-consistency in the ways participants referenced lexical or musical features in their diary accounts, despite a single uniform approach failing to emerge. Some participants revealed a clear bias towards lexical or musical processing when engaging with art songs. This phenomenon often derived from differing subjective views on the purpose or function of songs. For some, music is intended to support the signification of the text and participants described songs as 'an extended form of poetry reading' [Hugh/RAS6/I]. The diaries of these participants drew heavily upon descriptions of lexical material—from individual words, pronunciation, and spelling—to the broader consideration of a poem's semantic properties, language, meaning, and style. For these participants 'art song is rather meaningless if one doesn't understand the content' and is enjoyable because of 'the way the artists can make a song's text come to life' [Matilda/RAS8/Q]. Lexical materials were privileged because art song is a 'marriage of music and text' and 'if you don't understand the words, some of the potential magic is lost' [Maxwell/RAS7/Q].

Participants who privileged lexical features were often critical about available translations and translators. In evaluating in this way, participants demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge of the approaches employed by different translators working within the art song domain. As I have argued elsewhere, in part, this is due to the prevalence of text-based *translation norms* that exist within art song *translation communities* and the reliance on a small number of translators, many of whom are known to art song audiences themselves (Campbell, 2023). For these participants, the preference for printed translations derived from a need to see the shape of the poem, where an element of anticipation was necessary to aid

interpretation. This desire contrasted with the fragmentary nature of surtitle technology that had modest use in concerts across the study. Real-time surtitle technology was praised, but viewed as a supplementary resource, rather than a feasible alternative. The presence of a song's lexical elements expressed in its original isolated form (as a poem separate to the music) was therefore seen to be additive to art song experiences for many.

Although the privileging of lexical material enhanced participant experiences for some, for others it was disruptive. Some participants found it 'hard to understand how people can sit and read the texts and listen to the music' as doing so would not allow them to 'let [themselves] go to the music' [Lydia/RAS10/D]. Participants suggested they 'prefer to glance at the words rather than follow', from which they inferred 'means the music for [them] is more important than the words' [Rose/RAS5/Q]. The rationale for this positionality was often one of focus. The experiential features brought about by event liveness took precedence where 'during the performance it's the music and the presence of the performers and what they are doing which demands [a participant's] attention' [Douglas/RAS1/Q]. Participants privileged the materiality of the words, or to borrow a term from musicological literature, a song's 'songfulness' — a fusion of vocal and musical material judged to be pleasurable *independent* of its verbal content (Kramer, 2017). Lexical materials as visual signifiers were discarded because the performers 'expressed it all in the singing', conferring on art song a degree of universalism that meant 'it didn't need to be translated' [Rose/RAS5/I].

Despite evidence of self-consistency towards interactions with lexical and musical materials, participants did not seek to completely devalue these features entirely. Not a single participant indicated that understanding the meanings of texts was *unimportant*. As such, although this polarity of perspectives is useful in highlighting different responses and approaches, there are inherent challenges in viewing lexical and musical dimensions as a distinct binary pair. In observing the 'central paradox' that 'although [art song] *is* about the communication of text, it is *not* about the communication of text' [Grant/RAS2/D], participants surfaced the tensions presented by these unstable entities. In that sense, audience member 'interpretive moves' with song object materials gives credence to scholarship pertaining to word-music relations, that art songs have boundless analytical potential (Agawu, 2006; Abbott, 2017).

## Conclusion and Future Research

Complex interpretative song worlds are necessarily complicated not only because of the overabundance of interpretative demands, but also because of art song's ability to inhabit a degree of *in betweenness.* Through dedicated *collecting* practices, complex interpretative song worlds extended across time and space, providing a direct *connection between* the concert hall and connoisseur-like work at home. A prized sense of intimacy and close psycho-social resonance enabled audience members to relish the *connections* forged *between* songs, performers, and everyday experiences. The matrimonial bond *between* words and music led audience members to confer an element of inviolability on songs, which was subsequently *venerated*. The genre occupying a space *between* a dramatic form and a non-dramatic form, prompted audience members to manage impressions of musical performers in imbricated ways. Audience members interpreting signified and signifying systems *between* sonic and visual forms paradoxically enables a word-music genre that is 'about the communication of the text', yet 'not about the communication of the text'. And the *betweenness* of these

constructs working together fostered satisfying experiences for those indoctrinated in the *way of art song these days,* and sometimes challenging encounters for those who were not. As revealed throughout this discussion, audiences address this plurality and navigate these tensions in fractured and sometimes contradictory ways, which, as a 'pure exchange' in the 'human voice which we all understand' [Barnabas/RAS12/D], generates personal and meaningful affects.

In developing complex interpretative song worlds theorising, I have demonstrated the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical features that shape audience experiences with the genre. The interpretative schema of activities that features prominently within live art song encounters: listening to ('the music'), watching ('the performers'), and reading ('the text/translation'), creates 'problematic' yet satisfying experiences for audiences. Further research could develop these findings. Since the present study was concentrated on the work of one promoter, a multi-site study could scope comparative approaches across the UK, responding to the evidenced proliferation of art song promoters currently in operation. An international study would foreground the genre's multilingual perspectives and interrogate its reception across different vernaculars. Additionally, since audience members in this study interacted with materials prior to, during, and after live art song events, future research could be targeted beyond the boundaries of the concert hall. This could be achieved by extending diary methods throughout the year and experimenting with technological developments, such as voice notes and other forms of digital data collection. Similarly, an out-of-the-concert-hall analysis could investigate different art song domains (pedagogy, publishing, recording and broadcast media), allowing a fuller application of complex interpretative song world theorising. The recurring omission and subjugation of pianists in participant accounts also invites future research. Particularly, within the context of recent industry trends to replace the word 'accompanists' with alternative terms such as 'collaborative pianists', to reflect the 'tremendous skill needed to work in this field' (Roberts, 2018). An investigation of alternative genres of music where audience experiences are entangled with word-music relations, and other complex interpretative song worlds would also be valuable.

For audience research, I have addressed gaps in knowledge pertaining to art song's specific engagement practices that differ from other classical subgenres. This study's examination of the intricate interplay between word and music relations, including the use of poetry and interlingual translation, all generate useful insights for audience scholarship. The link between in-concert behaviour and pre- and post-concert preparation (homework), and the challenges in building performer-audience rapport brought about by the genre's hybridity, also add further knowledge to the field. These findings and directions for future research reaffirm the view that art song 'remains an enticing mystery' (Agawu, 2006: 280). Yet this mystery is evidently valuable to the culture of art song, in generating reception practices that attempt to reconcile the genre's *in betweenness* in challenging and imperfect ways. Given 'art song is representative of life in its wildest, messiest sense' [Harriet, RAS3/D], further de-mystifying is encouraged to understand these fascinating complex interpretative song worlds and the audiences who inhabit them.

## Biographical Note

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# Appendix One: Online Questionnaire

**SECTION 1:**

This questionnaire is divided into four sections. An important part of this research project is to understand how live art song features in current audience members' lives. The section aims to find out a bit more about your history with art song engagement.

**How important is live art song to you in your life?**

- € Extremely important
- € Very important
- € Moderately important
- € Slightly important
- € Not at all important

**Could you tell me about a specific live art song encounter that was positive and particularly memorable for you? Take your time to revive this encounter in your mind and in as many words as you like tell me about that experience. What particular qualities made you recall this experience, and how did this experience make you feel or react?**

[Open text field]

**Approximately how many times (if any) in the last 24 months have you attended the following individual Oxford Lieder live art song events as an audience member?**

Place a number in the box

| | None | 0 - 2 | 3 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 - 15 | 16 - 20 | More than 20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Evening Concerts | | | | | | | |
| Lunchtime Concerts | | | | | | | |
| Study Days | | | | | | | |
| Masterclasses | | | | | | | |
| Language Labs | | | | | | | |

**In your opinion, please describe to me what makes the experience of attending a live art song performance enjoyable?**

[Open text field]

**What are the most important features of engaging with live art song experiences for you? Please select no more than three.**

- € Discovering or learning more about song
- € Sharing an experience with my friends and family
- € Relaxing and unwinding
- € Social experience of being around like minded individuals
- € Supporting a music organisation whose values I believe in
- € Having fun and being uplifted
- € To escape or lose myself in the music
- € Listening to music I am already familiar with
- € Having a strong emotional experience with the music
- € Quality of musicianship
- € Other (please specify)

**Approximately how many years have you attended Oxford Lieder events as an audience member?**

- € 0 - 1 years
- € 2 - 4 years
- € 5- 7 years
- € 8 - 10 years
- € More than 10 years

**Can you describe how you first came to be interested in art song?**

[Open text field]

**Reflecting on your experiences of art song in the past are there types of performances (for example format, languages, repertoire, voice type) that you're drawn to or more likely to attend? Please tell me what they are and why you're attracted to them.**

[Open text field]

**Reflecting on your experiences of art song in the past are there types of performances (for example format, repertoire, languages, voice type) that you're less likely to attend? Please tell me what they are and why you're less attracted to them.**

[Open text field]

**Alongside purchasing individual tickets (if any) in the last 24 months have you participated in any of the following?**

- € Bought a Festival Week Pass
- € Bought a Festival Weekend Pass
- € Participated in the Friends Scheme
- € Made a donation
- € Volunteered
- € Other (please state)

[Open text field]

**Approximately how many times (if any) in the last 24 months have you attended the following cultural activities as an audience member?**

| | Number of occasions | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None | 0 - 2 | 3 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 - 15 | 16 - 20 | More than 20 |
| Art gallery or art exhibition | | | | | | | |
| Museum exhibition | | | | | | | |
| Theatre performance | | | | | | | |
| Classical music concert (excluding art song) | | | | | | | |
| Opera or musical theatre | | | | | | | |
| Non classical music concert or gig | | | | | | | |
| Ballet or dance performance | | | | | | | |
| Cinema screening | | | | | | | |
| Visited a historic or heritage site | | | | | | | |

**How often (if at all) do you listen to recordings of art song (for example CDs, radio, streaming)**

- € Everyday
- € Multiple times a week
- € Once a week
- € Few times a month
- € Monthly
- € Rarely

**How often (if at all) do you listen to recordings of other types of music (for example CDs, radio, streaming)**

- € Everyday
- € Multiple times a week
- € Once a week
- € Few times a month
- € Monthly
- € Rarely

**Finally for this section, how would you describe your knowledge of the art song genre?**

- € Expert or specialist knowledge
- € A lot of knowledge
- € Fairly knowledgeable
- € A little knowledge
- € No knowledge

**SECTION 2:**

An important part of this research project is to understand the motivations and expectations audience members have for their live art song experiences. This section aims to find out a bit more about how you decide to engage with the genre.

**How important or unimportant are the following factors in your decision on whether or not to attend an art song performance?**

| | Importance | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Very important | Important | Neither important or unimportant | Unimportant | Very Unimportant |
| Specific compositions or pieces | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Composer | | | | | |
| Singer | | | | | |
| Pianist | | | | | |
| Poetry | | | | | |
| Poem | | | | | |
| Language | | | | | |
| Other factors (please state below) | | | | | |

**Other factors:**

[Open text field]

**Please turn to the 2019 festival brochure or the list of events on the website. Can you identify two or three performances that stand out that you would like to attend? Please tell me why you're attracted to them and what are your expectations for these performances.**

[Open text field]

**Finally for this section, can you identify two or three performances that you are not interested in attending? Please tell me why you're less attracted to them and what are your expectations for these performances?**

[Open text field]

**SECTION 3:**

This section aims to find out more about how you engage with art song in live performance situations.

**In the period between choosing to attend a live art song performance and the performance itself do you do anything to prepare for the experience (for example listen to a recording, source information about the music or performers).**

[Open text field]

**In your opinion how important or unimportant is it for songs to be sung in their original language?**

- € Very important
- € Somewhat important
- € Neither important nor unimportant
- € Somewhat unimportant

- € Very unimportant

**Please can you tell me why you think this?**

[Open text field]

**When songs are sung in a foreign language how important or unimportant is it for you to understand the meanings of the texts?**

- € Very important
- € Somewhat important
- € Neither important nor unimportant
- € Somewhat unimportant
- € Very unimportant

**Please can you tell me why you think this?**

[Open text field]

**When listening to song in a foreign language which of the following translation resources have you used?**

- € Printed translations
- € Surtitles
- € Spoken introductions
- € Songs sung in an English translation

**Please comment on your experience of using each of these translation resources, if there are any in particular you like or dislike using and why this is the case.**

[Open text field]

**Is there anything about live art song performances that you would change if you could?**

[Open text field]

**Is there anything else you'd like to say to help me understand your experiences with art song?**

[Open text field]

**SECTION 4:**

In this final section I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

**Please tell me your age**

- € Under 18
- € 18 - 24
- € 25 – 34
- € 35 - 44
- € 45 - 54
- € 55 - 64
- € 65 - 74
- € 75 - 84
- € 85 or older

**Which of these best describes your gender?**

- € Male
- € Female
- € Other
- € Prefer not to say

**Which of these best describes your ethnic group?**

- € English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- € Irish
- € Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- € Any other White background
- € White and Black Caribbean
- € White and Black African
- € Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background
- € Asian or Asian British
- € Indian
- € Pakistani
- € Bangladeshi
- € Chinese
- € Any other Asian background
- € African

- € Caribbean
- € Any other Black, African or Caribbean background
- € Arab
- € Any other ethnic group

**Which of these best describes your employment status?**

- € Employed full time
- € Employed part time
- € Unemployed looking for work
- € Unemployed not looking for work
- € Retired
- € Student
- € Other

**Which of these best describes your highest educational qualification?**

- € PhD
- € Masters or postgraduate degree and professional or vocational equivalents
- € Undergraduate degree and professional or vocational equivalents
- € Other Higher Education below degree level
- € A levels, vocational level 3 and equivalents
- € Trade Apprenticeship
- € GCSE or O Level grade A*C (5 or more), vocational level 2 and equivalents
- € GCSE or O Level grade A*C (less than 5), vocational level 2 and equivalents
- € Other qualifications: level unknown
- € No qualifications

**Have you ever learnt to sing or play a musical instrument?**

- € Yes
- € No

**If yes please can you tell me the instrument/s and your level of training**

[Open text field]

**Have you ever learnt to speak a foreign language?**

- € Yes
- € No

**Please can you tell me the language and indicate your proficiency. There is an option to add more languages below.**

Language:

[Open text field]

**Proficiency:**

- € I can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read and express myself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely
- € I can understand a wide range of demanding texts and can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions
- € I can understand main ideas on both concrete and abstract topics and interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers possible without strain for either party
- € I can understand the main points of standard topics and produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest
- € I can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance. I can communicate in routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters
- € I can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases. I can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help

## Appendix Two: Instructions for Diarists

Thank you for participating in this research project. Here are some instructions to assist you in your completion of this part of the study. Please read these instructions carefully. If you have any questions about this study please feel free to speak to the researcher at any time before, during, or after the festival.

Email: XXXXXXXXX
Tel: XXXXXXXXX

1. Where possible record one diary entry for each performance you attend.

2. Where possible try to record your entries as soon as possible after each performance as this will support your recall.

3. Label each entry clearly with the date of the performance, time, and a title or the names of the performers.

4. If you choose to comment on specific features of the performance (for example specific songs or poems) please make sure you reference these clearly in your entries so it is obvious to me what you are referring to.

5. If you'd like to add any additional comments on the festival as a whole or afterthoughts on performances after you've completed your entries, please feel free to do this at the back of your diary. This isn't compulsory but allows you to clarify or elaborate further if you wish.

6. As a reminder, diary entries will be completely anonymised. No quotations will be attributable to you personally in any publications resulting from this study.

7. If you run out of space and need an another diary please do not hesitate to contact me using the details above.

In your own words and in as much detail as you like, please give an account of your experience at each performance. The following prompts may or may not be useful to help develop your responses:

Reflections on performance: what did you think (if anything) about the performance/performers; and how would you describe the performances, performers and/or music performed.

Reflections on production: what did you think (if anything) of the space and its features; the printed programmes; texts and translations/surtitles; how did you or the performers make use or interact with these.

Reflections on reception: what did you notice about the way you engaged with the performance; what aspects did you concentrate or focus on the most (for example reading translations, watching the performers); how did various parts of the performance make you feel and how did you react; and what did you notice (if anything) about the audience around you and how they responded.

Reflections on expectations and previous experiences: how did the performance compare with your expectations for it; and how did it compare to previous encounters with the performers, repertoire, or art song more generally.

## Appendix Three: Sample Interview Schedule

[Confirm recorder is on].

I would like to talk through most of your diary entries. And I've got a few questions to ask you about each of them if that's OK?

1. A general question to start with. How did you first get into art song? How did that come about?

2. How how many years have you been coming to the Festival?

3. And how did this most recent festival compare to previous ones?

[Focus on diaries].

4. Let's look at the diaries and the first concert you attended.

In this concert they performed settings of Schubert songs, and Hugo Wolf songs which were orchestrated. You said you found yourself making comparisons between the orchestrations and the versions you'd heard before for just piano and voice. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

5. There was one piece you talk about in detail in this concert, the Sibelius. You talked about it being 'beautifully sung', 'soaring over the orchestra'. And her voice particularly impressed you. Can you tell me more about that?

6. You briefly discuss the venue for this concert, which was less satisfactory. Can you tell me why this might be?

7. You make a comment in this entry saying you wish the audience didn't applaud between every piece. It is distracting for you? Why might this be the case?

8. In this entry you also talk about translation and say 'it's very difficult to follow every word of every song using the translation booklet'. Can you tell me a bit more about these challenges?

9. In all your entries you often talk about diction, words seem to be an important part of your listening experience. For example, comments on understanding the words, or if you can't hear the words, having something there that can help you process the words…tell me a bit more about that?

10. You make a reference that you engage with materials at home. Do you often do prep before concerts? Or look at things afterwards? What sort of things do you do?

[Next entry].

11. I next want to talk about [performer's name redacted]. You talk about the Hollywell music room and say how it's 'ideal for song'. Can you tell me more?

12. In this concert you mention the use of the screens for translations. Do you prefer the screens, or programmes, or do you use them both?

13. In this entry you say this is where you met many friends. In your entries you mention talking to other audiences about experiences of concerts, what happened, and what you're looking forward to. You use the word 'community', can you tell me more about this?

14. When describing [performer's name redacted] you use a specific word: 'wonderful', and repeat this word on several lines. Why do you think that was? Why were more wonderful than others you attended? And what was it about them that made you feel this way?

15. Another specific term I want to talk to you about is 'goosebumps'. You make an interesting comment that the sounds of the French language in song gives you goosebumps? What is it about the French language that invokes these sensations and feelings? Is it the same of other languages?

[Next entry].

16. Let's move onto the next concert. In this concert you said the settings of Clara Schumann's music were very moving. This is one of the few concerts that you use this type of language to describe music in this way. Can you tell me more about this concert and how it might have differed from others, if at all?

17. In this concert you talk about [singer's name redacted] 'using her copy, a little stiffly from the score at times.' And then you describe it as 'remarkable' when she pushed the score away for the Brahms. Singing off copy, is that important to you? Does that make a difference to your experience?

[Next entry].

18. Let's move on to [performers' names redacted]. Which again, is another one, which you particularly enjoyed: 'A performance where there is an indescribable touch of magic'. You talk about things like 'his colour', 'his tone', and his ability to 'act out' and 'emote'. Can you tell me a bit more about how singers 'act out' songs and your experience and preferences here?

19. You talk about [pianist's name redacted] playing which is on exceptionally good form. And you say he rose to the occasion and supported [singer's name redacted] interpretation with 'sensitive' playing. I noticed this is the only entry where you talk about the pianist. Can you tell me more about the relationship between singer and pianist, and your experience of this?

[Next entry].

20. I would like to next talk about the concert on [date redacted]. You talked about English song, and that you want to hear more, and that we should have more. Why do you think that is the case? And what are your views on the type of repertoire that appear at the Festival?

21. In the same concert you said 'some songs misfired'. What went wrong? Can you tell me what you mean by this term? Where there other examples?

[Next entry].

22. I want to next talk about three concerts, which were Schubert song cycles in English translation. Before you even attended the performances, what were your thoughts on hearing these sung in the English language?

23. I got the impression from your diaries that you know these works fairly well? You've heard them in German a number of times before? How did they compare?

24. In this performance you talk about [singer's name redacted] instructing you to put the words down. You said that 'despite you knowing it in German, new aspects came across to you, that you didn't hear or see in the piece before'. Was that true of all three performances? Can you tell me more about this?

25. In the final concert you talked about the process of 'mental disintegration' and making connections between Schubert's music and everyday Oxford. Did you feel that more in English than you had done previously listening to German? That's the impression I got from this entry, but tell me more?

26. Do you think we should try and programme song/translate song/perform song…that more obviously connects with contemporary experiences? And do you have any hopes or ideas for art song's future?

[Wrap up].

27. I think we've talked about your early experiences with art song, your life journey through art song, and your journey through this most recent Festival. And we've ended with your ideas for the future. Do you have anything else you'd like to mention or any final questions for me about the research?

[Thanks. Turn off recorder].