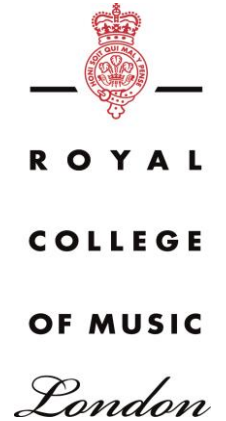


# Artistic Research in an Interdisciplinary Context



Methods and Processes for Interdisciplinary Groups of Performers and Scholars within the AHRC-funded project '**Music, Migration and Mobility**' at the Royal College of Music



Norbert Meyn, Royal College of Music  
nmeyn@rcm.ac.uk





Karl Rankl (1898-1961)  
**Caliban in the Coal Mines** (text by Louis Untermeyer)  
written in Oxford in 1942  
Performed with Christopher Gould, piano

Seven Songs for Tenor, Op. 8  
No. 1: Caliban in the Coal Mines

Louis Untermeyer (1885-1977) *fermat* Karl Rankl (1898-1968)

**Allegro ma non troppo**

Tenor  
Piano

3  
T. < God, we don't like to com - plain we  
Pno. *mf* *p*

5  
T. < know that the mines are no ark;  
Pno. *mf*

7  
T. < but... there's the pools from the rain.  
Pno. *p* *mf cresc.*

*mad line*

# Is this music odd or pioneering?

Unusual attributes of this music:

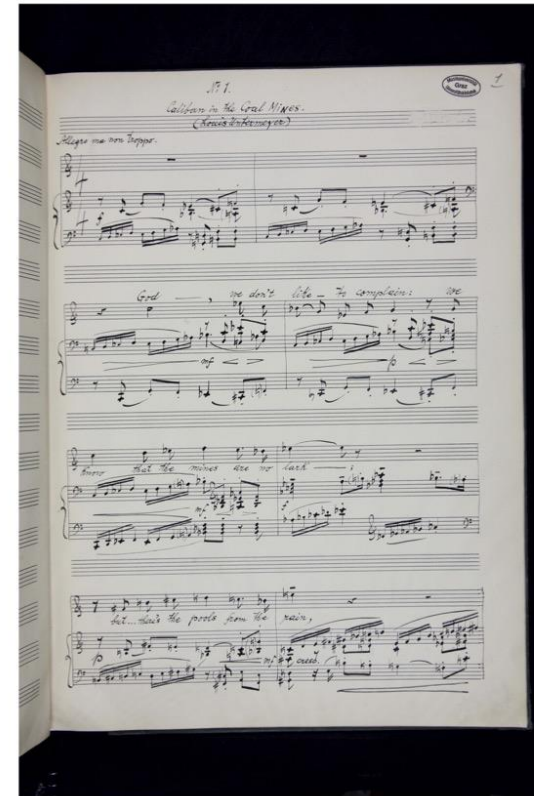
**Programmatic accompaniment** – like a machine or automaton, labour in the mines, very obvious characterisation

Socially aware **protest through music** - Reminiscent of Eisler, Brecht or Weill

**Advanced harmonic language** – Elements of atonality, Schoenberg

Very **rhythmic word setting** – unusual for English, which is often set in a more fluid way

Music seems **'out of place'** in England



# Migrant (mobile) context of Rankl's English songs

Rankl studied with **Arnold Schonberg** and **Anton Webern** in Vienna, 1918-1922

Rankl was a close friend of **Hanns Eisler**, conducted premieres of works by him, **Berthold Brecht** and **Kurt Weill** in Berlin

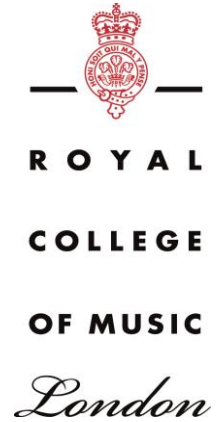
He emigrated to Britain in 1939, **began to learn English** but was not yet completely fluent in 1942

He was **isolated from public musical life** as a refugee during WW2, without a work permit and unwell after being interned as an enemy alien

In 1946 Rankl became the **first music director of the Royal Opera House**, Covent Garden, a prominent figure in musical life in Britain



# My affinity with this music is due to my own migrant biography



I grew up and studied music in **East Germany**, where I became familiar with the music and style of Hanns Eisler/Berthold Brecht.

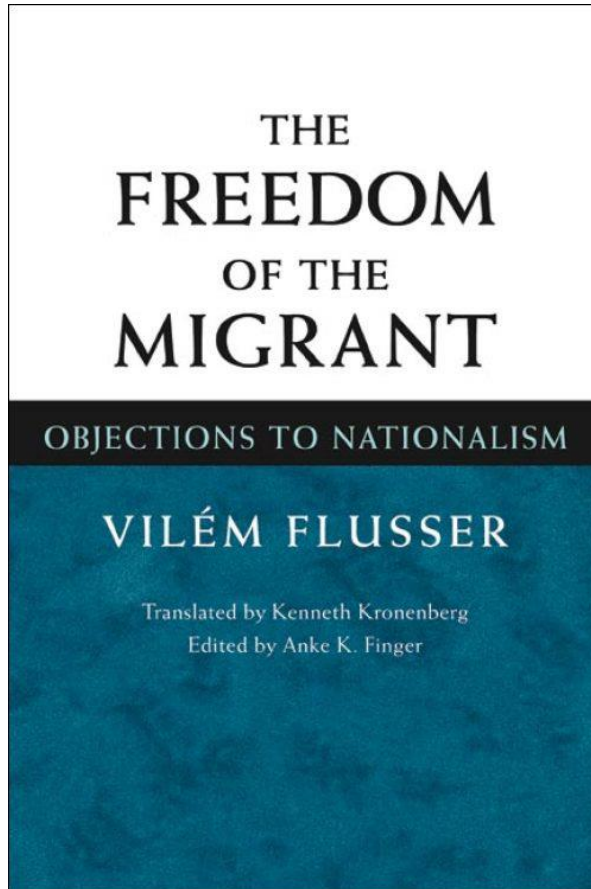
I migrated to Britain in 1997 and have worked there for many years as a freelance (EU-migrant) singer. I teach **German Lieder** at the Royal College of Music but also love **English song**. I am excited by music that reflects my **hybrid identity**.

As a language coach at the Royal Opera House and many other musical institutions in the UK I am **aware of the significance** of Rankl's generation of émigré musicians for music in Britain.

I sing English with a slight **German accent** and find the strong rhythmic word strangely satisfying, I am hyper-aware of word setting issues through my teaching.



# The freedom of the migrant



Vilém Flusser (1920-1991)

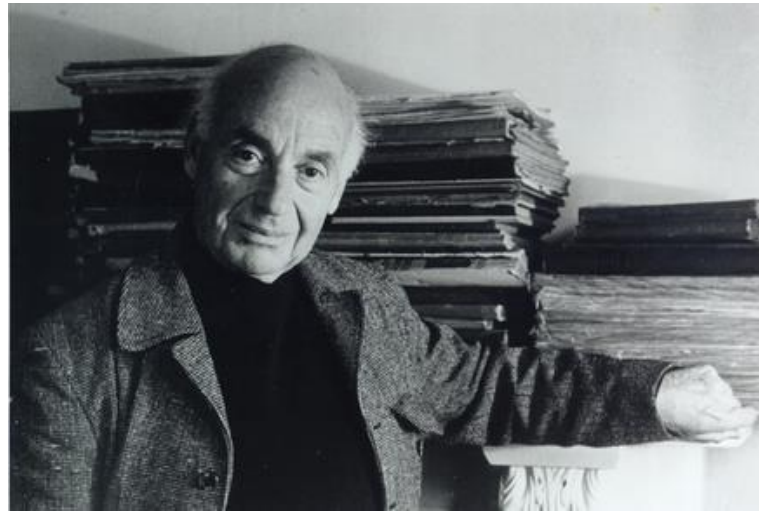
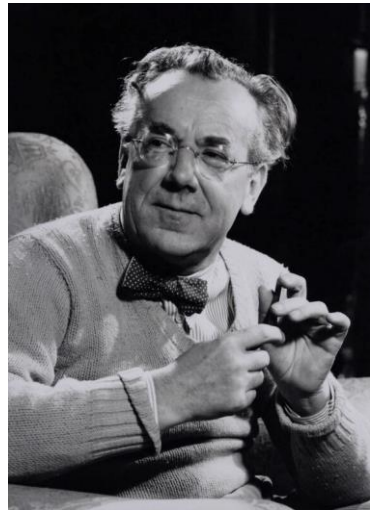
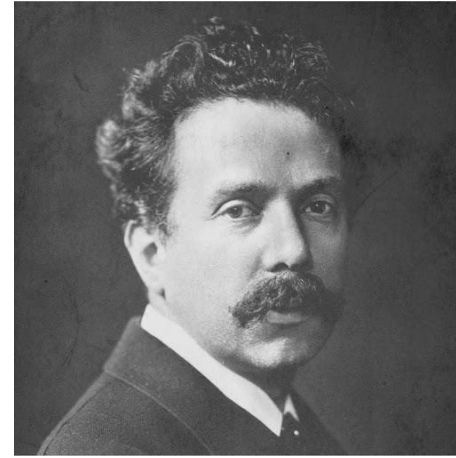
Migrants can be seen as **'vanguards of the future'**

Severing attachments to 'Heimat' is painful, but can mean **greater freedom** to build own attachments

Migrants can **awaken the consciousness** of those who remain settled

Flusser, Vilém. *The Freedom of the Migrant. Objections to Nationalism*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

## Migrant Musicians from Nazi Europe in Britain

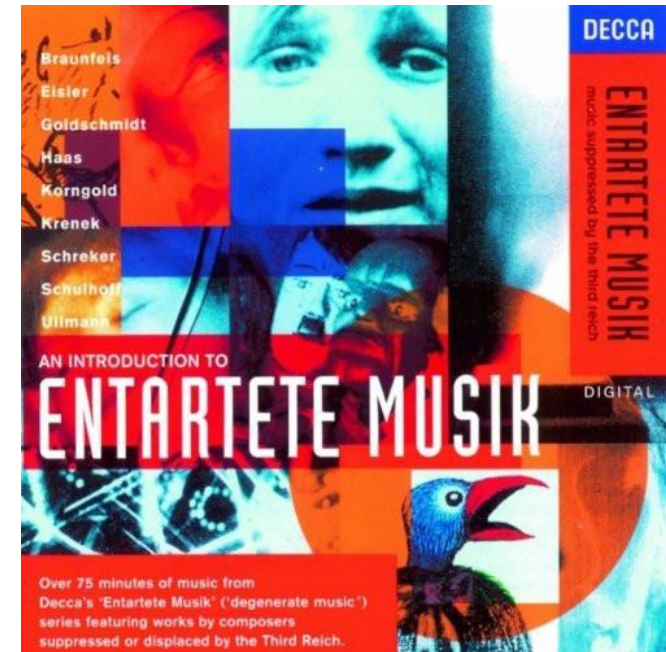
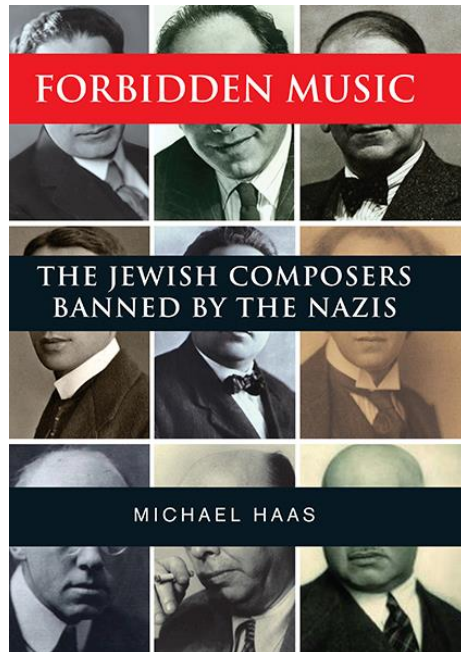


Hans Gál (1890-1987) , Egon Wellesz (1885-1974) , Robert Kahn (1865-1951) , Mátyás Seiber (1905-1960),  
Karl Rankl (1898-1968), Berthold Goldschmidt (1903-1996), Erika Fox (1936- ) and Franz Reizenstein (1911-1968)

# Proposing a paradigm shift in theory and practice

Foregrounding **mobility** rather than belonging and victimhood, while acknowledging trauma

Accepting **migration as normal** and celebrating hybridity





# Developing and testing new approaches

Performers **control the narrative**, choose the repertoire and engage with the **historical context**

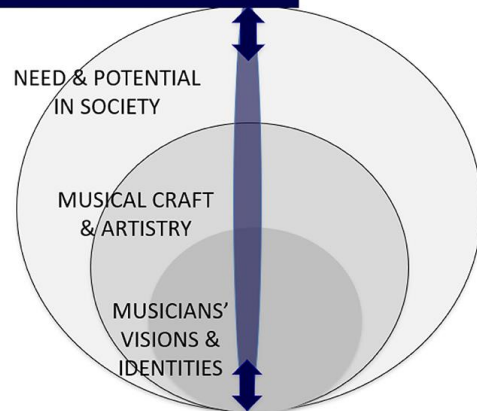
Performers take responsibility for the **ethical implications** of their practice



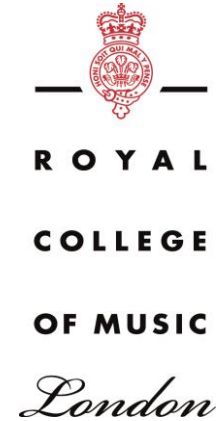
## ENSEMBLE ÉMIGRÉ

Image from: Gaunt, Helena et al (2021), Musicians as 'Makers in Society', *Frontiers in Psychology*, Volume 12

### MUSICIAN AS MAKER IN SOCIETY



# AHRC project: Music, Migration and Mobility - The legacy of migrant musicians from Nazi Europe in Britain (2019-23)



- Studying **migrants** (not migration) and their contributions to culture
- Understanding music **through mobility** rather than fixity/place
- Acknowledging and **celebrating transnational influences** and stylistic hybridity as drivers of innovation
- Addressing **nationalist thinking** that can exclude migrants
- Designed as an **open-ended process** of enquiry by an interdisciplinary group



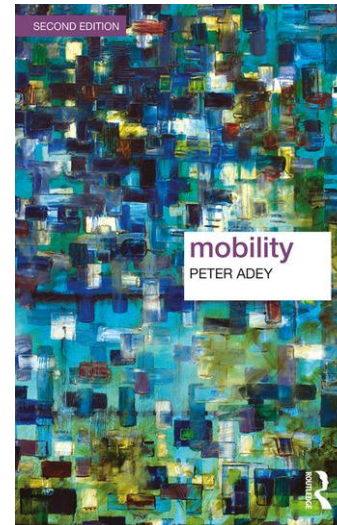
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# Peter Adey – seeing culture through the lens of mobility

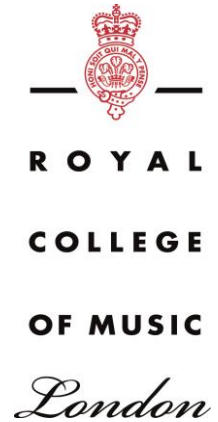
Co-Investigator **Peter Adey** is Professor of Human Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London

**Mobilities** is a contemporary paradigm in the social sciences explores the **movement of people** (human migration, individual mobility, travel, transport), **ideas and things**, as well as the broader social implications of those movements. (Wikipedia)

‘Music is often marketed through place, and places market themselves through music.’



Adey, Peter. *Mobility*. London: Routledge, 2010.



# Nils Grosch - challenging narratives in historical musicology

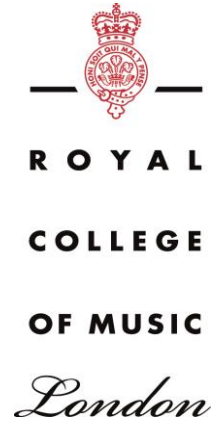
Co-Investigator Professor **Nils Grosch** is Head of Musicology at Salzburg University

‘Most historical narratives offered by conventional musicology are based on concepts that **take stability and fixity for granted**’

Grosch, Nils, ‘Music and Migration research – a challenge’, in Nils Grosch und Rolf Kailuweit (ed.) *Italian Migration and Urban Music Culture in Latin America*, Waxmann (Münster, London, New York), 2015, p.7-13.



# AHRC DEFINITION OF RESEARCH



Research projects are required to:

- 1 Define a series of **research questions**
- 2 Specify a **research context**
- 3 Specify the **research methods**

Approaches may include **practice-based approaches**, testing, prototyping, experimental development and evaluation.

**The council would expect this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process.**

<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/AHRC-010223-ResearchFundingGuide.pdf>

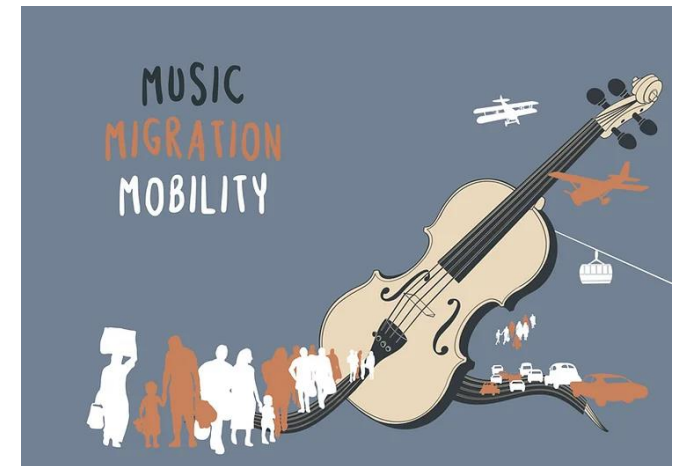
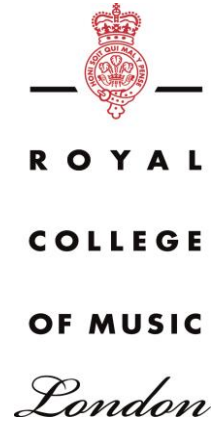
Accessed March 14, 2023



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# QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES

- Investigate the **geographical, institutional and creative mobilities** of musicians who migrated to Britain from Nazi-ruled Europe during the 1930s and '40s
- Investigate how music they composed after arriving in Britain can be **understood by contemporary practitioners, and how it might best be presented to today's publics** in ways that reveal its transnational nature
- Develop innovative ways of displaying and disseminating the multi-faceted narratives of these musicians' lives and their music as a means of **advancing ongoing debates about migration, mobility and culture formation** in general.



# RESEARCH METHODS

Artistic practice, reflection

Making sheet music editions

Historical research

Archival research

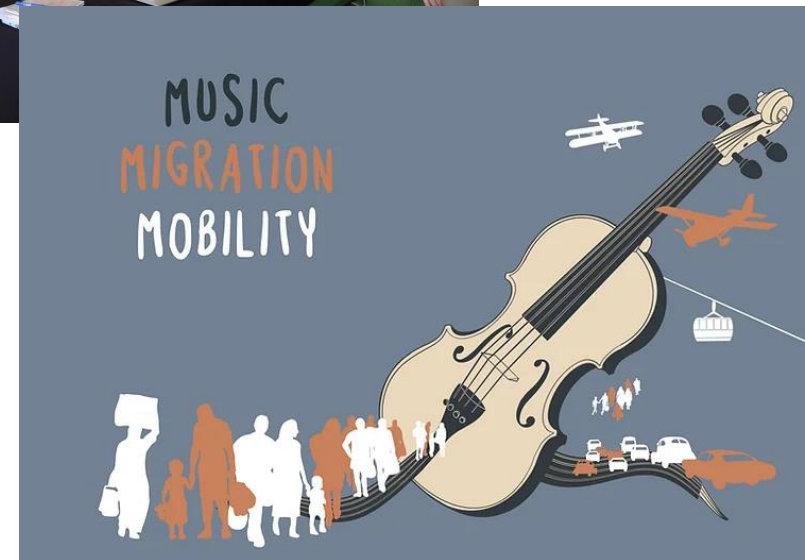
Oral History research

Geography – Story Mapping

Theoretical investigation

Development and testing of narrative approaches

Social science methods for data collection and analysis



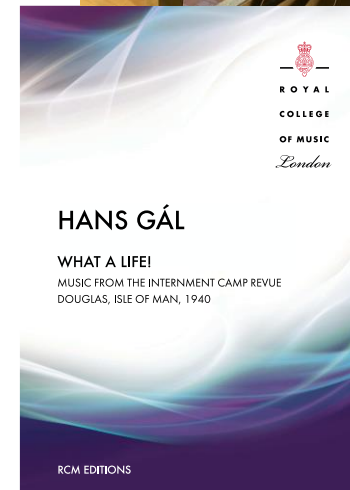
# PRACTICE-BASED APPROACHES

**Workshops, concerts and recordings with RCM students and experienced professional musicians**

Exploring the relationship between **understanding of historical context** and performance

Musical performance as social action in society – choosing repertoire and narrative approaches to **foreground and celebrate migration and mobility**

The focus on musical practice sets the **agenda for the historical research** and theoretical investigations





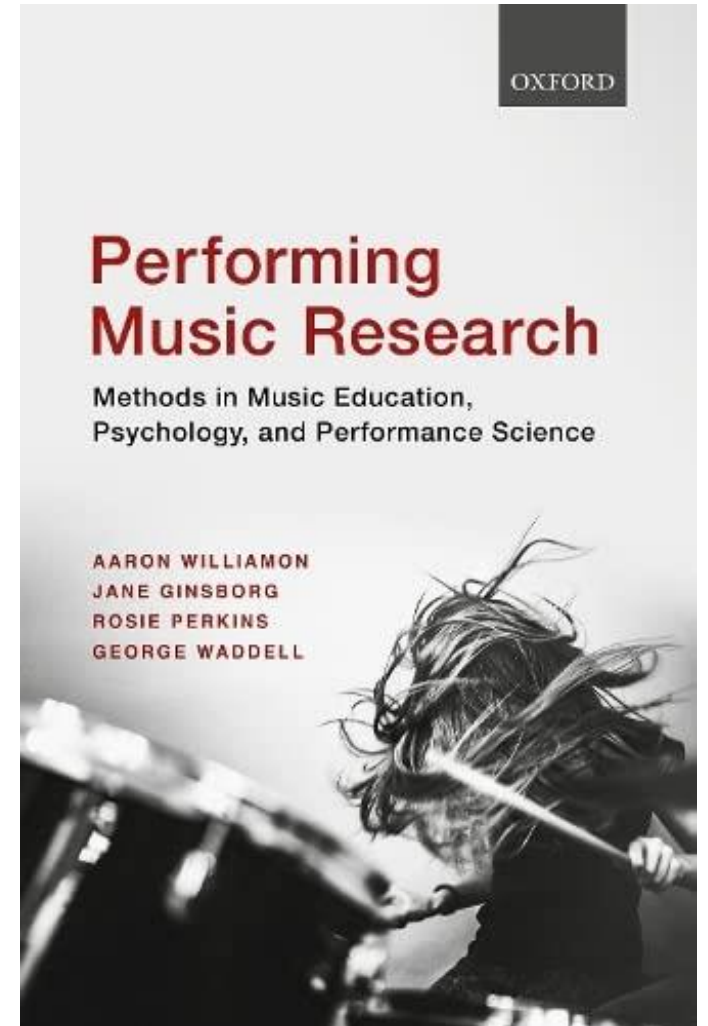
# PROCESS/METHODS/ETHICS

## ACTIVITIES DURING PERFORMANCE PROJECTS

- Introductory seminar with music historians
- Meeting with the composer's family or friends/studying oral history
- Rehearsal sessions with the researchers and specialist coaches
- Spoken introductions in the concert – co-developed

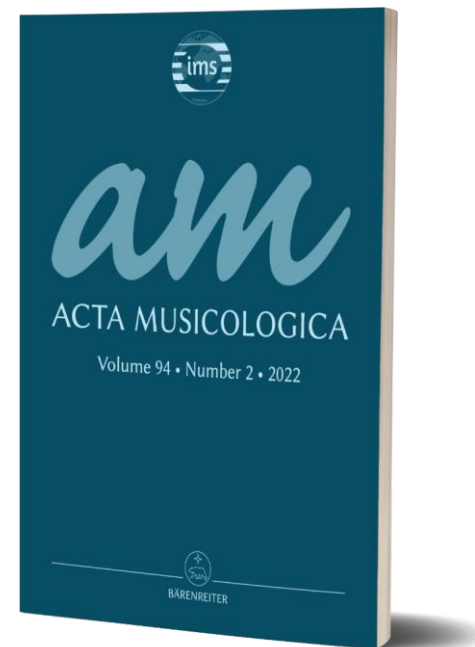
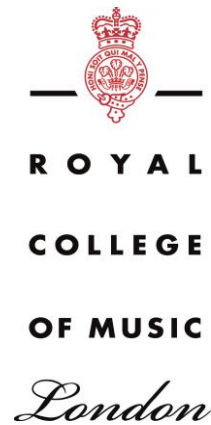
## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS – JOINT REFLECTION

- All participants are co-researchers, data are anonymised
- Interview data interpreted through quantitative analysis – using performance science methods



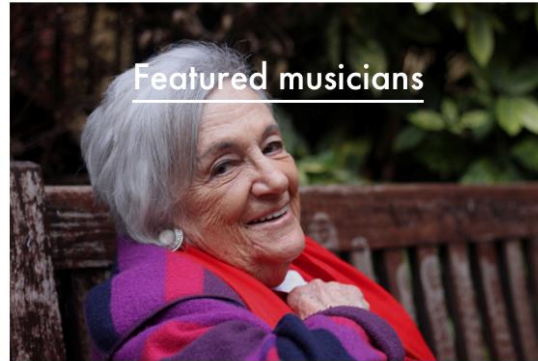
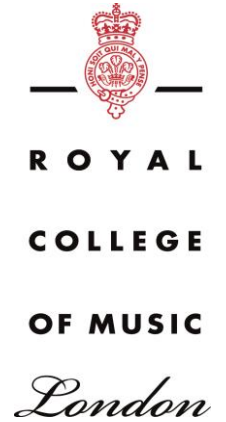
# DISSEMINATION

- **Performances and Recordings**
- **Scholarly articles** and Edited Collections
- **Online Resource** with:
  - Long read stories
  - Featured Musicians Biographies
  - Oral History Interviews
  - Interactive story maps
  - Sheet music editions for free download
- **Exhibition in the RCM Museum** until May 21, 2023



# Online Resource on RCM Website

## [www.rcm.ac.uk/singingasong](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/singingasong)



- Study
- What's on
- Get involved
- About
- Visit
- Research
- Support
- Q



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# Being an artistic researcher in an interdisciplinary project means taking multiple roles

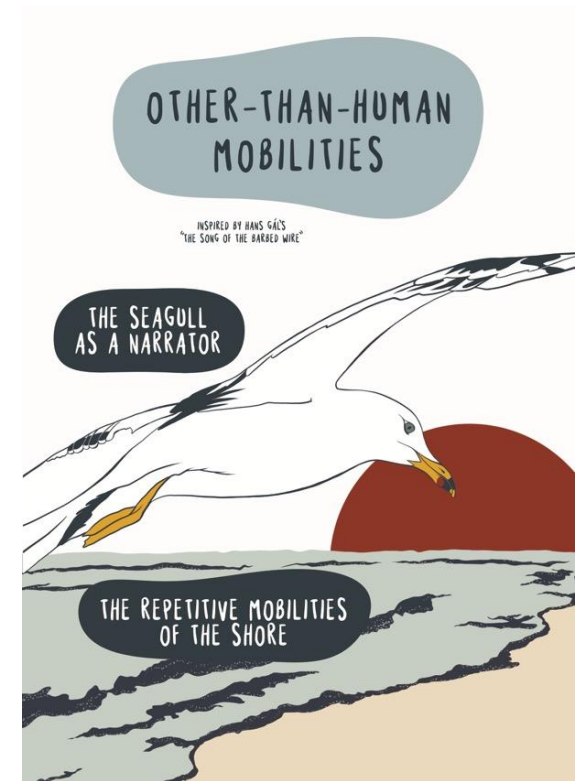
Artistic/practice researchers can **transfer their insights to different roles** – from performer to coach to producer to editor to presenter

Crossing disciplinary boundaries and **finding a common language** can be challenging

Artistic excellence is vital, but **not the only measure of success**

**Embrace the mess** – different disciplines have different priorities, which can cause tensions

Don't forget to treat all disciplines with **equal respect**.



# Dealing with copyright questions is important

It is important to get copyright consent from all participants to enable sharing

Mutual trust between co-researchers is vital

Whoever holds the copyright (institution or researcher) needs to be accessible and able to respond to enquiries and give permissions

Copyright can be licensed for multiple uses. It can for example be held by an institution and licensed to participants for non-exclusive use.



# SUMMARY

## Why is Artistic/Practice Research at the centre of this interdisciplinary project?

- Artistic practice holds together issues that concern multiple disciplines. These would usually be studied separately.

*'This approach makes it possible to study a set of problems as **integrated and interdependent** challenges faced by artistic practice.'*<sup>1</sup>

- A view of the **bigger picture** can be achieved by 'tackling these problems through the creative practice itself and reflecting on this process in light of **cross-disciplinary theory**.'<sup>2</sup>
- It can reveal the **inner experience of the performers**, connecting with their identities and important issues in society

<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> Both quotes from: R. Lyle Skains, *Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology*, in *Media Practice and Education*, 19:1, 2018, 82-97 (p.85).

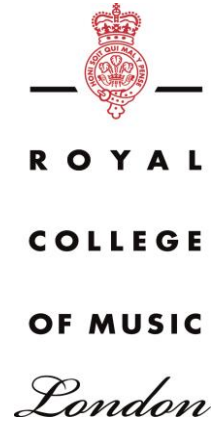


# Thank you!

Karl Rankl – Fair Daffodils  
Op. 7/4, 1942  
Charlotte Bowden, soprano  
Ella O'Neill, piano

Karl Rankl – The Cruel Rain God  
Op. 5/9, 1942  
Michael Bell, tenor  
Jack Campbell, piano

Norbert Meyn, Royal College of Music  
[nmeyn@rcm.ac.uk](mailto:nmeyn@rcm.ac.uk)



# Mátyás Seiber (1905-1960)



Studied with Zoltan Kodály in his native Hungary

Professor of Jazz in Frankfurt, also wrote dodecaphonic compositions

Composed film music and modernist works in Britain

Highly respected teacher of composition and advocate of contemporary music



# Concert 'Traveller between Worlds' (2020)

Serenade for Wind Sextet (1925)

Permutazioni a Cinque (1958)

Nonsense songs – Morgenstern Lieder  
(1934) and

'The owl and the pussycat' (1957)

Two Jazzolettes (1929/32)



# THEMES OF THE REFLECTIONS

Themes	Sub Themes	Summaries
1. Music and Place	National affiliation	Place Changes Things Music crosses Boundaries
	Categories	Seiber harder to characterise Music does not need to fit into categories
2. Stylistic Hybridity	Freedom	Surprise Freedom of the Migrant
	Mixed influences	Multiple Influences Big Mix
3. Strategies of Engagement	Importance of context	Importance of context Links with other composers
	Putting Music first	Let the Music speak Enthusiasm

# MUSIC AND PLACE

## Summary

Place changes things

## Quote

*"I like to know where a composer was when he was writing the music. .. that changes the way we approach it, for example, it is interesting that Rachmaninov's 2nd Symphony was written in Dresden and not in Russia."*

Music crosses boundaries

*"Music crosses national boundaries. Music can be related to a country but does not have to be seen like 'the property of the country', like the Nazis did with Wagner.."*

Seiber harder to categorise

*"It can be harder obviously to put Seiber's music into categories... like you can put Beethoven Germanic, Debussy French ... and it's obviously not that simple."*

Music does not need to fit into categories

*"You can hear different kinds of styles and national traditions in music... music is more abstract .. it doesn't need to fit into categories of 'this was made in Germany or made in the UK'"*

# STYLISTIC HYBRIDITY

## Summary

Surprise

Freedom of the Migrant

Multiple influences

Big Mix

## Quote

*“It is fascinating that a composer doesn’t have that one particular style!”*

*“Seiber was free, not tied to a place - I wonder if that gave him a sense of freedom”*

*“Seiber will have had different influences in regards to where his family was from and then where he spent most of his time living - he could feel like a European person”*

*“There was a big mix in Europe, a lot of the avant garde, and late romantic composers were still doing their thing. Seiber resembles all of Europe.*

# STRATEGIES OF ENGAGEMENT

## Summary

Context is emotion

Links to other composers

Let the music speak

Enthusiasm

## Quote

*“It is about context, history is really important for connecting emotions to the music  
Like with Shostakovich, knowing the history changes how you hear the music”*

*“You can draw people in by making links with more famous composers, for example by linking Seiber with Schönberg”*

*“I don’t try to actively fit the music into the composer’s story, their life or what they had for breakfast. Sometimes context will come to mind, and that is useful.”*

*“It’s been very enlightening, it’s been amazing”*