

Pop 4: Developing Songwriting Teaching and Learning Activities as Collaborative Research

Pop 4 is an ongoing collaborative venture between partner higher education institutions based in Manheim (Popakademie), Copenhagen (RMC), Rotterdam (Codarts) and Leeds College of Music that seeks to provide opportunities for students and staff to explore and share creative methodologies in relation to songwriting. Twice yearly, around 25 participants travel to one of the four institutions to work on collaborative tasks designed to reflect the ethos of the host institution. To date, the project has led to the creation of over 100 new works, some written, performed and produced by teams of students and others written for guest artists to perform. Many of those involved continue to work together on separate projects that have arisen as a consequence of POP 4 collaborations.

Using the verbal and written impressions of students and staff who have been involved in Pop 4 since its inception in September 2015, Prof West will discuss the developmental events that have characterised the ongoing shaping of the project. Each of the tutors involved is motivated by a desire to enable learners to develop skills of team working, criticality and adaptability that will allow them to make progress throughout their lives as musicians; the presentation will partly focus on challenges and discoveries experienced in seeking to realise these aims. By examining the nature of project tasks and the students' responses to being engaged with them, the presentation seeks to draw temporal conclusions on how European songwriting tutors facilitate learning and how their students learn.

The intended audience are those with an interest in: collaborative learning paradigms, developing collaborative international partnerships and the development of songwriting pedagogy at HE level. It is hoped that the session will have impact as a sharing of ideas for consideration, evaluation, and possible adaptation; by examining these findings within the context of their own practice, colleagues may find ways for potential application within their own disciplines.

The proposal links to the overall theme of the conference in that it offers an example of how Leeds College of Music seeks to engage in collaborative research as a means of developing its approach to teaching and learning. Acknowledging the increasing scope for musicians to practice outside of their initial territory of study, the Strategic Plan of Leeds College of Music emphasises our intention to prepare students for life as a professional in a European context. As such, we aim to learn from international partners as we seek to ensure accuracy and currency in providing a research-informed taught environment that exists at the forefront of music practice and discussion. The student experience is at the core of this endeavour, and this presentation uses qualitative evidence to give voice to students involved in the project.



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Professor Andrew West has been a professional musician since 1990, when he joined Hugh Cornwell (The Stranglers) and Roger Cook (Blue Mink) to form the eclectic trio Cornwell, Cook and West. Over 350 of Andy's songs have been published, with some featuring in the Grammy award winning shows 'Heroes', 'Lost' and 'True Blood'. Whilst resident in Nashville between 1997 and 2003, Andy released a solo album 'Sundays and Birthdays' on the US based Infinity Cat label and produced numerous sessions in Nashville including Julie Lee's album 'Stillhouse Road' featuring Grammy award winning vocalists Alison Krauss and Vince Gill. Prior to joining Leeds College of Music in 2011, Andy designed and course directed the world's first Masters degree in Songwriting at Bath Spa University. Having completed an MA and PhD specialising in the Teaching and Learning of Songwriting in Higher Education, his book 'The Art of Songwriting', was published by Bloomsbury in July 2016.