

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Guildhall School of Music & Drama</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts</p>
<p>Title of case study <i>Knight Crew</i> and the engagement of young people</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact The opera <i>Knight Crew</i> by Julian Philips provides a model for how contemporary large-scale opera can excite young people for whom the medium is often perceived as excluding and exclusive. <i>Knight Crew's</i> impacts were both direct and indirect: direct through the involvement of young people with little or no experience of opera in the development and performance of the work; indirect through the international influence the various studies and evaluations of the opera have had on subsequent initiatives within opera and education.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research One of the main aims of the research was to work towards creating a new model of Opera, one that could reanimate a tradition arguably engaging only a small and unrepresentative section of society. The key researcher working on this project was Julian Philips, who, at the time of the start of research was a research student at Sussex University 2006-09 and since 2004 Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. The research grew through the researcher/composer's residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera (2006-09) that enabled Philips to investigate the potential of new operatic forms, their optimal methods of development, their selection of performers and the ways in which resulting works could be realised for audiences. The principal staging posts that mark the evolution of this research prior to <i>Knight Crew</i> are <i>Followers</i> (2008), a site-specific, promenade opera, and <i>The Yellow Sofa</i> (2009), a chamber opera for 10 singers and small ensemble. Both were composed for, and presented by, Glyndebourne. The latter is also offered as an REF output (output 17a). Through these smaller operas the composer's understanding of the potential of the research project expanded: what had been an endeavour aimed principally at breathing oxygen into the grand operatic tradition became one that increasingly appreciated that some of the methods through which this could be achieved had the hugely significant advantage of bringing a new audience to the art form. The conclusion emerged that the engagement of young people into the creation of opera, would not only revivify the form but also excite and engage a new generation. <i>Knight Crew</i> encapsulates these research outcomes and was the vehicle through which the impact described in this statement was achieved. It is worth underlining that the research aim was not primarily sociological, educational or polemical, but rather operatic. Its impact on the quality of the opera is presented in a separate REF output (output 17b), here, the focus is <i>Knight Crew's</i> impact on the way opera is made, how it is shared with audiences and how these advances are influencing others eager that opera should continue to provoke and engage. <i>Knight Crew</i> is published by Peters Edition, London.</p>
<p>3. References to the research Author: Laura Battle Title: Opera for all at Glyndebourne Year of Publication: March 1st, 2010 Type of output: Review, the Financial Times. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/a928d7ea-2556-11df-9cdb-00144feab49a.html#axzz2eyUWW27I 'Working closely with local schools and community groups Glyndebourne has used workshops and auditions to recruit a team from the Sussex region for a modern retelling of the King Arthur myth. Although professional soloists play the protagonists – Art, Lance and Quin – 50 teenagers will perform as the Knight Crew chorus, very much a lead role in its own right, and there are also choruses of young boys and mothers. Composer Julian Philips and librettist Nicky Singer have developed a challenging narrative dealing with social issues including knife crime and bullying, and few concessions have been made musically. "I have had to worry about how to write material for young voices but I haven't</p>

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compromised its language and I haven't stinted on trying to build real operatic textures of some complexity" says Philips.

Glyndebourne, however, is unique in being able to offer world-class facilities because it does not present operas throughout the year. *Knight Crew* is benefiting not only from the involvement of a widely respected production team, including director John Fulljames and designer Es Devlin, but also from the staff that work on the festival productions.'

Author: Guy Dammann

Title: Knight Crew

Year of Publication: March 8th 2010

Type of output Review, the Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/mar/08/knight-crew-opera-review>

To note: Guy Dammann is a regular contributor to the Guardian and Times Literary Supplement. He is an employee of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and a colleague of Julian Philips

Philips has never shied away from co-opting contrasting musical styles for dramatic purposes, and his score is a riot of references, taking in popular and operatic lyric idioms in a way that allows seamless interaction between professional soloists and chorus. Indeed, part of the magic of the music and of John Fulljames's direction is that it allows influence to flow from innocence to experience as well as vice versa, adding a quality to the solo performances, notably of Yvonne Howard (Myrtle) and Pascal Charbonneau (Art), that would have been lacking with a more experienced supporting cast.

Add to the mix Es Devlin's ingenious stage design and Nicholas Collon's excellent, transparent conducting and the overall effect was exhilarating, and not a little humbling.

Author: Michael Church

Title: Knight Crew, Glyndebourne

Year of Publication: March 5th 2010

Type of output: Review, the Independent

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/reviews/knight-crew-glyndebourne-1916969.html>

Glyndebourne's first composer-in-residence Julian Philips is a master of pastiche. And when *Knight Crew* make their appearance - dimly lit and drably costumed like creatures from the underworld - one senses director John Fulljames's characteristically sure touch...

For a 'community' opera this is an extraordinarily accomplished piece of work, with the Mothers' Chorus - some of whom are the real-life mothers of the fictional gangsters - being outstandingly good (full marks to chorus-master Gareth Malone, otherwise known as presenter of the BBC's 'The Choir'). Soprano Claire Wild and tenor Pascal Charbonneau are wonderfully convincing as the chief protagonists, with mezzo Yvonne Howard doubling brilliantly as the bag-lady and Arthur's despairing mother. The endlessly mutating set with its skilfully projected climactic scenes recalls the glory days of English National Opera, the libretto trades intelligently on the monosyllabic terseness of street slang, and the music draws boldly on Bernstein and Stravinsky. Whether this new work 'has legs' is a moot point - it demands major skills and resources - but it's certainly a major achievement.

Author: Susan Elkin

Title: Lots of Learning and not a hamper in sight

Year of Publication: March 8th 2010

Type of output: Blog post, The Stage Blogs

<http://blogs.thestage.co.uk/education/2010/03/lots-of-learning-and-not-a-hamper-in-sig/>

It all adds up to a gripping two hour, two act opera - a reworking of the Arthur story set on a 21st century UK estate where knife crime is a way of life.

I love the lyricism of it. Think of Puccini punctuated by occasional Lloyd Webber moments suffused with Bernstein-ian rhythms and Britten-esque harmonies. I also love Es Devlin's massive, flexible metallic geometric set with all those shadowy balconies and Bruno Poet's sinister lighting

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and evocative, story-telling projection. No compromise on Glyndebourne's usual production values tonight.

But most of all I love seeing over 100 young people learning and achieving so much together and clearly - it was very obvious at the curtain call - enjoying every minute of the experience...I wouldn't have missed it for anything: profoundly uplifting and encouraging. But I'll wear my thermals next time.

Research Sponsorship

The National Lottery through Arts Council England, East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove Music, Arts and Study Support, 3ev, The Donald Albert Anderson Charitable Trust, Allen and Overy, The Andor Trust, The Peter Beckwith Trust, J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Idlewild Trust, MariaMarina Foundation, Charles Peel Charitable Trust, He Philanthropic Collaborative, PRS Foundation for New Music, RVW Trust, The Reed Foundation, Martin Smith, The Bernard Sunley Trust, The Michael Tippett Musical Foundation, Tufton Charitable Trust, Mr WJ Weston, George and Patti White.

Quality of research

The research that underpins this claim for impact is the same research presented in the *Knight Crew* research output in REF (output 17b).

4. Details of the impact

Three main areas of impact are presented below: *Knight Crew's* impact on its young performers; the impact of its performances; and the on-going impact of *Knight Crew* after its initial season of performances. Together these form the multi-stranded "significant enhancement of cultural life" described in the Impact Template (REF 3a, section d) and which are placed in a more general context in the Impact Template (REF 3a, context).

***Knight Crew's* impact on its young performers**

One impact of the practice-based research process that led to *Knight Crew* was felt by those who contributed to its development. These included fifty-two young people recruited to the chorus and another thirty-eight who augmented the professional orchestral musicians. Additionally, twenty adult amateur singers formed a mothers' chorus. The impact on these performers is evidenced by the three-part BBC Television documentary, screened in 2010, that charts the development of the opera and the experience of the participants from first workshop to first night. In summary it shows the initial surprise of the young participants that their contribution to the genesis of *Knight Crew* was not only requested but vital, through to nervousness and excitement as the performances became closer. A second, less mediated, set of participant reactions was seen on the *Knight Crew* pages of social media.

Running parallel to these formal and personal processes of documenting the impact on the young people was a study carried out with relevant local authorities on the barriers to participation in opera experienced particularly by 14-19 year olds. An additional report (2010) was commissioned by Glyndebourne from Dr Richard Ings. This was preceded by an Arts Council assessment from David Richardson.

From these formal reports, evaluations and personal commentaries it is possible to draw three major strands of conclusions about the second order impacts *Knight Crew* had on its younger participants: a sense of enhanced self-worth at the realisation that they had a creative ability that was valuable and valued; an understanding of the operatic process stripped of its private languages; and the realisation that opera can speak directly to them about subjects important to them.

References to reports cited here appear in Section 5.

The impact of *Knight Crew's* performances

The four performances of *Knight Crew* were attended by 4,536 people, 44% of whom were new to Glyndebourne Opera. Ticket sales exceeded company expectations by £11,000.

In addition to the live performances, a web-based micro-site, maintained for three years after *Knight Crew's* first production, allowed downloads of the complete opera; 600 were made.

The impact of *Knight Crew* after *Knight Crew*

The innovative involvement of young people in the creation and performance of *Knight Crew* was immediately understood as a significant development. This was recognised by the BBC in its decision to make the documentary already described, but also by the composer/researcher and his team. An event was therefore held after the *Knight Crew* matinée at Glyndebourne that encouraged experts from various institutions to reflect on the development of new opera and its relationship to opera education work.

This event was followed in February 2011 by an international conference on new opera development. The event, led by the composer/researcher, used lessons learnt through *Knight Crew* as its starting point. The conference welcomed key figures from the British education sector and representatives of leading UK and European opera companies.

The impact of *Knight Crew* was further enhanced by an agreement between the BBC and Glyndebourne that the company could use additional BBC footage to chart its own process of commissioning and developing *Knight Crew*. This extends the impact of the opera, and its innovative developmental process, to the wider international operatic community.

Another impact of *Knight Crew* has been the influence its creative process has had on other projects by other teams. The composer/researcher has been invited to advise various groups intent on staging new work using variants of the approaches pioneered in *Knight Crew*. These include W11 Opera, Welsh National Opera, and The Opera Group. Additionally, plans are now (2013) nearing completion for new performances of *Knight Crew* in New Zealand.

Further impacts prompted by *Knight Crew* have included numerous invitations the composer/researcher has received to join bodies responsible for commissioning new work (Sound and Music, Royal Opera House, The Opera Group, Royal Philharmonic Society, British Association of Songwriters, Composers and Authors) and to speak at conferences on future directions of opera (European Network for Opera and Dance Education (March 2010), Opera for Young People (2011), Royal Musicological Association (July 2012) New Operatic Forms for Participatory and community opera (July 2012).

The success of *Knight Crew* has led to the composer/researcher receiving further commissions for his work that builds on the practices developed in the opera. These include *Good Intentions* (W11 Opera, December 2012), *How the Whale Became* (Royal Opera House, December 2013), and *Fern Hill* (Welsh National Opera, 2014).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1) Evaluation Report - Commissioned by Glyndebourne Festival Opera from Dr Richard Ings, (June 2010). Available from the Guildhall School.

2) Independent Assessment - Commissioned by The Arts Council, England from David Richardson, (April 2010). Available from the Guildhall School

3) Local Authorities' study on barriers to participation - Available from the Guildhall School

4) BBC documentary *Gareth Goes to Glyndebourne*

<http://www.bbcshop.com/music/gareth-malone-goes-to-glyndebourne-dvd/inv/av9826>

5) Arts Council

For information on *Knight Crew* from the Arts Council see:

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/funded-projects/case-studies/young-singers-perform-knight-crew-opera-stage-glyndebourne/>

6) Glyndebourne

For a Glyndebourne Opera website with a page on *Knight Crew*, a range of links, photographs and video go to <http://glyndebourne.com/discover/knight-crew>

7) Facebook

For a Facebook site for *Knight Crew* see: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Knight-Crew-Opera/226818720084>

8) Blogs

For *Knight Crew* blog material see <http://operaobsession.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/knight-crew.html>;

<http://sonofabook.blogspot.co.uk/2010/02/knight-crew-countdown.html>;

<http://www.notesfromthelushpile.com/2010/06/guest-blogger-nicky-singer-good-bad-and.html>;

<http://www.r3ok.com/index.php?topic=1908.0>