

<b>Institution:</b> Queen's University of Belfast
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 35
<b>Title of case study:</b> Using German Protest Song in Political Education
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>David Robb's research into folk and protest song has an impact on a wider public through its promotion at music clubs and festivals and in its use in political education in schools. The context for the impact is the general political climate in Germany since the Second World War where protest song has been supported at a national level as 'democratic' heritage. Questionnaires from a recent workshop revealed how teachers have made use of Robb's recent on-line research project to promote a democratic consciousness amongst pupils. His research has also influenced the song repertoires of folk groups and performers.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research is Robb's work since the early 1990s on German political song and performance. It has focused on how songs of revolutionary periods were revived particularly in the post-World War II period, in order to re-establish lines of 'democratic' cultural heritage which had been broken by the Nazis. In this respect Robb has actively connected with the movements (represented by musicians, festivals and academics) in both East and West Germany since the Second World War that have nurtured the democratic tradition of folk songs on a public level.</p> <p>Robb's monograph on the 'Song-Theatre' of the clowning duo Wenzel and Mensching (<i>Zwei Clowns</i> 1998) looked at the creative appropriation of political song tradition in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), also exploring performance techniques used to circumvent censorship under the communist regime. The work was published almost ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a significant point in the public discourse surrounding the topical theme of 'coming to terms with' the communist past. One of the crucial points Robb was making was the redundancy of the post-unification assumption that separated GDR performers into distinct categories of either regime conformers or political dissidents.</p> <p>The publication of Robb's next book <i>Protest Song in East and West Germany</i> (2007) confirmed him as a leading international researcher in the field. It resulted in an invitation to collaborate with Eckhard John of the German Folk Song Archive and subsequently to the British Academy and AHRC/DFG grants which have funded him since 2008. During this period Robb and John have worked on the 'History of Reception of Songs of the German 1848 Revolution', published as a project within the <i>Historisch-Kritisches Liederlexikon</i> (<a href="http://www.liederlexikon.de">www.liederlexikon.de</a>). The last significant research on this subject was undertaken by Wolfgang Steinitz in the GDR in 1962. Twenty years after the end of the Cold War it was felt that a reassessment was due. Robb and John's approach is novel in its interdisciplinary combination of literary, musical and historical analyses within the framework of commentaries and critical scholarly editions. Via archival and internet research they have located new sources of song reception, revealing new information about authors, composers, melodies, the milieus in which these songs circulated and how they shaped/ reflected social identities in 1848 and thereafter up till the present. One of the main findings lies in Robb and John's pinpointing of the change of function, which songs can undergo in the course of their history. Correspondingly they have exposed the myths, which can emerge during a process of historical reception which is often ideologically motivated.</p> <p>In summary the research has led to the most up-to-date findings on a subject which has had</p>

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

song publications and, above all, in political education in the promotion of democratic culture and consciousness in Germany since 1945. Robb's work can be seen as a continuation of this impact, as section 4 will illustrate.

Since January 1999 Robb has been a Lecturer (Senior Lecturer since 2004) in the School of Languages, Literatures and Performing Arts and since 2011 in the School of Creative Arts at the Queen's University Belfast.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

Monograph:

- *Zwei Clowns im Lande des verlorenen Lachens. Das Liedertheater Wenzel & Mensching* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1998)

Edited Volume (Robb also wrote the introduction and five chapters):

- *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960s* (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2007).

Other articles on German political song including:

- "A Man's a Man for a' that" and "Trotz alledem": Robert Burns, Ferdinand Freiligrath and their reception in the German Folksong Movement" *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 156/1, 2011, pp. 17-46. (with Eckhard John)
- 'The Legacy of Brecht in GDR Political Song from Biermann to Wenzel & Mensching', in Karen Leeder and Laura Bradley (ed.) *Brecht and the GDR: Culture, Politics, Posterity* (NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 183-200.
- 'Political Song in the Cold War', in Andrew Hammond (ed.) *Global Cold War Literature. Western, Eastern and Postcolonial Perspectives* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 156-170.

Website Anthology: of 22 commentaries and critical editions for AHRC/DFG Project, 2009-12 (with Eckhard John):

- 'Lieder der Revolution von 1848 und ihre Rezeptionsgeschichte in Deutschland' ('History of Reception of Songs of the 1848 Revolution'), *Historisch-Kritisches Liederlexikon* [http://www.liederlexikon.de/ueber\\_liederlexikon\\_de/projekte/ahrc-dfg\\_projekt](http://www.liederlexikon.de/ueber_liederlexikon_de/projekte/ahrc-dfg_projekt)

**Research Funding**

AHRC/German Research Foundation (DFG) (2009-2012)

Project Title: 'History of Reception of Songs of the 1848 Revolution'. £57,130 for Robb as PI.

British Academy Small Research Grant (2008-2009)

Project title: 'New Research in German Political Song': £5,630

British Academy Small Research Grant (2003-2004)

Project title: 'Protest Song in East and West Germany': £2786

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of David Robb's research can be measured particularly with his recent 1848 'Liederlexikon' project, which has been used by teachers within political education in Germany.

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

A wider public interest in Robb's research dates back to his monograph on Wenzel and Mensching which was launched at the Leipzig Book Fair by the commercial publisher Ch. Links in March 1998 (references 1 and 2). The many reviews included one in the *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung* (Teachers' Paper), which praised Robb's raising of the profile of East German identity, which was perceived as being marginalised by the mainstream media (reference 3). Further impact was shown by the inclusion of his essay as a 'special feature' of Wenzel and Mensching's DVD *Latest from the Da-Da-R*, which had its international release in 2009 (reference 4).

Robb's second book *Protest Song* (2007) was widely commended for increasing awareness of the German political song phenomenon in the English speaking world, for example in the *Times Literary Supplement* (7 March 2008) and in *World Music*, which described it as 'simply peerless [...] indisputably the best account on the subject in English [...] a wonderful book' (27 May 2008, reference 5). Further impact was demonstrated by Robb's radio interview on 'PRI's The World' for a documentary 'Protest Songs' on 9 November 2009 for the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Robb's impact can best be measured with regard to his current on-line project 'Songs of the 1848 Revolution' (with Eckhard John). The interest in their work is documented by the positive feedback in emails from people who use their 1848 website in their work, for example, Christian Souchon who used an excerpt from their work on his homepage 'Jakobite Songs' (reference 6) and Bernd Hans Göhrig who requested permission to reprint one of their commentaries in his magazine *Querblick* (reference 7).

Robb's research has been given a prestigious public platform at the Rudolstadt Folk Festival, the largest festival of its kind in Germany. On 3 July 2010 he presented his work on Burns' 'For a' that' within a colloquium led by cabaret artist Dieter Beckert " for the 200th anniversary of the birth of the song's translator Ferdinand Freiligrath. The *Folker* journalist Reinhard Ständer wrote how the show cast a new light on the relationship between German and Scottish folk music (reference 2). Beckert wrote how the revelation of this connection inspired his new cabaret production featuring the character Findlater based on a Scottish Earl, resident in Saxony in the Romantic period. It also resulted in an annual Burns Supper in the Albrechtsburg Castle (reference 8).

Robb's workshop, 'Historical Political Songs in the 21st Century', took place at the Rudolstadt Festival on 7 July 2013. He and John presented their research in front of a 50-strong audience comprising teachers (Music, History, Politics or German), social workers, musicians, translators and journalists. This was followed by a discussion entitled 'New Perspectives for School and Political Education' featuring guests from the worlds of folk music (Jürgen Wolff), political song (Heinz Ratz), the media (Michael Kleff) and the Centre for Political Education of Thuringia (Peter Reif- Spirek). 22 participants filled in questionnaires (reference 9) and discussed how the research could be used in their professions (reference 10). The questions were:

- What relationship do you have to songs of the 1848 Revolution and how did you come across the theme?
- Why does a theme such as this belong to a folk festival?
- Can you use the research results presented here in your own work? If so, in what area?
- Have these research results cast a new light on the subject? If so, in what respect?

## Impact case study (REF3b)

## Summary of questionnaire answers:

Hauptert and Kröger (reference 9) and Melchior (reference 10) indicated they already used the 'Liederlexikon' in school teaching. Several other teachers said they would use it. It was praised as a useful resource for:

- the origins of songs and their process of transformation, for example, in the adaptations and parodies (Brock). Meijer (translator, singer) stated that the research illustrated how 'the path a song takes is just as important as the song itself'. Bülzingslöwen commended the updating of tradition through the discovery of new composers.
- political education classes dealing with Neo-Nazism and nationalism (Melchior), the definition of freedom (Bärtel), or in talking through historical contexts (Dörnenburg). the repertoires of singers and choirs (von Bülzingslöwen, Dörnenburg, Nagel, Vierheilig)
- journalistic and media work: Lehn for his book on the GDR folk scene; Nagel for his articles for the German Wikipedia; Engelle in an article he is currently writing for *Folker*.
- for new insights into the wider European context of 'A Man's A Man'/'Trotz alledem' (Siska, Nagel, Kröger and Neumann)
- for enabling an up-dated contextualisation of the subject (Ackermann)

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Letter: Email from Head of Ch. Links publishing house in Berlin which published the book *Zwei Clowns*
2. Letter: Email from a journalist with the leading German folk magazine *Folker*
3. Statement: Review of book *Zwei Clowns* by journalist Astrid Volpert in *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung (German Teachers Newspaper)* 2/ 1998, p.51
4. Video on file: Essay 'Wenzel Mensching and the Latest from the Da-Da-R' as special feature on official DVD release of Wenzel & Mensching's *Latest from the Da-Da-R* (DEFA Film Library 2009).
5. Statement: Review of book *Protest Song in East and West Germany* by journalists Petr Douruzka and Ken Hunt in *World Music*, 27.05.2008.
6. Letter: Email of 23 October 2012 from author of internet site 'Jakobite songs': songs': which used an excerpt from Robb and John's essay on Burns.
7. Letter: Email of 31 October 2012 from Ecumenical Network Churches Requesting permission to use an article of Robb and John's.
8. Letters: Emails of 7 March and 2 April 2013 from a musician and cabaret artist from Dresden on the impact of Robb's contribution to the colloquium "'Trotz alledem". Zum 200. Geburtstag des Dichters und Übersetzers Hermann Ferdinand Freiligrath' at the Rudolstadt Folk Festival in 2010.
9. Statements: Questionnaires of participants of workshop 'Historisch-politische Lieder im 21. Jahrhundert' at the Rudolstadt Folk Festival, 7 July 2013.
10. Video on file of workshop 'Historisch-politische Lieder': presentations, songs and forum discussion, 7 July 2013. Melchior statement on DVD chapter 2, 1:42:00.