

Institution: University of St Andrews 
Unit of Assessment: 28 – Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Poetry and Music in C19th France, or The Value of Art
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This study, based on Dr David Evans' work on C19th French poetry, encompasses a wide variety of schools outreach, recordings, concerts, workshops and public talks in Scotland and England, bringing practising musicians, schools and concert audiences together with academics and students, to explore the relationship of words to music, and song as a mode of artistic expression and intercultural exchange. It produced brand new compositions, brought little known works to a wider audience, offered new ways of listening and understanding challenging artworks, and inspired amateur composers to write their own material, based on fresh insights into the theory and practice of major artists.</p> 
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research comprises investigations by Dr David Evans, at the University of St Andrews since Sept. 2004, into C19th French poetry and music, combining two strands: (1) how major, internationally influential poets (Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Banville) conceptualised their poetry, in metaphorical terms, as music, and (2) how composers (Fauré, Debussy, Koechlin) responded to this verse by setting it to music. His findings deepen our understanding of the mechanisms behind the production of works of art, and how those artworks are to be interpreted in terms of both aesthetic and economic value. Following the French Revolution, as long-held beliefs over absolute values were collapsing, aesthetic value was no longer a given; in reaction to increasing industrialisation and the commodification of art, poets began to define their art in terms which could not be reduced to reproducible formulae: namely as music, an art which, paradoxically, is wordless. These poems had a profound influence on composers, who either set them to music (Fauré, Debussy, Duparc, Poulenc, Britten) or wrote instrumental music inspired by them (Debussy's <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>, and piano pieces). This research builds on Evans' first monograph <i>Rhythm, Illusion and the Poetic Idea</i> (Rodopi, 2004), which showed how the revolution in French verse forms of the late C19th illustrated a shift away from previous aesthetic certainties and towards an exciting period in which artists created art which asked questions of its very status as art. Evans has since demonstrated that, when composers such as Debussy and Fauré write music inspired by these texts, they create new harmonic worlds which encourage similar reflections on the limits of our definition of 'the musical'. Over the last eight years, Evans has presented this research at over twenty international conferences in the UK, France and USA, such as the annual meetings of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes and the Society for French Studies, including the papers 'What Might "Music" Mean? A Perspective from the French Nineteenth Century' at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (University of Edinburgh, 2004) and 'Music and Poetry at the Crossroads: Baudelaire, Debussy and 'Recueillement'', at the Institute for Music in Human and Social Development (Edinburgh, 2008), the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (Glasgow, 2008) and the University of Toulouse (France, 2008).</p> <p>This impact study also harnesses Evans' research (2005-2014) into the poetic theory and practice of Théodore de Banville, a contemporary of Baudelaire and Mallarmé who had a major influence on both poets and composers such as Debussy and Koechlin. This work has been presented in Evans' special edition of the internationally recognised journal <i>Dix-Neuf</i> dedicated to Banville (2010), 4 book chapters (2006-2013) and 14 conference papers. A paper revealing the extent of Banville's influence on Debussy, 'Communication Breakdown: Debussy, Banville and the Trouble with Serenades' has been presented in several different fora, including conferences on French Musico-Poetics (Royal Holloway, 2010) and Music and Modernism (University of Aberdeen, 2010), and a recording can be downloaded at www.backdoorbroadcasting.net ('Unsettling Scores').</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references) and **Evidence of the Quality of the Research****Monograph**

1. *Rhythm, Illusion and the Poetic Idea: Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé*
(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004)

Reviewers of this book wrote, 'David Evans [...] is undoubtedly the leading French prosody specialist of his generation. [...] This is a challenging study which will demand close attention from any student of poetry, and not just that of the nineteenth century.' (*The French Review*, 79:6, May 2006, 1373-74) and 'This is a substantial, scholarly examination of rhythm and its oscillations in the formative projects of French poetic modernity. [...] Evans shifts the terms of the critical debate [...]. As Evans urges us to relish, rather than conquer, rhythmic irresolution, so he critiques, refreshes, and significantly extends the critical tradition in modern poetry and rhythm studies.' (*Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 34:3-4, Spring-Summer 2006).

Journal articles

2. 'La Poésie en jeu(x): Théoville de Bandore sur la corde raide de la Rime'
(*Théodore de Banville*, ed. by David Evans, special issue of *Dix-Neuf*, 14:2, Oct. 2010, 167-84), DOI: [10.1179/147873110X12835202122569](https://doi.org/10.1179/147873110X12835202122569)
3. 'Music and Poetry at the Crossroads: Baudelaire, Debussy and "Recueillement"'
(*Dix-Neuf*, 8, Apr. 2007, 18-37; co-written with Dr Helen Abbott, Uni. of Sheffield) , DOI: [10.1179/147873107790725633](https://doi.org/10.1179/147873107790725633)
Article commended by Society for French Studies' Malcolm Bowie Prize, June 2008.

Book chapter

4. 'Théodore de Banville and the Mystery of Song'
(*Words and Notes in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Phyllis Weliver and Katharine Ellis, Boydell Press, 2013, pp. 165-182)

Research for these publications was supported by a Small Research Grant from the British Academy, a Small Research Grant from the Carnegie Trust and a Visiting Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh. Further evidence on the quality of this research is that Evans was invited to contribute an *état présent* to the journal *French Studies*, on words and music studies in the French C19th, a high-profile confirmation that his work in this interdisciplinary field is having an impact academically. The proposal for a forthcoming book on Banville, accepted by Legenda in Dec. 2011, received extremely complimentary feedback from their editorial board, who accepted it unanimously, with one reader commenting 'An exemplary proposal from a fine scholar'. Evans has reviewed material on Debussy for the journal *Scottish Music Review* and has been invited as keynote speaker to the University of Cambridge's annual Post-Graduate Conference in May 2014, and the annual Modern Languages conference of the University of Costa Rica in Dec. 2014. An invitation to a visiting post at William and Mary College, USA for Spring 2014 calls Evans 'a world-renowned specialist of C19th French poetry and culture' for 'his rich and highly-respected work in the field'.

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

This impact narrative has inspired a wide variety of local, national and international audiences to reflect on how and why art is produced, and how we consume it both financially and intellectually. It has contributed to cultural life and education beyond the HEI in which the research took place thanks to (1) collaboration with interpreters and creators of cultural capital (2) engagement with school pupils (3) public lectures and lecture-recitals.

(1) Collaboration with interpreters and creators of cultural capital: performing and creating new works

Evans rediscovered a series of song settings to which his research has drawn new attention and which, with the collaboration of professional musicians (mezzo-soprano and piano), he has brought to wider audience attention for the first time. Charles Koechlin's 1890s settings of Banville's *Rondels*

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include some fine examples of late C19th French song setting of which only one – ‘Le Thé’ – features as part of the common repertoire. Evans and the mezzo-soprano (S1) have presented this material in public concerts and lectures, ‘A Celebration of French Song’ (St Andrews, 10th April 2013) and ‘The Night Translated’ (Brook Theatre, Chatham, Kent, 8th May 2013). They commissioned a young composer (S2) to set the three remaining Banville poems which Koechlin neglected to set, thereby completing the song cycle with challenging contemporary works. These pieces were premiered at the spring 2013 concerts, at which the composer himself was present for discussion, and recorded for public consumption on soundcloud, where they have been heard over 200 times (S2). Additional concerts in London have taken this material to an even wider audience, and the composer plans for this new music to be performed in a series of future concerts in the USA. In this way, the project has had an impact on the cultural lives of audiences, composer and performers by bringing little-known works back into the spotlight and creating new, original works within a framework of cross-cultural and transhistoric dialogue. The project ‘stretched the musicianship and performance skills’ of the singer, inspiring ‘a number of new performance devices’ while ‘cross-discipline discussions’ encouraged new ‘critical and reflective thinking about programme development’ (S1). As for the composer, this ‘discourse on interpretation, idiomatic writing and the visceral physicality of performance’, with researcher and performer, has led to his ‘first serious, opus-numberable compositions’ and offered new ways of thinking about ‘the compositional process and the choice of poetic material’ (S2). Audience feedback (S3) highlighted the importance of the way in which the academic research was integrated into these cultural events in order to ‘contextualise the text and historical setting in comparison with contemporary society’, asking ‘questions which have been reiterated by artists to this day’, and inspiring the audience ‘to listen differently to the programme’.

(2) Engagement with school pupils

Evans ran a cross-curricular project with Scottish Highers pupils of both French and Music at a local school, Madras College (2 hrs school visit per week, Sept.-Dec. 2012) involving poetic and musical analysis, translation and composition, culminating in a concert in the school for 70 younger pupils as well as guests from the town (Dec. 2012). The music pupils studied a wide range of C19th poems and song settings, inspiring them to work on their own compositions; the texts for these compositions emerged from Evans’ work with the languages pupils, who analysed and translated a selection of poems which challenged them to go beyond the narrow requirements of their examination curriculum. The concert featured readings by the languages pupils of poetry both in the original language and translation, and performances by University Music Centre students of songs set both by major composers and the school pupils themselves. Feedback from pupils and staff alike attests that this activity is extremely rewarding for all concerned since, in the terms of the REF criteria, it creates and interprets cultural capital in such a way that it enriches and expands the imaginations of everyone involved. As the teacher’s report states, ‘this interdisciplinary approach exemplifies the best modern practice with regard to Curriculum for Excellence, making links between subjects in a manner which stimulates a life-long interest’ (S4).

(3) Public events: How is aesthetic value constructed? How do we consume art?

Evans has delivered a wide range of public lectures on his research into musico-poetics over the last few years, including ‘Debussy, Banville and the Problem with Fixed-Form Poems’ at a public event at Gresham College (London, 2012), available on YouTube (S6) since August 2012, which has attracted 320 views (by 31 July 2013). In St Andrews, he has spoken at the Franco-Scottish Society (2008, 2011, 2012), the University Open Association (2011), the Music Centre’s Summer Organ School lecture series (2011), and the international poetry festival StAnza (2013). Furthermore, in Dec. 2010 Evans also ran a masterclass on French song (Fauré, Berlioz), in conjunction with the University Music Centre, at which high calibre professional musicians – well-known pianist and soprano – explored performance issues with an audience comprising members of the public and students of Evans’ final year module ‘Music in C19th French Poetry’. The impact of the research in each case was a greater public understanding of the powerful social, economic, political, and aesthetic forces which may be seen to influence the way in which artists compose, and the ways in which audiences respond to those artworks. As one audience member (S5) writes, ‘Bringing

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students and townspeople together, as Dr Evans has done here [...] is a most important and worthwhile exercise', and that these events are 'backed by serious research of the subject [...] and a real desire to make the subject available to an audience of people of varied experience and abilities'.

With these three intertwined strands, this impact study established clear links between original academic research into new corpuses and methodologies, the wider public, performers and schools, generating new interest in languages, translation and music education. The project has altered the way its beneficiaries perceive poetry, music and song; offered opportunities for rediscovering music and expanding the repertoire; allowed for greater dialogue between performers of music and students of text; built bridges between music and poetry from diverse contexts around a central intellectual theme; and invited the creation and performance of new musical works.

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

(S1) Professional soprano, based in Kent corroborates the benefit of the research to music, both for artists and audiences.

(S2) Composer, Royal Academy of Music, London corroborates the benefit of new compositions as a result of the work.

(S3) Audience member of 'The Night Translated' lecture-recital, Chatham, Kent confirms the integration of the work into cultural events to inspire audiences.

(S4) Head of Music at Madras College, St Andrews corroborates the benefit to secondary school pupils of cross-disciplinary activities resulting from the work.

(S5) Secretary of the Franco-Scottish Society, St Andrews corroborates the benefits to the group as a result of understanding lesser-known areas of French culture.

(S6) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJWt2jZQRGg> corroborates that the public lecture 'Debussy, Banville and the Problem with Fixed-Form Poems' at Gresham College (London, 2012) has been available to the general public since August 17 2012.