23-24 January 2020
Bell Pettigrew Museum

Early Career Researcher Workshop on Slavic Studies and
the Public Humanities

Slavic Studies Goes Public

Organised by Dr Victoria Donovan and Darya Tsymbalyuk
Funded by the British Academy
Public engagement, impact, and knowledge exchange are concepts that today rank highly on research agendas across the UK. Yet, the discussion of what constitutes engagement, the politics and practicalities of building collaborations with non-academic partners, and the ethics of conducting such work are still at their very earliest stages. This workshop brings together Early Career Researchers in Slavic Studies to discuss the kinds of engagement work currently ongoing in the field and to reflect in a sustained way on the ideologies, ideals, and ambitions that inform work with public audiences. Bringing together academics, artists, and activists from Canada, the UK, Ukraine, the US, and Russia, the workshop will explore impact across borders, politics, and cultures. The event will take the form of roundtables, group discussion, creative interventions, and peer-to-peer mentoring sessions. For more information contact Victoria Donovan: vsd2@st-andrews.ac.uk; or Darya Tsymbalyuk: dt43@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Workshop participants: Maria Brock; Victoria Donovan; Precious Chatterje-Doody; Sofiya Gavrilova; Sarah Jackson; Maria Korolkova; Mikhail Melnichenko; Yevheniia Moliar; Viktoria Naumenko; Svitlana Osipchuk; Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic; Isobel Palmer; Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey; Clemens Poole; Jamie Rann; Kirill Repin; Darya Tsymbalyuk; Anton Valkovsky; Maria Voronchuk; Jessica Zychowicz.

DAY ONE

9.30 Introduction

9.45-11.15 Roundtable 1

WHAT?

*How can we recognize the voices and practices of ordinary members of the local community and incorporate these into the discourses and activities that emerge in the course of public engagement?* (Kirill Repin)

When reporting to funders of projects, we are often asked to determine the reach and significance of our work by evidencing “what has changed.” These changes can be physical (the innovation of new technology, databases, collections, creativity), but can also be more abstract (shifts in values, understanding, attitudes). What are the tangible and intangible legacies of public engagement work? What issues does this kind of “pro-social” productivity present? Who determines what is produced? How can those leading projects be sure that the legacy or change is desired by or necessary for the communities engaged? In this session, we ask roundtable leads to bring an object (a “what”) to the discussion that has some particular meaning or value for them in connection with their engagement work and to reflect on this in their talks.

*Speakers: Sofiya Gavrilova, Maria Voronchuk, Precious Chatterje-Doody*

*Moderator: Victoria Donovan*
11.15-11.45 Coffee Break

11.45-13.15 Roundtable 2

WHO?

Academics can be token presences but academics can also treat the outward-facing aspects of their work as ritualistic, meaningless box-ticking – something which can contribute to a mistrust of ‘expert’ institutions. (Jamie Rann)

In this roundtable, we will be talking about subjects, subjectivities, and intersubjectivities. The idea of selecting a community on which to enact “impact” is problematic. What other kinds of collaborative project design can we imagine? How can communities choose their academics, artists and activists rather than the other way around (crowd sourcing, other models for grass-roots project design)? How can the us/Them dichotomy be rethought (and with it the idea of “giving voice” to “voiceless” communities)? What about non-human subjectivities (engaging animals, landscapes, environments, climate)? What institutional factors and politics inform and determine the “who” of our public engagement work? Roundtable leads are asked to sketch a map of the collaborations that informed their present or future project designs for discussion with the group.

Speakers: Maria Brock, Viktoria Naumenko, Anton Valkovsky
Moderator: Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey

13.15-14.30 Lunch

14.30-16.00 Roundtable 3

WHERE?

(Is there) latent neo-colonialism built into...transporting cultural content, including methods of critical thinking, to what is perceived to be less culturally developed regions? (Clemens Poole). Is it ethical to bring your vision to a local site you don’t belong to? (Svitlana Osipchuk).

How do cultural politics determine our sites of work? Engagement in the arts and humanities tends to gravitate towards museums, archives, and schools. In the UK, financial and institutional incentives exist to encourage these kinds of collaboration (grant capture, government indicators of success). But what are the results? Tokenism or poorly conceived engagement? Strategic work with impact sympathetic partners who know how to effectively “evidence” change? How does this experience compare across national borders? Is public space a site with more potential for transformation in Russia and Ukraine? What risks and what potential does this kind of engagement involve? Can we reflect on the significance of virtual spaces where engagement takes place? Is the Internet the ultimate public space for engagement or an ethical black hole? Roundtable leads are asked to bring one photograph or image of an important site of engagement as a prompt for discussion.

Speakers: Mikhail Melnichenko, Maria Korolkova, Yevheniia Moliar, Jamie Rann
Moderator: (tbc)

16.00-16.30 Coffee Break
16.30-17.30 Keynote 1

Sarah Jackson, Engaged: Public Humanities on the Phone

From the receiver’s ‘black mouth’ in Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* (1931) to the ‘five hundred-quid worry bead’ in Will Self’s *Phone* (2017), telephones repeatedly ring, buzz and ping in modern and contemporary literature. But how might we productively engage different audiences with the cultural, political and textual implications of literary telephony – of crossed wires, phone-hacking and missed calls? Considering the telephone’s capacity to operate ‘between science, poesy, and thinking’ (Ronell 1989), this creative-critical paper weaves together a series of answer-machine messages in order to explore the potential of the telephone to shape our understanding of voice and engagement, as well as the possibilities of technology for facilitating cross-cultural conversation.

Dr Sarah Jackson is Associate Professor in English at Nottingham Trent University, where she works at the intersections between creative and critical writing. Her publications include *Pelt* (Bloodaxe, 2012), which won the Seamus Heaney Prize and was longlisted for the Guardian First Book Award, and *Tactile Poetics: Touch and Contemporary Writing* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015). A BBC New Generation Thinker and AHRC Leadership Fellow, she is currently working on a project entitled ‘Crossed Lines: Literature and Telephony’.

19.00 Dinner

DAY TWO

9.30-10.30 Keynote 2


When people make music together, social relations are brought into being and enacted in sound (Schutz 1964; Feld 1984; Cook 2013). These might be referred to as the micro-social interactions which emerge in a music-making event, but which intersect with and arguably refract larger social practices in which a music tradition is enmeshed (Born 2011). One way to think about this is that music-making practices are mechanisms through which a range of social relations can be facilitated and experienced. Different musical practices and their traditions afford and perhaps encourage the enactment of some social relations more than others, and arguments have been made for the suitability (or lack thereof) of musical practices for socio-musical interventions. In this workshop we will take an inside look at one of the most conspicuous examples of group music-making: the rehearsal and performance of a symphony orchestra. In doing so, some of the assumptions generally held about the micro-social interactions which take place in orchestras will be challenged, while revealing some of the persistent and somewhat hidden inequalities in the fabric of their wider social practices. We will look at an example of a musical intervention created by the Orchestra of St John’s that sought to leverage the social mechanisms of orchestral practice to amplify the voices of young refugees and investigate the extent to which it achieved its aims. Finally, we will experience first-hand the creation of social relations through music-making ourselves, using spoken word and percussion and an introduction to Santiago Vasquez’s conducted improvisation method called Ritmo y Percusión con Señas (Rhythm and Percussion with Signs).

Lead, match, assert, blend, resist?
Originally from Fairbanks, Alaska, Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey is a UK-based conductor committed to social justice and environmental sustainability through classical music. Cayenna serves as the Associate Conductor of the Orchestra of St John’s, Director of Performance at St Catherine’s College, Director of Research for the Oxford Conducting Institute, and is a postdoctoral researcher on the AHRC-funded research project Transforming 19th-Century Historically Informed Practice at the University of Oxford Faculty of Music. Her academic research focuses on the social psychology of orchestral music-making practices and the impact of socio-musical initiatives in classical music.

Cayenna has received multiple awards and grants for her collaborative social and environmental work through music as well as her advocacy for women composers. Most recently she has received Arts Council funding for her projects with the Oxford Spires Academy to amplify the voices of young refugees through music, and a week-long Oxford residency with Ensemble Zohra, Afghanistan’s first ever all-female orchestra, as part of a longer-term partnership between OSJ and the Afghanistan National Institute of Music.

10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

11.00-12.30 Roundtable 4

WHEN?

Budgets and work on the project end, but what about social connections which you need to put an end to? (Anton Valkovsky) Finding key local interlocutors who are willing to share information, networks, and collaborate on projects is more contingent on a process of trust-building than planning things well or relying on perseverance when things do not work out as expected. (Jessica Zychowicz)

At many universities in the UK (including St Andrews) ethical review is still not required for impact work since this isn’t considered “research with human subjects.” Yet, the need for serious reflection on the ethical implications of work with public audiences is obvious. Research integrity demands that mechanisms be built into projects to ensure that those involved are fully informed about the research’s aims, that participants’ wellbeing is ensured throughout a project’s lifetime, and relationships are maintained after its completion. In this slow and sustainable model is there any room for pop-up, opportunistic engagement? Work that capitalises on opportunities that may be transient, while remaining responsible and ethical? How do experiences compare across national borders? Does speed and spontaneity sometimes equal greater creativity? When does engagement end? When should it never have begun? Roundtable leads are asked to sketch their project’s “lifetime” and discuss the issues that delivering on this timeline presents.

Speakers: Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic, Svitlana Osipchuk, Jessica Zychowicz
Moderator: Sarah Jackson

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30-15.00 Roundtable 5

WHY?

How can gratitude and political ideals be channeled in productive ways that involve academic research as a starting point, but then go beyond it? (Maria Brock).

The goals of public engagement work are often accepted as self-evidently beneficial. When writing impact reports we speak about “broadening understanding” and “empowering” local communities. But there would appear to be many (neo-colonial) assumptions tied up in this thinking. Lina Srivastava has talked about the problematic notion of “giving voice” to the voiceless. Voices already exist in local communities, it is rather that we privilege our own capacities to “hear.” What
do we mean by “broadening understanding” and “stimulating creativity” – whose and in response to what? What does it mean to “inform policy” – who is listening and what motivates their desire to engage? Is public engagement a response to the failures of governmental politics? What is its relationship with broader structures of power? In this final session, we ask speakers to visualise/schematically represent the systems of power surrounding their engagement projects and reflect on how these systems determine and shape their work.

Speakers: Isobel Palmer, Clemens Poole, Kirill Repin
Moderator: Darya Tsymbalyuk

15.00-15.30 Coffee Break

15.30-17.00 Drop-in Mentoring Sessions

17.00-17.30 Closing Remarks

19.00 Dinner