'Old Adam was the first man formed': (In)forming and investigating listeners' experiences of new music as audience enrichment, public engagement and research

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Abstract:
Talk-based audience research has been shown to shape the engagement of research participants (Reason, 2010; O'Neill, Edelman & Sloboda, 2016; Pitts & Gross, forthcoming). Asking participants to articulate their arts experiences and providing them with the space to think out loud can prompt them to view the arts in new ways, simultaneously investigating and informing their engagement. However, it is unclear how this process fits within the academic paradigm of public engagement. If audience research functions as audience development or audience enrichment, could it also be considered as a form of public engagement?

This paper reports the opportunities and complications faced when employing public engagement and audience enrichment in a longitudinal study with eight folk music listeners, tracing their engagement with a new album and associated performances. The study offered a unique opportunity to investigate these concepts because public engagement was incorporated into the research design; alongside attending conventional performances, participants were also taken to a specifically-programmed 'public engagement' event, a roundtable discussion on the value of the arts that formed part of the AHRC's 'Being Human' festival 2015. The study therefore functions as a form of public engagement in two ways: firstly, by providing a space to reflect on arts experiences through careful questioning to prompt new ways of thinking about their listening; and secondly, by sharing the findings of earlier research projects through a scheduled public engagement event.

The study uncovered deeply nuanced findings around the primary question of engagement, but it also raised questions for the ethical and methodological implications of developing audience's experiences whilst simultaneously trying to record them. Despite this ouroboric paradox, incorporating public engagement activities may be beneficial to audience research, offering a way to access the musical experiences of self-conscious or increasingly 'sociologised' audience members (Hennion, 2001). By exploring the impact of taking part in the research on the participants, we question the distinction between ideas of audience enrichment and public engagement, and in addition, explore public engagement as research method.

Introduction

Public engagement and audience development are both terms that resist definition. Both describe attempts to develop the understanding, knowledge or engagement of members of the public, resting on an uncomfortable set of assumptions about the rights of researchers, arts organisations or practitioners to 'improve' the attendance habits or knowledge of an 'ignorant' public (Hagger-Johnson et al., 2013; Kawashima, 2006; Williamson, Cloonan & Frith, 2011). Activities which attempt to deepen existing audiences' engagement with arts experiences by providing additional information on the creation or meaning of art works are difficult to disentangle from public engagement events which broaden access to research findings. From our experience, such research audiences often consist of existing arts enthusiasts, and therefore the act of communicating research findings can in turn shape arts engagement. To add to the confusion, within audience studies there is a widely-accepted belief that taking part in post-performance facilitated conversations, as part of a research project, can itself deepen the engagement of audience members. Furthermore, public engagement is increasingly being incorporated into research methods (as seen by the recent Public Engagement as Method conference at the University of Sheffield[1]), making it all but impossible to separate the collection of data from the assessment of the impact of the study.

In this article, we explore notions of public engagement and audience development in a study investigating the responses of eight folk music listeners to a new album released by one of the authors, Fay Hield, a folk singer and lecturer at the University of Sheffield. Motivated by the necessity for academic staff to evidence the impact of their research on the wider public, Hield invited Sarah Price to draw on her experience of collaborative audience research to co-design a project investigating the impact of Hield's musical work. The primary aim of our project was to examine how audiences engage with the stories in folk songs and findings relating to that research question are currently being prepared for publication. However, alongside gathering this data, we found the act of engaging in the

research process affected participants' experience of listening to this music. This paper focuses on the impacts of taking part in research, contributing to debates around the relationship between research and audience development. Our study employed innovative methods in an attempt to access nuanced, individual accounts of the listening experience from an audience base that has a tendency to be alert to scholarly debates and, consequently, self-conscious about their engagement. Here, we cast a critical lens on how these methods impacted on our findings. While they produced rich results and significant new findings, we are honest about the flaws in the project design and issues that came to light during its implementation. In particular, we consider the impact on the participants, questioning how the use of public engagement as part of our method of investigation affected the kind of data produced. We end by discussing the ethical implications of such a research project, showing both the pros and cons of implementing a study which simultaneously investigates and informs audience members' experiences.

Public engagement and audience development

Academic researchers in the UK are under increasing pressure to demonstrate the impact of their research on wider society, both as part of Research Excellence Framework submissions (Stern, 2016) and through a shift in ideology towards the 'engaged university' (NCCPE, n.d.). Researchers are being encouraged to take part in public engagement activities to disseminate their findings beyond the confines of the academy. 'Public engagement' is a confusing term in the context of audience research, as it is also used by Arts Council England and other arts organisations to refer to people engaging with arts and culture (Arts Council England, 2016). Here, we use 'public engagement' as it is defined by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE).

> Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.
>
> (NCCPE, 2017)

As the NCCPE's definition highlights, public engagement is not simply a process of conveying or transferring knowledge to the general public. Although events of this nature such as talks and roundtables do still take place, a recent Wellcome report has noted a shift towards more 'interactive and dialogic forms of public engagement' (Burchell, 2014, p.6). The notion that knowledge is merely transferred is dated. At the Public Engagement as Method conference in 2016, a question was raised as to whether carrying out a research project with participants was itself a form of public engagement. It could be argued that talk-based research projects fulfil many of the requirements set out in the NCCPE's definition of public engagement. In-depth qualitative measures certainly involve two-way process of interaction and listening, though since the purpose of research is to solicit data from the participants,

there remains a question mark over whether this research process is truly 'mutually beneficial'.

This is further complicated by studies which incorporate public engagement into the act of conducting research, not simply by sharing findings, but opening up the process of problem identification and analysis to the participants. In these situations, co-production methods are in closer alignment, as both academics and experts from the communities under investigation form a research team to develop a shared understanding of the issues. In this case, all participants undergo a change in their own understanding of the context through the process (Durose et al. 2012).

In this study, we required our research participants to attend a public engagement event in the middle of the longitudinal research, in the hope that it would expose them to new ideas about the value of the arts, deepen their understanding of their own engagement, and empower them to speak more freely with less facilitation from the researcher in subsequent conversations. While attending this event did indeed demystify the methods and aims of the research for the participants, as they were recruited to address our own research questions, there remained an imbalance of power between researcher and participant that prevented participants from truly becoming 'co-researchers' (Walmsley, 2016a; Hartley & Benington, 2000). Indeed, this project exposes the privileged position of the investigator in carrying out audience research projects. We, as investigators, set the agenda with the parameters and emphasis of each discussion geared towards topics that may yield new knowledge for us, rather than being dictated by what was most important to the participants involved. Nevertheless, this is not to deny participants agency in this research; participants influenced the direction of the conversation and, as we show below, challenged the nature of our questioning and analysis over time.

In inviting participants to attend a public engagement event to deepen their understanding of their own engagement, this project impacted on their actual engagement with the music. As such, it could be seen as a form of audience development. Audience development is a term used within the arts and media industries to describe attempts to diversify or expand audiences, or deepen the engagement of existing audiences, usually through initiatives from arts organisations (Kawashima, 2000; 2006; McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001). The breadth and ambiguity of definitions of 'audience development' render the term somewhat unhelpful. Consequently, researchers have distinguished attempts to grow, diversify or change the attendance habits of audience members, from interventions designed to deepen the impact of arts experiences. The latter has instead been referred to as 'audience engagement' (Brown & Ratzkin, 2011; Walmsley, 2016b) or 'audience enrichment' (Conner, 2013). However, as Walmsley (2016b) has noted, there are 'definitional challenges' around the use of the term 'engagement' (p.68) and the term is rarely used consistently in either audience research literature or within the arts industry. For this reason, in this paper we use the term 'audience enrichment' to describe activities which attempt to deepen audience members' engagement with an arts experience.

Post-performance discussions have been shown to be an effective form of audience enrichment. Lynne Conner (2013) claims that discussion is an integral part of the arts experience, as most audience members need to talk to fully process their experiences (p.6). As Pitts and Gross (forthcoming) have noted, 'the conversation itself is more than just a research tool, but can also enrich and solidify the arts experience itself'. The act of conducting post-performance qualitative research can deepen engagement and shape the memory that is retained of the event (see also O'Neill, Edelman & Sloboda, 2016; Reason, 2010). Brown and Ratzkin (2011) also raise an interesting possibility that repeated engagement with post-performance feedback might develop the critical skills of audience members (p.33), suggesting a longer-term impact on their arts attendance beyond the experience of a particular event.

While there is growing acknowledgement of the potential power of post-performance conversations to deepen audience members' engagement with and enjoyment of an arts event (Brown & Ratzkin, 2011; Pitts & Gross, forthcoming), there is rather less written on the quality of such conversations. An exception is Conner's (2013) monograph, *Audience Engagement and the Role of Arts Talk in the Digital Era*, a passionate plea for arts organisations to 're-democratise' (p.3) meaning-making by validating audience members' reactions in post-performance discussion groups. Conner lists a number of factors which promote 'productive' arts talk, such as: creating a hospitable environment with a culture of respect, listening authentically, welcoming indecision, celebrating participants' struggle to articulate their responses, employing powerful questions to change the course of the conversation, and 'check[ing] your ego at the door' as a facilitator (pp.125-132). Conner advocates for the facilitator's role to be to support audience members, pacified by the silence of the concert hall, to find their own voice, a task which resonates with Katya Johanson and Hilary Glow's (2015) claim that audience feedback is often biased towards positive evaluation due to audience members not feeling adequately empowered to speak critically about their experiences.

A utopian aim is for facilitators to create environments in which artists, arts workers and audiences take part in regular, honest exchanges, thereby rendering the job of facilitator defunct. However, this is where Conner's argument diverges from the act of conducting post-performance conversations as a data-gathering tool. The researcher-as-facilitator, armed with predetermined research questions, cannot fully remove their agenda from the conversation. There is therefore a conflict of interest between the aims of the research project to collect data from the participants and the side effect of developing the participants' reflective skills and deepening their engagement with the music.

Within the arts, and especially audience research, ideas of public engagement and audience enrichment are difficult to separate, as both attempt to deepen engagement by providing publics with additional knowledge and new ways of engaging with artworks. There are ongoing debates around the authority of arts organisations to attempt to manipulate their audiences through these initiatives and the ways in which these reinforce ideas of

cultural hierarchy within the high arts (Kawashima, 2006). The act of carrying out audience enrichment or public engagement activities is therefore wrought with ethical implications.

Investigating audiences

The purpose of our study was to measure the impact of new music by Fay Hield (2016). *Old Adam*, an album of folk songs, was released to critical acclaim in February 2016, with the Guardian naming it one of the 'Best Albums of 2016' (Jonze, 2016). The project was designed to explore the impact of the album on both artist and listener, to investigate contemporary values and meanings of folk songs. This paper reports on the audience research strand of this project. There has been surprisingly little research into audience experience at presentational folk music performances (a rare example being McKerrell, 2012). We first investigated the value of folk music to its audiences through an online survey, which consisted of six qualitative questions which asked respondents to describe how they first encountered folk music, how it came to be a significant part of their lives, and to identify events and songs that were particularly meaningful to them. The survey was publicised to Hield's fans via Facebook creating a snowball effect with 69 'shares' producing an unexpectedly high response. The survey attracted 234 responses in four days with many people taking the time to write detailed answers. This implies a highly-engaged audience of folk music listeners, with a strong desire to discuss their musical experiences. Given the limited resources of this modest project, it was impossible to analyse the voluminous survey data in depth prior to conducting the longitudinal phase of the study, however, general trends were identified and the survey responses will inform future research and publications.

From the survey, eight respondents were recruited to take part in the longitudinal phase of the research, providing they were able to attend all three scheduled focus groups. Eight was determined the optimum number as a balance between our desire to maximise the number of participants we spoke to, whilst retaining a manageable conversation where all participants would have space to talk about their experiences. This small sample size left us vulnerable to attrition, and two participants could not attend the second focus group, but all eight participants remained engaged until the culmination of the study. Participation in this phase involved attending the following events, each of which was immediately followed by a focus group discussion lasting approximately 45 minutes:

- Performance: *Old Adam* album preview show by Fay Hield and the Hurricane Party (15th October 2015, Music in the Round, The Crucible Studio, Sheffield)
- Public engagement event: 'Seeing Human in Song', round-table with scholars and practitioners, including Hield, discussing how stories help us to understand what it means to be human (13th November 2015, AHRC Being Human Festival 2015, Upper Chapel, Sheffield)[2]
- Performance: by Fay Hield and the Hurricane Party as part of the *Old*

Adam launch tour (15th March 2016, Firth Hall, Sheffield)

Lines of inquiry were devised and data analysed by both Hield and Price, with the focus groups being conducted by Price alone, as it was felt that participants would be more honest or critical about their engagement without Hield being present.

The decision to conduct this research as a focus group stemmed from a desire to explore the immediate reactions of multiple participants to the performances and public engagement event through talk-based methods. The benefits of conducting group conversations are that they provided opportunities for participants to contextualise their experiences and to challenge each other, producing data of greater depth and richness. The hazards of conducting qualitative research in a group setting are that certain voices can dominate or that participants do not feel comfortable enough to speak openly. Furthermore, there is a danger of 'groupthink' (Janis, 1982) in which the desire amongst the group to maintain harmony means that potentially controversial opinions or deviations from the consensus go unexpressed or are suppressed. Taking these issues into account in the method design phase, we did consider supplementing the focus group data with individual interviews with the eight participants in order to elicit further responses without the pressure of the group setting. However, this study was modest in scale, and at the point where interviews were scheduled, analysis of the focus group data suggested these potential issues were not compromising the data collection, and that the remaining researcher time would be better spent analysing existing data.

We recruited from survey respondents who had provided their contact details on a first-come-first-served basis. This led to a group of eight participants who were all highly engaged in folk music, attending performances at least six times a year and listening to folk music recordings on a weekly basis. We could have sought to assemble a group representing a range of levels of engagement with folk music; however, as longitudinal research demands a substantial commitment from the participants, it is probable that those with an established investment in the music were most likely to volunteer.

With such a small research sample, questions around the generalisability of the findings are plentiful (Höijer, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). This is complicated by the fact that we recognise that folk music audiences are diverse in their type and level of engagement. However, in their demographic, the focus group can be seen as representative of many participants of the folk scene (Hield & Crossley, 2014), being white and primarily middle-aged or older, with one younger participant. While they are all highly-engaged audience members, they do still represent some of the variety in folk music audiences, in that some actively participate in music making and some only listen, some regularly go to folk clubs whereas others exclusively attend more professionalised concerts, and some are relatively new to folk music, whereas for others, it has been a lifelong passion. As such, we take the approach that the views of this focus group do shed light on the engagement of the wider audience for presentational, professional folk music performances, but that they cannot be said to speak for all audience members, offering a window into the listening

experience, but not reducing our analysis to one particular interpretation. The methodology employed here is valuable for the depth and richness of qualitative responses. A larger-scale study could develop our method by combining focus groups with additional research tasks such as interviews, diaries or participant observation, and juxtaposing additional focus groups and interviews with a diverse range of audience members to test the prevalence of these participants' experiences.

The longitudinal phase was designed to fulfil two aims. Firstly, it traced the listeners' growing familiarisation with the songs on the album, through which we were able to gain new understanding of the mechanisms by which songs transform from unknown entities to meaningful parts of listeners' engagement (Hield and Price, in progress-a). We were able to study audience responses to live performances in comparison with recorded music which, when combined with the performers' accounts, yielded new insights into the perception of an artist-audience connection from both sides of the stage (Hield and Price, in progress-b).

The second aim of the longitudinal design, and one that is most pertinent to this discussion, was to achieve more nuanced and individualised accounts of the musical engagement of these listeners. From Hield's experience as both a practitioner and researcher of folk music, it was known that folk audiences are often highly engaged with critical debates around the music and even with associated academic literature (Hield, 2010). Indeed, being an 'expert' on the repertory, traditions and debates can act as a form of currency for listeners to negotiate their position within the hierarchies that exist in this scene (Stock, 2004). As such, it was felt that members of this listening community may be particularly self-aware in discussing their engagement. This was confirmed by the survey responses; respondents tended to regurgitate soundbites from established discourses around the universality of folk song subject matter (Gammon, 2008), and problematic ideas around 'imagined villages' and musics of the people (Boyes, 1993). The longitudinal design intended to allow participants to grow more comfortable with one another, and with Price as the researcher, so that their responses became more personalised. In addition, conducting three conversations allowed us to return to topics and ask them to clarify their viewpoints, to confirm or reject our conclusions, and to dig down further into their opinions and attitudes.

Requiring the participants to attend a public engagement event similarly aimed to provoke more nuanced and less prescriptive responses. The public engagement event was hosted by Hield and included a poet (Helen Mort), a storyteller (Tim Ralphs), an illustrator (Nick Hayes) and a researcher of life stories (Brendan Stone) to present examples of their work and discuss how they find that the stories they work with relate to, or help construct, what it means to be human. The findings presented in this public engagement event emerged from previous studies and the artistic practice of the speakers. Although it concluded with a brief 'question and answer' session, the event itself was non-dialogic in nature. However, the focus group which followed was very much interactive, and demonstrated that the public engagement event had challenged the group's perspectives on what the research was about, releasing new ideas and perspectives on their own

experience of engaging with folk song. Public engagement, in this instance, was not the culmination of the project, but integrated into its methodology.

Incorporating public engagement into the methodology complicated the relationship between investigating and informing the participants' musical engagement. In the discussion that follows, we first consider how the act of participating in the research acted as a form of audience enrichment by deepening the participants' engagement with Hield's music and folk music more generally. We then explore the role of public engagement activity within the research project and how it affected the participants' responses. The most direct form of public engagement took place in their attendance at 'Seeing Human in Song'; however, it could be argued that there was a more indirect form of public engagement taking place throughout the project. In each of the focus groups, Price returned to the same topics, bringing up comments from previous conversations. This had the effect of transmitting our developing analyses back to the participants. The difficulties faced in verifying our conclusions with the participants revealed a great deal about the problems faced in combining public engagement with audience research. In the final section, we explore the implications in terms of research ethics and data validity within this project, providing practical advice for similar projects and suggesting directions for further study.

Audience research as audience enrichment

Over the course of the three focus groups, we found evidence that taking part in the research was shaping participants' ideas. On a small number of occasions, participants acknowledged that their attention had been drawn to aspects of their engagement that they had not noticed before. For Abigail[3], the topic of conversation during the focus group was causing her to consider her listening in a new light, seemingly thinking out loud as the conversation went on. In addition, Steve described how he had been thinking about his engagement with folk music as he was travelling to the performance and focus group, suggesting that earlier conversations were playing on his mind and that preparing for taking part in the research prompted him to think more deeply about his choice of listening than he had done previously.

> Abigail   I think, for me, the [songs] that [I relate to most] – I haven't thought about this before – it's always the modern ones, the [songs] that are newly written.
>
> Steve   I was thinking about this driving in, actually. […] The [songs] I like as well are the ones where the story's not entirely clear. Like that Hag in the Beck. I thought 'what is this about, exactly?' And I really like that because you go and listen again and think 'what is this?' […] I like that, because you think 'umm, I wonder which way this is', so I sort of like it when it's not entirely [clear].
>
> (Focus Group 3)

For Abigail and Steve, taking part in the research had made them think about trends in the kind of songs they enjoy that they had not noticed before. The participants' growing awareness of their own engagement was demonstrated through questions that were asked during the research and conversations that took place in previous focus groups. In the first and third focus groups, there were discussions around how listening to new music differed from the experience of listening to familiar music. In this discussion, participants compared how they listened during a performance, in the process, realising that not all listeners were hearing the music in the same way.

Steve	I think when it's completely new, you find yourself trying to listen to the words to hear them, to think 'what is this about?' […]
Pauline	I still think, for me, it's always the melody first.
Steve	Really?
Pauline	Yeah, always the melody first.
Max	Well, I'm the same. I don't actually hear the words to begin with and it's more the impression that the sound makes, the music and the feel of it and the sound of the words rather than the reading of the words. […]
Abigail	I was thinking about this during the concert, actually. When she was talking about Queen Eleanor and she was telling the story of it before she started and I thought 'gosh, this sounds interesting, I must actually listen to the words'. And I realised, as I was doing that, that what normally happens is I listen to the first kind of verse or so and I listen to the words and I focus in on them and think 'gosh, this is an interesting song', and then they go into an instrumental bit and I get distracted with the melody, and in my head then, I'm just kind of singing the melody and the words have disappeared. But with that one, because I'd heard described the story and I thought 'I want to hear it', I really made an effort and listened to the words all the way along. And by the end of it I was going [gasps] 'oh my gosh! This song!!' […]
Pauline	We're all different, aren't we?
Nicholas	Isn't it amazing?!

(Focus Group 3)

Taking part in the research contextualised participants' listening. The first focus group included a great deal of discussion about the importance of words to participants' engagement with a song. Some felt that hearing the words was vital to engaging, while others felt that the music and sound of the song was more important when hearing it for the first time, understanding the lyrics came later with repeated listening to a recording. Evidently, for Abigail, taking part in these discussions also influenced the listening

experience she had during the *Old Adam* launch tour performance, making her more aware of how she listened during a concert. Not only did she realise that she tended to be 'distracted by the melody' but also, having become aware of this, she adapted her listening, paying far more attention to the words of the song. She reported a strong emotional reaction to the story of the song from having made a concerted effort to listen to the lyrics, therefore taking part in the research seems to have deepened her aesthetic engagement on this occasion. Earlier research fed into both her listening experience and the data gathered at the later focus group.

In the focus groups, participants also compared their knowledge of folk music with that of other participants. For Abigail, this seemed to lead to some insecurity about her own engagement, particularly in relation to Steve and Anne who were more experienced in active participation in folk music.

Abigail	I have come to [folk] from more modern folk music so I haven't got all the, kind of, back catalogue, if you like. And I don't go to folk clubs, like sing arounds kind of thing, so I don't hear them that way, so I think they're all new to me.
Steve	Because I'm sort of the opposite. She did the one about the prostitute, *Bad Girl*, and I was sitting there thinking 'hang on, this is the *Streets of Laredo*'. This is a female version of the *Streets of Laredo*, so I sort of had the opposite thing of thinking 'oh, I've never heard this about a woman, it's usually about a cowboy', a dying cowboy. And there were certain phrases in it, I thought 'oh yeah, I remember that'.
Abigail	I mean, I'm starting to do that. The more I listen to, I'm starting to pick up on different versions of the same song, but I feel I'm talking in this group that a lot of you have got much more of that from your experiences already that I don't have.

(Focus Group 3)

While these types of conversations are common in the course of participatory folk events (Hield, 2010), it would be unusual for audiences to speak to each other in such depth during concert attendance, and so engaging in this research gave audiences a context for sharing such information. They gained a deeper understanding of one another's backgrounds, developing a clearer picture of their place within the folk scene. This could be viewed as bonding, as an opportunity to understand one another and discover connections, but from another perspective, it highlighted differences in knowledge or experience with the potential of alienating those who felt less connected with the event, creating barriers. The makeup of the focus group could therefore impact on how participants perceive folk audiences more widely.

As participants became more aware of each other's knowledge, they began to draw on this as a resource. Colleen asked the other participants for the name of a tune that she loved but did not know what it was called.

Colleen	The tune that they played – the musicians played – that was… [...] I'm dying to hear the proper name of it.
Anne	*The Princess Royal*.
Steve	*The Princess Royal*.
Colleen	*The Princess Royal*! I've got to write it down because I just love it!
Anne	It's a morris tune. [sings]
Colleen	It's one of my favourite tunes of all time!! I love it.
Steve	It normally sounds a bit simpler than that. [sings] It's great! It's a great tune.

<div align="right">(Focus Group 3)</div>

Colleen did indeed write the name of the tune down so that she could look it up and listen to it again. Having more experienced folk players and singers in the research group enabled Colleen to draw on their knowledge to further her own engagement. In addition, Anne and Steve, the most knowledgeable members of the group, gave her extra information: that it was a morris tune and that the version played in the performance was unusually complex. In this way, they not only gave Colleen the practical information she asked for but demonstrated their knowledge of the wider folk music culture.

At a later stage in the third focus group the conversation moved on to interaction between the artist and the audience. Here, Steve was able to draw on his experience of playing in bands to give the other participants some insight into what might be going on in the minds of the musicians as they played.

Steve	It's interesting that because I play, I'm in a band, and we get told all the time 'for goodness' sake, smile!' […] We're zoned into the music, actually, it's not that we're not enjoying ourselves because we are, we're just… and it's not that we're concentrating fiercely to do it, either, it's more that you just think 'oh, this is good!!' and you just get into it. […] But actually, to stand there and smile, you really have to sort of think 'right, I must smile'. […]
Max	Doesn't it happen naturally though? If there's some spark there? To feel you've got to smile whilst performing, must be a mistake or at least, it's something added on.
Steve	All I can say is when you're playing, you get zoned into the music and smiling is the last thing that crosses your mind.

<div align="right">(Focus Group 3)</div>

Max's idea of what it must be like to be a performer was challenged through being able to speak to another performer giving him an insight into what it is like to perform. This was potentially an understanding he did not want to gain. The art of performance can be based on smoke and mirrors, and this raises a question into how deeply audiences want to understand the building blocks of an artistic performance before it reduces their enjoyment of the experience. While taking part in such forms of research certainly seems to shape participants' understanding of this musical genre, it may not necessarily yield an improvement.

All the examples quoted above were taken from the third focus group. Participants spoke amongst themselves much less in the first focus group, and this form of interaction increased over the course of the three conversations. Longitudinal research helped to move the discussions towards a more open form of facilitation where they guided the conversation themselves, as seen from this conversation on the importance of words in engaging with a song.

Colleen	[Fay] could be singing the telephone directory for all I care! […] You could have words that were totally crazy and it doesn't make any sense at all.
Steve	I'm not sure I could, actually.
Colleen	I could.
Steve	The test of that is listening to music in another language.
Colleen	Oh, I can listen to music in another language.
Steve	I can listen to that but only up to a certain point. There comes a time when I think 'I don't know what any of these songs are about'.
Max	That's an interesting point that. The South African Black Mambazo – I listen to that quite a lot and I don't understand a word, but the impression that it creates… and there's honesty in that. […]
Debbie	But if I hear a song in English and I think it's really trite or the words don't fit together very well, it really irritates me. […]
Colleen	As a rider to what I said, if the words are particularly, you know, saccharine, lovey-dovey and horrible, then I can't take it. But I suppose if I could if the tune and the singer was particularly nice, I could maybe blot out the horrible words.

(Focus Group 3)

The focus group context provided a forum for people to explore their initial ideas, hear one another's perspectives and go on to refine their own position. As researchers, this is an established and useful process to monitor strongly held beliefs and identify areas for opinion change; for participants, it is an environment in which they confront their assumptions and dig a little deeper into their own understandings of their experiences or viewpoints, offering an opportunity for change. The focus group context was valuable for

this project because the group conversation yielded nuanced data, acknowledging the primacy of individuality of experience. Therefore, the makeup of the group is of central importance to the potential for wider generalisations (Robson, 2011, p.294).

The impact of the longitudinal nature was that participants felt increasingly comfortable with each other. This was not only seen in their willingness to challenge each other's opinions but also in their confidence to express their own views more firmly. It was particularly visible in Colleen's comments through the three conversations. In the first focus group, there was quite a long conversation about live and recorded music and the difficulties of grasping the meaning of songs when hearing them live for the first time.

Colleen	I was thinking in some of them that I'd really like to hear this on the album again, because it would be balanced differently.
Anne	Oh, but folk music's live!!!
Colleen	Oh!! I'm not saying I don't like live performances...
Anne	I know, I know, I know.
Colleen	...I'm just saying that it would give me a different experience.

(Focus Group 1)

Anne's quick intervention to claim that folk music was a genre that should be heard live was part of a certain amount of policing of assumed agreement regarding folk music tropes, especially that it should be live not recorded, acoustic rather than amplified, and a participatory rather than presentational artform (Turino, 2008). In Anne and Colleen's exchange above from the first focus group, Anne's desire to expound the right and wrong ways of presenting and engaging with folk music caused Colleen to softly defend her position. In the third focus group, however, Anne's rather loaded questions about the relative merits of different ways of presenting folk music was met by a much stronger response from Colleen.

Anne	How do you think [the connection between performers and audience members] works though in the sort of on-stage, PA, us-and-them that you get when you've got a stage?
Colleen	But all performances are different, aren't they? We have to appreciate them for what they are. If some of them just stand there and do their performance [...] then that's fine by me.
Pauline	Or is that the difference between listening to a CD and actually being at a live performance and feeling a bit more of the live thing?
Colleen	It's funny, isn't it, that? See, I prefer the CD to be quite truthful.

(Focus Group 3)

Colleen had the confidence to resist against the idea that folk music was intrinsically better live. In general, earlier in the process, when established folk tropes were rehearsed, they

came out strongly and authoritatively, but once people had spent time exploring their feelings and understanding their various engagements in deeper ways, they were less forthcoming with presenting ideas as one sided and factual, giving more space to multiple perspectives, fewer dichotomies, and perhaps even understanding their own experience as more multifaceted than they had imagined it on initial contact.

We have shown here that the act of conducting this research project actively shaped the engagement of this group of listeners, and may have developed their reflective skills and critical thinking regarding their listening habits, thereby shaping their future engagement. The questions we asked them in the focus group prompted them to look on their engagement in new ways and our decision to host group conversations, rather than individual interviews, provided points of comparison, allowing them to contextualise their listening with other audience members' experiences and learn new things. The impact of fellow research participants on their responses increased over the course of the project as they grew in confidence, drawing on each other's knowledge to fill gaps in their own understanding, challenging each other to clarify or back up their statements, and feeling comfortable enough to express potentially controversial views. In this way, the growing confidence of the participants allowed them to challenge the soundbites of the survey. This suggests that, while the presence of more knowledgeable folk listeners within the group may have inhibited earlier conversations, the choice of a longitudinal study helped to overcome these difficulties.

These factors shaped the participants' views in quite subtle ways; the first focus group discussion was not dissimilar to spontaneous post-performance conversations that might be had amongst companions. The second focus group, on the other hand, included a more direct intervention, designed to influence their responses, leading to more abstract and philosophical contemplation. The third focus group returned to conversational style, though the tone and nature of the discussion was more nuanced. By requiring participants to attend a public engagement event, we hoped to expose them to new ideas around the value of arts engagement, thereby prompting them to consider their own engagement in a new light. The next section considers the impact of attendance at this public engagement event, as well as more indirect forms of public engagement that were manifest in the implementation of this research.

Impact of public engagement event on data collection

The participants demonstrably enjoyed attending the public engagement event and engaged deeply with the ideas presented, happily discussing them at length in the focus group afterwards. Indeed, this was the easiest of the three focus groups to conduct as conversation flowed naturally requiring very little intervention by Price, sparked by the ideas put forward by the five speakers. Participants took it in turns to identify a variety of key ideas that had particularly struck them as interesting and, seemingly, that they would continue to mull over in the days to come.

Pauline   What was interesting for me is... [...] as individuals, we hear exactly the same thing as he's saying, but we're all going to interpret it differently. [...] It's different as soon as it leaves someone's mouth or the page or whatever. It becomes different according to who's taken it. That was the kind of thing I was getting from tonight. [...]

Anne   I think what I found most interesting was... I think it was something Fay said about songs and stories and poems [...] allowing us to practice how we feel. So, the responses that we have to some of these stories or song are enabling us to sort of rehearse for if we meet a situation that makes us feel like that in real life. I thought that was a very interesting idea that I haven't actually ever considered before. So, that's something that I'm sort of taking away to ponder on. [...]

Debbie   I found that quite interesting when they were talking about [...] the only way you can know, even remotely, what is in someone else is through story. You can only know what they tell you, you can only know about, *really*, how people feel, through empathy, through stories.

(Focus Group 2)

These comments did not follow in succession; in each case, participants put forward a concept which they had found interesting, which was then discussed and dissected by the whole group. During and after the event, participants were happy to engage with these quite abstract ideas about the power of storytelling and the experience of listening to a story. The event seems to have been particularly captivating for its mixture of both presentation and discussion of art works. Audience members were therefore able to ground these more abstract ideas on the value of storytelling with the immediate experiencing of the songs, stories, poetry and images.

We wanted to investigate whether these ideas could also be connected to the listening experience of the participants when they attended the *Old Adam* gig in March, which immediately preceded the third focus group. We were particularly intrigued by one topic of conversation around 'letting your guard down' when listening.

Max   The interesting thing I found, tonight, was the reference to the sound of listening. [...] When the storyteller was telling a story, and there was a kind of captivation in the audience that he could feel, that enabled him to tell a story more effectively. [...] It needs an engagement from the listener [...] a connection, a commitment. A willingness to let your own guard down, to enable you to feel part of what other people are experiencing.

(Focus Group 2)

This was a topic that the whole group discussed, agreeing with the idea that, in listening to a story, sung or spoken, the listener places themselves in a position of vulnerability, as the story may provoke unpleasant emotions, provide a difficult listening experience or make them feel uncomfortable. Given that one of our research questions was around how listeners connect to live and recorded songs, and the communication between audience and performer within a live performance, we were keen, in the third focus group, to explore further this sense of vulnerability and commitment made by audience members when listening to a live performance.

> *Last time, when we were at the event about stories and storytelling, we talked bit about being vulnerable when you're listening to stories. I was wondering if at any point tonight you felt more or less comfortable or vulnerable?*
>
> [long pause]
>
> [Colleen shook her head]
>
> *You don't think so?*
>
> Colleen   Don't think so, no.
>
> Max   There seemed to be two or three of them where there was a slight hush […] there seemed to be just that little moment when it finishes before the applause and that, maybe, coincidences with this *opening up* a little bit.
>
> <div align="right">(Focus Group 3)</div>

The participants seemed somewhat confused by the question; it was as though it bore no resemblance to their experience of listening. We believe that what the participants rejected was the strength of the word 'vulnerable'. This was a term that we had used in analysing the conversation from the second group; Max had talked about the audience making a 'commitment' to listening and 'letting their guard down' in order to fully engage with a story, without knowing where the story would go and whether it would be an unpleasant or difficult experience. Our findings had been that the vulnerability of audience members was a significant aspect of engaging with stories in a live performance. Yet this word, 'vulnerable' seemed an inappropriate description of their experience of listening to Hield perform, bringing with it connotations of being unsafe, uncomfortable, or under scrutiny. While Max seemed to understand Price's reference, and returned to the language of 'opening up', similar in sentiment to 'letting your guard down', for the rest of the group, this was far too strong a term to relate to their own listening.

The difficulty of bringing up previous topics of conversation was never fully reconciled. In the instance above, the questions jumped too far ahead, testing our findings rather than reintroducing the topic for further discussion. This highlights the power imbalance between researcher and participant in such a project. In between each focus

group, we were able to transcribe the recording and analyse the data to inform the direction of questioning in the next conversation. For participants, however, previous conversations instead remained ephemeral memories. Our act of translating participants' conversations into research 'findings' had the effect of alienating the participants, and may have even raised suspicion that their comments were being misinterpreted.

Another topic which we wanted to interrogate further in the third focus group was their opinions on the importance of truth in folk songs and stories. This was a topic which had been discussed in the previous two focus groups, but with quite contradictory statements and very few points of agreement. Because of this, Price was unable to bring up any straightforward findings from previous focus groups and instead, simply reintroduced it as a topic of conversation by applying the issue of truth directly to the songs they had heard that night.

> *We talked a lot at the last group about stories and truth. What relationship do you think the songs tonight had to truth?*
> Pauline   There's usually an element of truth. [...]
> Steve   I think it has to be… I think it has to be true to life, it has to be believable. [...] I don't really care if it's not true! [...]
> Max   This truth thing bothers me; I think I've said before. It's more of an honesty. If you see honesty, I'm with it, but if you don't see honesty, I'm not. Truth? Well, who knows.
>
> (Focus Group 3)

While it may not come across strongly in these transcribed quotations, Steve and especially Max appeared annoyed by this line of questioning. Steve's comment of 'I don't really care if it's not true!' not only stated that whether a song was historically true did not matter to him, but also hinted that this was an irrelevant question to be asking. Max especially felt that the truth-content of a song had no impact on his enjoyment. The feeling communicated was one of frustration, that this was a topic on which they had already made their opinions known, therefore they were somewhat exasperated to be asked the same questions again. This exposes a difficulty in longitudinal research: to ensure that participants feel heard when returning to the same topics.

However, it is worth examining Steve and Max's comments in more detail. Steve claimed that historical truth did not matter, but that the songs needed to be true to life. Max similarly stated that truth did not matter as much as 'honesty', arguably a very similar concept to Steve's 'true to life' idea. Therefore, truth, as a broader concept than historical accuracy, does appear to be important to both of their engagement with folk songs. This is another example of how the act of translation that occurs between the face-to-face dialogue with research participants and the language we employ when we write them up as research 'findings' can jar with participants' experiences of listening.

Perhaps part of their irritation with this line of questioning may be that the participants felt we were trying to push them to describe their listening on our terms, placing undue importance on topics that were of minimal importance to their engagement. Indeed, this discussion of truth was intertwined with the conversation above in which Colleen claimed she would happily hear Hield sing the phone directory. This parallel conversation around the importance of the sound of the music rather than the content of the songs seemed to be a resistance against the line of questioning. This resonates with Heywood's (2004) findings that audiences for storytelling performances resist overly-scholarly interpretations of their listening.

This sentiment was found in discussion around the role of stories and songs in emotional development. As seen above in Anne's reaction to the public engagement event, participants were intrigued by the idea that stories allow us to rehearse emotional responses in safe space, an idea prevalent in literature on storytelling, especially in relation to childhood development (Braid, 1996; Miller et al., 1990; Tirrell, 1990). In the focus group that followed the public engagement event, participants began to extrapolate this concept: Anne reflected on her grandchildren's experience of reading stories, Debbie suggested there was a parallel in the idea of catharsis in Greek tragedy, and Colleen proposed that soap operas may be fulfilling a similar function. They were happy to accept this concept in abstract terms, but we were curious to explore this further in the third focus group, asking whether they had personal experience of this happening when they have been listening to folk songs.

> *What we've talked about before is how stories can give you a trial run for life, you can explore certain feelings through stories. Is this something you have consciously thought about before? Can you think of examples of where you're drawing on songs and stories to deal with real life?*
>
> Anne   I kind of think it's the other way round. I identify with songs when they relate to experiences I've already had. [...] that's when a song means more to me and I get more from it when it mirrors an experience or a feeling that I've had or I've had to deal with. [...] Or it chimes with your worldview, if you like.
>
> Pauline   Or it's a light-bulb moment, sometimes. It might be something that, actually, this particular scenario or whatever, you haven't come across, but it can be a kind of lightbulb moment because it is new.
>
> (Focus Group 3)

Despite originally being receptive to the idea that stories and songs prepare listeners for difficult emotional situations, in the later focus group, participants were unable to identify where this had taken place in relation to folk songs. Instead, Anne said that folk songs tended to be more powerful when they resonated with her previous experiences, suggesting that they are understood less as a source of emotional preparation than as a

space for reflection and the processing of emotions after the event. This chimes with Tia DeNora's (2000) theory that music is often used for emotional regulation, enhancing and mitigating experienced emotions. Participants' comments seem to emphasise this therapeutic role of music over and above the kind of emotional development theories prevalent in storytelling research (Braid, 1996; Miller et al., 1990; Tirrell, 1990).

This exposed a tension between scholarly views on listening and the participants' real-world experiences. Participants were more than happy to engage with ideas in the abstract after the public engagement event, but resisted against applying these directly to their own listening. Perhaps the participants were willing to believe that these theories explained *other people's* listening, but were reluctant to 'explain away' their own enjoyment; in a follow-up email, Colleen was keen to make clear, that despite all our conversation about stories and meaning in folk songs, she 'just enjoyed the sounds'. On the other hand, perhaps the public engagement presented participants with more nuanced accounts of the ideas that we struggled to articulate in our own lines of questioning. This disparity between abstract theories and concrete experiences of listening warrants further investigation.

The development of participants' ideas and responses in some areas of inquiry was thwarted by the difficulty of re-introducing previous conversations. Bringing up the topic too broadly led to frustration as participants felt that they had not been heard. Relaying findings in too academic a manner led to feelings of alienation as the act of translating participants' comments into research findings meant that our interpretations bore little resemblance to their personal listening experiences. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the public engagement event did lead to a refinement of ideas across other topics of conversation, and presenting our findings in subsequent focus groups gave us the opportunity for us to understand these topics in a more nuanced way, improving our representation of participants' thinking in our developing papers.

Research ethics and data validity
Introducing such interventions as increasing participants' knowledge and testing findings during the research phase leads to questions over the validity of the data we collected. In this final section, we explore the limitations and ethical issues within a research project of this nature, which simultaneously shapes and records participants' experiences.

Our project was designed to achieve a deep qualitative account of listening from a population that is known to be highly engaged with debates around the cultural value of folk music and consequently, with the potential to be particularly self-conscious about articulating their engagement. The decision was taken to structure the research longitudinally and to include attendance at a public engagement event in order to provoke more nuanced, individualised accounts of the participants' engagement. The focus of this project was to investigate participants' *understanding of their own engagement*. Rather than attempting to capture the lived experience of listening to folk music, this study was

designed to both inform and investigate participants' *remembered* experience and their ability to articulate it (see O'Neill, Edelman & Sloboda, 2016).

Participation in this study could be seen as a form of audience enrichment. By taking part in focus groups immediately after being audience members, the participants had their responses and reactions filtered through this group conversation. These discussions prompted them to consider their listening experiences from new perspectives which may have helped to develop their reflective skills, in turn shaping their engagement in the future. Arguably, the research also changed their behaviour, in that participants seemed to make a concerted effort to listen to Hield's CD prior to the second and third focus groups. Both audience enrichment and public engagement illuminate difficult questions around the authority of researchers and practitioners to attempt to influence the understanding or behaviour of recipients. What right do we have to impose our ideas about musical engagement on to the participants?

Given some of the more negative emotions such as annoyance and frustration that were elicited by the research, participation in this study may have detrimentally affected the participants' engagement with folk music and the lasting impact of attending these performances. Participants' ambivalence towards the research means that the impact of taking part on their long-term musical engagement is unknown; ideas discussed during the focus groups may have enhanced, diminished, or had no effect on their engagement with and enjoyment of folk music in the future. It is unclear whether participants were aware that this is what they were signing up for in taking part in the research, although the public engagement event should have signalled a more philosophical approach to music listening. The NCCPE (2017) claim that public engagement should have 'mutual benefit' for both researcher and audience, but this is complicated by the dual purpose of both informing and investigating experiences, as we needed the participants to provide data for this study. However, aside from moments of frustration, the participants did seem to really enjoy talking about their engagement, and three followed up with emails to Price to express thoughts they felt they had not got across in the conversations. Arguably, the overwhelming response to the survey suggests that the research was fulfilling some latent need to discuss musical experiences amongst folk listeners. In addition, the participants' enthusiasm for the ideas put forward at the public engagement event suggest that they particularly enjoyed that aspect of the study, but how do we ensure that our participants gain the benefits they want from taking part in research?

The public engagement event attended by the participants was a rather traditional 'knowledge transfer' model of public engagement activity. Within the context of the research project, however, this event became far more dynamic, as it seemed to remove the mystery of our study, and make the complex ideas that we were investigating far more accessible through the engaging talks from the five presenters. In this way, the public engagement event opened up the methods of the research project to the participants, arguably giving the participants far more agency, as they were made aware of the purpose of the questions asked, and the angle which we were taking in the investigation. While it

risks undermining the validity of the data, perhaps it is ethically justified to demystify the research process. We may pride ourselves on obtaining informed consent from participants, but how many interviews or focus groups have ended with participants looking bemused by the idea that we think their comments are interesting? Taking participants to the public engagement event allowed them to see in a more concrete way how their comments would inform our understanding and enabled them to contribute to shaping the discussion towards the areas they felt were most important.

The focus groups themselves could also be seen as a form of public engagement in much the same way as talk-based audience research can be a form of audience enrichment. Rather than communicating findings to a public audience, the act of asking the research questions based on developing analysis within the focus groups prompted the participants to reflect on their listening in new ways and therefore find their own new forms of understanding. It is closely aligned with the underlying premise of public engagement as two-way communication between researcher and public.

The longitudinal nature of the focus groups allowed us to test our conclusions with the participants. As discussed above, the process of testing findings with the participants proved problematic within this study. Participants resisted against our overly-scholarly interpretations of their listening, leading us to question the reliability of their accounts of listening. Given that participants were happy to engage with ideas in the abstract following the public engagement event, but were not happy to apply it to their own listening, this could suggest that they were trying to protect their understanding of their experience rather than exposing their inner workings. Inclusion of this public engagement event in the research design was therefore useful for understanding audience members' *perception* of their listening experience, rather than providing objective conclusions on how people experience performance. It is difficult to say without further investigation whether this study has revealed a deep-seated contradiction in how listeners understand their own and others' engagement, or whether they were resisting our lines of research inquiry, which failed to capture the nuance of the ideas put forward in the public engagement event.

All of this leads to questions around the validity of parts of the data that has been produced by this research. In conducting a longitudinal study, we hoped to gain more nuanced and individual accounts of the listening experiences of a population who have a tendency to be rather self-conscious and over-intellectual about their engagement. On the one hand, there was evidence of refinement of ideas and increasing candour over the course of the three focus groups. On the other hand, we may have just been conditioning the participants to provide us with the discourses we wanted to hear. Social-desirability bias can lead research participants to give the answers that they believe are preferable (Hennion, 2001; Spector, 2011), and the more information we provided, the more they engaged in discussion in those areas. Within a longitudinal study, in which participants became increasingly friendly as a group and with Price as the researcher, this process could have been exaggerated to provide inaccurate, but seemingly desirable, accounts of listening. There is a danger that the process could become a self-fulfilling ouroboric cycle; educating

participants in the areas we were interested in, then recording their interest in those areas. In simultaneously informing and investigating listening experiences, are we simply forming the audiences that we want to study?

Any concern that participants' ideas were entirely moulded by the research must be balanced against the participants' growing sense of confidence within the research setting. By the third focus group, participants seemed happy to challenge each other, to challenge inherited ideas about the value of engagement, and to resist against lines of questioning by Price. They refused to let their engagement and enjoyment of folk music be defined entirely on our terms.

Relaying our emergent findings back to the participants allowed us to check back with our participants on two levels. Firstly, we were checking that the participants' previous comments accurately reflected their wider listening experience and were not just a product of the interview context. This was particularly necessary for the focus group that took place after the public engagement event, in which their own views may have been overwhelmed by those of the speakers. Returning to the same topics repeatedly was a means of checking for consistency, as well as nuancing responses as participants became better equipped to reflect on their engagement.

Secondly, we were attempting to verify that our translation or interpretation of their comments were accurate. This entered a complicated phase as we moved beyond checking that we had understood what participants meant in a particular statement, to see if they agreed with what our findings were over all. The longitudinal nature of the study highlights the changing power relationship between the researcher and the participant. On the one hand, we had a subordinate role as researchers, being entirely reliant on the generosity and honesty of the voluntary participants in order to carry out the project, with Price acting in the role of facilitator to help participants to access and understand their own experiences. While we set the parameters, tone and pace of the conversation, over the course of the project, participants became more empowered to dictate the flow of the conversation themselves, shifting the power relationship again. Our research team discussions between focus groups had the effect of translating natural conversations to 'findings' that participants subsequently could not recognise as their own responses. Through subsequent focus groups, these moments of conflict gave participants the opportunity to query our findings, consequently enabling us to nuance our analyses. However, ultimately, as we had access to recordings and transcriptions from the conversations and the participants only had their memories, control over the interpretation and translation of the findings lay squarely with us. The researcher is in a privileged position, having the final say in research outputs such as this paper, on the conclusions drawn, conclusions based on their own understanding and which may not be agreeable to all participants. Perhaps these moments of conflict were in themselves crucial to identifying the new forms of understanding generated through this study. The questions we asked revealed what we as researchers believed to be important in musical engagement. It was in recognising that certain questions bore little resemblance to their own listening that participants were able to identify and articulate the most important

aspects of their engagement, moving beyond inherited ideas (on both sides) to provide us with a more nuanced and individualised account of their listening and a more mutually-constructed set of research findings.

Conclusions and future directions

Attempts to gain rich research findings by firstly developing participants' own understanding of their arts engagement through longitudinal conversations and attendance at a public engagement event were in many respects successful, with two additional papers in progress exploring the new insights we have gained into the process of familiarisation of new songs and the two-way communication between audience and performer that occurs during performance. However, this project has highlighted how carefully these interventions need to be managed. Despite much fruitful and enthusiastic discussion, participants appeared frustrated at points where they felt their views had not been acknowledged, and alienated when findings were presented in unfamiliar language.

In addition, this study calls into question what it is that we think participants gain from taking part in research. While we proposed to deepen and develop participants' understanding of their own engagement, we ran the risk of exposing them to ideas that they did not like, of *explaining away* the pleasure of listening, overcomplicating their perceived experience, or of diminishing their enjoyment by showing the mechanics behind the art of performance. Further research is needed to understand how engagement with abstract theories about listening and the value of the arts can help or hinder engagement, which could in turn inform the writing of programme notes or delivery of pre-performance talks. Understanding what information or processes can be offered to audiences to deepen their engagement with art works remains a fertile ground for investigation.

This kind of research methodology creates a bridge between research (for academic benefit) and audience enrichment (for audience or artist benefit) through engaging in a process of more mutual growth. Our project used audience enrichment for the sake of research development and vice versa. Given that the understanding of participants was developed over the course of the project, for better or for worse for their enjoyment, the study can be seen to fit into the conversational, dialogic form of public engagement identified by the NCCPE (2017) and Burchell et al. (2014). This had the result of our project moving, in some areas, from an academic-led project towards a more empowered group, reflecting a co-produced approach.

This research also raises outstanding questions around the influence of the impact agenda on research design. This audience research project, itself an attempt to evidence impact of an earlier compositional research project, becomes an exercise moving in ever decreasing circles examining the impact of measuring the impact of research. With academics under increasing pressure to demonstrate the impact of their research on the general public within the Research Excellence Framework, such public engagement activities are regularly accompanied by evaluation and research, producing a dataset in their own right. Where does the research end and public engagement begin? Within the field of arts

practice this is particularly acute where research outputs implicitly generate their own audience enrichment. In this process of informing, investigating and re-informing audience members' engagement, researchers risk losing sight of the participants' experiences in favour of measuring the value of their own impact.

Acknowledgements:

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Notes:

[1] 'Public Engagement as Method', University of Sheffield, Tuesday 5 July 2016, programme available at: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/artsenterprise/publicengagementasmethod. Storify of the event available at: https://storify.com/FestivalAH/public-engagement-as-method.

[2] A short video of the event is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEEkmHtj4mE

[3] Participants were asked whether they would like their own name or a pseudonym to be used in publications. Their wishes have been respected throughout.