

Northern Voices Opera Project

An interdisciplinary Practice as Research project which took place in 2014-5, and aimed to develop techniques whereby a Northern English accent could be heard in the operatic singing voice.

Context

Unlike theatre, operatic sung accents are dominated in the UK by an adapted form of Received Pronunciation; although some regional accents are occasionally used in Britten, for example, no Northern English accented opera has been written. Kathryn LaBouff (2008), for example, does not mention Northern English accents at all in her survey of regional accents in opera.

Methodology and Outputs

The project sought to create and test new material based on the speech patterns and rhythms of Northern English, and set four texts jointly developed by the composer and poet Ian McMillan.

The project consisted of a series of five workshops with singers, actors, poet Ian McMillan, sociolinguist Philip Tipton. It was funded by Arts Council England, and took place between July 2014 and March 2015. Evidence of this is to be found in:

1a summary video of phase one R and D project, including evidence of the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet

1b videos of the four songs created in this phase

1c scores in pdf of the songs

LaBouff, K., 2008. *Singing and communicating in English : a singer's guide to English diction*, New York: Oxford University Press.