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Immediate release

University of Sheffield begins new research to discover how a 19th century poet has influenced generations of pop, rock, rap and classical music.

The University of Sheffield has begun a four year project to investigate the influence of 19th century poet Charles Baudelaire's effect on contemporary music. **The Baudelaire Song Project** aims to draw together all the song settings of Baudelaire's poetry for the very first time and explore how his famous verses have been expressed through all musical genres from rap and rock to pop and electronica.

Baudelaire has influenced generations of musicians, song writers and music lovers for decades; from 60's pop with Serge Gainsborough and The Rolling Stones, to 1970's Glamrock with David Bowie and to 1980's Rock with The Cure.

The aim of the project is to develop new methods for the analysis of poem and song using digital analytical tools. The poems will be marked against the songs in a digital archive, comparing not just the poem and the music but also musical trends against poetic text.

An online resource published at the end of project which will provide users with a comprehensive, searchable database of Baudelaire poems and song settings, this will be a valuable tool for musicians, music scholars and the public across the world. Any singer or teacher interested in Baudelaire will be able to find a song setting for performance and songwriters can search a Baudelaire text and create a whole new song setting to his poems.

Many of the tagged poems made available through the online archive will be accompanied by audio recordings of the songs, especially for those rare settings which have gone unnoticed by singers and performers alike, making new materials available to the wider public.

Workshops and public concerts will also form part of the project which will take place over the next four years working with [Oxford Lieder](#), [Toulouse Mélodie-Française](#), and [Sheffield Sing!](#)

Director of the project **Dr Helen Abbott** from the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Sheffield said;

“People are already getting in touch with us via Twitter to share their own songs based on Baudelaire lyrics. We already know quite a lot about the classical music settings by famous composers such as Debussy, but it’s all the other types of music that use Baudelaire’s poetry which are starting to produce really exciting results for us. We’ve had a French rap group contact us, an American theatre collective, and an Italian composer. Baudelaire’s reach is enormous, and we’re trying to capture that for the first time. It means we can reveal what actually happens to a famous poet’s words when they are picked up by musicians – all sorts of weird and wonderful things can happen!”

Charles Baudelaire is one of the most compelling poets of the nineteenth century. Baudelaire is distinctive in French literature also in that his skills as a prose writer virtually equal his ability as a poet. His body of work includes a novella, influential translations of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe, highly perceptive criticism of contemporary art, provocative journal entries, and critical essays on a variety of subjects. Baudelaire's work has had a tremendous influence on modernism, and his relatively slim production of poetry in particular has had a significant impact on later poets. More than a talent of nineteenth-century France, Baudelaire is one of the major figures in the literary history of the world.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors;

Funding for the project Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

A video interview with Dr Helen Abbott and photos are available [here](#)

Dr Abbott’s [Biography](#)

Twitter @BaudelaireProj

[Website](#)

The project is led by Dr Helen Abbott from the School of Languages and Cultures (Principal Investigator) and Dr Mylène Dubiau from the Department of Music, Université de Toulouse II-Jean Jaurès (Co Investigator) in partnership with colleagues from [HRI Digital](#).

For interviews, images and further information contact The Baudelaire Song Project Publicity Officer **Philip Strafford** p.strafford@sheffield.ac.uk 0781 653 8202, 0114 222 6906.

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