



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

UOA D33

MUSIC, DRAMA, DANCE, PERFORMING ARTS,
FILM AND SCREEN STUDIES



RESEARCHER

Dee Isaacs

OUTPUT TITLE

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

OUTPUT TYPE

Composition

DATE OF PERFORMANCE

21 March 2018

FIG. 1

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,
Old College Quad, Edinburgh,
21 March 2018. Photo Andy Catlin.



Performance available at:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Nine++Fathoms/1_lq08bdtl

Score available at:

<https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner>

01 / STATEMENT

The BASCA-nominated *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a 3-act site-specific opera for large ensemble, SATB choir, and children's chorus involving multi-staged performance and video projection, performed in the University of Edinburgh's Old College Quad and Playfair Library.

A collaborative project by composer Dee Isaacs, writer Gerda Stevenson, theatre director John Bett, and film-maker Ian Dodds, the project was conceived and produced as part of the University of Edinburgh's *Music in the Community* programme in collaboration with teachers and pupils of Leith Walk Primary School and two professional musicians from West Africa, Gibril Camara and Aboubacar Sylla.

Isaacs and Stevenson retell the story of Coleridge's epic poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* for our times. The opera explores the issues raised by the current refugee crisis in partnership with 25 university music students and 60 school children in a multi-lingual primary school with a high proportion of immigrants in an area of deprivation within the City of Edinburgh. In this multi-cultural environment, the participants' experiences became an integral part of the production process, allowing a complex of interactions to arise through the media of music and theatre.

The video and scenic components were devised to immerse both audience and participants in contemporary experiences of flight and diaspora.

The production process was monitored and a final evaluation report was produced, allowing the stake-holders to assess the social and educational impacts of the project.

02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a site-specific opera written for large ensemble, SATB choir, and children's chorus in a production involving multi-staged performance and video projection.

It was produced as part of the University of Edinburgh *Music in the Community* programme in collaboration with long-term partner Leith Walk Primary School. The work was conceived and researched by Dee Isaacs and produced collaboratively with the writer Gerda Stevenson, theatre director John Bett, and film-maker Ian Dodds.

The music was written during the summer of 2017; simultaneously, a film was made documenting the production process (see Appendix 2, page 10).

The production was put together in the autumn of 2017, and realised with the students of the *Music in the Community* 3 & 4 course cohorts, working in Leith Primary School with a mixed group of 60 students aged 7–11, and their teachers.

The production took place 21–23 March 2018 in the Old College of the University of Edinburgh (see the programme PDF in Appendix 1, page 10) and was documented on video (see Appendix 2, page 10).

03 / ORIGINALITY

The work is collaborative, both across creative disciplines and as an example of a participatory arts practice that places community at the heart of the production process.

The work and its processes of production explore how the creation of immersive musical and theatrical experiences can speak to and impact on individuals and the communities who experience a multi-ethnic context of social deprivation.

The production sets out to challenge preconceptions about the processes of performance and co-creation in a multi-cultural context. The musical composition drew on many different diasporic genres of music, from klezmer to Georgian song, contemporary classical and experimental live electronics in a manner designed to encourage the co-participation of musicians with different levels of ability, from primary school students unaccustomed to singing to professional West African performers.

This enabled the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants to find expression and developed a sense of openness in the approach of each participant to the others in the production.

The work was nominated for a British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors (BASCA) award (see Appendix 3, page 10).

FIG. 2
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,
Old College Quad, Edinburgh,
21 March 2018. Still from
documentary film (videographer
Ian Dodds).



04 / RIGOUR

This project is designed to integrate music and visual arts activity in active learning that fosters children's own creativity, supporting an integrated curriculum and local teachers' goals for learning in general, particularly focused on aspects of social cohesion.

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence has been a key point of reference in developing the goals of the project. The evaluation reports from a series of previous projects have also provided valuable indicators for the enhancement and development of working methods, and creative focus.

The project was supported by a number of social action trusts, whose aims and objectives also formed a part of the remit of the project (see Appendix 4, page 10).

05 / SIGNIFICANCE

This output sits within a tradition of large-scale community arts projects that has transformed over the years in part due to changes in primary and secondary education policy.

It is the outcome of a long-term commitment on the part of the University of Edinburgh *Music in the Community* programme to its partner institution, Leith Primary School. This commitment has strengthened the practice base among teacher-colleagues, the school administration, and the students and parents and led to a developing sense of engagement in collaborative artistic projects as arenas within which to explore issues that are relevant to all of the participants.

The performances are concerned with illuminating and giving voice to individuals and communities, celebrating unique personal experiences and building new creative languages. They provide opportunities of access to students, their parents and other members of the local community to participate in creative activities alongside excellent professionals within a mutually supportive environment through a process of committed engagement, shared curiosity, respect, and mutual learning. Some examples of community feedback appear in Appendix 6, page 10.

06 / APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Programme

The full event programme is available at:

[https://uoe-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/ecarefsh_ed_ac_uk/EcFqx-pnHfN\]pTfOAgio6v8BKx1d3yF04UuI3fnCKNm8hw?e=wqT\]Kp](https://uoe-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/ecarefsh_ed_ac_uk/EcFqx-pnHfN]pTfOAgio6v8BKx1d3yF04UuI3fnCKNm8hw?e=wqT]Kp)

Appendix 2: Performances

Listen to a performance here:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Nine++Fathoms/1_lq08bdtl

Video of performance here:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/t/1_x6b9tqhl

Documentary film (videographer Ian Dodds) here:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Ancient+Mariner+Rough+Cut/1_zenzcm9b

Featured on the Janice Forsyth Show, BBC Radio Scotland, 20 March, 2018.

Appendix 3: Award Nomination

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was one of 3 compositions shortlisted by the British Academy of Composers for their BASCA Awards 2018, in the outreach and education category.

<https://www.prsformusic.com/press/2018/british-composer-awards-2018-nominees-revealed>

Appendix 4: Funding and support

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was supported by small arts trusts and private donors. The total budget was £48,000 – funders included:

- Robin Leith Trust
- Lanvern Foundation
- Thornton Foundation
- Lobs Trust

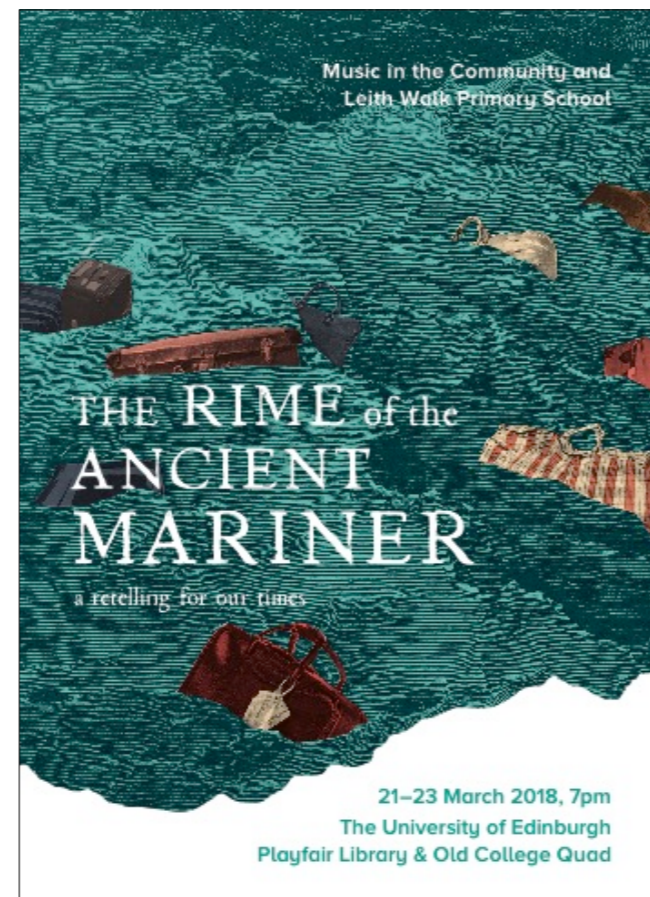
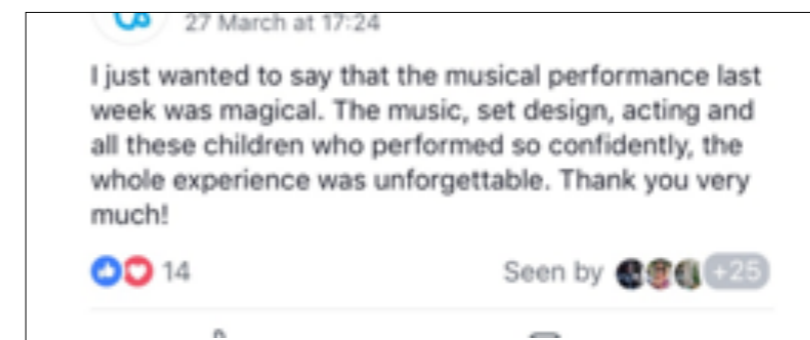
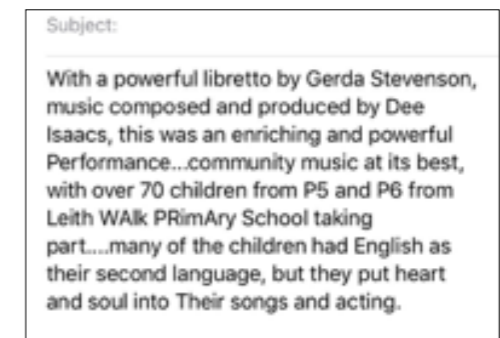
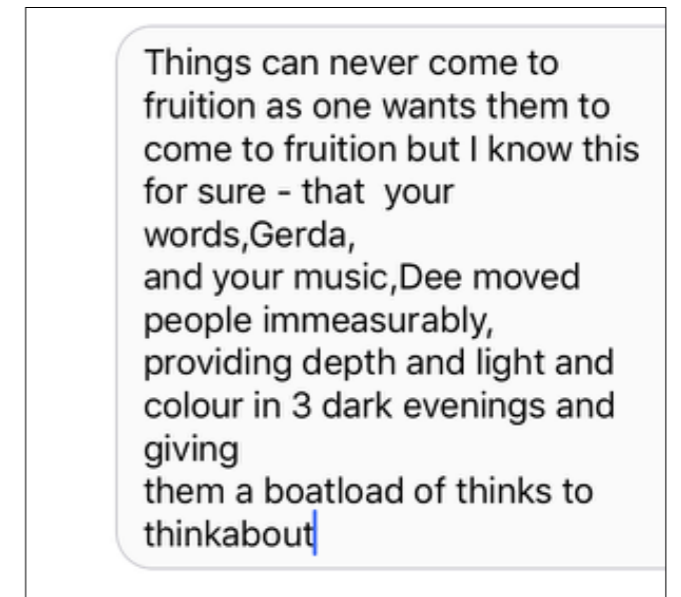
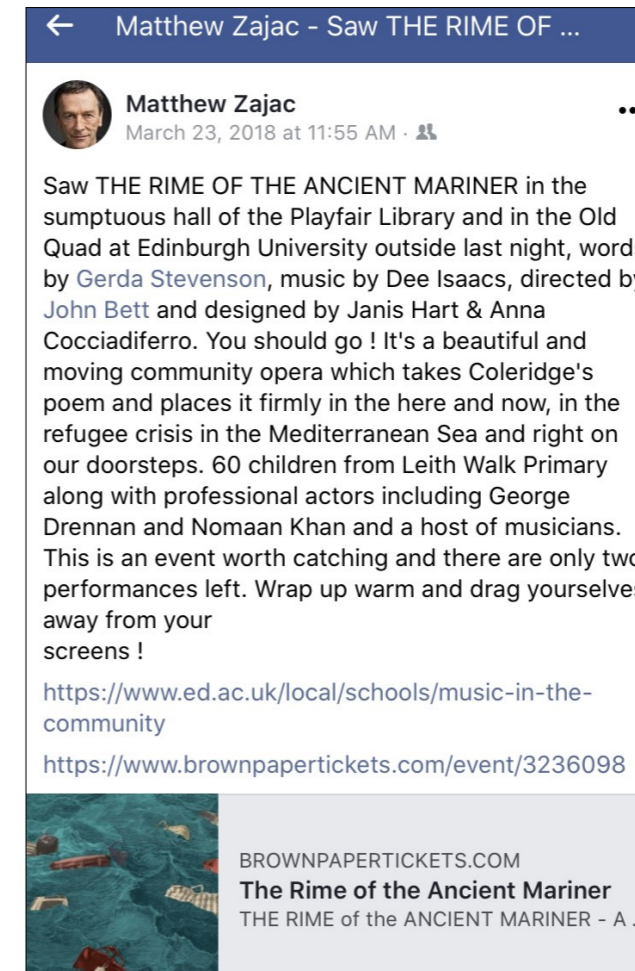


FIG. 3
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, event programme.

Appendix 6: Reviews



FIGS. 4–7
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, reviews from social media:



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