



The choir of the Tlomackie Synagogue, Warsaw, c1929. Directed by David Ajzensztadt (left). Source: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research

Research and innovation

Shedding light on Jewish art

A University-led research project has attracted significant funding to shine new light on the forgotten works of Jewish artists.

Performing the Jewish Archive has been awarded £1.53m by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) under its Care for the Future: Thinking Forward Through the Past theme.

The project, led by Dr Stephen Muir of the University's School of Music, will bring recently rediscovered musical, theatrical and literary

works by Jewish artists back to the attention of scholars and the public, and stimulate the creation of new works. Dr Muir's recent work has drawn upon musical archives of Russian and Polish Jewish composers who found their way to South Africa through various processes of displacement and migration.

Alongside Dr Muir, a multidisciplinary team

across four continents will focus on the years 1880-1950 – an intense period of Jewish displacement – to explore the role of art in such upheaval. Performing the Jewish Archive stems from work done on several projects with colleagues at both the University and Leeds College of Music.

Dr Muir says: "All this work has built up a great deal of momentum at the University, paving the way for this large grant."

A number of people across the University were involved in providing support to the applicant team. Dr Muir's research project began when Louise Heery and Anoushka Kulikowski from the Funding Development team in the Research and Innovation Service (RIS) helped him secure a small research mobility award from the University in 2012 to fund a trip to the University of Cape Town, one of our partners. This was followed by a further modest award from the Fund for International Research Collaboration in 2013.

With the groundwork in place, Odette Dewhurst from the Public Funding team set up a series of initiatives to support Dr Muir's AHRC application. These included reviewing drafts and organising practice interviews for the team. Ged Hall from SDDU and Sue Hayton from the Cultural and Creative Industries Exchange Hub were also part of the network of support throughout the application process.

Dr Muir says getting the AHRC award would not have been possible without the help of colleagues. He believes the grant has come at an apt time for the University: "The time seems to be right for us to becoming a leading centre for the study of Jewish arts, and responses to experiences of repression, exile and displacement.

"It's also a great opportunity for scholars from a variety of disciplines to take a fresh look at what archives are, how they function, and how they might best be used in modern society."



Dr Stephen Muir