

Creating Effective Collaboration between Poetry and Music

Discussion Room for AWP

Event Description:

Often poetry-music collaboration can falter due to speaking different artistic languages, perceived lack of applicability, and confusion over shared aims. However, poets and musicians benefit hugely from cross-disciplinary work when it involves an understanding of the specific relationship between both. We want to dismantle the obstacles, create effective shared spaces and foster better cohesion between art forms, countering the "self-first" attitude that typically dominates both.

In contrast to individual-focused events, we are focused on successful collaboration: embracing working with others, gaining a deeper understanding of the art through transmuting your work. We pass on tools for crossing over genres, boundaries and audiences through collaboration.

Event Category: Discussion Group

***From AWP:** Discussion rooms are an opportunity for presenters and attendees to engage in deeper, more collaborative conversation on specific literary topics. During the discussion room onsite at the conference, presenters will lead attendees in discussion about the topic and should be prepared to share their own perspectives, pose questions to be answered and discussed by attendees, and answer questions from attendees. Presenters should be prepared to lead a room of up to one hundred attendees in discussion.*

Event Time and Date: 10:35am - 11:50am on Thursday March 9, 2023

Event Organiser and Moderator: Laila Woozeer

Laila Woozeer is a queer Welsh-Mauritian-American artist whose work spans music, creative non-fiction, poetry, and theatre. Their writing has appeared in The Guardian, Mashable, BuzzFeed, Stylist, Metro, gal-dem, Aurelia, Oh Comely, Marie Claire and Wales Art Review, with poems in Messy Misfits Club and Petrichor. Their first book, Not Quite White, a magical realism memoir centered on post-colonial identity, was released by Simon & Schuster in 2022. Laila can be found on social media @lailawoozeer or at lailawoozeer.com.

Event Participant: Phil SaintDenis Sanchez

Phil SaintDenisSanchez is originally from New Orleans. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Poetry International, Tinderbox Poetry Journal, and elsewhere. His debut collection, self-portrait before & after my body, is forthcoming on Button Poetry. He lives in Brooklyn.

Event Participant: Yusra Amjad

Yusra Amjad is a poet and standup comedian from Lahore, Pakistan who managed to retain an authentic voice despite spending two years in an MFA program at Sarah Lawrence College. She is also a graduate of Forman Christian College, a Pushcart nominee, and a Fulbright scholar.

OBJECTIVES:

We are focused on two main aspects of what we deem to be “successful” collaboration, firstly the actual practical process, including:

1. Sharing clear outcomes
2. Difficulties we’ve encountered
3. Moving between poetry/musical languages
4. What spaces are needed
5. When does this kind of work usually occur
6. How do you find each other

And secondly, what one could gain artistically and creatively from a “successful collaboration”, such as:

1. Merits/Similarities
2. Increased insight into a piece
3. From a musical perspective
4. From a poetry perspective

OVERVIEW OF EVENT

5 minutes: *moderator to welcome, introduce everybody, outline the event/aims.*

15 mins: *each participant spends 4-5 minutes outlining their experience.*

20 mins: *questions (from moderator to participants) centered around what can facilitate better and more involved collaboration, and barriers or perceived obstacles to working together.*

20 mins: *audience is grouped to discuss further and share/collaborate together*

15 mins: *Q&A, pass on notes from the group work, final thoughts.*

Discussion Questions:

First we will discuss the actual process of collaboration:

In what scenarios have you found this to take place? How have you found musicians/poets to collaborate with?

What has hindered the process?

What has helped the process?

Do you have a clear goal outlined when beginning a collaboration? (i.e. I would like this poem to have a 4 minute piece of music alongside)

How much involvement do you find helpful from a writing/poet stance

If writing new specifically for a musical collaboration, how does that affect what you do?

Secondly, what we actually gain from that process:

How does it change your reflections on the work?

Have you revisited pieces after collaborating on them? How do you re-evaluate?

How does it affect your future poetry process?

Yusra - the process of re-learning your own poem, as a song

Phil - how your song-writing process has influenced your poetry

Other Ideas:

Thinking about rhythm, pitch and tempo you would use anyway

- Choose bits of poems for audience to use
- What moods does the music conjure for you
- How do you start thinking about what can the music add and what can the music represent in this

Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gil_Scott-Heron

<https://jerryjazzmusician.com/a-collection-of-jazz-poetry-winter-2021-edition/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfNOogGqSLA> and
<https://allanshowalter.com/2020/12/03/compare-leonard-cohens-take-this-waltz-to-a-conventional-english-translation-of-federico-garcia-lorcas-pequeno-vals-vienes/>