

Project associate (Freelance): “Gypsy and Traveller Voices in UK Music Archives”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[The English Folk Dance and Song Society \(EFDSS\)](#) is the national development organisation for the English folk arts. It is multi-faceted, being England’s folk arts centre (Cecil Sharp House); an education, training, and creative development agency; an advocate and lobbyist on behalf of the folk arts; a membership society (c3,000 members) and custodian of the [Vaughan Williams Memorial Library \(VWML\)](#). Cecil Sharp House (CSH) is a 1930s Grade II listed building in Camden, London, purpose built to be the home of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML). VWML is England’s national folk music and dance archive which was awarded designated status by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in 2011 which described it as ‘the most important concentration of material on traditional song, dance and music in the country.’

In the Spring of 2023, The Vaughan Williams Library is collaborating with researchers from the University of East Anglia and the University of Sheffield to curate and develop awareness about the library’s collections of Gypsy and Traveller songs and music.

The Gypsy and Traveller collections held by the library consist primarily of private collections that have been deposited in the library archive. The majority of the collections relate to Romani Gypsies but there is also material relating to Irish and Scottish Travellers. A sizable number of recordings have been digitised and published on the library’s online portal. Most of these recordings are also available in other archive collections (such as the British Library) or published on LPs and CDs from a variety of record companies. In addition to the digitised material available online, the library collections also include written and audio publications with Gypsy and Traveller songs and music which can be seen in the library. Where relevant the library catalogue also includes notes on collections in other places, such as the British Library Sound Archives. There is currently no single register of Gypsy and Traveller material in the collections and some inside knowledge is required to find the right entries.

The project “Gypsy and Traveller Voices in UK Music Archives” is led by Dr Hazel Marsh (University of East Anglia) together with Dr Esbjorn Wettermark (University of Sheffield) and the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House, London (English Folk Dance and Song Society). The aim of the project is to create resources that make the Gypsy and Traveller collections more accessible, particularly for Gypsy and Traveller people seeking engagement with their cultural heritage. The project will develop the library’s ability to engage with Gypsy and Traveller users and support the cultural wellbeing of some of the UK’s most marginalised communities. Through collaboration we will highlight the richness and importance of Gypsy and Traveller music collections for communities themselves and the wider English folk scene.

A note on terminology: We use “Gypsy and Traveller” as a short for Romani Gypsy and Irish and Scottish Travellers. We are aware that there are different personal preferences to how and when these terms are used.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Role Title: Project Associate (Freelance)

Based at: Home based

Reporting to: The project team: Tiffany Hore (VWML), Hazel Marsh (UEA), Esbjorn Wettermark (TUoS)

Additional Requirements:

This is a freelance position and the associate is responsible for their own work materials including computer and internet access.

Start Date and Duration:

The successful applicant will be expected to attend a start-up meeting with the project team as soon as possible after recruitment has finished and the project will finish in July 2023 with the publication of the resource. The main bulk of the work is expected to take place between March and May. There will, however, be much flexibility and opportunity for the Project Associate to plan and schedule their work to fit with other commitments.

Job summary

The Project Associate will create a resource that introduces the collections of Gypsy and Traveller songs held by the Vaughan William Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House, London. The aim of the resource is to make the collections more accessible, particularly for Gypsy and Traveller communities and people of Gypsy or Traveller heritage. The project will help the library to highlight and celebrate the contributions of Gypsy and Traveller singers in their collections.

The scope of the new resource and work commitment

The main output from this role is to produce a new library resource which will be published on the [VWML website](#). We expect the final output to be a substantial resource that introduces the collections in new and accessible ways. There will be plenty of flexibility for the project associate to develop the format of the resource and to discuss and agree a suitable format and scope with the team. The project team will arrange for regular check-ins and meetings with the Project Associate to support their work and provide guidance as needed.

It is difficult to put an estimate on the time commitment to expect as the fee is based on delivering the resource rather than a set amount of days or hours of work. However, the fee offered is equivalent to that for other substantial EFDSS resources, such as [Beyond the Marylebone Workhouse](#) or [Black Singers and Folk Ballads](#). The Project Associate should be prepared to spend the majority of their work hours on the resource over 4 to 6 weeks between March and May. The associate will also need to spend sufficient time on the resource around the submission deadlines (see Key Dates below).

Examples of current study guides and resources produced by Vaughan Williams Memorial Library and English Folk Dance and Song Society

The library has several [study guides](#) introducing different parts of their collections. These study guides are generally 20-60 pages long and list sources and material with relatively little introduction to the content itself. They are primarily aimed at researchers rather than the general public. Although filled with useful information they can be a bit difficult to navigate if you are not used to doing research.

The education department at EFDSS also produces many resources about folk music aimed at musicians and educators. They are all freely available on their [Resource Bank](#). These resources are less academic in scope and offer introductions to folk music, song and dance for people who might be new to the area. Most resources include pictures, sound and video recordings as well. Depending on the scope, these resources tend to be around 15-50 pages long.

We are not expecting the Project Associate to copy the style of any of these existing resources but to feel free to be inspired and work with the project team to come up with a suitable format for the new resource.

Key Responsibilities

- Write and design an accessible resource to the digitised online collections at the library. The resource should be aimed at Gypsy and Traveller users but will be accessible to anyone via the library website.
- Work with the project team to decide on priorities and planning (of focus groups, resource launch etc.).
- To work with the librarians to locate and add information as needed to Gypsy and Traveller material in the library database and catalogue.

In addition, the project associate is expected to:

- Collaborate with the university researchers and staff from EFDSS to produce a short film about the Gypsy and Traveller collections at the library.
- Liaise with the EFDSS marketing team and the library to plan social media and website information about the project.
- Contribute to the evaluation of the resource and the project.
- Promote the resource within your own network and take part in the launch at Strumpshaw Tree Fair, Norfolk, in July 2023.

Person Specification

Essential experience

- Lived experience of, and/or deep connections with, Gypsy and/or Traveller culture
- A passion for community access to culture and heritage collections

- An interest in how archive collections can be a source of community pride and wellbeing.
- Basic knowledge of IT and word processing, ideally including using shared online documents (Google Docs or similar) and other online work tools.
- Some experience of writing and/or designing educational, or other public facing, material.

Desirable experience

- Some knowledge of traditional songs and singers with Gypsy and/or Traveller background
- Some experience of using databases or library catalogues
- Some knowledge of Gypsy and/or Traveller history in England.

Personal Qualities and abilities

- Good time management and able to work independently and to deadlines.
- Willing to work together with the library staff and university researchers.
- Open to feedback and able to work with an editor to produce a final product.
- A positive attitude and ability to engage with complex issues in a constructive way.

Conditions of Employment

This is a freelance role with the English Folk Dance and Song Society (Vaughan Williams Memorial Library), the project associate is expected to be registered as self-employed and responsible for their own taxes.

Fee:

£2,000 inclusive of material and travel. The fee will be paid in two instalments with the last instalment paid on delivery of the final resource.

Additional funds for meetings and travel:

Although the majority of the work is home-based there will be a need to travel for meetings and training at certain points in the project. There are some dedicated funds for travel (and accommodation if needed) for these key meetings including 1) an introduction meeting and training day with the team (including one night accommodation), 2) launch events for the finished resource at Cecil Sharp House, London (including one night accommodation if needed), and 3) launch event at Strumpshaw Tree Fair in Norfolk (2 nights plus contributions towards subsistence). All travel and accommodation funded by the project should be confirmed with the project lead (Hazel Marsh) prior to booking.

As this is a freelance role, any additional travel and accommodation, if needed, will be paid by the associate.

Key dates:

Deadlines and key dates will be confirmed at the planning and training day at the start of the project. These will include the following:

2-3 March: Planning and training day at Cecil Sharp House in London.

Week commencing 3 April (tbc): First focus group input meeting

20 May: First full resource draft

Week commencing the 19th June: Final resource draft and focus group evaluation session

30 June: Resource launch at Cecil Sharp House, London, to coincide with Gypsy, Roma & Traveller History Month.

15-16 July: Resource community launch at Strumpshaw Tree Fair, Norfolk

How to Apply

If you are interested in the role, you should send an application via email to Tiffany Hore (tiffany@efdss.org) at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

Deadline for applications is 9:30 am on Tuesday 14 February 2023.

You are welcome to use a conventional CV, write a letter about yourself or record a short video or sound recording (5 - 10 min). If you are using a video recording please share this via a link to YouTube, Dropbox or Google Drive (or any similar online storage), as the file may be too big to be attached in an email.

Regardless of the format of your application, please include the following information and use the Person Specification as a guide when answering the questions:

- Why are you interested in this project?
- What experience do you have which would make you a good person for the job?
- Give us some examples of previous work or other relevant experience (include links or other references to your work).

Also, make sure to provide the following information so that we can contact you:

- Full Name
- Phone number
- Email address (this will be our main way of contacting you)

Please include full names and contact details (phone and email) for two referees who know you and your work. We will only contact your referees if you are offered the role.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview with Hazel Marsh, Esbjorn Wettermark and Tiffany Hore in the week starting 20 February 2023.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the role or the project please contact Hazel Marsh (Hazel.Marsh@uea.ac.uk).