**The Open University Literature and Music Research Group**

Hosted by Bournemouth University and Arts University Bournemouth

on Friday 29 September, 5.30pm, at the South House Theatre, AUB.

**The House of Life - Words, Music and Silence**

**A practice-based examination of songs and the silence that frames them.**

This lecture recital will consider Ralph Vaughan Williams’ settings of 6 sonnets by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1904). The first of these to be composed was 'Silent Noon’; singer Julia Hollander and pianist Peter McMullin will focus on this song, its relationship to the rest of the cycle and especially the theme of silence. They analyse the ways Vaughan Williams’ music depicts silence and consider the role of Rossetti as both painter and wordsmith: calling on both our listening and our (silent) visual powers. The live performance context is an important aspect of the event, as we witness how responsibility for noisemaking passes back and forth between audience and musicians or how a pause inside a song serves the storytelling and the mood. In real time, the performers demonstrate how silence works between one song and the next, and its ultimate resonance at the end of the cycle.

JULIA HOLLANDER is a writer and singer based in Oxford. A love of music and words inspired her first career as an opera director. In the 1990’s she was the youngest ever staff director at English National Opera, and the first woman to direct an opera at the London Coliseum. She went on to stage many more productions around the world, as well as founding her own contemporary music theatre company, Operate.

Julia has been collaborating with Peter McMullin for more than a decade, presenting numerous musical events including a BBC radio documentary about her family’s escape from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, *The Letter.*Singing has always been part of Julia’s life: from Indian folk songs to Jazz to Renaissance polyphony, working as a song therapist and teacher with a particular emphasis on singing with dementia sufferers. These experiences form the basis of her latest book, *‘Why We Sing’,*investigating the importance of song to our wellbeing, and charting its extraordinary influence on all aspects of our spiritual, emotional, and physical lives.

PETER McMULLIN was born in Plymouth and grew up as a pianist and, later, a jazz musician, playing saxophone in a variety of Plymouth-based bands and the Devon Youth Jazz Orchestra. After completing a BA in Music at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University in 1985 he pursued a career in book selling with Blackwell’s and is still their renowned Printed Music Specialist, winning two major industry awards in 2004 and 2011. Outside this role he has a rich and varied life as a musician focussing primarily on collaborative work in a wide variety of genres. He is also a singer and conductor and is much in demand as an exam coach. Past projects include performing a large array of avant-garde and electro-acoustic music with The New London Chamber Choir. Work with Arcadian Opera in Buckinghamshire has seen him on the production team for *Faust* by Gounod, *L’Elisir d’Amore* by Donizetti, *Romeo and Juliet* by Gounod and *The Wreckers* by Ethel Smyth.