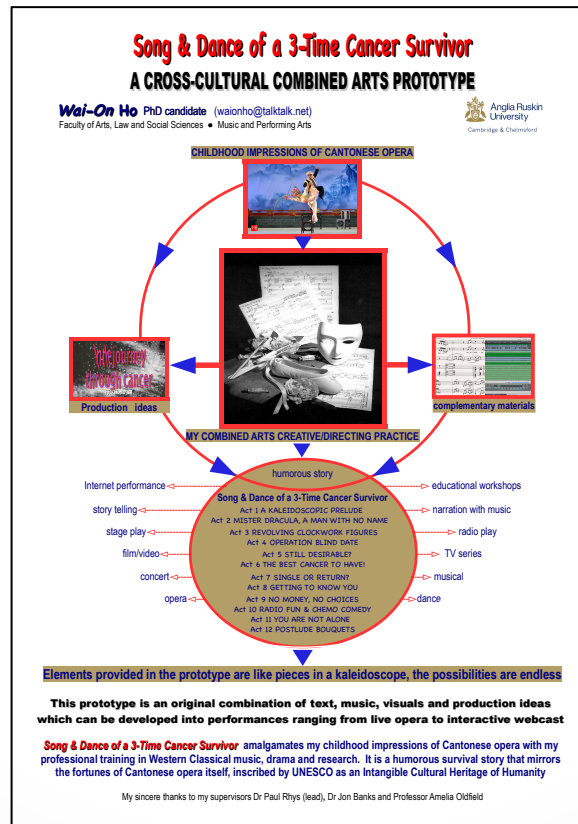


Ho Wai-On 何蕙安

BIBAC 2016 Presentation



**A CROSS-CULTURAL COMBINED ARTS PROTOTYPE ARISING FROM CANCER
AND REMEMBERING CANTONESE OPERA**

**A creative practice-led and autobiographical PhD
Submitted March 2016**

Before coming to Anglia Ruskin

Royal Academy of Music

Piano, singing, composition, and both performer & graduate courses

International Dance Course for Professional Choreographers and Composers

Royal Ballet – Ballet Rambert - Glen Tetley

Short courses for Film & TV direction/production

Electro-acoustics

West Square/Morley College - Barry Anderson;
CCRMA - Stanford University - John Chowning

MA (Cardiff)

Stage & operatic works by Stravinsky, Schönberg & Isang Yun;
Using a hybrid computer system to produce the germ for new quasi-operatic work

Creative/directing practice

Best known as a composer and creator/director of work/projects combining music, dance, drama and visual arts across different cultures



Creative/directing practice & Cantonese opera

Though trained according to Western principles and have lived in the UK since 1966, my creative and directing practice have been influenced by my childhood experience and impressions of Cantonese opera in Hong Kong.



The Cantonese opera that I remember

In addition to singing, performers were involved in acting, stylized gesticulation and movements, dance and kung fu. They had knowledge of elaborate makeup and costumes, were charismatic, and had freedom in modifying existing materials, adding their creative input into live performances.



The Cantonese opera that I remember

It was a mixture of high and low, refined and vulgar, loved by fans yet low in social status, multifaceted, cross-cultural and multimedia – anything goes for survival.

E.g. *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* as Cantonese opera



The Cantonese opera that I remember

Enjoyed by the masses and reaching those shunned by society – the illiterate, the poor, prostitutes, beggars and gangsters – bringing them enjoyment and culture, and I lived among these people as a child.



The Cantonese opera that I remember

The leader of the troupe was often the lead performer and would take control of drama, design and all aspects of performance, and would modify a performance for the enjoyment of the masses.

This is probably the reason for my proclivity for combining other elements with music, and directing and designing my projects. The following is an example:

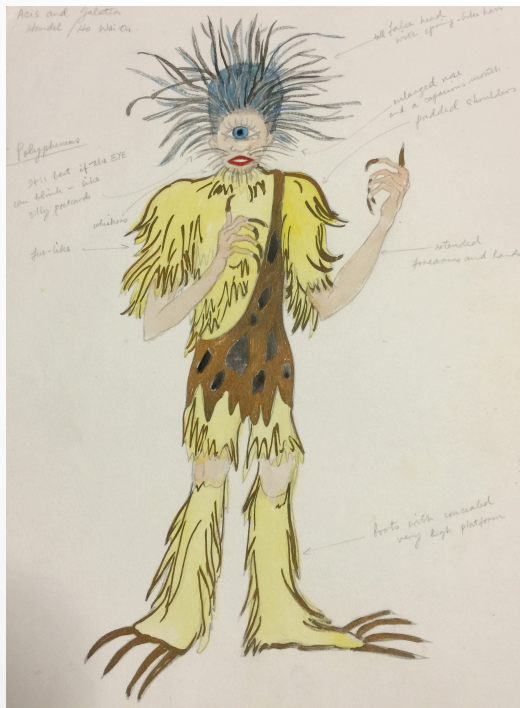
As director/designer of Handel's *Acis & Galatea*

Remembering the vivid on-stage action and drama of Cantonese opera, I decided that my production of *Acis and Galatea* was to be a dance opera.



As director/designer of Handel's *Acis & Galatea*

My design for the Cyclops Polyphemus was inspired by fairy tale; and used Cantonese opera headgear, platform shoes and walking on stilts.



As director/designer of Handel's *Acis & Galatea*

As a production of colourful 'big drama' like Cantonese opera:
I painted the amphitheatre stage floor with a heart within heart design to signify the obsessive and passionate love; I created new characters for dancers based on the libretto, e.g., 2 birds (dancers) in aria *HUSH, YE PRETTY WARBLING CHOIR* etc....



Cancer & Cantonese opera

The process of surviving cancer three times alerted me to the possible demise of Cantonese opera – in 2009, it was ‘inscribed’ by UNESCO as an ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity’ – i.e., an endangered species.

I survived. Even if Cantonese opera is to survive, many of the characteristics that I remember are unlikely to continue.

What I hope to achieve

I have no training in Cantonese opera, but some of the characteristics that I remember have lived on in my work.

Using my cancer story to look back in humour, I attempt to retain some Cantonese opera characteristics in a new format that can be understood by Westerners and enjoyed by the general public.

Internet Fieldwork

I watched online Cantonese opera performances past and present, and created Internet forums for articles, discussions and reference materials.

My Space

&

Plum-Flower-Boat

The screenshot shows a personal profile page on the 009y.com forum. The header includes the user's name 'AKLWHO' and a link to their profile. Below the header, there are sections for '头像' (Avatar), '日志' (Logs), '相册' (Album), '广播' (Broadcast), '主题' (Topics), '分享' (Share), '留言板' (Message Board), and '个人资料' (Personal Information). The '日志' section is active, showing a post titled '请新生船长, 继续船长. 今晚版主帮忙' with a date of 2014-01-12. The post content discusses the user's involvement in the forum and their appreciation for the community. The '相册' section shows a grid of images, including a portrait of the user and various group photos. The '广播' section shows a list of recent broadcasts, including a video of a Cantonese opera performance. The '主题' section shows a list of topics, including a discussion about the forum's future. The '分享' section shows a list of shared links, including a video of a Cantonese opera performance. The '个人资料' section shows the user's basic information, including their name, age, and location.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 009y.com forum. The header includes the forum's name '009y.com' and a link to the forum. Below the header, there are sections for '首页' (Home), '论坛' (Forum), '群组' (Groups), '家园' (Home), '广播' (Broadcast), '导航' (Navigation), '淘帖' (Treasure Posts), '插件' (Plugins), and '游戏' (Games). The '论坛' section is active, showing a list of recent posts, including a discussion about the forum's future. The '群组' section shows a list of groups, including a group for Cantonese opera enthusiasts. The '家园' section shows a list of home pages, including a page for a Cantonese opera performance. The '广播' section shows a list of recent broadcasts, including a video of a Cantonese opera performance. The '导航' section shows a list of navigation links, including a link to the forum's homepage. The '淘帖' section shows a list of treasure posts, including a post about a Cantonese opera performance. The '插件' section shows a list of plugins, including a plugin for a Cantonese opera performance. The '游戏' section shows a list of games, including a game for a Cantonese opera performance.

What I have found

Traditionally the basis of 'big drama' (what Cantonese opera is called in Cantonese) is the Quben 曲本 – a quasi libretto cum script that performers had freedom to modify their performance.

撰曲：伍時本
哭像夢楊妃一

唐明皇哭像夢楊妃

反工六工尺上上 六反工尺尺上士合士上乙士上士合
【生合尺首板】驚驚 瓦冷添 愁 慟。(尺)

任合士上合 六反工六工尺尺上 尺上工尺工 工尺

【生起二黃板面白】失卻楊妃心微痛，幸存鬼斧塑嬌容。且待我燈前細看花模樣，悲情一敘話愁濃。【的的】哎呀，這真是我的太真，我的玉環呀。

【生唱長句二黃下句】仙姿俠貌下深宮，窈窕幽閒，堪贊頌。比昭君增妍麗，較西子，倍神丰。是嫦娥，靈犀暗通，夜寒秋凍，暗把相思，投種。【收攝】

【生白】妃子，妃子。孤皇思念你呀。哎呀。

【生重一槌沉花下句】哎吔吔，畢竟是香檀木塑楊妃像，難迴笑臉沒玲瓏。

【生禿起血淚花】念五 士合士上合 乙士合士上合 上士尺工尺乙 環，笑臉 容，哭聲

士尺合士上(六工尺)上尺工尺工六尺 上上尺工尺工六尺(工六尺合實救難自控，太真 妃 香香 仙 踪，天人

尺乙士上合任合士上(五生)六工六 工尺上上上工尺工六尺相隔令我無 窮恨痛，盼夢裡 驚驚再次 相 擁。

【生叫頭入夢介】妃子，太真，玉環！

【旦風鐮段頭唱落花時節】 上乙士合士上尺工乙士合任合士上(工尺) 上上上、尺工六工六工尺上尺上 落 葉滿階 紅途凝露凍，更有那 子規泣 聲 縱， 舊地重 臨 往，

The Autobiographical

I use my cancer survival story and my cross-cultural combined-arts practice to create a people-friendly prototype that is a compromise of contradicting approaches:

Western practice (an original work is created by an individual and cannot be altered) and the Cantonese opera that I remember (work is collaborative and allows recycling and modification by others).



The creative part of my thesis is the
12-act Quben (libretto cum script)

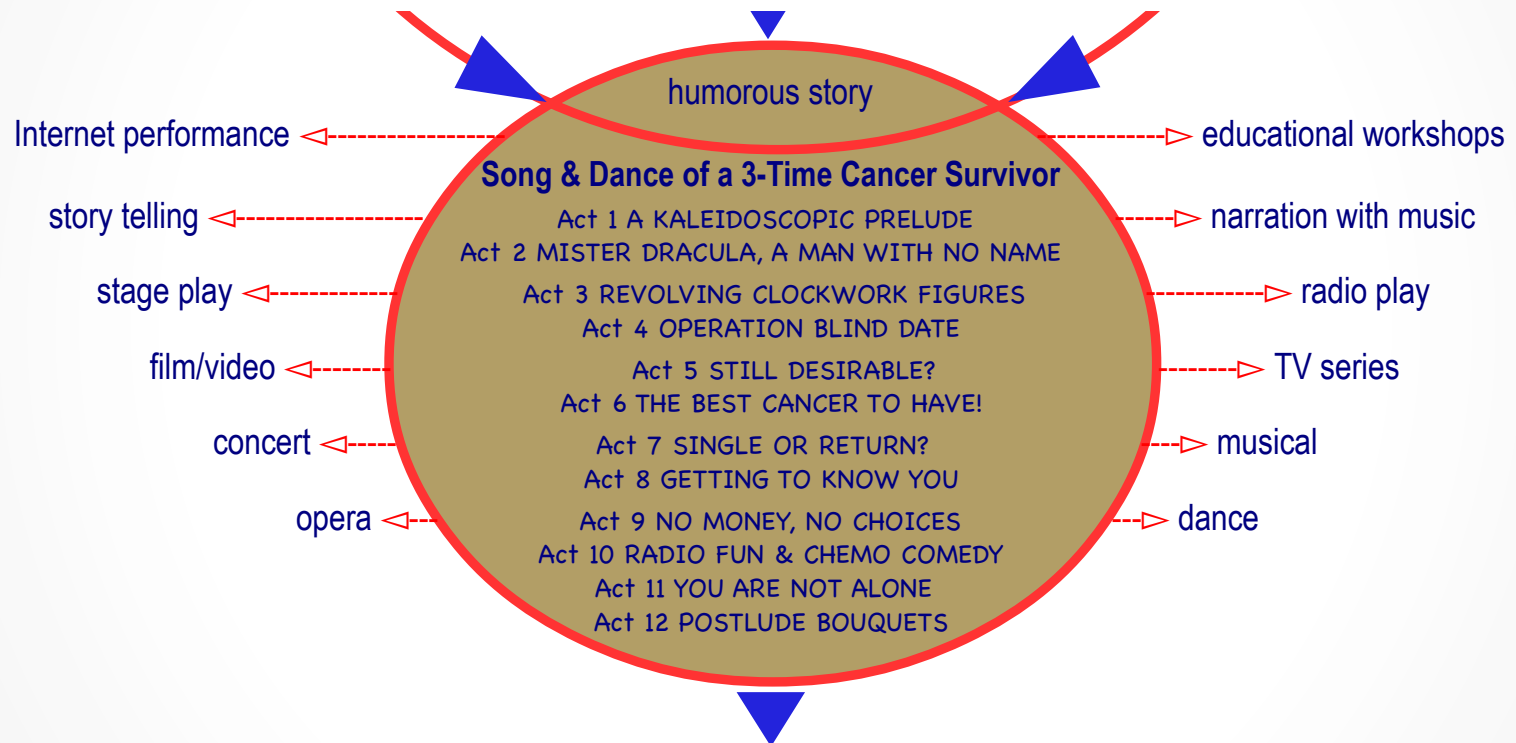
Song & Dance of a 3-Time Cancer Survivor

A CROSS-CULTURAL COMBINED ARTS PROTOTYPE

Wai-On Ho

I also provide original music for each of the 12 acts

The Quben is for enjoyable reading and can be developed into multi-venue performance



Elements provided in the prototype are like pieces in a kaleidoscope, the possibilities are endless

A sample of the text: end of Act 1

(In my fevered imagination, I saw the surgeon as Dracula)

**What fun! But wait!
Who's this? – approaching?
Oooooo - Noted killjoy,
Dressed to kill, and thrill, in white
Oooooo – chill!
Hold on to your crucifixes!
Dr Whooooooooo?
It's Mr Dracula,
Even worse than Dr Dracula –**

Electro-acoustic music

inspired by high-pitched Cantonese singing

The music I provide for *Act 2 Mr Dracula*:

Like bats – high frequency sound waves that bounce back, but of course not ultrasonic like real bats.



Notated music inspired by Western Classical & Cantonese opera

Step 1: I jotted down the melody of this performance as pitches only to use as thematic raw material.



Notated music inspired by Western Classical & Cantonese opera

Step 2: I read the lyrics of Act 11 so as To get some sense of shape and rhythm.

***No infection –
you need no protection.
Yet where are you, my friend?
Have you flown?
And am I left to moan,
alone, all alone...***



Notated music inspired by Western Classical & Cantonese opera

Step 3: I wrote a melody – modifying raw material (Step 1) according to the lyrics (step 2).

Soprano Solo Heroine's Song (verse 4) Ho Wai-On

Transposing Score
Song and Dance of a 3-Time Cancer Survivor Act 11

Words: Ho Wai-On & Michael Greenhough Sop: with feelings & rubato, like a diva singing an eagerly awaited aria on stage
♩ = 56 approx.

I sus - tain a smile in com pan y,

my de - mean our is cou - ra - geous, my con

di - tion not con ta - gious, yet you who spoke of

love have flown, flown have flown have flown, yet

you who spoke of love yet you who spoke of love of love

love, I am left to groan

and moan A - lone, all a - lone.

Notated music inspired by Western Classical & Cantonese opera

Step 4: Harmonic inspiration was from listening to Dvořák *Song to the Moon* from *Rusalka* (+ building work noise!).

Heroine's Song (verse 4) Ho Wai-On
Song and Dance of a 3-Time Cancer Survivor Act 11
Transposing Score
Words: Ho Wai-On & Michael Greenhough

Trumpet in B♭ $\text{♩} = 56 \text{ approx.}$
Tpt: use suitable mute to produce a mellow and muffled tone, or use a clarinetist instead

Violoncello $\text{♩} = 56 \text{ approx.}$
Vc: indicating phrasing only - bowing at your discretion; please try ad lib gliss, molto vib & ornaments

5 Sop: with feelings & rubato, like a diva singing an eagerly awaited aria on stage

S. Solo $\text{♩} = 56 \text{ approx.}$
I sus tain a smile in com pan- y,

Tpt.

Pno.
Pno: slow arpeggios + pedal to produce ambiance rather than chordal texture;
or use keyboard and experiment: e.g. try organ and aim at making it sounding not like the organ.

Vc.
Sul C
or gliss on 2 strings



Production ideas for the Quben

As music video: Act 1 *A Kaleidoscopic Prelude*



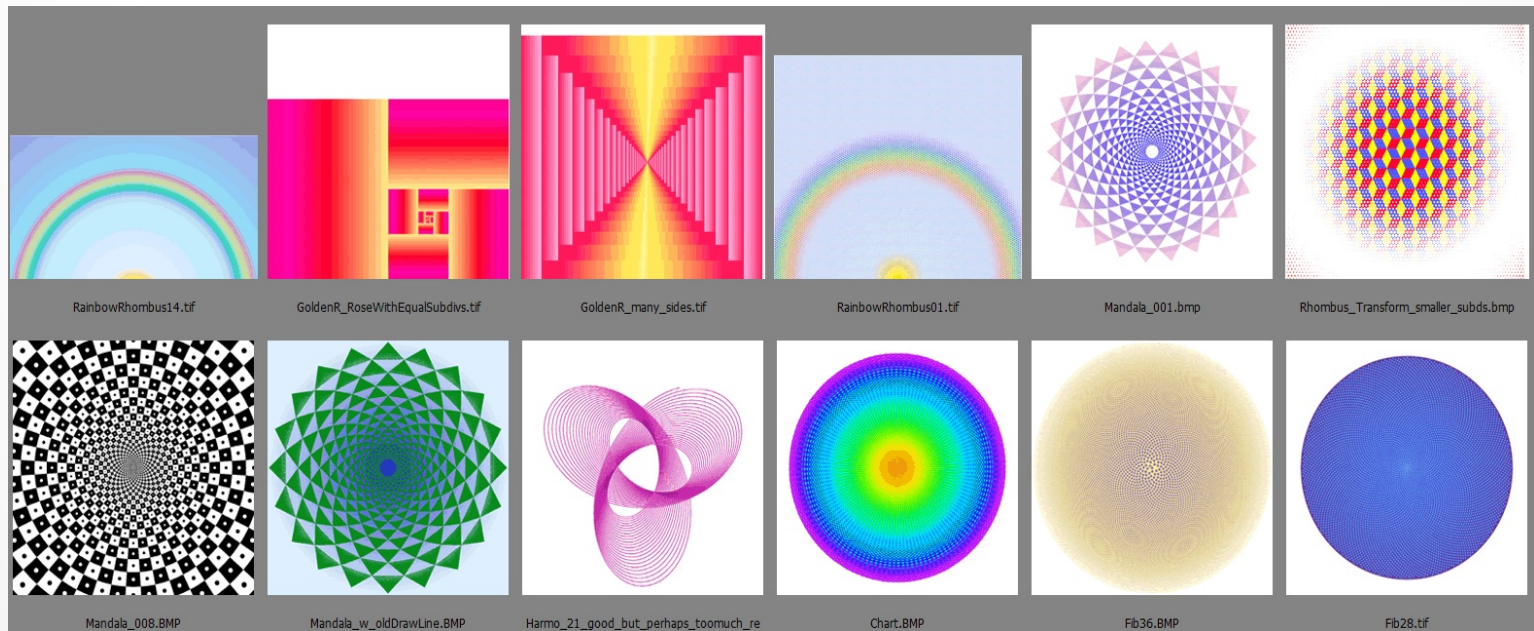
Production ideas for the Quben

Text as animation: Act 11 *You Are Not Alone*



Complementary materials

E.g., suggested visual images for *Act 10 Radio Fun & Chemo Comedy* – Golden Means and other graphics by Marcus West



Context

CHILDHOOD IMPRESSIONS OF CANTONESE OPERA



MY COMBINED ARTS CREATIVE/DIRECTING PRACTICE

humorous story

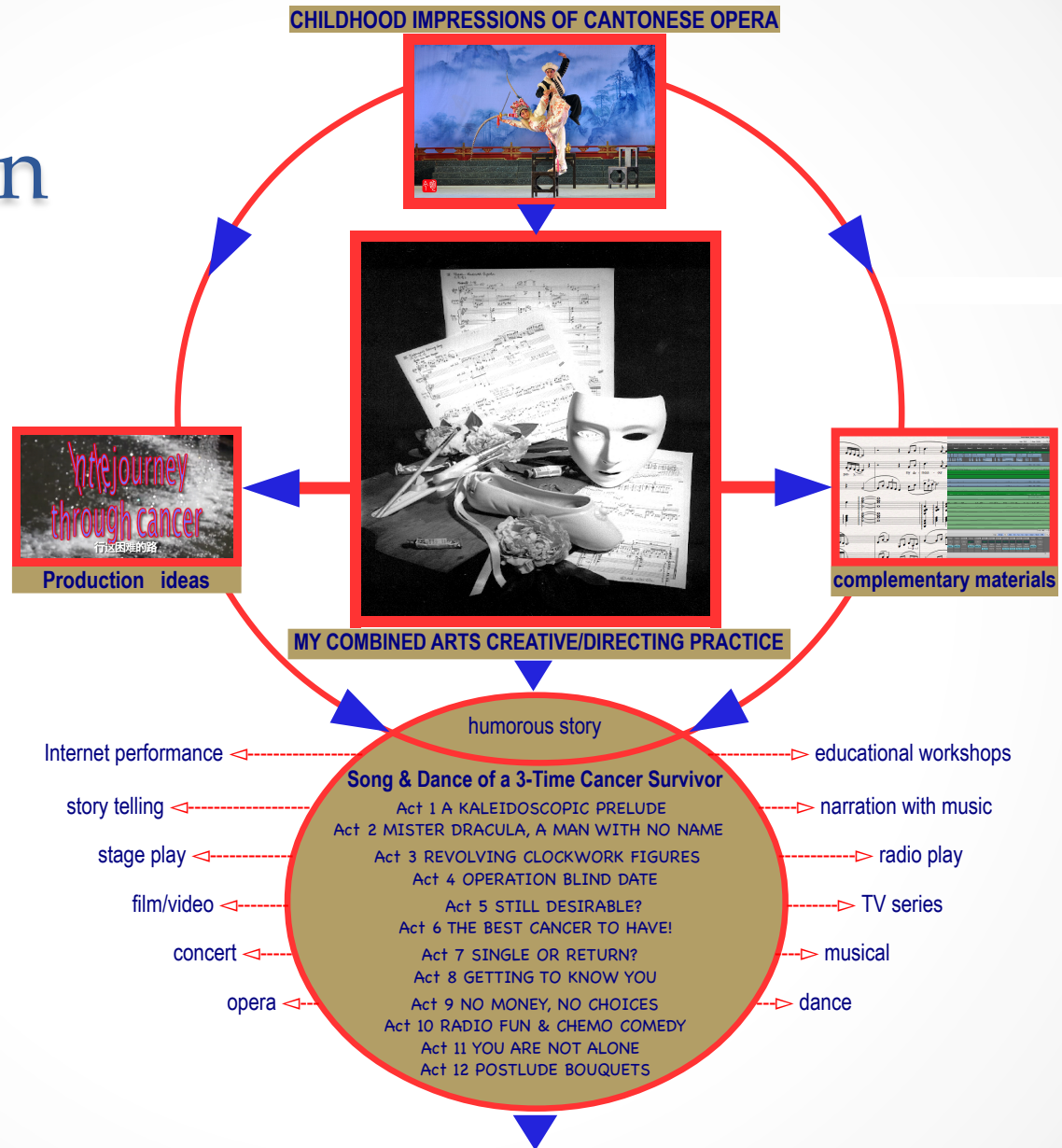


Production ideas



complementary materials

Evolution



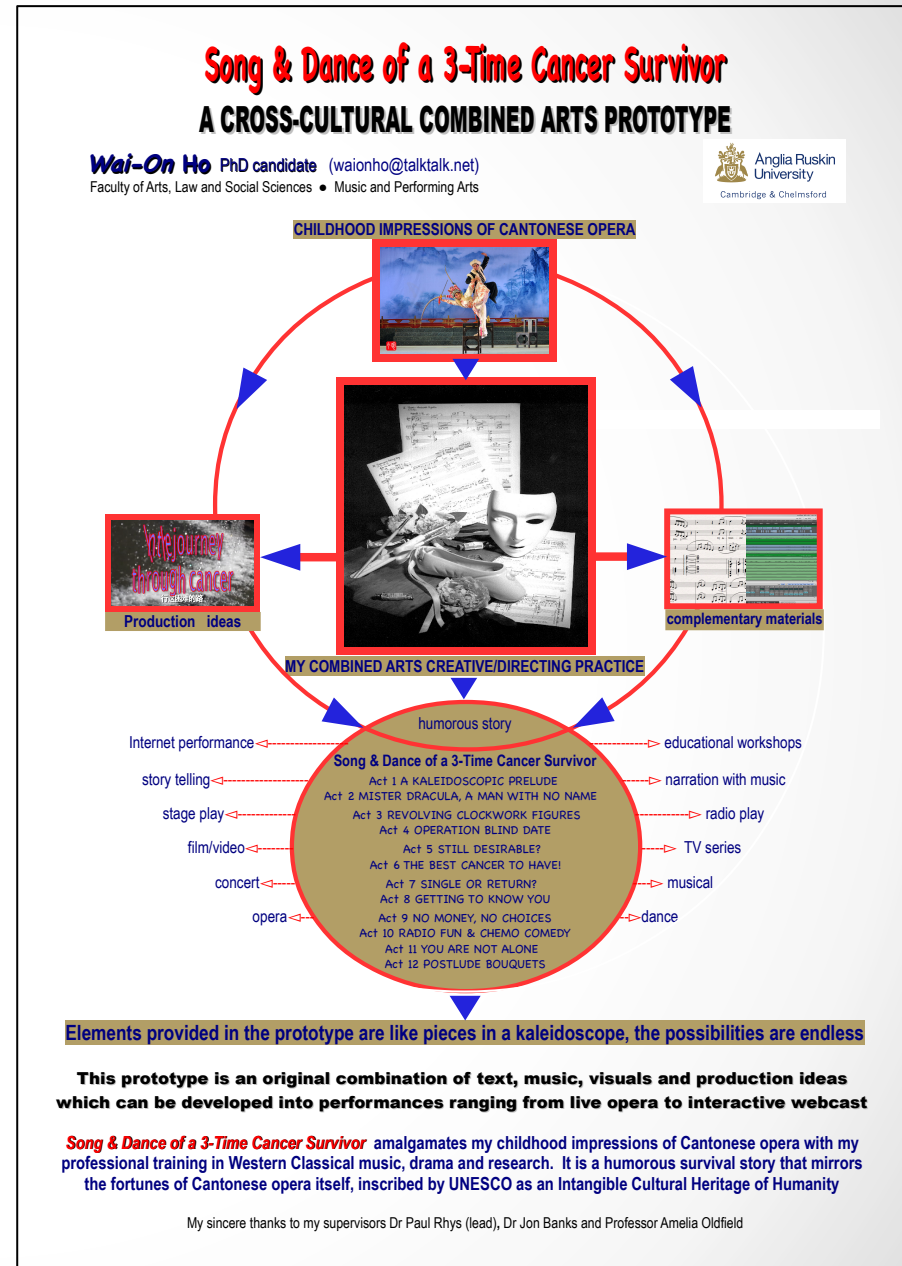
Elements provided in the prototype are like pieces in a kaleidoscope, the possibilities are endless

The Result

A twelve-act Quben called

Song & Dance of a 3-Time Cancer Survivor

A prototype of text, music, production ideas and complementary materials, which serves as a basis for new versions and supports multi-venue performances, both for my use and the use of others.



Acknowledgements

Musicians Benevolent Fund Professional Development Award 2009

Anglia Ruskin University CPD Fund

My Supervisors

Professor Amelia Oldfield



Dr Paul Rhys (lead)



Dr Jon Banks



Video: Lion Chamber

Cantonese opera – all-round performers – creative input – humble origin



That's All

Do get in touch if you are interested via:

www.howaion.co.uk