Abstract SSS XIV

The Copla Musical: Spanish history made into an intercultural musical

My Practice-as-Research musical theatre project The Copla Musical combines the dominant paradigms of musical theatre in Britain and America with a popular form of Spanish musical theatre, Copla. This project has developed with aims to engage and test current intercultural theory as a critical framework. The Copla Musical tells the moving story of transgender artist La Gitana, who escaped Franco’s dictatorship in Spain to become a variety star in America. It presents a piece of Spanish history aiming to engage international audiences by blending core features from Anglo-Spanish cultural settings.

Throughout the last few years, this work has been tested with diverse audiences in Britain and abroad who have responded to the piece based on their cultural knowledge. Jukebox musicals are known to benefit from an intertextual awareness associated with the prior cognisance of their songs. Copla songs provide this sort of identification to a demographic of Spanish audiences who are aware of the songs’ early history, however these songs are often totally unknown to non-Spanish audiences who cannot relate to any prior knowledge or experience. My aim in the creation of this project is to find artistic strategies to defend the dramatic value of copla outside of Spain.

Key related topics from the call:
- Adapting from, to and between page, stage, screen and real life
- New musical theatre
- Diversity and gender in musical theatre
- Audience engagement and musical theatre