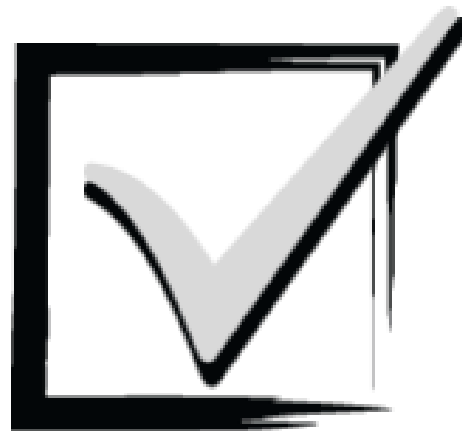


Melodramatick: a DRI use case for participatory cultural data

Dr William Haese-Hill
Research Software Engineer
<https://github.com/haessar>

15th April 2026



Context

Many performing arts organisations face pressure to evidence reach and attract younger, tech-savvy audiences amid tight funding.

Event listings and catalogues are easy to publish; **capturing “what audiences actually engaged with”** is much harder, and often remains invisible.

Participation patterns are uneven (age and deprivation effects are well documented in sector evidence), and discovery is increasingly digital.

An interface that **links event listings data with a user engagement mechanism** could improve participation from digitally-oriented (and often younger) audiences.

Parallels

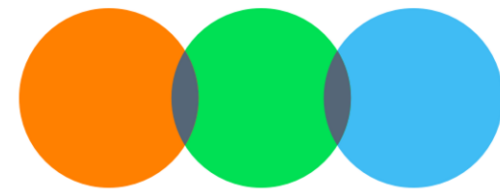
Commonalities:

- User accounts
- Lists (often user curated)
- Social layer: ratings/comments/following
- **Engagement logging** (“I watched/read ...”)

What if we apply this to the performing arts?

- Heterogeneous – different data models and metadata across artforms (opera/ballet/theatre/...)
- Strongly event-based: **work -> production -> performance** (date/venue)
- Catalogues are often fragmented

goodreads



Letterboxd

Melodramatick framework

- Open-source template for deploying participatory performing arts sites
- “Polymorphic” *Work* model (Opera/Ballet/Symphony/etc) with a shared core.
- Shared workflow: **Work -> Production -> Performance -> “Tick”**
- Implementation: Django (Python) – popular web framework with large dev community



django

What a new instance requires:

- Minimal model mapping
- Branding + basic hosting configuration

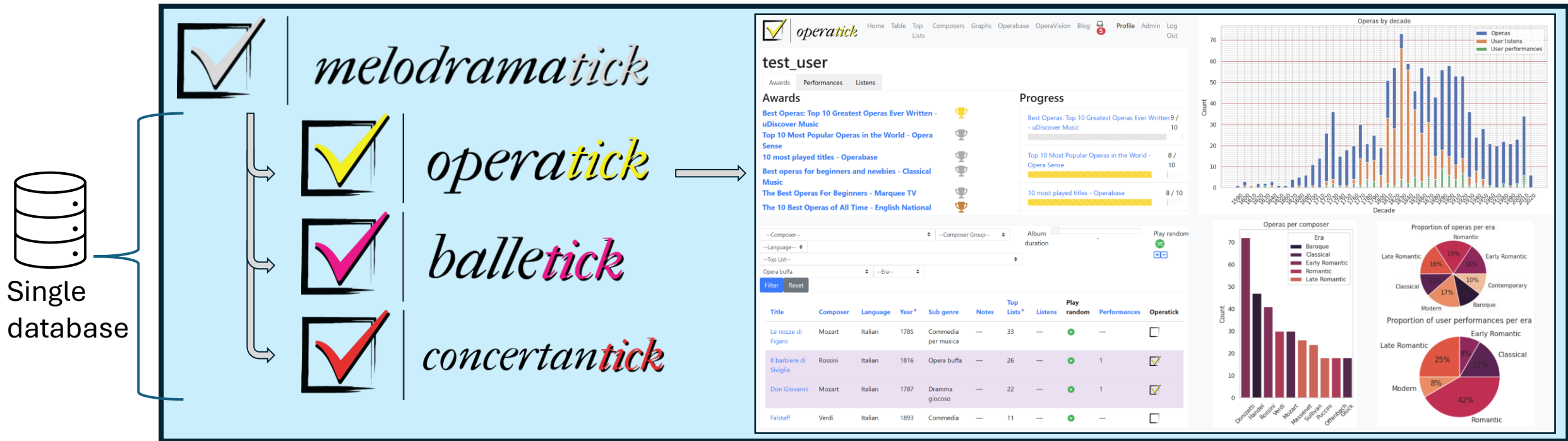
Participation & user retention:

- Low-friction “tick” interface (user can add additional fields/metadata via profile)
- Light “gamification” (e.g. awards for top list completion)
- Optional: direct Spotify playback for linked albums (for music-aligned works)

Example



- Proof-of-concept (hosted on a shoestring)
- Manually populated with 1000+ works



Improvements identified (v0 to v1)



Import/export pipeline

- Currently relies on manual data entry
- Move to repeatable ingest (CSV/API) and versioned exports/provenance



Event-driven performance model

Represent performances as calendar events, populated from listings data, rather than only user reported.

DisCouRSE-funded project

Funding acquired to implement v1 improvements.



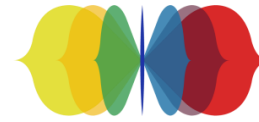
Pilot dRTP leadership model (partner-facing):

- Establish relationship with a cultural sector org partner
- Partner receives a fixed fee, and
 - provides event metadata for an agreed period (i.e. “season” catalogue CSV)
 - disseminates platform to their established channels (i.e. social media)
 - (optionally) recruit funded intern from UofG to handle arising admin.
- Ingest data from partner and/or external sources, run user engagement study with partner audiences.

Governance:

- Collecting user participation data requires research ethics approval / DPIA
- Before study – determine necessary/optional personal data (age band? gender?)
- Default public outputs should be aggregate-only to ensure anonymity

DISKAH plans



DISKAH

Digital Skills in
Arts and Humanities
Network

Turning the pilot into a DRI use case

- Package a repeatable workflow: ingest -> participation (“ticks”) -> privacy-safe aggregates -> publish/export (*EOSC?*)
- Document governance artefacts: DPIA/ethics templates, participant-facing text, safe-output rules
- Publish reusable outputs: versioned exports/provenance (and guidelines to redeploy) (*Zenodo?*)
- **Data enrichment:** link event/venue data to geospatial context and other open reference datasets (where justified)
 - External data resources (examples):



MusicBrainz

Canonical IDs/metadata ->
identifier linking



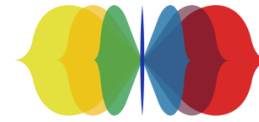
**DATA
THISTLE**

Event listings -> ingestion

Ge **names**

Place context -> enrichment

DISKAH plans cont'd



DISKAH

Digital Skills in
Arts and Humanities
Network

Capstone dRTP Workshop

Running user engagement pilot template in controlled setting

- Walk through the end-to-end pattern (ingest -> publish -> participation window -> reporting)
- “Futures” scenario exercise: partner capacity + governance load -> risks + mitigations
- Outputs: a shared checklist + example materials (partner SoW, data protection/ethics templates, comms pack, reporting template)

Thank you!

Interested in
collaborating? Seeking:

- dRTP co-leads
 - DRI/publishing advice
-