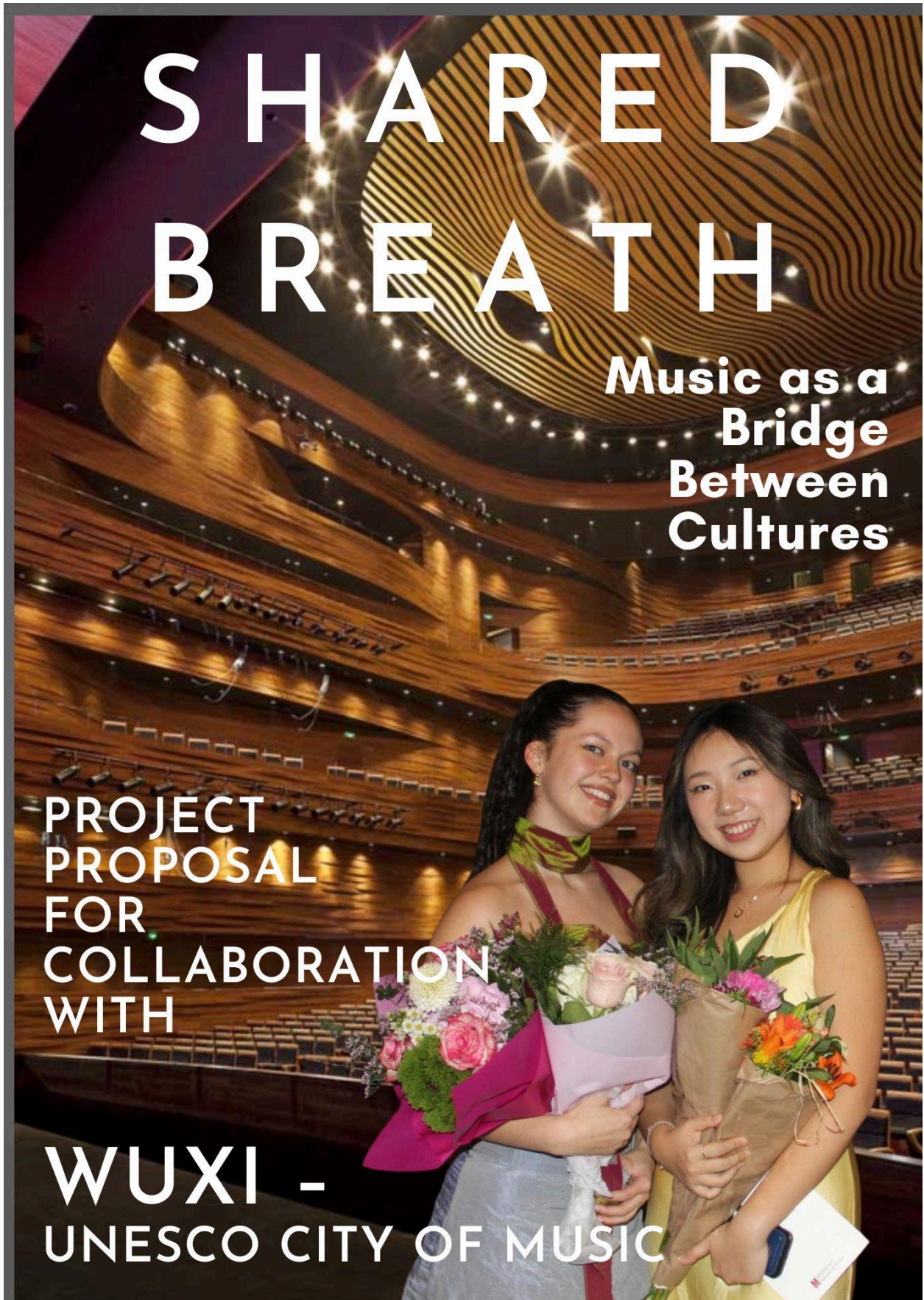


SHARED BREATH

Music as a
Bridge
Between
Cultures

PROJECT
PROPOSAL
FOR
COLLABORATION
WITH

WUXI -
UNESCO CITY OF MUSIC





Shared Breath

Voice, Culture and Connection

Music as a Bridge Between Cultures

Project Proposal for Collaboration with Wuxi – UNESCO City of Music



Introduction

With great respect and sincere admiration, we are honoured to present Shared Breath, an international music project designed to contribute to the vibrant cultural vision of Wuxi, China's remarkable and inspiring UNESCO City of Music.

Wuxi is widely recognised for its rich musical heritage, its dynamic cultural development, and its growing international presence as a city where tradition and innovation come together in a truly remarkable way.

At the heart of the project lies a simple yet powerful idea: while the human voice is shaped by culture, language and tradition, it is fundamentally rooted in a shared physical foundation, breath.

By bringing together young singers from the Netherlands and musicians from Wuxi, Shared Breath celebrates not only the universal nature of music, but also the unique and beautiful cultural identity that Wuxi represents.



Origin – A Personal Encounter

At the heart of *Shared Breath* lies a personal story that reflects the deeper meaning of international cultural exchange.

The project originates from the encounter between two young artists, Soprano Louise Jones from the Netherlands and soprano Charlotte Yang from China, who met while studying at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, an internationally renowned conservatory.

Coming from different cultural backgrounds, they followed the same programme, studied with the same teachers, and developed their artistic voices within the same environment.

What began as a meeting between two cultures soon grew into a close friendship. Through their daily collaboration, they discovered a profound sense of connection, not only in their musical development, but also in their shared curiosity, discipline and joy in making music together.

This experience revealed something essential: that beyond differences in language, tradition and culture, there exists a deeply human foundation for connection.

This insight forms the basis of *Shared Breath*.

The project places the human voice at its centre, an instrument shaped by culture and identity, yet rooted in the same physical foundation, breath.

In the context of Wuxi, a city celebrated for its rich musical heritage and its inspiring vision as a UNESCO City of Music, this personal story gains a broader meaning. It reflects how individual encounters can grow into meaningful international collaboration, contributing to cultural dialogue on a larger scale.



Why Wuxi?

Wuxi holds a truly distinguished position as China's first UNESCO City of Music, a recognition that reflects both its profound musical heritage and its forward-looking cultural vision.

As a city that has long been celebrated as a cradle of musical tradition, and at the same time a rapidly developing centre for contemporary music and innovation, Wuxi offers an exceptional environment for meaningful international collaboration.

Shared Breath is deeply aligned with this vision.

The project contributes to Wuxi's continued growth as a leading international music city by:

- strengthening its already impressive role in global cultural exchange
- creating inspiring collaboration between Chinese and European artists
- further enhancing the international visibility of Wuxi's outstanding musical identity
- activating and celebrating its remarkable cultural infrastructure

In this context, Wuxi is not only a host city, but a powerful artistic partner and an inspiring cultural example on the global stage.



Artistic Leadership at the Highest Level and Internationally Recognised Expertise

The artistic direction of *Shared Breath* is led by a team of highly experienced and internationally respected professionals, supported by a strong institutional framework within the Netherlands.

Participants from the Netherlands are selected from leading institutions, including the National Choirs of the Netherlands, an organisation with an excellent reputation in the development of young vocal talent and widely regarded as one of the highest-level training environments for emerging singers in the country.

Through collaborations with internationally renowned institutions such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Dutch National Opera, these participants are trained within a highly professional and artistically demanding environment, ensuring a strong level of preparation and performance quality.

This ensures that the project not only brings artistic exchange, but also contributes to a high-level educational and cultural experience that aligns with the ambitions of Wuxi as a leading UNESCO City of Music.

Conductor of Nationale Koren is Irene Verburg. She is also a vocal coach and is widely recognised for her exceptional expertise in the development of young vocal talent. She has been affiliated with the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague and serves as director of the National Choirs of the Netherlands, where she has played a significant role in preparing young singers at an outstanding artistic level. Her work is characterised by a refined pedagogical approach and a deep dedication to nurturing emerging voices. She further expanded her expertise through studies in the United States, supported by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Artistic leader of Nationale Koren is László Norbert Nemes. He brings a strong international dimension to the project. As a highly respected choral conductor and vocal coach, he combines extensive experience in working with young singers with a deep foundation in the Kodály tradition, one of the most influential approaches in music education worldwide. His work is rooted in musical precision, attentive listening and the development of a cohesive ensemble sound, making him a valuable and inspiring artistic partner within the project.



Artistic Concept

Shared Breath is designed as a collaborative artistic process built on:

- listening
- adapting
- co-creating

Participants work in mixed Chinese and Dutch ensembles, developing repertoire together.

The final performances are not the starting point, but the natural outcome of an intensive process of exchange and creation.

Collaboration with Wuxi Symphony Orchestra

A central element of the project is the potential collaboration with the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra.

This collaboration offers:

- integration of young vocal talent with a professional orchestral environment
- opportunities for joint performances combining Western vocal repertoire and Chinese musical traditions
- a strong international artistic statement aligned with Wuxi's UNESCO profile

This partnership would significantly enhance the artistic level and international impact of the project.



Programme Structure

During a ten-day to two-week residency in Wuxi, young musicians will work together on repertoire, participate in masterclasses, and develop joint performances that will be presented in public concerts.

While the project originally started with a focus on one city, it has been designed as a flexible and expandable platform, allowing Wuxi to play a leading role in shaping its future development as an international model for musical exchange.

Duration: 10–14 days

Phases:

1. Arrival & Cultural Orientation
2. Collaborative Rehearsals in Mixed Groups
3. Masterclasses with international faculty
4. Integration with local musicians and orchestra
5. Public Performances in Wuxi

Minimum of two public concerts, with potential for additional performances depending on local interest.

Participants

The project is designed as a flexible and scalable platform.

- Netherlands: ± 20 young singers (expandable)
- China: local students, musicians and potential orchestral collaboration

This flexibility allows the project to adapt to the ambitions and scale of Wuxi's cultural programme.

Benefits for Wuxi

Shared Breath offers concrete and measurable value for the city:

Cultural Impact

- strengthens Wuxi's already rich and celebrated identity as a leading international music city
- brings UNESCO values to life through a visible and inspiring artistic collaboration
- highlights the unique beauty of Wuxi's musical traditions in an international context

International Positioning

- further elevates Wuxi's global profile as an outstanding UNESCO City of Music
- creates meaningful and visible connections with European cultural institutions
- generates international attention through high-quality artistic and media output

Educational Value

- provides masterclasses and training for local students
- facilitates direct interaction with international vocal pedagogy
- supports talent development within Wuxi's music institutions

Activation of Infrastructure

- use of concert halls and educational facilities
- potential collaboration with the Wuxi Symphony Orchestra
- integration into existing cultural programmes

Organisation

Carpenter Concerts (Netherlands)

- concept development
- international coordination
- participant selection

Wuxi partners (to be confirmed)

- host institution
- local coordination
- venues and facilities



Documentation & Visibility

The project includes a structured media strategy:

- video documentation (rehearsals, performances, interviews)
- social media content
- international promotion

This ensures long-term visibility for Wuxi as a UNESCO City of Music.

Long-Term Vision

Shared Breath is designed as the starting point of a long-term collaboration.

Future possibilities include:

- recurring editions in Wuxi
- expansion to other cities within the UNESCO network
- exchange programmes between China and the Netherlands
- return performances in Europe

Closing

We believe Shared Breath offers a meaningful opportunity to contribute to Wuxi's cultural ambitions as a UNESCO City of Music.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to explore this collaboration further and shape the project together.

Yours sincerely,
Mirjam Timmerman

Founder & Director

Carpenter Concerts



支持并展示新兴古典音乐人才



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Important links:

[Conductor Irene Verburg](https://ireneverburg.com/), <https://ireneverburg.com/>

[Conductor Laszlo Nemes](https://www.koncon.nl/docenten/laszlo-nemes-2), <https://www.koncon.nl/docenten/laszlo-nemes-2>

[Carpenter Concerts](https://carpenterconcerts.nl/), <https://carpenterconcerts.nl/>

[Soprano Louise Jones](https://www.louise-jones.com/), <https://www.louise-jones.com/>

[Soprano Charlotte Yang](https://carpenterconcerts.nl/charlotte-yang-sopraan-jonge-talenten-bij-carpenter-co),

<https://carpenterconcerts.nl/charlotte-yang-sopraan-jonge-talenten-bij-carpenter-co>
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