



Shared Breath

Voice, Culture and Connection

Project Presentation & Request for Collaboration

Music as a bridge between cultures



Introduction

With great respect, we are pleased to present Shared Breath, an international exchange project that brings together young vocal talent from the Netherlands and musicians from China in an intensive artistic and educational collaboration.

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 and musicians from Europe and China, Shared Breath explores how cultural identity influences vocal expression, while at the same time revealing the universal nature of musical communication.

At its core, the project is about connection, created through a shared artistic process of collaboration, listening and co-creation.

Origin - a personal encounter

“Shared Breath” is an international exchange project that brings together young singers from the Netherlands and young musicians from China in an intensive artistic and educational collaboration.


The project originates from a personal encounter. Louise, from the Netherlands, and Charlotte, from China, met while studying at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, an internationally renowned conservatory. Coming from very different cultural backgrounds, they followed the same programme, studied with the same teachers, and moved within the same artistic environment.

What began as a meeting between two worlds quickly developed into a close friendship. Through their daily collaboration, they discovered how much they have in common: in their musical development, their way of working, their curiosity, and the joy they experience in making music together.

This personal experience forms the foundation of the project. It demonstrates that, despite cultural differences, meaningful connection is possible on a deeply human level.

From this perspective, “Shared Breath” was developed: a project in which the human voice is central, as an instrument shaped by culture, language, and tradition, yet rooted in the same physical foundation, breath.

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



We have chosen Xi'an as the starting point, but the project is designed to be expandable to other cities as well.

Why China and Xi'an?

The choice for China, and specifically Xi'an, is both artistically and strategically grounded.

China represents a rapidly developing and highly engaged environment for classical music, with a strong conservatory system and a growing interest in European vocal traditions. For Dutch young singers, this provides a meaningful context for international artistic development and exchange.

Within this context, Xi'an holds a special significance. As one of the oldest cultural capitals of China and historically a key hub along the Silk Road, Xi'an has long been a meeting place of cultures, ideas, and artistic traditions. This makes it a particularly relevant location for a project centred around cultural exchange and connection.

The collaboration with Xi'an Conservatory of Music further strengthens this choice, providing access to a strong educational environment, talented students, and local infrastructure.

At the same time, the project is rooted in a personal connection. One of the initiating artists, Charlotte Yang, originates from Xi'an and maintains a connection to the region. This personal link enables a more authentic and meaningful collaboration, bridging the gap between individual experience and broader cultural exchange.

Together, these elements make Xi'an not only a practical choice, but a conceptually and artistically fitting location for the project.



Artistic Leadership at the Highest Level and Internationally Recognised Expertise

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

Irene Verburg, vocal coach and conductor, is widely recognised for her expertise in the development of young vocal talent. She has been affiliated with the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague and is director of the National Choirs of the Netherlands, where she has played a key role in preparing young singers at a high artistic level. Her work is characterised by a strong pedagogical approach and a deep commitment to nurturing emerging voices. She has studied in the United States with a grant of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

László Norbert Nemes brings an international dimension to the project. As a choral conductor and vocal coach, he combines extensive experience in working with young singers with a strong foundation in the Kodály tradition, one of the most influential approaches in vocal and musical education worldwide. His work is rooted in musical precision, listening, and the development of ensemble sound, making him a valuable artistic counterpart within the project.

Participants from the Netherlands are selected from leading institutions, including the National Choirs of the Netherlands, an organisation with a strong reputation in the development of young vocal talent. Through collaborations with major cultural institutions such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Dutch National Opera, the National Choirs provide a high-level training environment for emerging singers.

Together, this combination of artistic leadership and institutional support ensures both a high artistic standard and a strong educational foundation for the project.

Artistic Concept

Working title:

Shared Breath, Voice, Culture and Connection

The project is designed as a process of:

- listening
- adapting
- co-creating

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

The final concerts are not the starting point, but the natural outcome of this collaborative process.

Programme Structure

Duration: 10 days

Dates: 4 June 2027, arrival, 14 June 2027, departure

Structure:

Phase 1, Arrival & Orientation

- introduction participants
- cultural and artistic context

Phase 2, Collaborative Work

- mixed groups, Netherlands and China
- rehearsals in small ensembles

Phase 3, Masterclasses

- led by Irene Verburg and László Nemes
- in collaboration with Xi'an faculty

Phase 4, Concert Preparation

- integration of artistic work

Phase 5, Performances

- minimum of two public concerts in Xi'an

Participants

Total group: approx. 25 participants

Netherlands

- ± 20 young singers
- selected from conservatories and national choirs

China

- students and musicians from Xi'an Conservatory

Artistic Leadership

- Irene Verburg
- László Nemes

Supporting team

- facilitators
- media/documentation

Organisation

Carpenter Concerts (Netherlands)

- concept development
- participant selection
- international coordination
- funding applications

Xi'an Conservatory of Music (intended partner)

- host institution
- students
- rehearsal spaces
- concert venues
- invitation letter



Documentation & Visibility

The project includes a structured media plan:

- video recordings (rehearsals, interviews, performances)
- social media updates
- project page on website
- potential collaboration with Chinese and Dutch media

This ensures:

- visibility of the project
- documentation for future collaboration
- international positioning of participants

Financial Overview

Total estimated budget: €91,250

Main categories:

- Travel: €28,500
- Accommodation: €15,750
- Meals: €7,500
- Local transport: €4,000
- Artistic costs: €12,000
- Production: €6,000
- Media: €3,000
- Insurance: €2,000
- Contingency: €10,000

The Dutch side will actively pursue funding through cultural funds and private partners.



Collaboration and Support

To realise *Shared Breath* successfully, the project seeks collaboration with partners who can contribute to its practical, institutional and financial development.

We welcome the opportunity to work with organisations and institutions that are willing to support the project in one or more of the following areas:

Practical Support

- facilitating contact with the Xi'an Conservatory of Music and other relevant partners
- supporting communication with local institutions
- providing guidance in arranging:
 - travel coordination
 - accommodation
 - local logistics
- assistance with official procedures, such as invitations and visa processes

Institutional Support

- connecting the project to relevant cultural and educational institutions
- advising on local networks, opportunities and partnerships
- contributing to the positioning and visibility of the project within existing cultural frameworks

Financial Support

- direct or indirect financial contributions
- support in identifying and accessing relevant funding programmes
- guidance on cultural initiatives and funding opportunities within China and internationally

Long-Term Vision

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

Future plans include:

- recurring editions of the project
- expansion to other cities
- exchange programmes between China and the Netherlands
- a potential return visit of Chinese participants to the Netherlands

Closing

We believe that *Shared Breath* represents a meaningful and forward-looking initiative that aligns with shared interests in cultural exchange, education, and international collaboration.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this project with you and explore how we can work together to bring it to life.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Mirjam Timmerman
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-concerts/),

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