MIGRATION, PERFORMANCE & POLICY

STUDY DAY: 26 NOVEMBER 2026

SONGS AND POEMS FROM THE BETWEEN

3.30 - 4.50PM, RECITAL HALL, SCHWARZMAN CENTRE

Poets and musicians will each perform 15min sets that explore experiences of being in between. Yousif, Tyné Angela, Josh and Hadia will then join Samantha Sebastian (Faculty of Music, University of Oxford) in conversation, reflecting on each other's work, their creative processes, and the role of performance in the public imagination around migration.



Yousif M. Qasmiyeh

Yousif M. Qasmiyeh is Postgraduate Research Associate and Joint-Lead of the Baddawi Camp Lab as part of the Imagining Futures research project; Refugee Hosts' Writer-in-Residence; and a doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford's Faculty of English. A researcher, poet and translator who was born and educated in Lebanon's Baddawi refugee camp, Yousif's research examines the archive, time and containment in refugee literature in Arabic and English. His collections Writing the Camp (2021) and Eating the Archive (2023) are highly acclaimed, and his poetry, literary criticism, scholarly articles and translations have been widely published including in GeoHumanities, Modern Poetry in Translation, Critical Quarterly, Cambridge Literary Review, PN Review and Poetry London. Yousif's poetry has been exhibited worldwide in venues such as the Venice Biennale and in Jenny Holzer's installation at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.



Tyné Angela Freeman

Tyné Angela is a vocalist, composer, and doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford's Faculty of Music. Her work explores the diverse factors that influence how we listen and shape musicality. She has recorded eight albums of original compositions, performing internationally and singing at venues like the Kennedy Center and Grammy Museum. Her music has been presented by institutions including Banff Centre, Dartmouth College, and TEDx.

Tyné Angela performs songs from her collaborative album Bridges. She co-wrote them with musicians from Kenya, Burkina Faso, and Cape Verde. Much of the songs were composed virtually, over WhatsApp voice notes and Skype calls, as the musicians were all in different countries. The music often crossed borders more easily than they could as long-distance songwriters. The set moves between English, Swahili, Kriol, and French, allowing diverse identities to be expressed together without being collapsed into one. Revisiting this work has prompted Tyné Angela to reflect on what becomes audible about migration when we hear it play out through multilingual lyrics and melodies.



Odyssey Ensemble with Hadia Azizi

Odyssey Ensemble for Refugees is a narrative change charity that amplifies refugee stories through music and the arts. Founded by musician and asylum lawyer Josh Asokan, it commissions refugee poets, filmmakers and musicians, paid as professionals, and performs their work alongside a professional ensemble. In under two years it has reached over 2,000 people live, with sold-out concerts at Cadogan Hall and Kings Place and features on BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4. Odyssey Ensemble have collaborated with numerous artists, including poet and humanitarian practitioner Hadia Azizi. As alumni of the University of Oxford's Faculty of Music and Department of International Development respectively, Josh and Hadia's collaboration highlights the study day's interdisciplinary spirit.

Poet Hadia Azizi reads three poems with a piano trio from Odyssey Ensemble, each finding its own way into the experience of displacement. In Merzia Qahramany's Wounded Wings, the speaker is a migrant bird, flying wounded over a land divided by borders in search of a nest and of peace. Shukria Rezaei's Threads Across the Sea begins with a girl embroidering a blue scarf for her mother, and quietly the scarf becomes the sea so many must cross to reach safety. Hadia's own Things I Carried takes stock of what a refugee brings across a border: not only belongings, but feelings, memories, language and, finally, hope.

Policy often speaks of people in numbers and categories. Performance puts a person in the room. Our set asks what changes when audiences hear refugees' own words, in their own voices, before they meet them in a headline.