

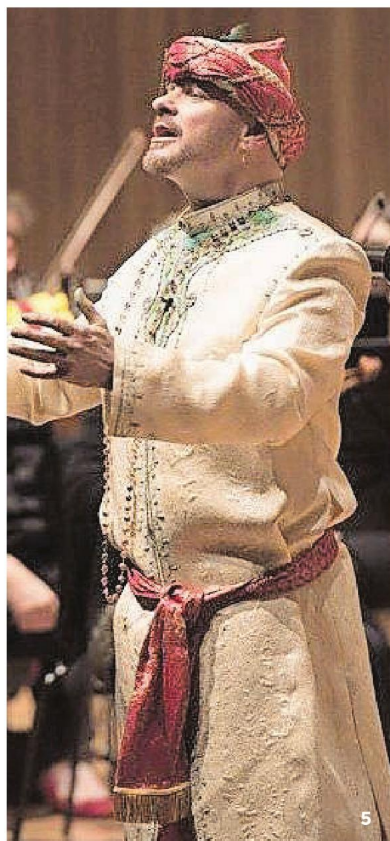


Katie's appearances in classic works of art (1) *Bathers at La Grenouillère* by Monet (2) Monet's *Wild Poppies* (3) Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* (4) James Mayhew as himself and (5) James performing

Photos: Contributed



SENSATION



projects, like the *Kalevala* epic poem from Finland which inspired Jean Sibelius, the story of William Tell, and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

"I always try to go back to the earliest and most authentic version of the story that I can, as that's the one that probably inspired the composer in the first place. I want to put across to children that these wonderful pieces of music, many of which they might know without realising it, originally came from stories, to help them remember it.

"Then one day, if they hear it again, it won't just be a nice tune, but something a bit deeper than that."

Mayhew's own childhood exposure to the world of the creative arts has inspired his career, and continues to motivate him in everything he does.

"The power of art, music and storytelling can open up so much – and there are children out there who really need that chance. So many children, for one reason or another, have difficult lives, so rather than narrow things down, we should be opening as many doors as possible."

■ Julian Shea is a freelance writer and broadcast and print journalist, and an associate lecturer at St Mary's University, Twickenham

■ Details of James Mayhew's books and upcoming live painting performances can be found at <https://www.jamesmayhew.co.uk/>

THE COMMON LANGUAGE FALLACY

The idea that the world might be a more peaceful place if we all spoke with the same tongue is a mistaken one, says **PETER TRUDGILL**, as our bloody history shows only too well



There are people who believe that languages are divisive. The world would be a much better place, they reckon, if we all spoke the same one. Surely it would be much easier to achieve world-wide cooperation and peace if there was one single world language?

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. A very large number of the most bitter and bloody conflicts in human history have been fought out between peoples who spoke the same language and had no trouble at all in understanding one another's speech.

Somewhere between 600,000 and 850,000 soldiers died in the American Civil War – that's often reckoned to be as many Americans as died in both world wars and all the other conflicts the USA has ever been involved in put together. It was no help at all to those unfortunate Union and Confederate soldiers that they spoke the same language as one another.

Nor did speaking the same language do anything to stop the appalling slaughter that took place during the genocidal events in Rwanda in 1994, when at least half a million Tutsi – maybe even twice that number – were killed by Hutus. Perhaps as much as 70% of the Tutsi population were killed: they were not saved by the fact that their mother tongue was Kinyarwanda, exactly the same language which is spoken by the Hutu.

The history of Europe is full of similar cases. The English Civil War of 1642–1651 brought about appalling levels of death and destruction – something which many of us remember hearing absolutely nothing at all about in our school history lessons.

Over 80,000 people – 'people' meaning men of course – were killed in the actual fighting; and an additional 100,000 men, women and children died from disease brought on by the war. Approximately 4% of the entire population of England perished because of a war that was being fought between two sides who both spoke, most of them, only English and nothing but English.

The 1917–1923 Russian Civil War which followed the revolution was one

of the greatest catastrophes there has ever been: some estimates reckon there were as many as 12 million military and civilian casualties. Most of those, though by no means all, were native Russian speakers, and Russian was the single language of wider communication used from one end of the country to the other.

The Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939 did involve speakers of Basque, Catalan, Galician and Spanish, but everyone involved could all also speak the national language, Spanish, which was, in any case, the mother tongue of the vast majority of the combatants and non-combatants. Over 600,000 people died, and many more were imprisoned or displaced.

The Greek Civil War was another disastrous conflict in which nearly everyone involved was a native speaker of the same language, and where even the Slavic, Albanian and Rumanian speakers involved could speak Greek.

The fighting between leftist and rightist forces, which lasted from 1946 to 1949, led to 150,000 deaths and to more than one million people – out of a total population of around seven million – having to leave their homes.

Within living memory, the carnage that occurred in Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001 was yet another tragic example of people who spoke the same language slaughtering each other.

About 150,000 people lost their lives, including 14,000 in Sarajevo alone. Not everyone in Yugoslavia spoke the same language: in Kosovo they spoke Albanian. But everywhere else they spoke Serbo-Croat, except in Slovenia and Macedonia where closely related South Slavic languages were spoken. Nowadays Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Montenegro all claim that they speak different languages, even though they are perfectly mutually intelligible.

Contrast this with Switzerland, which has four indigenous languages – Swiss-German, French, Italian and Romansch – and which has not been involved in any fighting since 1847.

■ Peter Trudgill is professor emeritus of English linguistics at the Université de Fribourg/Universität Freiburg, Switzerland

SLAV

Slovene, Slovak, Slavic – these words all have the same root. Slavs are peoples who speak Slavic languages like Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Croatian, Bulgarian. The name Slav has no connection with slave, and probably none either with Slavic *Slavo*, 'word'. Most likely it's derived from a river anciently called *Slova*: we're not sure where that river was, but it may well have been the Dnieper.