

**Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**Unit of Assessment: D35 Drama**

**a. Context**

By the very nature of our discipline, research in the **Department of Drama and Theatre Arts (DTA)**, engages with audiences beyond the academy, and, as demonstrated below, every member of the UoA is engaged in impact activity as an integral part of their research (including practice-based research). These initiatives are underpinned by research in the three complementary principal strands of our research: **theatre history and historiography**, **contemporary performance studies**, and **creative practice**. DTA focuses on two strands of impact activity:

1. We collaborate with professional practitioners (performers, directors) on specific pieces of work, to develop new approaches, and to support and inform their work with insights achieved through research, and thus we inform their practice beyond the specific activity/performance engaged in.
2. We shape and enrich cultural engagement for a range of publics by providing research-derived theatre programmes, commentaries and discussions in print and other media.

The beneficiaries of our research are:

- Theatre and film practitioners
- Audiences for cultural events associated with performance, either in the context of the performance itself or as part of the educational and other outreach activities of performing companies
- Museums and art galleries, professional bodies connected with the performing arts, the Open University, and organisations such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and the English-Speaking Union
- School and teacher audiences for student productions, including Theatre in Education (TIE) work, and staff-led productions informed by research

**b. Approach to impact**

Impact is a fundamental part of our planning of research projects, a strategic focus that builds on but moves decisively beyond our previous engagements with non-HEI beneficiaries. As noted above, we also apply our research to shape and inform public performances by DTA students (including Theatre in Education performances) that draw on our research, producing a further level of cultural benefit to wider audiences.

Current impact activity has been supported by both internal and external funding (e.g. **Ledger**, UoB Centre for Learning and Development and India travel fund, RKT funding from EDACS and CAL, and grants from outside bodies, including performance organisations). DTA adjusts the scheduling of other duties to facilitate impact activities. Research mentoring encourages and supports impact planning, and CAL RKT office gives detailed advice on designing impact activities at all stages of applications.

The principal strands of our impact activity are:

1. **Collaborating with professional practitioners to develop new approaches and support and inform their work with insights achieved through research, e.g.:**
  - **Jackson** (see **case study**) benefits actors, directors and audiences through his work as text consultant in rehearsal with professional theatre companies on Shakespeare productions, e.g. *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* directed by Michael Grandage at the Donmar Theatre, Wyndham's in London, and Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Broadhurst in New York and *Macbeth*, directed by Kenneth Branagh and Rob Ashford in the Manchester International Festival (July 2013). He shared insights with both practitioners and academics in his keynote address at the international conference for on 'Shakespeare Across Media' in Taipei (2012).
  - **Ledger's Caravana!** (a participatory performance for family audiences of six at a time that takes place in a small touring caravan, submitted to RAE 2008) has given rise to extensive creative engagement in this period, benefiting a range of audiences around the UK. Building on contemporary interest in 'intimate' theatre and the regional and national development of outdoor arts, it engages younger audiences with intimate performance. *Caravana!* was piloted with ACE

funding in 2012 in association with mac birmingham (which matched College research funding) and the Birmingham Hippodrome's 'Six Summer Saturdays' programme. It was also selected to be presented at Kendal Mintfest. The work tours to festivals in 2013 with further ACE funding, including to the National Theatre, the rural touring network in Lancashire and a Welsh-language version for the Cardiff Millennium Centre. **Ledger's** work also benefitted practitioners and audiences in India through his master class at the Foundation for Liberal and Management Education, Pune (2012), and his workshop and performance at the Kala Ghoda Festival, Mumbai (2013).

- **Tomlin** (see **case study**) has benefitted practitioners and audiences by working as dramaturgical advisor with Point Blank Theatre on *An Evening with Psychosis* (national touring production 2009), and with Tin Box Theatre on *Not Known at this Address* (Birmingham and Warwick, 2011-12). She has most recently worked as writer/performance-maker with Geiger Counter Theatre on *The Pool Game* (Birmingham, 2011; Huddersfield, Sheffield, London, Leeds and Barnsley, 2012).
- Grace informs the work of practising playwrights by providing workshops on playwriting (e.g. ACE Foundation, Cambridge, 2013).

## 2. Enriching public cultural engagement through research-informed commentary

This is achieved through a range of channels including theatre programmes, commentaries and discussions in print and other media, e.g.:

- **Angelaki** engaged with the Manor Players of Sunbury by giving two talks and Q&A related to their production of Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*; co-organised a conference on Martin Crimp at the Royal Court Theatre and shared the insights of her research by producing programme notes on Crimp for the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond; and engages with a wider public through her open-access 'Thinking Theatre' blog, reflecting on contemporary performance practices in the UK and internationally (<http://www.vickyangelaki.com/>).
- **Ioannidou** addressed the public launch of the exhibition 'Identity and Community in Performance: Greek Festivals 1927-2012', which she co-curated at the Classics Centre, Oxford; and she is contributing to the associated online Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama.
- **Jackson** has benefitted the audiences of Shakespeare productions in which he has been involved (see above), and those of *Hamlet* and *The Magistrate* at the National Theatre, by writing programme essays. His research has also contributed cultural enrichment for audiences beyond the academy in the UK and internationally through guest lectures (local schools and reading groups through Birmingham Speakers scheme; Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC; English-Speaking Union, New York and Washington); contributions to the Columbia Shakespeare Seminar (New York), and to a webinar hosted by Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) and CUP; and introductions to screenings in the Shakespeare Film Festival organised by SBT. His research also benefitted students beyond UoB through his contribution to a DVD about screen versions of *Othello* for the Open University (2011).
- Newey informed and engaged a wide range of audiences with her AHRC project A Cultural History of English Pantomime, 1837-1901 by undertaking activities that included consultancy for and contribution to a Finestripe Productions documentary on the pantomime dame (broadcast on BBC 4 at Christmas 2012), and a double-page feature on the history of pantomime in *The Big Issue* magazine (2012).
- **Radcliffe** contributed to cultural enrichment for visitors to the exhibition of paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite John Brett at the Barber Institute (2010), initiating and co-ordinating PGR and UG performance that drew on her research on Victorian performance and culture. She also contributed to wider discussion of the use of manuscripts in the creative arts by sharing research insights a Literary Heritage Society meeting at the British Library (2012). Her account of the DTA production of Wilkie Collins's play *The Red Vial* was shared with members of the Wilkie Collins Society, which brings together general public interest with academic research, through its members' Newsletter (Spring 2011). **Radcliffe** has also co-edited for the Society the first edition of Collins's unpublished play *The Lighthouse* (2013).
- **Whyman** brought the benefits of her research to international audiences through a guest presentation, 'The Actor and the Dramatic Image', in a seminar on Michael Chekhov at the

School of Dramatic Art Theatre (formerly Anatoly Vasiliev's theatre) in Moscow, June 2010; and through a lecture presenting her book *The Stanislavski System of Acting; Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance* (2008) at the National Theater Academy of Oslo, part of the National Academy of the Arts) at a symposium on actor-training (2012).

Our research also contributes to the distinctiveness and innovation of performances by students in TIE and similar projects, benefitting audiences of all ages. We are further developing established relationships that support the public impact of our research with mac birmingham, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Birmingham Hippodrome and cultural and educational partners in India.

**c. Strategy and plans**

We shall further develop our impact by **sharing best practice** in areas of particular strength, and scoping impact opportunities in all new research projects. This will include further consolidating existing relationships with partner organisations, and starting new ones: the capacity of organisations such as mac Birmingham, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and BMAG to widen participation through print, web and other media will be a particular focus. DTA's revitalised links, from 2013, with BBC Drama Village and Birmingham Repertory Theatre will support this strategy. We shall also collaborate with CAL RKT office to develop impact as an integral part of external funding applications, and explore the potential of the various **UoB schemes** (e.g. Birmingham Speakers) that foster productive links with community, commercial, cultural and policy spheres.

The department's plans include incorporating new communications media into the planning of research projects; advising on impact opportunities in the mentoring of staff and PGRs; making impact potential a key factor in appointments; and sharing best practice among colleagues. We shall prioritise the **measurement, monitoring and evaluation** of our impact: members of the UoA now routinely collect such information (e.g. box office figures). From 2014 onwards DTA will use the online research data system PURE to record impact.

Specific staff plans include:

- **Ledger** will develop his interdisciplinary project **Igloo**, which has ACE funding and has been awarded a £4000 'voucher' from the AHRC Collaborative Arts Triple Helix, in which he is partnered with Nikki Pugh (<http://npugh.co.uk/>) and The Bone Ensemble theatre group.
- **Jackson** will work on West End productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Henry V* by the Michael Grandage Company (September 2013-January 2014).
- **Radcliffe** is collaborating with a radio producer on a proposal to the BBC for a production for Radio 3 or 4 of Wilkie Collins's *The Lighthouse*, based on her edition of the play (2013). She will further develop her Museum Theatre project at UoB's Winterbourne House, benefitting a range of publics through weekend and summer events, and will speak on nineteenth century drama at three public events.
- **Whyman** is developing a project with Dr Isobel Wollaston (UoB Theology and Religion) for the IAS 'Saving Humans' theme, involving public engagement on the Kindertransport in History and Memory (from Autumn 2013), focussing on a DTA production of *Kindertransport*, by Diane Samuels, in the year of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kindertransport.
- Grace's *Breakfast with Mugabe* will be produced by Two Planks at the Alice Griffin Jewel Box Theater in NY, August-September 2013, and he has contracted with Bloomsbury for a co-authored book for practitioners: 'Playwriting: A Writers' and Artists' Companion'.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The two case studies exemplify both strands of DTA impact strategy. **Tomlin's** focuses on contemporary performance work (**strand 1**), with its immediate impact consisting of the involvement of practitioners and audiences in pieces devised and presented in innovative ways. **Jackson's** focuses on his involvement in theatre and film, including engagement with directors, performers, and audiences (**strand 1 and strand 2**).