

Institution: University of Exeter

Unit of Assessment: Drama

a. Context

Engagement with diverse communities beyond the academy is at the core of Exeter Drama. Since its foundation, the Department has been committed to public engagement and knowledge exchange, and our research aims -- to produce new knowledges in theatre theory, history, and creative practice -- have led to impact, influence, and innovation at local, national, and international levels. The Department's long-standing connections with the theatre industry, and the influence of our research in the theatre profession, has expanded into other areas of activity, involving health and medical care, diasporic migrant communities, tourism and town planning.

Our research centres are designed to map broadly onto community interests and practices, in a two-way process of knowledge exchange. We work with communities to develop new insights and self-knowledge of their own creative practices, cultural knowledge, and cohesion, as well as to preserve performance heritage and traditions. Cross-disciplinary research in areas of health and well-being has had a material impact on local, national, and international communities at risk. Our research has influenced areas of professional practice in actor training, and publication practices in the creative arts. In the current REF period we have hosted two AHRC Creative Research Fellows, Howard **Barker** and Hugo **Glendinning**, both of whom launched major public creative projects during their time as Fellows in the Department. Working artists' willingness to develop new work in the Department is further evidence of the impact of our research culture beyond the academy.

Performance and Cultural Heritage

Research into specific cultural, ethnic, and regional performance practices and heritages has been enabled by the Centre for Research into Performance Histories and Cultures. Our specific case study emerges from research which enables the preservation and re-interpretation of cultural heritage, and details the impact emerging from research on British Asian Theatre. **Ley**, **Daboo**, and **Hodge** have facilitated a new understanding of Asian and British Asian performance histories, benefitting current performers, theatre practitioners and migrant communities. This work has ongoing impact in national diasporic communities, as well as in source cultures in south Asia. The broader research culture from which this project emerged is one of sustained interest in and knowledge exchange with community performance traditions. It is exemplified by **Milling's** research into the history of seaside entertainment, through her AHRC funded project 'Revitalising the Seaside Prom' (2010), which provides an example of the impact of our research on the tourist industry. **Milling** collaborated with a professional Pierrot troupe to look at what made Pierrot performances so popular in the past and how and why they might be recreated for today's holidaymakers. A Torbay Council Regeneration Officer commented that: 'The press coverage for the project was incredible and helped us to reinforce the Riviera as a place that is supportive of cultural events. As an authority we monitor the press and have targets for press positive stories, each story can be converted into a financial worth. The *Guardian* piece (main paper and *Guardian Weekly*) were worth £33k towards the annual target.'

Performer Training

Research conducted within the Centre for Contemporary Performance Practice has had wide dissemination and measurable impact on the theatre profession, locally, nationally, and internationally. Our case study on Intercultural Performer Training traces the way our research has enhanced the quality of specifically *intercultural* performance for audiences, nationally and internationally. This is one aspect of the way that our practical work has created new artistic forms for the entertainment of audiences and new methodologies for use in the theatre industry. Creative research in new writing, for example, has informed Anna **Harpin's** company *Idiot Child*, who were recently termed 'rising stars' by *The Guardian* and after sell-out houses and critical acclaim for their 2011 show, *You're Not Doing it Right*, have been commissioned to create a further show for Bristol Old Vic, receiving Arts Council funding to support their work. At the 2013 Edinburgh Fringe, they were supported by Bristol Old Vic, listed as one of Lyn Gardner's best of the Fringe, and shortlisted for the Total Theatre Award for Emerging Artists. Mangan and **Goldingay's** work undertaken with AHRC Research Fellow and playwright Howard **Barker** included the AHRC-funded *Blok/Eko* - a new work by Barker, performed at the Northcott theatre, by a cast of 78 students, staff and

Impact template (REF3a)

community actors to 429 audience members. The play was also the centre of a symposium attended by 42 people, recorded and archived by P. **Hulton**. Stephen **Hodge** and Cathy **Turner's** company, Wrights & Sites, has made a significant contribution to site-based art, signalled by their inclusion in a national touring exhibition covering the history of walking arts practices (2013). Their work has also contributed to cultural regeneration: the project *Everything You Need To Build A Town Is Here* (2010) was commissioned by Situations as part of CABE's Lottery-funded 'Sea Change' project, for Weston-super-Mare. While it is impossible to quantify the effect of individual aspects of the regeneration programme, The Grand Pier noted record visitor figures for that period. **Hodge's** work with Wrights & Sites dates from 1997, and included curating a mini-season of work in public spaces for festival audiences, residents and tourists in Fribourg, Switzerland (2008), enabling the festival to reach out to non-theatre audiences.

Applied and Community Theatre

This research field is facilitated by the Centre for Performance, Sciences and Community. This is a long-running area of research in Drama, which has a long history of involvement, exchange and impact at the local and the global. The case study on Applied Theatre for Wellbeing demonstrates one strand of this work, developed in Drama at Exeter over a very long period of research and creative practice by John **Somers**. **Somers'** concern has been with the application of theatre and performance techniques to wellbeing and community. In his ground-breaking work, **Somers** aims to effect change within individuals and communities through theatre and performance. The reach of this research is extended and sustained by **Schaefer, Milling, Harpin, Duggan** and **Goldingay**, whose various research projects in community and wellbeing engage directly with participants outside the academy. **Schaefer** is involved with two major AHRC-funded projects looking at community participation in the arts and the significance of the arts in places of poverty, both with potential to influence policy-making and arts practice. **Goldingay's** work with Exstream recently included AHRC funding for work using Drama to support young people leaving care, having impact on their ability to integrate into adult communities. In addition to work mentioned in the Case Study, Exstream has been working with, and funded by the NHS since 2007, using role-play to simulate patients for the NHS SW Peninsula Deanery and for the Psychology Department at Exeter; **Schaefer** and Macbeth lead these processes.

b. Approach to impact

Our research centres reflect the current strengths of the department, and define the ways in which research activities and outcomes engage directly with users outside the academy. University funding is used to seed larger initiatives. For example, **Goldingay** received 'Bridging the Gaps' funding, which enabled her to work with the University Medical School to develop the 'Performing Pain' project, later receiving funding from the National Institute for Health Research Fellowship for Clinical Excellence held by Prof. Paul Dieppe, and leading to further grant applications. This project has the aim of influencing medical practice in the management of pain.

One mechanism to support the impact of research into community work is the graduate company, Exstream. Originally set up by John **Somers**, in 2012 Exstream was restructured as a community interest company under the management of Macbeth, **Goldingay & Schaefer**. Exstream's work is supported by rehearsal space and production resources in the Drama department.

Internal funding is used to pump prime impact activities, as is the strategic use of research leaves to support impact generating activities for the future. For instance, **Daboo's** leave in 2013 will allow her to complete impact activities connected to The Southall Story project, including a public exhibition of The Southall Story, touring to the US, Canada, India and Thailand, which is funded by an AHRC Follow On grant.

The Department also supports the work of staff who contribute beyond the academy. Staff members who need to pursue significant projects away from Exeter have been given time and/or employment flexibility to undertake this. **Loukes'** teaching was flexibly scheduled to allow her to participate in the 2009 tour of her company's show, *The Idiot Colony*, and **Zarrilli's** teaching and administration workload adjusted to enable him to tour *Told by the Wind*, and its associated artist training activities. **Hodge** curated performance for Exeter Phoenix (to 2012) and continues as an advisor; his work there has been a direct factor in securing the venue continued Arts Council

Funding, and caused Total Theatre to note it as a 'vibrant artistic centre...London isn't the epicentre of experimental theatre/performance practice currently' (2009). **Hodge's** own 'Second Live' project began as an ACE-funded producing programme and eventually work from this was taken to London's Royal Opera House. **Hodge** is now Co-Director of REACT, an AHRC-funded initiative to broker collaborations between researchers and small to medium enterprises in the creative economy of the south-west.

c. Strategy and plans

Our impact strategies are informed by advice from the university RKT office, the work of the University Impact Case Study Review Group, the College Research Strategy group and the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research.

We are building further strategic links to create and sustain international impact. Our split-site PhD programme with NIAS, Bangalore creates opportunities for extending the influence of our intercultural research and makes further links with institutions and theatres in India, where we have now made further links with the National School of Drama. We continue to build on relationships with US institutions such as Brown and the University of Austin, Texas. We are also involved in preliminary discussions with key actor training and theatre research organisations in China. The Departmental International Officer has become a major strategic academic administrative role, and is recognised accordingly in staff workload and promotion.

We are prioritising the development and tracking of impact of research in Performance, Sciences and Community, since we have a number of significant projects in progress, with clear emphasis on community participation, wellbeing and medical practice. We are actively involved in the University's Humanities and Social Sciences themed research (HASS strategy), particularly in the Medical Humanities, and areas of well-being, identity and belief. We maintain interdisciplinary partnerships at Exeter that will assist in developing the impact of our research. For instance, D. **Hulton** worked with the Mood Disorders Centre on a successful Leverhulme grant application for an artist-in-residence (a writer) to work there, with D. **Hulton** involved as director and P. **Hulton** documenting the project. **Duggan, Goldingay,** and **Harpin** are in dialogue the Medical School and the College of Life and Environmental Sciences. Through these collaborations, we are in discussion with further non-HEI partners (eg. Devon Healthcare Trust).

d. Relationship to Case Studies

All three case studies demonstrate the embeddedness of impact-generating research in the Department, and the strategic use of internal resources to enhance the impact of our research.

The knowledge exchange generated by **The Southall Story** exhibition (British Asian Theatre CS) drawn from AHRC-funded research was recognised by the AHRC in awarding Follow-On Funding for exhibitions and performances in India and Thailand, July-December, 2013. Our relationships with NIAS and other Indian partners have allowed the project to have further reach, working in tandem with RCUK-funded activities to promote an understanding of British-Asian theatre, including **Daboo's** presentation on the research at the British High Commission in India.

Zarrilli, D. Hulton, and **Loukes** (Intercultural Training CS) have all received targeted leave, and flexible working arrangements to spend time developing their work with practitioners beyond the academy, influencing and changing pedagogical and performance practices nationally and internationally. Internal funding has been used to support the dissemination of this research eg teaching packs to accompany **Loukes' The Idiot Colony** [REF2].

Somers' work (Applied Theatre for Wellbeing CS) extends over 20 years, pointing to notably sustained knowledge exchange and impact, beginning with Somers' founding of the performance company, Exstream. Exstream exemplifies the role of creative practice in the Drama's knowledge exchange beyond the academy. **Somers'** work began as a small scale theatrical investigation of stresses in local farming communities and from this, more substantial funding from the Wellcome Trust and others was used to develop more extensive touring and exploration of a number of medical issues for a wider public. This, in turn, led to wider consultancy and international collaborations as documented in the case study.