

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Winchester</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D35 Music Dance Drama and Performing Arts</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Theatre for Development: Tim Prentki</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor Tim Prentki's research focuses on how the arts can benefit both society and the individual, with a particular focus on the methods practitioners can employ to achieve positive change and improve the quality of life within specific communities. His work challenges cultural values and social assumptions and contributes to debates about civil society and policy making. The impact of this work has been felt in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading training workshops with NGO personnel on the Indian sub-continent in the workshop methods Prentki developed;</li> <li>• A global network of facilitators trained through the MA programme;</li> <li>• Engagement of community activists in developing democratic capacity;</li> <li>• Stimulating debate on the efficacy of applied theatre through published research;</li> <li>• Contributing to a reconsideration of what constitutes impact in this field.</li> </ul> <p>His recent, original contribution to the field lies in his ground-breaking practice of linking facilitation, central to the development of 'truthful' performance, to the traditional role of the 'fool' in theatre.</p> <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Throughout his career Prentki has developed insights both from practice, which has subsequently formed the basis for written theoretical reflection, and from writing, which he has incorporated in subsequent practical workshops and programmes. His methodology, developed and refined over many years of field-work and collaboration, involves a workshop process which commences with individual life-maps. These are then developed through collaborative devising, culminating in the presentation of a contradiction to the audience.</p> <p>The impetus for the research arises out of the belief that theatre can be used to support social change, therefore it falls into the tradition of socially engaged theatre. Whilst drawing upon the practices of Brecht and Boal, Prentki's work seeks to make the process available to any social group capable of and desiring to bring about social change. From Brecht comes the shared conviction that humans are always capable of change if circumstances permit, together with the application of irony and contradiction within theatrical structures. From Boal comes the desire to remove the barrier between participants and audience. Unlike Boal's practice of Forum Theatre, however, Prentki's work undermines any fixed hierarchy of oppressor and oppressed.</p> <p>The intention in each workshop is always to establish a practical dialogue between core principles and the specific circumstances pertaining to that workshop. For instance, when working with groups that might be described as victims of social systems the emphasis might fall on building confidence and capacity. Whereas when working with groups who have access to the levers of social change the emphasis might fall upon the contradictions between the personal convictions of workshop members and the systems within which they are required to operate.</p> <p>The book <i>Popular Theatre in Political Culture: Britain and Canada in Focus</i> (2000) together with the journal articles written between 1995 and 2008 explore applied theatre practice according to a view that it is the most socially deprived who are likely to benefit most from these interventions. Since then, by tapping into older theatrical conventions of 'fooling' derived from research for his recent book <i>The Fool in European Theatre</i> (2012), Prentki has developed a more sophisticated and ambiguous relationship to the sources of social change. That means that more attention is now given to the aesthetic dimensions of applied theatre and that the contradictions and fissures within the constructs of power are deconstructed within the process. One of the consequences of this change has been to widen the definition of applied theatre so that it can now embrace a range of popular theatre traditions previously considered beyond its scope.</p>

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Prentki's work was described as 'outstanding' and 'world-leading' by RAE 2008. The report also stated that the University's 'contribution to research in Theatre for Development is recognized internationally with staff working in this area giving keynotes at UK and overseas locations and taking key roles in the formulation of policy.'

### 3. References to the research

1. Prentki, Tim and Jan Selman. eds. (2000) *Popular Theatre in Political Culture: Britain and Canada in Focus*. Bristol and Oregon, Intellect.
2. Prentki, Tim and Sheila Preston. eds. (2008) *The Applied Theatre Reader*. London: Routledge.
3. Prentki, Tim. (2012) *The Fool in European Theatre* Palgrave Macmillan.
4. Prentki, Tim. (2002) Social Action through Theatre. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 12 (1-2), pp. 115-133.
5. Prentki, Tim (2003) 'Save the Children, Change the World' *Research in Drama Education* 8/1, pp. 39-53.
6. 'Theatre for Development/Theatre as Development' *National Drama Australia*, 2011.
7. He has guest edited a special issue of *Research in Drama Education* with Michael Etherton on 'Impact Assessment and Applied Drama' (Vol.11, No.2, 2006)
8. 'Any Color of the Rainbow – As Long as It's Gray: Dramatic Learning Spaces in Postapartheid South Africa' (2008), *African Studies Review*, Vol 51, No.3, pp.91-106.
9. 'In the Jungle of Contradictions or Where Have All the Grassroots Gone?' (2007) *South African Theatre Journal* Vol 21, pp. 123-134.
10. RAE 2008 University of Winchester Unit of Assessment 65 Report.

### 4. Details of the impact

*The Applied Theatre Reader* has had a positive impact on industry professionals, such as the Artistic Director of Border Crossings, who states it has been 'especially important in informing the ethics of what we do.' (Ref 1 - 11 Aug 2011). A US reviewer of the Reader notes that 'Prentki and Selman's discussion of Brechtian influences, popular education, and theories of community development are particularly strong.... The book goes far beyond simply defining, describing or advocating popular theatre' (Ref. 2), while the NTQ reviewer suggests that 'This book offers detailed and noteworthy insights into a variety of practices throughout the world' (Ref 3). Overall this book generated new ways of thinking that influenced subsequent practice.

The initial impact of Prentki's work came mostly from direct contact with participants internationally, but it is through training trainers in NGOs across disciplines around the world that the reach and significance of his practice have been established, helping professionals and organisations to adapt to changing cultural values.

In Bangladesh, he conducted one month of workshops each year for four years from 2000-3. The participants in these workshops represented many of the leading NGOs in the country, thereby enabling a swift dissemination of these practices around the entire country. Core participants from NGOs working in women's access to legal services, combating domestic violence, and addressing children's rights developed significant experience in using Theatre for Development in their everyday practice. As the Save the Children officer says 'Still lot of NGO's are using the TfD process as means of raising children voices for advocating and negotiating with the policy makers at local and national level on the issues affecting children lives.' (Ref 4 - 1 Nov 2012) Further influence was achieved in the HE sector: 'Dhaka University included TfD in its Masters syllabus during the Higher Education Link project jointly implemented by British council. Now all most all the public university in Bangladesh included TfD as part of academic course in particular dramatics department.' (Ref 5).

Delegates at 'Theater? Mit Mir? Drama in Education for Children and Adolescents at Risk' in Rostock, Germany (2009) included practitioners and researchers representing theatre, education, special education, psychology and the social sciences. Since then Prentki has also enjoyed a professional collaboration with Serbian NGO Zdravo da ste/Hi Neighbour, whose mission and activities are aimed at protecting vulnerable groups and promoting their development during the

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long period of war and post/war crisis in ex-Yugoslavia. A total of 379 psychologists, teachers, social workers, psychiatrists, students, researchers and practitioners have benefited from this creative exchange and employ Prentki's 'theoretical model and approach [to their work] result[ing] in a dynamic and rich interaction with/between [...] participants' (Zdravo da Ste Director).

Most recently (October 2011) Prentki worked in Southern Brazil, giving a practical/theoretical seminar on the fool as a facilitator to a network of community practitioners in Florianopolis. He mentored 8 members of a class as they practiced facilitation in communities. Community facilitators from that class record that 'Approaching the community of Barra da Lagoa, Florianópolis, and taking part in a Forum Theatre practice there, I could open my perspective ...understanding that [the joker] may incite the audience to intervention' (Ref 6 - 19 Oct 2012) and describe how he 'learned throughout the seminar that the facilitator can, beyond expressing conflict, take part in it. The seminar offered a counterpoint to the facilitator in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed.' (Ref 7 - 16 Oct 2012).

Other companies using and recommending Prentki's methods include international charity Tear Fund, where his co-authored booklet *Using Theatre for Development* is available for download, and the blog *Unlocking the Classroom* with its focus on the arts and social change (Ref 8 + 9). Practitioners, teachers, lecturers, students and policy makers are also encouraged to read *The Applied Theatre Reader* in D.I.C.E publication *Making a World of Difference* (Ref 10).

Prentki was commissioned by ACE to write an impact assessment of the first phase of the work of ARROW (Art: a Resource for Reconciliation Over the World) 'A Mile in My Shoes' (2009).

Keynote speeches for academic and non-academic audiences since 2008 include:

- 'Counter-narrative: "To Be or Not to Be": That is Not the Question', Community Theatre Conference, State University of Santa Catarina, Florianopolis, November 2008 (Published in Portuguese).
- 'Theatre for Development'. VSO 'away day', November 2008.
- 'Hopes and Possibilities for Applied Theatre'. Applied Theatre Conference, University of Rio, Rio de Janeiro, October 2011. (Published in Portuguese).
- Seminar to social science students at Wageningen University, Holland on theatre for development for the contexts in which they are working, May 2012.
- 'The gatekeepers, the facilitators and the native soil' IDIERI conference, Limerick University, July 2012.

'Living beyond our means, Meaning beyond our lives' Theatre/Drama and Education 7<sup>th</sup> Athens International Conference, November 2012 (Published in Greek).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Artistic Director, Border Crossing Theatre Company, 11 Aug 2011 (personal communication).
2. Little, Edward 'Review of Popular Theatre in Political Culture' *Theatre Research in Canada* Vol 22/2, Fall 2001.
3. Broekman, Kirsten (2009) 'Review of Applied Theatre Reader' *NTQ* Vol 25, No 1, p.104.
4. Save the Children (Bangladesh), 1 November 2012 (personal communication).
5. Director, Sdravo da ste (Serbia) *Collaborative Work with Dr. Timothy Prentki*. 8 September 2011 (Personal Communication – Letter).
6. Member of Florianopolis Organisation of Facilitators Association, 19 October 2012 (personal communication.)
7. Member of Florianopolis Organisation of Facilitators Association, 16 October 2012 (personal communication.)
8. LH. (2009) New Book: *Applied Theatre Reader. Unlocking the Classroom (on meaning making, special-education, the arts and social change)* 20 March [Online]. Available from: <http://unlockingtheclassroom.blogspot.com/2009/03/new-book-applied-theatre-reader.html> [Accessed 24 August 2011].
9. Prentki, Tim and Claire Lacey. (2005) Using Theatre in Development. *Tearfund International Learning Zone* [Online] Available from:

- [http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_51-60/footsteps\\_58/using\\_theatre\\_in\\_development/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_51-60/footsteps_58/using_theatre_in_development/) [Accessed 01 October 2013].
10. Cooper, C. ed. (2010) *Making a World of Difference: A DICE resource for practitioners on educational theatre and drama*. Brussels: DICE Consortium.