

<b>Institution:</b> Liverpool Hope University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D35b: Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts
<p><b>a. Overview</b></p> <p>Liverpool Hope is a liberal arts inspired institution committed to the pursuit of academic excellence. It was awarded university status in 2005 and Research Degree Awarding Powers in 2009. This reflects a corporate repositioning marked by a significant intensification in research activity and investment. The Department of Drama, Dance and Performance Studies (DDPS) is one of seven academic departments in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. There are currently thirteen permanent, full-time members of the department: Professor Simon Piasecki (Head of Department); Principal Lecturer Dr. John Bennett; four Senior Lecturers (Dr. Gary Anderson, Dr. David Crilly, Dr. Lena Simic and Dr. Rachel Sweeney); five Lecturers (Dr. Claudia Brazalle, Dr. Brian Desmond, Dr. Niamh Malone, Dr. Declan Patrick and Dr. Zoe Zontou); two Post Doctoral Teaching Fellows (Dr. Kris Darby and Dr. Mark Greenwood). In addition, there are two permanent fractional staff (one at 0.5 in Drama, one at 0.5 in Dance), Ms Sarah Black and Ms Carmel Cleary; they are both PhD students, one supervised within the department. Professor Simon Piasecki and Dr. Kris Darby joined the department in September 2013. All staff are research active. The research environment is further enriched by the contributions of adjunct and visiting professors (detailed in Section b).</p> <p>DDPS is one of the larger departments in the University, with approximately 300 undergraduate students enrolled on Single Honours programmes in Creative and Performing Arts (CPA), and Drama, and on Combined Honours pathways in Dance, and Drama &amp; Theatre Studies (DTS). The MA in Contemporary Popular Theatres recruited its first cohort in 2008-2009, on a two-year, part-time cycle. Members of the department supervise a number of postgraduate students on the MA by Creative Practice.</p> <p><b>b. Research strategy</b></p> <p>The department, as a unit of assessment, entered the RAE in 2008, submitting five members of staff. The Drama section of the submission was singled out as being particularly forward-looking, and the report noted: 'Drama has a good sense of building potential through a combination of early-career appointments and a group of visiting professors whose professional practice complements the department'. The report of that panel also stated 'the best outputs are internationally recognised, achieving excellence in respect of originality, significance and rigour to a substantial degree'. Under changed leadership, the department continues to 'build potential' and to develop its research work in twentieth and twenty-first century performance practice; to that end it has refined its focus, and the strategic aim now is to research the concept and practice of 'Performing Justice' in contemporary contexts across the strands of practice as research, applied theatre and popular theatre.</p> <p>Academic conferences and practice as research events have played an important role in the development and support of/for research. In February 2009, in keeping with the RAE 2008 commentary noting that the department had 'a particular commitment to English and Irish theatre and drama', the department held a colloquium on 'Radical Theatre and Ireland' which attracted distinguished external speakers such as Professor Lionel Pilkington, Senior Lecturer in English at the National University of Ireland, Galway, Professor Tim Prentki, Professor of Theatre for Development at the University of Winchester (retired) and keynote Professor David Lloyd, Distinguished Professor of English at UC Davis, USA.</p> <p>In December 2012, as part of the 'Performing Justice' strategic theme, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Simic and Ms Cleary curated 'Cartographies of Justice' creative event at the Creative Campus of Liverpool Hope University. This practice as research event brought together international artists and local communities with a focus on migration, belonging and social justice. The event included Student Performance, Artist Talks, Migrant Story Slam, Long Table Discussion and a 'Migrant Feast' of Senegambian cuisine. Invited international artists Simon Murray, Katherina Radeva and Natasha Davis discussed their arts practice whilst reflecting on their migrant positions and cultural identity. All of this was made possible by an innovation award of £9000 directly sponsored through the Vice-chancellor's office.</p> <p>As a research-informed event, 'Cartographies of Justice' built on the innovative work of Anderson and Simic and their art activist initiative the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home which is committed to research informed performance practice around the themes of the familial, financial transparency, climate change and performance interventions (submitted in individual practice-based research outputs and as one of the impact case studies). An earlier</p>

(2009) and on-going aspect of this work is neatly summarised by Dr. Cathy Butterworth in *Art in a City Revisited*, where she states:

[Anderson and Simic] have established The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home in their own house in Everton, close to where they teach at Liverpool Hope University (where the Creative and Performing Arts course is developing a robust critical framework for live art).<sup>1</sup>

As part of her involvement with 'Factory Floor', a creative network for women solo performers and writers, Dr. Simic instigated a series of research meetings at Liverpool Hope (February 2009, June 2010, June 2012 and November 2013). Factory Floor network grew out of an AHRC funded project 'Women's Writing for Performance' (2003-2006) at the University of Lancaster; Dr. Simic is one of its founding members. The network showcased practice as research work at ShowRoom at the University of Chichester, the Bluecoat and Unity Theatre (as a part of Homotopia festival) in Liverpool and the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff. Liverpool Hope University funded and hosted the network's meetings.

Dr. Zoe Zontou's co-curated the international multidisciplinary conference 'Addiction and Performance: the new Normal?' held in April 2012 (a partnership between Liverpool Hope and Kingston University). In collaboration with Fallen Angels Theatre Company, Dr. Zontou also conducted the research project 'Staging Recovery' which included the organisation of a public lecture at Liverpool Hope's Creative Campus in February 2013. As the part of the event, the Fallen Angels Dance Theatre performed their new production 'Chapter 2: Death of Self'. A number of local organisations and members of the general public attended the event. BBC3 Free Speech program also attended the event and interviewed the performers.

Members of the Department are connected to the wider academic community through conference attendance and presentation within their areas of specialism, collaborative work, and active membership of a range of professional organisations; these include Theatre and Research Performance Association (TaPRA), International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR), Performance Studies international (PSi), Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) and University Network of the European Capitals of Culture (UNECC). Within Liverpool Hope itself, research groups and centres provide a nexus for collaborative, interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary work, and staff have presented papers at the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies, the Popular Cultures Research Group and the Irish Studies Research Group at Liverpool Hope.

The university has a strategic commitment to enriching its research environment through appointment of Visiting and Adjunct Professors. These are remunerated positions and appointees play a substantive role in research culture, such as delivering lectures and workshops to staff and students. Research in the department benefited from the contributions of four Visiting Professors: multi-award winning playwright John Godber (2009-present); Professor of English and Comparative Studies (University of Southern California) David Lloyd (2009-2012); internationally-renowned theatre and opera director Patrick Mason (2009-2012) and Professor of Theatre Development (University of Winchester) Tim Prentki (2009-2012). Leela Sampson has been appointed as a Visiting Professor in Indian Classical Dance (February 2013) and has worked with students and delivered her first research talk in October 2013. The University are in the process of negotiating a new Visiting Professorship with Professor Noel Witts, which would strengthen the department's research strand within the field of contemporary performance.

Research seminars are also an important element in the support of research. There is a faculty-wide research seminar series that the department contributes to regularly, including Dr. Ricardo Abad of Ateneo de Manila University's acclaimed lecture on 'The Filipinization of Shakespeare' in 2011. At departmental level, we run an annual research seminar series delivered by visiting professors and department staff; these are important monthly events vital to the sustainability of our research and are attended by staff, PGR students and, on occasion, final year undergraduates. It would be unhelpful and page-consuming to list all the papers given over the years in this series but an indication of the 'Performing Justice' theme and the range and depth of associated work can be seen in the following titles:

<sup>1</sup> Butterworth in Biggs, B and Sheldon, J. (2009) *Art in a City Revisited*, University of Liverpool Press, p.204.

- 10.11.08 Dr. John Bennett – ‘Answering to the Audience: the Royal Court Liverpool as a Case Study in Contemporary Popular Theatre
- 9.03.09 Collaborative seminar with Edge Hill University including Dr. Helen Newall discussing practice-as-research in regard to her WW1 writing project
- 03.11.10 Dr. Niamh Malone – ‘Side-stepping the Executioner : An overview of the role of community theatre and urban regeneration at the beginning of the 21st century, with particular reference to the regeneration of Ballymun, Dublin (1998-2010) and the work of the Axis Arts and Community Resource Centre.’
- 12.01.11 Dr. Rachel Sweeney - ‘Virtuosity and the labouring body: the aesthetics of pain in butoh performance

In addition to the ‘Performing Justice’ theme, department research seminars may also either address specific methodological approaches, or provide an enabling platform for staff and PGR students to present conference length (15-20 minute) papers as work in progress for discussion and to receive constructive feedback. An example of the latter approach would be Mark Greenwood, a recent Post Doctoral Teaching Fellow appointment, who made good use of this opportunity to summarise and defend the central argument of his PhD thesis prior to viva. The viva was passed successfully and Dr. Greenwood is writing an article for publication in *OUI*

*Performance: Action Art Now* due for publication in 2014. He is also co-authoring an article on ‘Digital Writing’ for *Performance Research Journal* Volume 18, No.5. ‘On Writing and Digital Media’.

In the 2012/2013 departmental research series, Dr. Stuart Grant from Monash University, Australia, gave a lively and very well-received lecture on Performance and Phenomenology as part of a working research group seeking to publish with Palgrave MacMillan in 2014. This latter project, and the recent appointment of two new research-active members of the Dance team, Dr. Claudia Brazzale and Dr. Declan Patrick, is demonstration of a commitment and support for research in the Dance area.

If RAE2008 can be thought of as aiming to establish research potential, then the assessment period leading up to REF2014 has continued this building exercise and also aimed to demonstrate and realise some of that potential, particularly around the idea/ideal of ‘Performing Justice’. The department has grown in size and increased the quality of its research, particularly in the ‘practice as research’ field and recent appointments in Dance have done much to develop research in this area. Post REF 2014, under the leadership of Prof. Simon Piasecki, the Department will continue to build its research culture around the theme of ‘Performing Justice’ with plans for establishment of the research centre, international conferences, colloquia, invited research papers, development of postgraduate research provision, increase in external funding and creation of contemporary performance practice platform preliminarily titled LOOP. The research and publication profile of new appointments will be scrutinised to look for ‘best fit’ candidates who can add to these areas and extend the Department’s ambitions in networked and collaborative research. Confirmed plans include inauguration of the International Centre for Indian Arts, chaired by Prof Piasecki, in collaboration with Milapfest, South Asian Arts development organisation, and Dr Sweeny organizing a two day colloquium on cross cultural dance practices within Higher Education entitled ‘Bells of Change’ in 2014.

### **c. People, including:**

#### **i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

Since 2008 the department has grown in the number of research active staff. New appointments in the period include: Dr. Brian Desmond, Dr. Zoe Zontou, Dr. Rachel Sweeney, Dr. Claudia Brazzale, Dr. Declan Patrick, Dr. Mark Greenwood, and most recently the department has recruited two new members of staff: Professor Simon Piasecki (Head of Department) and Dr. Kris Darby (Post Doctoral Teaching Fellow). With the exception of Professor Simon Piasecki all new recruits have started as junior level academics (Post Doctoral Teaching Fellows or Lecturers). This is a young and growing department which is keen to develop further its research activities. All new staff and early-career colleagues have received mentoring, through interaction and collaborative projects within the department, through University-led staff development sessions on a range of topics such as ‘how to get published’, constructive feedback on papers delivered at the Department Research seminars, discussions of research plans in performance reviews with the Head of Department, and in more informal discussions with the Head of Department and other senior researchers. They are also generously funded through the Faculty’s Research Committee or Central Research Fund held by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Academic) when

presenting their research at national and international conferences. As part of the unit of assessment's research strategy, all new appointments are expected to be research-active and we encourage Post Doctoral Teaching Fellows to consider the publication and dissemination of their doctoral research. The staffing strategy for the Department follows the University guidelines in that promotion from lecturer to senior lecturer is not automatic but dependent on a number of criteria, including completion of four publications within a five year period. This ensures that all staff who are promoted to Senior Lecturer level are research active, through practice as research or traditional publications, as well as actively applying for external grants. All newly appointed professors give an inaugural lecture to the university community.

All full-time members of the Department hold PhDs; three of these (Bennett, Desmond, Malone) were fully-funded by the university and the two fractional appointments (Black and Cleary) are working toward PhD completion, also fully-funded by Liverpool Hope; this level of doctoral enterprise is a significant increase from 2008 and an indicator of the commitment of the University to the department.

Nine members of staff (out of equivalent of fourteen FTE members of staff) are entering REF with their individual research outputs. This is a significant improvement on RAE08.

A range of staff development training programmes is available at Faculty and University level. A specialist provision that the department is keen to engage with at the moment is the development of postgraduate research culture and to that end all staff are encouraged to attend relevant research supervisors training seminars such as supervisors' forums, upgrade and registration confirmation events, acting as an internal/external research degree examiner etc. (Engaging with the supervisor training programme is mandatory for acting supervisors.)

All members of staff have access to the staff development fund which is held by the Head of Department. This particular fund has, for example, enabled Ms Cleary (PhD student and staff member) to attend an international conference on performance and gender in Belfast in 2013; Dr. Simic to attend a number of workshops and masterclasses (Odin Teatret actor Roberta Carreri in Coventry, performance practitioner Rosie Dennis in Liverpool and Winter School 'Autobiology' by Curious in Glasgow), Dr. Malone to attend an intensive weekend training in Boalian techniques with Cardboard Citizens Theatre and Dr. Desmond to attend two week clown training in The Actors Space near Barcelona, Spain.

Members of the Department receive a number of different forms of support for their research: crucially, direct financial support for conference attendance has been available from the Faculty Research Committee (£30 000) and all staff in this unit of assessment have benefited from this financial resource, allowing them to attend significant international conferences. Since 2008 the department has held an active and successful record in applications to this particular fund. In 2012/2013 the Faculty Research Committee has funded Dr. Brazzale, Dr. Crilly and Dr. Patrick for international conferences in U.S.A. and New Zealand, whilst Dr. Desmond, Dr. Malone, Dr. Simic and Dr. Zontou have all given papers at TaPRA. Some previous successful applications include Dr. Anderson and Dr. Simic's conference presentations at PSi at Copenhagen and Zagreb, Dr. Sweeney's papers at specialist dance conferences in Australia, Dr. Bennett's delivery of a paper at IFTR conference in Chile. Nationally, members of the department have been funded to present papers at TaPRA conferences in Leeds, Plymouth, Kingston and Kent, PSi in Leeds amongst others.

Relief from teaching, particular research projects (including practice as research), training and mentoring, and the provision of other resources such as research equipment are all available via the University Research Committee (£200 000). The department supports longer periods of research as required. A recent example of this strategic support would be Dr. Rachel Sweeney's six-month Research Fellowship at Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra. The research theme was: *Topographic Choreographies: Staging dance ecology through transnational terrain performance practices*.

The Department follows the University's Equal Opportunities recruitment policy and monitors all applications to ensure that there is no discrimination in regard to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious belief or age.

## ii. Research students

Ms Carmel Cleary (0.5 FTE member of staff) is currently undertaking doctoral research within the Department. Her research topic investigates the notions of domesticity within



contemporary performance, with a special focus on the representations of class and gender. Ms Cleary is supervised by Dr. Simic and Dr. Anderson, alongside Dr. Jenny Daggers (Associate Professor in Theology) Dr. Brian Desmond successfully completed his PhD studies within the department in 2010. His PhD thesis considered contemporary Irish story theatre and is embedded in European political theatre traditions. Dr. Desmond is one of the nine members of the department entered for this REF with individual research outputs. Dr. Desmond and Ms Cleary were both in receipt of university scholarships.

In addition, Dr. Simic is also externally supervising Ms. Ines Matijevic, a Croatian artist working in Simic's specialist area of research concerning the maternal and arts at The Academy for Fine Arts in Zagreb, Croatia. In 2012 Dr Anderson undertook research degree examination training and was external examiner for a PhD study at the School of the Arts, Loughborough University.

For admission to the Department's PGR programme, it is normally expected that students will have a first-class BA (Hons) degree with a strong supporting statement of postgraduate research capacity, or, as is increasingly the case, already have an MA likewise indicating research potential. Students must put forward a viable research proposal, provide evidence of the personal and academic qualities to complete a research degree, confirm that Faculty research ethics policies have been consulted and show a 'match' with the Department's research strengths. Students' continuing registration for PhD undergoes formal interim evaluation through a 'confirmation of registration event', at which a panel scrutinizes work and orally explores this with the student.

Research students are monitored and supported through personal supervision, a dedicated Postgraduate Research Skills university-wide programme of seminars based on the Research Council endorsed *Vitae* programme of competencies which 'support the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and the QAA Code of Practice for research'<sup>2</sup>. The Postgraduate Research Skills Moodle provides a virtual learning environment; additionally, there is a second e-resource for research students through external subscription – Research Skills Online. Research supervisors work in small teams; one will be a subject specialist with the requisite knowledge to support the research project and one of the team must have experience of doctoral supervision to completion. The supervisory team also includes a Chair, well-versed in university regulations and with multiple completions.

#### **d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

The department is situated at Liverpool Hope's Creative Campus which consists of Grade II Listed building the Cornerstone, Angel Field – the award winning Renaissance style garden – a hall of residence, and a new Centre for Music, Performance and Innovation (completed in 2010) with the Capstone Theatre, a state-of-the-art 200-seat performance space. The University has invested £20 million in this creative and performing arts campus. The department's facilities include three fully equipped studio theatres and two dance studios, all of which are available to staff for their practice as research activities. In agreement with the Music Department, the staff are also welcome to use the music technology laboratory and a recording studio.

Assistance is also available for the preparation of external funding bids. Liverpool Hope employs a Research Facilitator with the remit of increasing externally funded research activity at the University, by working in partnership with academics to secure, manage and increase funding from external organisations both nationally and internationally. The prime role of the Research Facilitator is to support the University's research aims, and in particular, its researchers. Specific assistance is provided for: research administration & management, funding intelligence (in particular the use of *Research Professional*), costing & pricing research, contract negotiation, new business procedures, and systems development. Research workshops are offered by the Research Facilitator on a regular basis and topics have included: administration of grants and contracts, proposal development / writing, support for younger researchers, costing and pricing (fEC), and using the Research Council's "JeS" electronic submission system

All bids to external funding bodies are submitted to Dr. Ian Vandewalle (Pro Vice Chancellor, Resource Management and Planning) for final approval, following completion of financial assessment procedures. Research projects are scrutinised internally by the Faculty Research Committee for viability, quality, and value for money within the funding process. The Head of Department is asked to comment on funding applications as part of this process. Within

<sup>2</sup> Vitae Research Development Framework brief guide

the Department, the Head helps individuals to set realistic targets, encourages and helps to shape initiatives, and works to ensure that individual researchers and those doing collaborative research have access to the necessary resources.

Further infrastructure support comes in the form of a basic departmental library budget (figure for 2012/2013 was £15, 532) which has allowed for increased spending resources on books and on electronic databases such as LiON and the MLA bibliography. A separate budget is available for the purchase of materials needed for individual research projects. These are supplemented by interlibrary loans and by access to the other national libraries through SCONUL Research Extra. Each Faculty has two designated full time Faculty Librarians who work closely with all academic colleagues to provide support and advice on all areas of Library provision. The University has set up an institutional repository for staff research outputs. Research outputs for the REF2014 are being entered on to the repository and it will then go live.

The department has a history of successful internal research bids for a variety of projects such as 'Cartographies of Justice' practice as research event in 2012 (£9000) from Vice-Chancellor's Innovation Fund; organization and curating of the international, multidisciplinary conference 'Addiction and Performance: the new Normal?' in April 2012 (a partnership between Liverpool Hope and Kingston University £1500), practice as research activities such as Factory Floor (£1000), the Liverpool Anarchist Communist Sunday School practice as research project (£1050) and 'Staging Recovery' project which showcased the work of Fallen Angels Theatre Company and included a public lecture at Liverpool Hope's Creative Campus (£2000).

As previously mentioned, most members of staff have been funded by the Faculty Research Committee for delivery of research papers and performances at various national and international conferences. A strategic ambition for post REF2014 is to increase external funding and to that end all staff on Senior Lecturer contracts are required to make at least one external funding bid per academic year.

As regards the department as it stands, external funding comes mostly in the form of arts commissions and Arts Council England support for certain arts projects. The Institute for the Art and Practice for Dissent at Home (Anderson and Simic) has received a number of external commissions: £2000 from Arnolfini, Bristol, £2500 from nef (New Economics Foundation) and Artsadmin, London, £1000 from Artsadmin, £1000 from Live Art Development Agency, 800 euros from Lakeside Arts Centre in Klagenfurt, Austria. Dr. Simic has received funding from Arts Council England for her solo work *Masha Serghyeevna* (£4999 in 2009) and *Blood & Soil: we were always meant to meet...* (£4800 in 2011) and her most recent solo performance *1994* has been commissioned by Works Ahead and Contact Theatre in Manchester (£1200 in 2013). Dr. Sweeney's dance practice has been funded by *DANscienCE* Festival (\$5000 in 2013) in Canberra, Australia, 'Why Rush' Live Arts Festival (£200 in 2012) at Temple Works in Leeds and Dance in Devon (£1000 in 2009). Dr. Sweeney was also a recipient of Lisa Ullmann Dance Travel Scholarship (£800) in 2009.

Research is managed through procedures within the Department, Faculty, and University, and researchers in the Department work within these systems and guidelines. The Department complies with the University Ethics Policy, working with the systems and strategies in place for monitoring and approving the ethical considerations of research. All research is undertaken subject to the university wide Ethics Policy.

#### **e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base**

Research in the department has always been outward-facing in the sense that 'Performing Justice' must not only be done but 'must be seen to be done'.<sup>3</sup> To that end the department has been delighted to provide accommodation for Collective Encounters Theatre Company 'a professional arts organisation specialising in theatre for social change through collaborative practice. We use theatre to engage those on the margins of society, telling untold stories and tackling the local, national and international concerns of our time'. Students, particularly in their final year research projects, have benefitted from the proximity and expertise of this significant Arts Council funded organisation founded by a former member of this department. Further examples of the department's work in relation to the praxis of 'Performing Justice' are evident in Impact documents.

<sup>3</sup> *Regina v Sussex Justices, Ex parte McCarthy* ([1924] 1 KB 256, [1923] All ER Rep 233)

An additional signature strength of the 'Performing Justice' theme is the centrality of collaborative work. Mention has already been made of the various research networks, research groups and organizations the department engages with such as TaPRA, IFTR, PSi, SCUDD, University Network of the European Capitals of Culture, Factory Floor as well as Liverpool Hope University research initiatives: the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies, the Popular Cultures Research Group and the Irish Studies Research Group. Staff at the department also belong to these research groups and organizations: Radical Aesthetics, Radical Art (Loughborough University), Gender Research Network (run by University of Liverpool and gathering academics across three universities in Liverpool), European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC) /Arts and Health, MaMSIE (Mapping Maternal Subjectivities Identities Ethics), an interdisciplinary research group at Birkbeck University, Live Art Development Agency, Culture-Theory-Space research group (Plymouth University), MeWe, network for artists concerned with the maternal who are currently collaborating on AHRC funded Motherhood post-1968 project, Arts Alliance Promoting Arts in Criminal Justice, Community Arts North West, Everton Art Group, Migrant Artists Mutual Aid.

Colleagues in this UoA have been invited to a variety of events and conferences:

Dr. Anderson and Dr. Simic are both recognized for their contribution to art activist practices and scholarships through the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home. They were invited speakers at 'For the Love of It' Artquest conference, Cecil Sharp House, London (May 2013), 'Being Seen, Being Heard' symposium, part of Sacred Festival, Chelsea Theatre, London (November 2011) as well as a number of arts venues and universities such as Live Art Development Agency, East Street Arts, the Bluecoat, FACT, Arnolfini, Artsadmin, Stanley Picker Gallery, Loughborough University, York St John University, Plymouth University and University of Chester to name a few.

Dr. Simic's research on the maternal and performance resulted in her being an invited speaker at the multi-disciplinary Gender Research Seminar series at the Centre for Gender Studies (February 2011) and Drama Seminar at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (February 2010) both at the University of Cambridge. Most recently Simic has been an invited member and attended relevant meetings for AHRC funded Porous Dramaturgy Research Network in 2013, run by Dr. Duska Radosavljevic, University of Kent and Dr. Cathy Turner, University of Exeter.

Dr. Zontou's research work on theatre and addiction makes a significant contribution to the discourses in this field and she has been a guest lecturer at St John's York University in April 2013 and at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London, where her paper was 'An allegory of Addiction Recovery: Exploring the Performance of Eumenides by Aeschylus, as adapted by 18 ANO Theatre Group'. This has subsequently been accepted by *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* for publication in June 2013.

Dr. Brazzale's paper 'Afropean Bodies: Choreographies of Resistance' has been accepted for presentation at the 2013 Congress on Research in Dance at the University of California, LA. (April 2013). This year's special topic was 'Tactical Bodies: The Choreography of Non-Dancing Subjects'. CORD is one of the most important international dance studies conferences. Brazzale has also been invited to the Gender and Education Association to present a performative lecture at their 2013 conference 'Compelling Diversities, Educational Intersections: Policy, Practice, Parity' hosted by London South Bank University (April 2013). Brazzale's keynote presentation was titled '(Un) Covering Ground: A Critique of Contemporary Dance Education and its Narratives of Spatial Mobility'.

Dr. Bennett's particular expertise in popular theatre as a marginalized art form is gaining recognition and he has recently been invited to peer review two articles, one for publication in *Studies in Theatre and Performance* and the other in *Theatre in Canada*. He is currently chair of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) postgraduate committee and a contributing editor for *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 'an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the investigation of all aspects of popular entertainment'.

Collaborative activity and contribution to the discipline is set to continue and reach new heights under the new leadership of Prof Simon Piasecki whose new appointment has further invigorated the department and provided new contacts and research opportunities particularly within contemporary performance and the area of practice as research.