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| <p>Institution: University of Cambridge</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: UoA29</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: Rehearsal as effective theatrical method for performance: responding to climate change</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Zoe Svendsen's <i>3rd Ring Out: Rehearsing the Future</i> (3RO; 2010-2011) enhanced public understanding of and engagement with one of the most important social issues of our times through novel modes of performance and communication both live and online. This practice-as-research performance project had significant impact on a broad range of audience-participants, including policy-makers, local authorities, climate change communicators, other artists working in the field of art and climate change, children of school age and the general public. The project continues to attract requests for talks, policy meetings and/or further performances. The impact to date includes altering perceptions of both art and climate change, and of the relationship between them.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The underpinning research is the practice-as-research project <i>3rd Ring Out: Rehearsing the Future</i> (3RO) [1], which Svendsen undertook as a post-doctoral research fellow in the English Faculty at Cambridge 2009-2012. The project was first funded in 2009 by Tipping Point, a UK organisation devoted to bringing together scientists and artists to confront climate change.</p> <p>3RO was created in partnership with METIS, a Cambridge-based performing arts company of which Svendsen is artistic director, in collaboration with a network of artists and producers. The main output of the research was a performance that toured the UK, being continuously adapted in response to audience reaction and further research. The project was assessed and supported by a significant number of public agencies, theatre festivals and venues, and award-giving trusts and foundations.</p> <p>The structure of the performance was originally inspired by Tracy C. Davis's reconceptualising of Cold War exercises as 'rehearsals' in <i>Stages of Emergency</i> (2007). 3RO staged the question: what ecological changes might impact sufficiently on our global social future that we would need to rehearse for it, and how might we rehearse? The project addressed the question of how to create a performance work that would engage audiences in the topic both theatrically and politically, whilst remaining accurate in its treatment of the subject-matter. The resulting performance had the following research-driven features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance was site-adapted • The space was purpose-built, adapting shipping containers as portable multi-media performance spaces • Audience decisions altered the outcome of the performance within the scenario through a bespoke digital voting system • Audience numbers were deliberately restricted for the purposes of greater immersion/engagement • Audiences experienced both public voting and private discourse and the dissonance between them • Audience responses influenced succeeding iterations of the performance, including the creation of a new installation in 2011 • The performance had an unusually extensive online presence, capturing audience voting patterns, offering climate change information, and an archive of the installation created in 2011. <p>The dramatic scenario was initially developed in 2009 through a Creative Partnerships project in Norfolk, with school students aged thirteen and fourteen. From geographers to Council Climate Change officers to emergency planners, a wide network of individuals offered their expertise and assistance to enable Svendsen's team to make the scenarios plausible. In 2010, the 'script' was</p> |

Impact case study (REF3b)

rewritten to make it specific to the city in which it was performed, using the scenario of a heatwave followed by a flood. In 2011, a new version was written, incorporating ideas gathered throughout the first tour, in which the geographic location was the Suffolk coastline, exploring questions of agriculture, fire risk, the elderly isolated in rural locations, water scarcity and a shutdown at Sizewell nuclear power station.

This research revolved around the idea of ‘practising’ or ‘rehearsing’ the response to disaster [2]. Out of the process came a multi-media immersive performance lasting one hour, which staged ethical and social challenges posed by plausible and impending climate crisis. It was set in two modified shipping containers kitted out in the form of emergency planning rooms. The audience (twelve in each container) sat at a table with a map of the local area embedded in it; they were taken through the scenario of a future climate crisis, precipitated by a heat wave, in 2033. At key narrative points, the audience members were invited to vote – using individual consoles – about how to respond. The audience responses then governed the subsequent narrative of the piece.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] 3rd Ring Out is a practice-led performance project, extensively documented on its bespoke website (www.3dringout.com)

Video of the performance can be found at <http://www.3dringout.com/about/project/>.

Still images at <http://www.3dringout.com/about/photos/>.

An archive of the installation at <http://www.3dringout.com/blog/>.

An essay contextualizing the practice as research at <http://metisarts.co.uk/3rd-ring-out-the-research-context/>.

[2] Zoë Svendsen and Lucy Neal, ‘Rehearsing for a Climate-changed Future: Practising not Preaching for Environmental Accountability’, *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, May 2012, Themed Issue on Environmentalism, pp. 299-303. Peer-reviewed.

Evidence of 2*+ Research Quality

The project was commissioned by and selected for presentation at established UK performing arts festivals, including the Greenwich and Docklands International Festival and the Norwich and Norfolk Festival, and venues across the UK, including Northern Stage in Newcastle and the Junction in Cambridge. It received significant levels of funding **assessed through peer-review processes**, including Arts Council and other forms of public funding (totalling £99,703) and commissions/awards (totalling £46,500), including winning a TippingPoint Commission Award (<http://www.tippingpoint.org.uk/commissions/3rd-ring-out/>) (selected from 178 applications), an Ideas Tap Award, a Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust R&D Award, and an Artist Projects Earth Award. Further, it was selected for commission by the Outdoor Arts consortium, Without Walls, and was awarded a residency at the National Theatre Studio in late 2010 to enable further research, on the basis of the success of the 2010 tour.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The primary beneficiaries of the research were participants in and audiences of the 3RO performance. Extensive touring, inclusion in theatre festivals, the development of an accompanying installation in 2011, and up to eight performances a day allowed the project to reach a significant audience, without compromising the research-led decision to keep each audience small: 12 spectators per performance.

The performance toured the UK in May-July 2010, travelling to five locations: Norwich, Cambridge, Ipswich, Newcastle and London (89 performances, attendance 1394; participants in workshops and discussions 334). The receipt of additional funding to further develop the project from organisations including the National Theatre Studio and the Arts Council (itself indicative of the theatre sector’s perception of the project’s significance) enabled it to be presented in 2011 at the Watford Imagine Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (80 performances, attendance 680; additional participants in the ‘strategy’ cell 395). Audiences included theatre professionals, the general public and school children at St Bede’s secondary school, Cambridge; Flegg High School, Norfolk; and New Vic College, London.

Both the creation of the performance and the subsequent performances involved participation by the public. Impact on participants/audiences' cultural life was direct, **enriching their imaginations and sensibilities** and improving **public discourse** around issues of climate-change and their capacity to address the issue. Evaluations also showed wider **education benefits** in schools. Svendsen has presented the research in the context of sustainability policy development including Suffolk Coast Futures and the Cambridge University Centre for Science and Policy; and in the context of arts development including the University of East Anglia, Norwich Arts and Business. The research was presented at the Association of Performing Arts Presenters 2013, a New York annual conference for theatre producers, at which a UK panel presented a selection of European projects addressing climate change as examples of best practice. The British Council provided funding and administrative support to share the findings of the project with artists and producers in Berlin, and to travel to Beijing and Shanghai to discuss the project with artists, producers and environmental NGOs and journalists in 2010 and 2011. [1]

3RO has had an **impact on cultural life**, as witnessed by audience figures for live performances (see above) and visitors to the web-site (peaking at 700 per day in June 2010). It has been well received within the sector: *Fascinating and chilling show - the real power lay in the accumulation of very convincing detail and the brilliant multimedia layering up of it.* [2]

It is this ability to engage and provoke that was of particular benefit:

Third Ring Out stands out for me as high point of the year, and not just the theatrical year! It was a really engaging, stimulating immersion in a possible future world; so fast-moving and requiring all faculties to be constantly engaged that it was a real shock at the end to discover how long we had been immersed in the operations room, focussed on saving Newcastle! I would highly recommend it to any town or city wanting to engage its citizens in some real thinking about their role in planning for a climate change future. [3]

It has been compared favourably with other performances:

The play was engaging, and was also effective in provoking questions and reactions from the audience about effective strategies for coping with the effects of climate change. By involving the audience in decisions, it avoided the overly descriptive accounts of climate science or policy that have characterised other more traditional theatrical engagements with climate change; and its hyper-local focus, with the outside world shut out but brought inside in the form of a familiar local map, suggested the local, not just global, nature of the problem. [4]

Similarly the performance received positive reviews from audiences, again because it improved understanding and provoked thought about difficult issues:

Brilliantly conceived. I couldn't recommend this highly enough - it was thought provoking and serious.

[and]

This performance gave excellent insight into our future and caused the audience to dwell, and even act on, the thoughts it provoked. This performance has the power to change cultures' ways of thinking... intelligent, engaging and thought provoking. [5]

This emphasis on improving understanding and provoking thought through engagement with the performance or its development is clearly evident among school audiences already familiar with the concepts and techniques of 'gaming'. As one student at St Bede's School, Cambridge put it:

[3rd Ring Out] shows you the effects – because they've been saying like don't do this, don't do that because of climate change, but no one's actually said: because this will happen – you're just left to guess it by yourself and so [3rd Ring Out] really showed you what could happen. [6]

And another said:

Doing the Workshop and having the chance to hear her [Zoe Svendsen] talk about the play made me realise just how much you need to think about things and prepare your research before you start to act. It has made me change the way I now go about my acting' [7]

An evaluation of the Metis Arts' Residency at Flegg High School Norfolk [8], where the performance was developed, showed that all of the 19 students who completed questionnaires agreed that working with Metis had 'helped me understand the challenges we all face as a result of climate change' and 'would think more about [their] own impact on the planet and what [they] could do to help'. A recent general evaluation of theatrical work on climate change singled out the impact of *3^d Ring Out*. [9]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] <http://xindanwei.com/lang/en/2011/07/3rd-ring-out-china/>
<http://news.xkb.com.cn/guojij/2011/0722/149286.html>

[2] E-mail from person 1 (playwright), 21 June 2010

[3] E-mail from person 2 (Director, Preston Guild), 9 June 2010

[4] Report by person 3 (AHRC/DCMS Knowledge placement Fellow):
<http://www.tippingpoint.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Staging-climate-change-the-last-ten-years.pdf> (see p. 7).

[5] See <http://www.3rdringout.com/audience-and-press-responses/>

[6] See METIS report to the Arts Council, October 2010, p. 14.

[7] Quoted in evaluation by person 4 (Head of the Expressive Arts Faculty, St Bede's School, Cambridge), sent by email 6.10.2010.

[8] External evaluation of the Metis Arts' Residency at Flegg High School, conducted by the Norfolk and Norwich Festival (March-May, 2010), p. 19

[9] <http://www.tippingpoint.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Climate-Change-and-Theatre-What-Have-We-Learned.docx.pdf>, p.3.