

<b>Institution: University of Kent</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 35, Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b>
<b>Grotowski redrawn: enhancing theatre practice and teaching, enriching culture</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The AHRC-funded British Grotowski Project has enhanced international theatre practice and the teaching of theatre in schools, as well as broadening cultural understanding in the UK.</p> <p>The project enabled the development of new theoretical and embodied understanding of Jerzy Grotowski's oeuvre within and beyond the theatre profession, enhancing theatre skills in actor training and directing amongst professional practitioners, schoolteachers and pupils. Many project events took place under the auspices of the Polish government's Polska! Year in the UK and UNESCO's Year of Grotowski, both 2009, which broadened the global impact.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The AHRC-funded British Grotowski Project (September 2006 - September 2009) was led by PI Paul Allain. The project included an AHRC-funded PhD student Dr Pablo Pakula and a Research Assistant, Dr Giuliano Campo, both Kent-based for the project's duration. It re-evaluated the work of Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski and his influence on British theatre in particular. Grotowski's reception has for decades been hampered by a dearth of textual and audio-visual materials, misconceptions about his oeuvre, and limited access in the UK to his 'living tradition'. The project enabled direct experience of previously unknown aspects of Grotowski's work and practical Grotowski-focussed laboratory research. It reassessed how non-Polish speaking scholars, teachers and artists might better understand his work. Its methodologies involved scholarly research and publications (foregrounding historical, polylingual and editorial approaches promoting the work of Grotowski's collaborators, and European debates about Grotowski) as well as laboratory workshops, exhibitions, a conference and symposia.</p> <p>The research made five main discoveries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It brought into the public domain new insights including European perspectives, practices and audio-visual materials with translations from Polish, French and Italian, broadening understanding of the breadth of Grotowski's influence in Europe, particularly in Poland and Italy [1, 2, 5, 6].</li> <li>• The touring and fixed (National Theatre) exhibitions brought into the public domain rarely seen materials from Grotowski's practice, including posters, props, a scaled down set of <i>The Constant Prince</i>, as well as specially commissioned photographs and films (eg of Brzezinka outside Wroclaw, home of paratheatre and of Grotowski's influence on Indian cultural practices) [3].</li> <li>• It challenged and realigned familiar interpretations of Grotowski's oeuvre in what are normally considered separate phases of activity, and articulated the continuity in Grotowski's own processes [1, 5, 6].</li> <li>• It challenged misconceptions of Grotowski as an authoritarian director. The project's focus on Grotowski's collaborators, literary manager Ludwik Flaszen and performer/teacher Zygmunt Molik helped dismantle these misunderstandings [2, 4, 5, 6].</li> <li>• It highlighted the significance of text and dramaturgy in Grotowski's work. Allain's edition of Flaszen's collected writings revealed the complexity of the poetic language and dramaturgy used in Grotowski's performances, usually ignored by non Polish-speaking critics. Similarly, the Molik book focussed on the richness of Grotowski's voice and text work [4, 5, 6].</li> </ul> <p>The research was undertaken at Kent by Paul Allain: Senior Lecturer (2000-2003), Professor (2003-Present).</p>

### 3. References to the research

#### Research Outputs:

The British Grotowski Project outcomes include: textual publications; a completed PhD; two exhibitions; screenings; several workshops and practice-based meetings between and with Grotowski's former collaborators and theatre practitioners; and a website. See Allain's double-weighted REF Output 1 which includes these titles below (with the exception of item 4).

1. Paul Allain (ed.), *Grotowski's Empty Room*, (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009).
2. Peter Brook, *With Jerzy Grotowski: Theatre is Just a Form*, Paul Allain (co-ed.) with Grzegorz Ziolkowski and Georges Banu (Wroclaw: Grotowski Institute, 2009).
3. Co-curation with Giuliano Campo of touring exhibition: *Jerzy Grotowski: Theatre and Beyond*, with accompanying catalogue; curation of *Dust* exhibition at the National Theatre, both 2009.
4. Giuliano Campo and Zygmunt Molik, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010). Research Assistant's coauthored book with accompanying DVD which features a filmed introduction by Allain.
5. Ludwig Flaszen, *Grotowski & Company*, Paul Allain (ed), trans. by Andrzej Wojtasik and Paul Allain (London: Routledge, 2010).
6. Paul Allain (co-ed.) with Grzegorz Ziolkowski, 'Voices from Within: Grotowski's Polish Collaborators'. A special issue of *Polish Theatre Perspectives* with accompanying DVD. Grotowski Institute, 2013.

#### Project funding included:

AHRC British Grotowski Project (2006-09), £203,135 (plus PhD studentship): Ref: AH/D000785/1 Adam Mickiewicz Institute (IAM), Poland: funding of £21,500 for Polska Year! events, publications and exhibitions (2009).

Arts Council England (ACE): funding of £2500 for Milon Mela's performance, procession and workshop.

Polish Cultural Institute (PCI); funding of £1500 for a workshop.

### 4. Details of the impact

The project's activities, especially during the 2009 UNESCO Year of Grotowski and Polska! Year, redrew a central figure of twentieth-century theatre practice and theory [4]. The project's impact ranges from enhancing specific skills and knowledge amongst artists and teachers to raising and enriching public awareness about Polish and European theatre practice and history [4, 5]. It did this in practice and theory, crossing boundaries between the two. Director Richard Schechner commented on Allain's *Grotowski's Empty Room* that theatre practitioners 'will use the book for many years to come' (email to Allain 14.08.09).

The project was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education (THE) Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Arts, 2010. In 2009, Allain was awarded a medal for Services to Polish Culture from the Polish government.

The impact was achieved through a range of activities, from high profile engagements such as an **exhibition held at the National Theatre and another that was touring**, to focussed **practical and teacher-training sessions**, which are ongoing. Direct embodied impact has extended to over 600 UK theatre practitioners, audiences, school teachers, school children and theatre enthusiasts. Workshops developed practitioners' skills (including body and voice work, understanding of ritual practices, directorial montage) and understanding. Theoretical and practical sessions for schoolteachers and school children have helped improve knowledge of Grotowski at GCSE and A Level [6,7,8].

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The impact can be located in three specific areas:

**Theatre Practice**

The project had impact on experimental theatre artists mainly through the **seven workshops** we organised, supported in part by a grant from the Polish Cultural Institute (£1500). These were with international artists, including former Teatr Laboratorium actors Rena Mirecka and Zygmunt Molik and Milon Mela from India, all of whom collaborated closely with Grotowski [5]. The visit of Milon Mela, coorganised with Organic Theatre, attracted additional funding (£2,500) from Arts Council England. Such workshops, including *Traces*, a laboratory led by three British performer/directors (Persis-Jade Maravala, Ian Morgan and Anna-Helena McLean) were a chance for practitioners, teachers and students to engage directly with the Grotowski tradition.

Some practitioners attended all the workshops we held (eg Kindle Theatre, and members of Paraactive and Zecora Aura) [1,2,3]. Emily Ayres, Artistic Director of Kindle Theatre found the project, 'very inspiring...[it] has impacted upon the vision we have had for our work ever since. 'The project was an '[i]ncredibly rare opportunity to train with original and second generation Grotowski actors – Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik, Jola Cynkutis and Ang Gey Pin [...] an embodiment of physical discipline that we had only read about thus far...[the experience] gave us something to aspire to in our own practice' [3]. Jorge Lopes Ramos of Zecora Ura has described the work as 'transformative and invigorating' [1].

Further impact was achieved through the involvement of overseas participants in the June 2009 International British Grotowski conference as well as all our workshops, which were for practising theatre artists as well as scholars. At our 2009 postgraduate/practitioner symposium, which followed the main conference, practitioners had a platform to present practically or theoretically. Our call for papers received over 70 responses, resulting in the participation of 50 contributors from across the globe [4].

**Teaching**

The project had impact which is ongoing on schoolteachers and their pupils through a range of key activities including:

- a '**Weekend Workout: The Physical Actor after Grotowski**' (26/27.09.2009) at the Barbican Theatre, attended by 20 actors, directors and school teachers. One participant stated 'The experiential understanding has been fantastic' [7].
- Allain has twice (October 2012 and 2013) led **Continuing Professional Development** sessions on Grotowski and a lecture/masterclass for 200 A level students and teachers at the National Theatre. One teacher described Allain's seminar/workshop as '[e]xceedingly unexpected and energetic' [8].
- **AHRC-funded Public Engagement talk** at the Marlowe Theatre Studio, Canterbury as part of Lifting the Curtain: Theatre Research@Kent (01.05.2013).

Alice Taylor, Head of Drama at a Canterbury secondary school, has commented that the whole British Grotowski project 'enabled me to deepen my knowledge and create visual teaching materials' [6]. Allain is extending the reach and significance of such impact by advising as academic expert on the new Edexcel A Level Theatre Studies course throughout 2013.

**Cultural Understanding**

Two exhibitions, as well as the project more broadly, enriched cultural understanding of Polish theatre and Jerzy Grotowski's work in particular. Both exhibitions were organised with the Grotowski Institute [4], and were free and open to the public.

A **touring exhibition, *Jerzy Grotowski: Theatre and Beyond***, was presented in summer 2009 at the University of Kent for four weeks, at Battersea Arts Centre for two weeks and then Aberystwyth

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for a week hosted by the Centre for Performance Research. This was targeted at students, practitioners and academics and included original props and elements of scenography (boots, pipes and a wheelbarrow from *Akropolis*) as well as a scaled down reconstruction of *The Constant Prince* set. On YouTube, a filmed record of the exhibition at Canterbury has received 4,456 views: [http://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=grotowski+theatre+and+beyond](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=grotowski+theatre+and+beyond) (23.10.13).

**Dust, a five-week exhibition** of 45 black and white photographs of Grotowski's last performance, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, took place at the National Theatre in the Olivier Foyer in June/July 2009. The National Theatre was an ideal platform for the presentation of our research and collaboration, reaching a wide audience of theatregoers, professionals and enthusiasts. It could be seen by audiences attending events at the Olivier Theatre and general visitors to the building (estimated '20,000 viewers,' John Langley, National Theatre Manager [5]).

The British Grotowski Project thus generated significant impact across a range of beneficiaries, from professional theatre-makers, to schoolteachers and students, through to the general theatregoing public. The understanding and appreciation among these groups of Grotowski's contribution to theatre culture and practice has been significantly enhanced by the outcomes and activities of the project.

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Practitioners: Persis-Jade Maravala and Jorge Lopes Ramos, of Paraactive Theatre and Zecora Ura: <http://www.zecoraura.com/>, can attest to the enhancement of their own theatre practice as directors, actors and theatre makers.
2. Practitioner/teacher: Ian Morgan of Song of the Goat Theatre, Poland, can attest to the enhancement of both his and others' teaching of Grotowski and his own theatre practice as director, actor and theatre maker.
3. Practitioners: Kindle Theatre: <http://kindletheatre.co.uk/>. Company members can attest to the enhancement of Kindle's theatre practice and their understanding of Grotowski.
4. Director of the Grotowski Institute, Wroclaw, Poland: Jaroslaw Fret, can attest to the international reach of the project and its impact on teachers, students and professionals worldwide, not least in the UNESCO Year of Grotowski, 2009.
5. Theatre Manager, National Theatre, London: John Langley, can comment on the Grotowski exhibition *Dust* at the National Theatre and its potential impact in terms of enhancing public understanding of Grotowski's work and Polish theatre.
6. Head of Drama, Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys, Canterbury: Alice Taylor, can attest to the enhancement of her teaching of Grotowski and related areas (eg Physical Theatre/Devising) as a secondary school drama teacher.
7. Theatre and Cross Arts Producer, Barbican, London: Jenny Mollica organised 'Weekend Workout: The Physical Actor after Grotowski' (26/27.09.2009) and can attest to the enhancement of teaching/practice of Grotowski and related areas (evaluations available).
8. Secondary & FE Programme Co-ordinator, National Theatre, London: Kate Young facilitated workshops/lectures/seminars for teachers and students during October 2012 and October 2013 and can attest to the enhancement of teaching/practice of Grotowski and related areas (evaluations available).