



FOCUS Summer 2014

News from the School of Performance & Cultural Industries



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



Image by Tim Smith

Undergraduate Interns help to mark the build up to July's Grand Départ of the Tour de France with the Ghost Peloton Project

Ghost Peloton marked an ambitious collaboration between NVA and Phoenix Dance Theatre, in partnership with Sustrans. It was one of the headline events of the Yorkshire Festival 2014, which marks the build-up to July's Grand Départ of the Tour De France. The event took place in Waides Yard in central Leeds, and combined live art, dance, film and cycling to create a grand-scale spectacle to transform the urban landscape.

Three students from the School, Anna Turzynski, Eleanor Gribbin and Lois Taviner have undertaken internships with the collaborators in the period leading up to the event, funded by the Cultural and Creative Industries Exchange. These internships have allowed the students to use their skills and represent the University in a professional environment, as well as providing them with an opportunity to assist the organisation of a unique cultural event in Leeds.

"Being involved in the Ghost Peloton project has definitely been the most challenging project I have worked on so far, as it requires a constant collaboration between so many different organisations and artists. As a Marketing Intern at Phoenix Dance Theatre I've gained invaluable experience of the marketing of large public events, including the scale and level of organisation that it requires. In addition to assisting the marketing department with press packs, social media content and publicity material, I have attended meetings with the project's collaborators including Yorkshire Festival and NVA. I'm currently looking forward to assisting in the coordination of the press and media reception on opening night, which isn't far away!"

Eleanor Gribbin

"On my first day as an Intern I watched Angus the creative director speak passionately about the concept behind Ghost Peloton. He spoke to a room full of volunteer cyclists about community not competition, a concept often overlooked during coverage of the Tour de France. I listened to him and realised that I was involved with a beautiful live art event. Ghost Peloton is undoubtedly the largest event I have worked closely on. Being introduced to hundreds of new important people each day and making countless lanyards - there is a huge sense of a greater purpose and the parts that make it up. Witnessing the collaboration between international companies, local people and the city has been incredibly valuable. Big thanks to Nikki and Jodie from NVA for all their support and chats in the rain. In regards to my own creative development, seeing the lights weave across Wadies Yard has transformed a neglected part of Leeds for me into something unforgettable. A transformation which I hope to replicate in the future."

Anna Turzynski

"Ghost Peloton, has been a challenging, creative, and inspiring project. As Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, the experience has enabled me to meet so many new people and get stuck right in to an exciting project that utilises and brings together such diverse talents and ideas, from BMX riders to dancers to sound artists to lighting technicians, the mass of talented creative bodies involved in this project has made it feel an honour to be a part of. This work has challenged me to think outside the box when creating art and theatre and it has encouraged me to get up and try things, and not to be afraid of making theatre that's a little unconventional. Unconventional can be incredibly exciting! That's what my Ghost Peloton has been - exciting!"

Lois Taviner

The Bacchae

Re-imagining the ancient city of Thebes in a modern context, twenty one students have updated The Bacchae to tell a hard-hitting 21st Century story.

This new work with songs is a contemporary adaptation of Euripides' quintessential Greek tragedy. Dionysus, the god of wine and theatre, takes terrible revenge on a city for defying his will, and leads his followers in rebellion against its authoritarian, patriarchal rule. Dionysus brings revolution and freedom – but also blurs the lines between pleasure, intoxication, madness and violence as the social order crumbles.

This adaptation reimagines the chorus of the Bacchae as the centre of this universal story about human obsessions and the pursuit of ecstasy to its gruesome and devastating conclusion.

“He is life's liberating force. He is release of limbs and communion through dance. He is laughter, and music in flutes. He is repose from all cares – he is sleep!

When his blood bursts from the grape and flows across tables laid in his honour to fuse with our blood, he gently, gradually, wraps us in shadows of ivy-cool sleep.”

Euripides, The Bacchae

Images by Patrick Bannon



Subtext and Rain

‘Subtext and Rain’ is a devised contemporary performance by final year students in the School.

The performance interrogates notions of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ in terms of theatrical imagery, language and philosophy in a world where characters only communicate their relationships through metaphor and subtext.

Images by Phil Jones



Collaborative Performance Project Theatre-in-Education

Students on the Leeds City Council strand of the level two Collaborative Performance Project have visited schools delivering a hard-hitting message. Their theatre-in-education plays, aimed at a year nine audience, tackled the theme of road safety, detailing the consequences of drink and drug driving. One group, who visited Brigshaw School in Castleford, delivered five performances and workshops in one day.

Brigshaw Drama Teacher, Kim Buckley, told Module Leader Dr Philip Kiszely, "I am really pleased that we were able to host you again as it is so useful for the students to see a production of such high quality being performed by young people." This is the second time our students have performed at Brigshaw, and now the school has made road safety the central theme of their drama devising sessions. The School of Performance and Cultural Industries look forward to some of the school's pupils visiting next year as the partnership develops.

"Working with Leeds City Council provided a new but exciting challenge, creating a sense of responsibility, not merely as performers but facilitators and mediators of a powerful and important message. I was both shocked and amazed at the bright and perceptive responses from the pupils of Brigshaw High School, who positively engaged with both the performance and following workshop."
Tess Anderson, Year two Collaborative Performance student

Other Schools involved in the project were Horsforth and Prince Henry's Grammar School. The three student theatre-in-education companies performed and workshoped to around 400 pupils.



Sky Academy Arts Scholarship Winner

PhD student, David Shearing, has beaten off stiff nationwide competition to be awarded a £30,000 Sky Academy Arts Scholarship.

Around 1,000 developing artists applied for the Scholarships this year, but only five were successful. David impressed a high profile panel of judges, including the Barbican's Director of Arts, Louise Jeffreys, and the BALTIC Contemporary Art Gallery Director, Godfrey Worsdale, with his proposal for an immersive performance installation exploring the way we, as humans, experience the weather.

The winners were announced by Melvyn Bragg at the South Bank Sky Arts Awards ceremony in London.

David says: "The Scholarship gives me an incredible opportunity to spend time nurturing my practice. The funding will help support a sustained period of development. I make immersive installations that require some of the most valuable elements to any project; time, space and people to help make them happen – this funding, together with the mentorship, will provide this essential mix."

"The next stage is to inform collaborators and the venues who are supporting the project. This offers a brilliant opportunity to be bold and create an inspiring and challenging new piece of theatre – I want to take some risks."

David will begin work immediately on his installation in partnership with stage@leeds.

Below, an image of David's 'And it all comes down to this', which won the award for Best Installation at the World Stage Design (2013) event in Cardiff.



Outstanding Paper Award

The School is delighted to announce that Dr Ben Walmsley has just won an award for Outstanding Paper 2013 in Arts Marketing: An International Journal. The outstanding paper selections form part of the Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence. Emerald runs these awards to acknowledge the excellent contributions made by its authors, editors and reviewers. An outstanding paper should have that special something, something that raises it above all others and which the editor and Editorial Advisory Board can recognize and define. Ben's paper was entitled 'A big part of my life': a qualitative study of the impact of theatre.'



Welcome to new PCI staff



Sarah Short

**Student Education
Service Officer**

External Communications
and Marketing

stage@leeds company premieres 'Poison' at Northern stage

On Thursday 8 May members of the stage@leeds company (Holly Bowman, David Ley, Mathilde Davies, Marcus Marsh and Ben Green) travelled to Northern Stage Theatre in Newcastle to perform the English speaking premiere of 'Poison' by Chinese playwright Wan Fang. The production which was directed by stage@leeds Artistic Director Steve Ansell, and designed by Performance and Cultural Industries Alumni Helen Russell-Brown, was commissioned by the staging China network and performed as part of a two day network event led by Newcastle University focusing on the challenges of working with translated text. 'Poison' playwright Wan Fang travelled from China for the event and described the production as 'outstanding'. After the performance the audience had the opportunity to speak to the cast, director and playwright about the production and the particular challenges of working with translated text.



Berkofsky Arts Award Winners

Congratulations to four students from the School who have been given £2,000 each for the Berkofsky Arts Awards. They were awarded for their applications to create or disseminate artwork that would benefit the development of students' careers in painting, sculpture, drama or music.

Alice Boulton-Breeze and Anna Turzynski, are using their award to devise and produce a new immersive show for their theatre company The52. Premiering on the 24 and 25 of June in stage@leeds. The show invites the audience onto a familiar journey with unfamiliar results.

Samuel Netwon, is travelling to China to make a short film that will depict how the experience of the country affects the friendship of two best friends at a crucial crossroads in their life.

Harriet Callery, plans to use her award for a project in which she will act as a freelance producer for local emerging theatre company, Manic Chord Theatre.

Congratulations and good luck.



Left to right Samuel Newton, Anna Turzynski, Harriet Callery, Alice Boulton-Breeze

Alan Bennett's Yorkshire, West Yorkshire Playhouse

Kara McKechnie, Lecturer in Dramaturgy at the School has been heavily involved in the current Alan Bennett season at the West Yorkshire Playhouse. Material from her 2007 monograph on Bennett's television drama was used as the basis for a workshop she held with the cast of Talking Heads (directed by James Brining), which is set to tour Leeds homes before opening at the Playhouse in late June. Kara also wrote an article 'Humdrum Headingley, Ordinary Armley' on Alan Bennett and Leeds for the programme of Untold Stories, two one-act plays Bennett adapted from his autobiographical writings.

The event 'Alan Bennett and Yorkshire' took place on the set of Bennett's dark comedy 'Enjoy' in the Quarry Theatre on 4 June. Kara's lecture on Bennett's work involving Yorkshire settings and characters was accompanied by excerpts from rarely seen Bennett plays, such as 'Sunset Across the Bay', 'Me, I'm Afraid of Virginia Woolf' and 'Doris and Doreen'. Some of these were performed live by the excellent cast of Enjoy, involving Marlene Sidaway and Philip Martin Brown, all delivering the crucial balance between 'funny' and 'sad' with enormous understanding of Bennett's language and style.