FOCUS

News from the School of Performance and Cultural Industries

Autumn 2011
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Postgraduate Student Celebration

Postgraduate students and staff from PCI recently met to celebrate the end of a successful teaching year. The lunch provided an opportunity for students to talk about their achievements in the Individual Projects and Creative Work modules and to discuss plans for their forthcoming Research Projects. Many students would soon be heading home to destinations spread across the globe. Sharing a celebratory lunch together was a positive way to acknowledge new friendships made and the hard work undertaken by the students who will now move towards completion of their MA study in September 2011. Dr Javier Stanziola is the Postgraduate Taught Tutor for the new academic session. The school currently offers three programmes at MA level, MA Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship, MA Performance, Culture & Context and MA Writing for Performance & Publication. For further details please link to http://www.leeds.ac.uk/pci/postgraduate.html

Othello's Revenge Review

Othello's Revenge, directed by Dr George Rodosthenous was commissioned by the Cyprus Embassy in Berlin and presented in Munich on 15 April 2011 and Munster on 17 April 2011.

This new physical adaptation of Shakespeare's original play, Othello, dealt with jealousy, rivalry between men and the presence/absence of a female in the army barracks. What happens when the promotion is given to a rival? What happens when love turns to jealousy? And what are the destructive forces of dark rage? Several in the cast and technical team were graduates and current students from PCI. The music was composed by PCI alumnus, Dr Demetris Zavros and the dramaturgy was by Dr Duska Radosavljevic (University of Kent).

The piece received excellent reviews and the Münstersche Zeitung said ‘Rarely has Othello been staged in such a dynamic, barbaric and at the same time human way’.

Dr Rodosthenous and theatre historian Dr Eleni Pilla are now co-authoring an article called “‘Love is a con. A construction. And I am an engineer’: De-constructing love and rejection in Rodosthenous’ Othello’s Revenge”.

Read more about ‘Othello’s Revenge’ on the PCI Website under ‘News & Events’.
Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space 2011

Every four years professional designers, performance artists and students of performance design from all over the world come together in the city of Prague to celebrate the many forms of contemporary performance design including the best in performance, lighting, sound, and fashion design. Through art exhibitions, interactive and site-specific installations, workshops, lectures, discussions and performances visitors to PQ can experience performance design (or scenography) as an autonomous discipline that exists between visual art and theatre.

This June, students and staff from all three years of the Performance Design programme in PCI took part in workshops and discussions and saw exhibits and performances from more than 70 countries. The range of work on offer spanned mainstream, commercial work (UK designer Es Devlin talked about designing stage sets for Take That and Lady Gaga) to emergent performance forms which inhabit the spaces between the disciplines of design, installation and performance. (highlights here included Hooman Sharifi’s ‘Impure Company’ where a dancer performs inside a small white room full of fabrics, paper and paints for an audience of two or three and ‘The Telling Orchestra’, an electromechanical theatre using animated objects, light and an evocative soundscape). Dr Joslin McKinney, programme manager for Performance Design, was also invited to do a book-signing for her book, the ‘Cambridge Introduction to Scenography’.

Book examines humanities’ role in society

In research news, Dr Anna Upchurch will co-edit a collection of essays titled Humanities in the Twenty-First Century to be published in 2012 by Palgrave Macmillan. Thirteen authors from the United Kingdom and the United States will discuss how humanities education and research contributes to the wider world. This diverse group of researchers and practitioners will examine topics such as the skills-gap which the humanities addresses, how humanist thinking shapes professional practice in museums and other cultural organisations, and how the humanities contribute solutions to complex challenges in contemporary life. The need for the humanities to respond to the challenges, both practical and ethical, posed by the digital revolution is another major theme the book explores.

The book evolved from the Warwick-Duke Humanities project, organised in 2009 by Dr Upchurch and Dr Eleonora Belfiore at the University of Warwick. That project brought together 42 participants including humanities scholars, scientists, business executives, policymakers, and arts professionals to discuss and debate the role of the arts and humanities in society. The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In November 2010, Dr Upchurch gave a keynote presentation about the project to the Danish Council of Independent Research/Humanities in Copenhagen. Dr Belfiore and Dr Upchurch will co-edit the book, co-author the introduction, and contribute chapters of their own. Palgrave plans to publish the book in both the US and the UK.

Momentary Distractions

Momentary Distractions is the culminating performance of a two year HEIF funded project DownTownDance. The project has been coordinated by Dr Fiona Bannon in PCI working in partnership with Yorkshire Dance. The aim of the project has been to explore the processes and creation of performance works that each respond to the City of Leeds as the starting point. In this final work three independent dance artists, Vanessa Grasse, Daliah Toure and Kathinka Walter were commissioned to create and disseminate a series of new works. The result of this summer long project can be found in Momentary Distractions; An Austrian, a German, an Italian, a red chair, a camera, and a Victorian dress. Three dance artists, each on a different journey, explore their relationship to Leeds through sounds, film and movement, finding correlations between their explorations of the city they now call home. They stood still in public places, picked cherries on Belle Vue Road and left echoes of red wooden chairs in small side streets. This interactive performance installation weaves together snapshots of moments as they journey and invite the audience to rediscover and reconnect with what has become familiar.

For more information about the events please visit; www.yorkshiredance.com/whatson/at-yorkshire-dance or visit the stage@leeds website, www.stage.leeds.ac.uk
My Meksikana Journey by Study Abroad student Michaela Lesayova

Everything started at Heathrow where the airline had oversold my flight to Mexico City. Full of energy and positive expectations, I ignored this little complication and managed to get my flight to the land of tequila at the last minute. My enthusiasm wasn’t shaken by a very Mexican university enrolment either, nor by all the other experiences that accompanied me from the very first moment of my ‘Meksikana’ journey. These included crazy landlords, street dogs and some over-friendly residents of our barrio. After a year I am tougher and know a good batch of Mexican swear words. Do not get me wrong though, Mexico is a very genuine country and my experience there is something that I would never change.

My Study Abroad year took place in Puebla, Mexico’s 5th largest city. Puebla is a 2 hour bus ride from the capital and lies right below Mexico’s most active volcano. I really enjoyed all my classes. I did voluntary community service as one of my modules in the first semester and the second semester was delivered in Spanish only. I got to know a number of very interesting and adoral people.

Mexicans are the warmest people I have ever met and the bonds that we formed are very strong. I dearly miss my Mexican family and their tasty cuisine that they always offered me so kindly! Spending Christmas away from your family is tough, but opening presents on the sunny beach with piña colada in your hand instead of a Christmas punch is not bad either. The possibility of travel to Cuba and Guatemala showed me many new life perspectives too and I have never learnt so much about myself as on my Study Abroad. Wherever you decide to go, I encourage you to take up this opportunity as it comes just once and it is not to be missed!

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Paper Birds most recent work ‘Thirsty’, which was created in conjuction with the stage@leeds PAD programme, has received rave reviews at this year’s Edinburgh Fringe festival and recently featured on the BBC Newsnight: The Review Show. In addition to rehearsing and devising at stage@leeds the productions deft and clever set designed by Fiammetta Horvat was constructed with considerable skill by PCI technical staff member Ian Lindley.

Paper Birds will be performing ‘Thirsty’ at stage@leeds Stage One Theatre on Monday 27th Feb. Tickets are available on line or from the theatre box office.

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stage@leeds is committed to providing a resource and environment for emerging and established professional contemporary performance practitioners. Over the last year we have worked with a number of artists including Balbir Singh dance company, Gary Clark, Douglas Thorp and Paper Birds Theatre Company as part of the stage@leeds PAD (professional Artists Development) programme. PAD provides artists with rehearsal space, technical support and a welcoming creative working environment. In return the artists we work with present the created work as part of the stage@leeds performance season and provide our students with talks and feedback sessions.

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October
Wingbeats
Flight Paths
Sat 1 Oct
3.00pm & 7.30pm
Mother Libation
Mon Oct 3
7.30pm
Light Night 2011
George Rodosthenous
Othello’s Revenge
Fri Oct 7
9.00pm
David Shearing
If Anyone wonders why rocks breakdown
Fri Oct 7
5 - 9pm

Yorkshire Dance & PCI
Momentary Distractions
Sat 15 October
7.30pm
LUU Theatre Group
Festen
22, 24-26 Oct
7.30pm
Gary Clarke’s
Menage a Trois
Fri 28 Oct
7.30pm

November
Dugout Theatre Company
The Birthday Party
02 - 5 Nov
7.30pm

LUU Theatre Group
The Snow Queen
09-12 Nov
7.30pm
Indra Theatre
Albert and Equiano
17 - 18 Nov
7.30pm
PCI Production
The Seagull
23-26 Nov
7:30pm
LUU Open Theatre Society
Pretty When Drunk
30 Nov
7.30pm

December
LUU Open Theatre Society
Pretty When Drunk
01-03 Dec
7.30pm
PCI Production
All About Eve
07-10 Dec
7.30pm

Find out more about the latest productions here
www.stage.leeds.ac.uk

£ Concessions available. For all ticket information contact the Box Office on 0113 343 8730

Theatre at the heart of the Campus / Find out more at www.stage.leeds.ac.uk