



FOCUS Spring 2015

**News from the
School of Performance
and Cultural Industries**



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Dr Joslin McKinney appointed for international jury at Prague Quadrennial 2015

Dr Joslin McKinney, Associate Professor in Scenography in the School, has been appointed as one of the team of international judges at the Prague Quadrennial (PQ2015). The event is the most important event in the scenography calendar and will be held in Prague in the Czech Republic 18 -28 June 2015. Staged every four years it is a major festival of performance and international exhibition of scenography and architecture. Joslin McKinney's appointment as the key theoretician on this panel represents a major recognition of her international standing in the subject.

The Prague Quadrennial (PQ) of Performance Design and Space is the world's largest exhibition in the field of scenography and theatre architecture. The first PQ took place in 1967, and since then every four years it welcomes representatives from more than 70 countries around the world to Prague. PQ explores a wide range of scenographic practices – from stage design and costume design to lighting design, sound design and new scenographic practices such as site-specific, applied scenography, urban performance, costume as performance, and much more.

As part of the PQ programme, Scott Palmer, Lecturer in Scenography from the School will be convening an International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) research symposium to discuss the idea of scenography as a 'shared space' and David Shearing, a PhD student in PCI is running a scenography workshop on immersive performance. Several PCI undergraduates and PhD students will also be attending.

Image; set and lighting design for Feast, an interactive performance around celebrations and food. Photography by Phil Jones

Berkofsky arts award winners

Congratulations to two final year undergraduates, Imogen Nield (left) and Molly Sharpe (right), who have been awarded a £2,000 Berkofsky Arts Award. They were awarded for their application to create or disseminate artwork that would benefit the development of students' careers in painting, sculpture, drama or music.

During their studies on the BA Theatre and Performance programme Imogen and Molly founded Naked Flame Theatre in June 2014.

They are currently experimenting with ways to create embodied audience response through sensory performance elements, media and complex scenography. They are interested in creating intimate relationships between the audience and the work, making each audience member the protagonist in their own experience and creating an environment for sentient human interaction.

"This is a really exciting stage for Naked Flame and we'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone at PCI for all your advice and support."

"We plan to use the funding awarded to us to create an immersive performance piece, a break away from our usual style and a challenge, as practitioners. The event will combine scientific thought and personal stories to explore the effects of anxiety on the brain and body." Imogen and Molly

The event will take place over an entire day in stage@leeds on 3rd June this year.



Indian Theatre Practitioner comes to Leeds

The School recently had the pleasure of welcoming Kaustubh Bankapure, founder director of theatre company, Theatre Resource. Kaustubh is a trained applied theatre practitioner with more than eight years experience of working and teaching in the field. Kaustubh ran a participatory workshop for students to give them a flavour of his unique applied theatre practice.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for our students to work with an international applied theatre practitioner who is working in a completely different cultural context to our own. It was a great chance to see applied work in practice and to interrogate how it resonates with work in the UK" Dr Alice O'Grady, Associate Professor in Applied Performance

Theatre Resource based in Pune, (India) is a proprietary organisation which was founded with the aim of developing the human resource with difference. The company 'believe in developing the human resource, not through teaching, but through a realisation of experiences and actions'.



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Get involved

Did you know that we are always looking for student contributors for the School's newsletter? This might include; reviewing performances, articles about extra curricular activities you have been involved in, news about any awards or prizes you have received. Articles should be 150-300 words and include an image if possible. Send your news to pcumark@leeds.ac.uk subject 'Focus'

“Really enjoyed The Dreaming 2015 at stage@leeds tonight. Congrats to the talented team on a (literally) enthralling show.” *Audience member*

Final year performances

Final year students impress their audiences by producing fantastic collaborative devised performance pieces

The Dreaming

The Dreaming was an immersive, one-on-one performance developed from Peer Gynt (1867) where the audience members undertook an individual journey that was analogous to Ibsen's eponymous anti-hero. Asking us to reflect on ourselves and our everyday experiences, The Dreaming aimed to explore what good a little “head in the clouds” might offer us?

The Dreaming (like Peer Gynt), presented a labyrinth which was filled with individual audience and performer interactions. Ibsen's protagonist Peer, spends his life searching; trying to find the purpose of his journey; “forwards or backwards, it's equally far”, looking for himself but not seeing himself. We wanted to create an antidote to the modern ‘heads down’ culture through creating scenographic spaces for our audience to look up from the screen and interact with other human bodies; to take a moment to dream, to contemplate and to wonder.

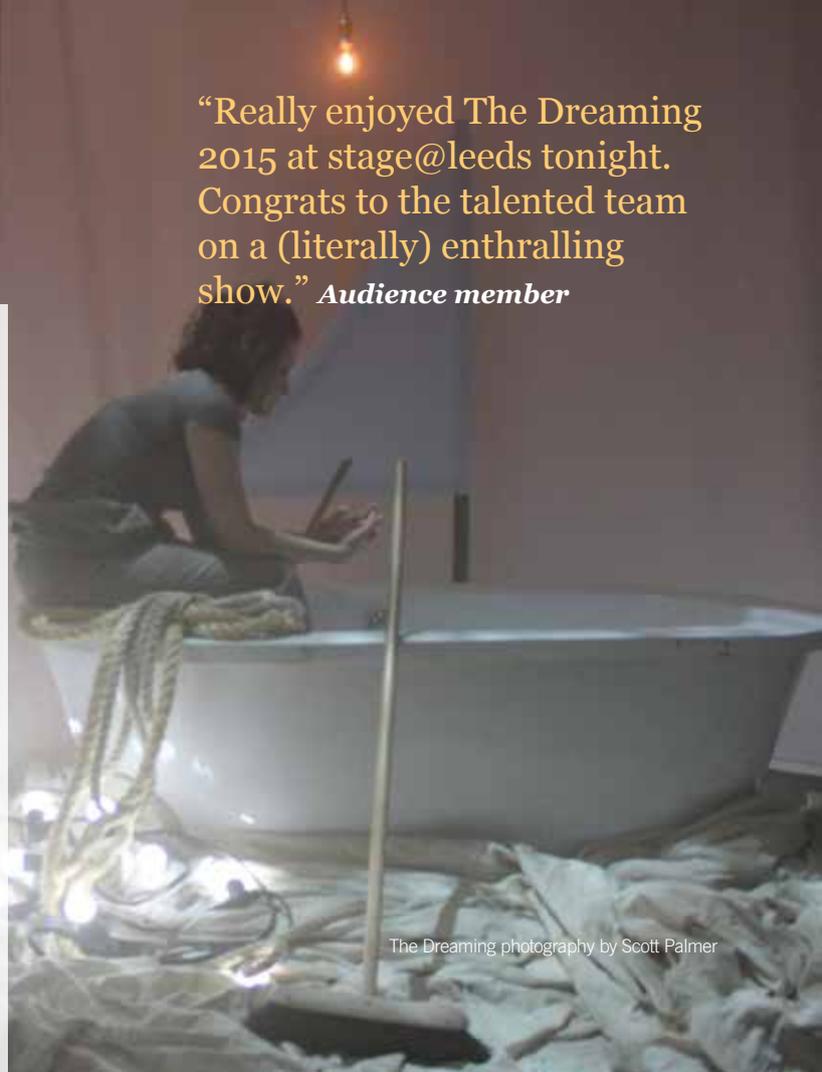
The Dreaming follows a long tradition of design-led, “immersive” performance work created by students at all levels of study within the School.

M/Lights

A collision of Gertrude Stein's 'Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights' and Fritz Lang's first talking movie 'M', inspired by the Wooster Group's 'House/Lights', this production explored the dark edge of human psychology.

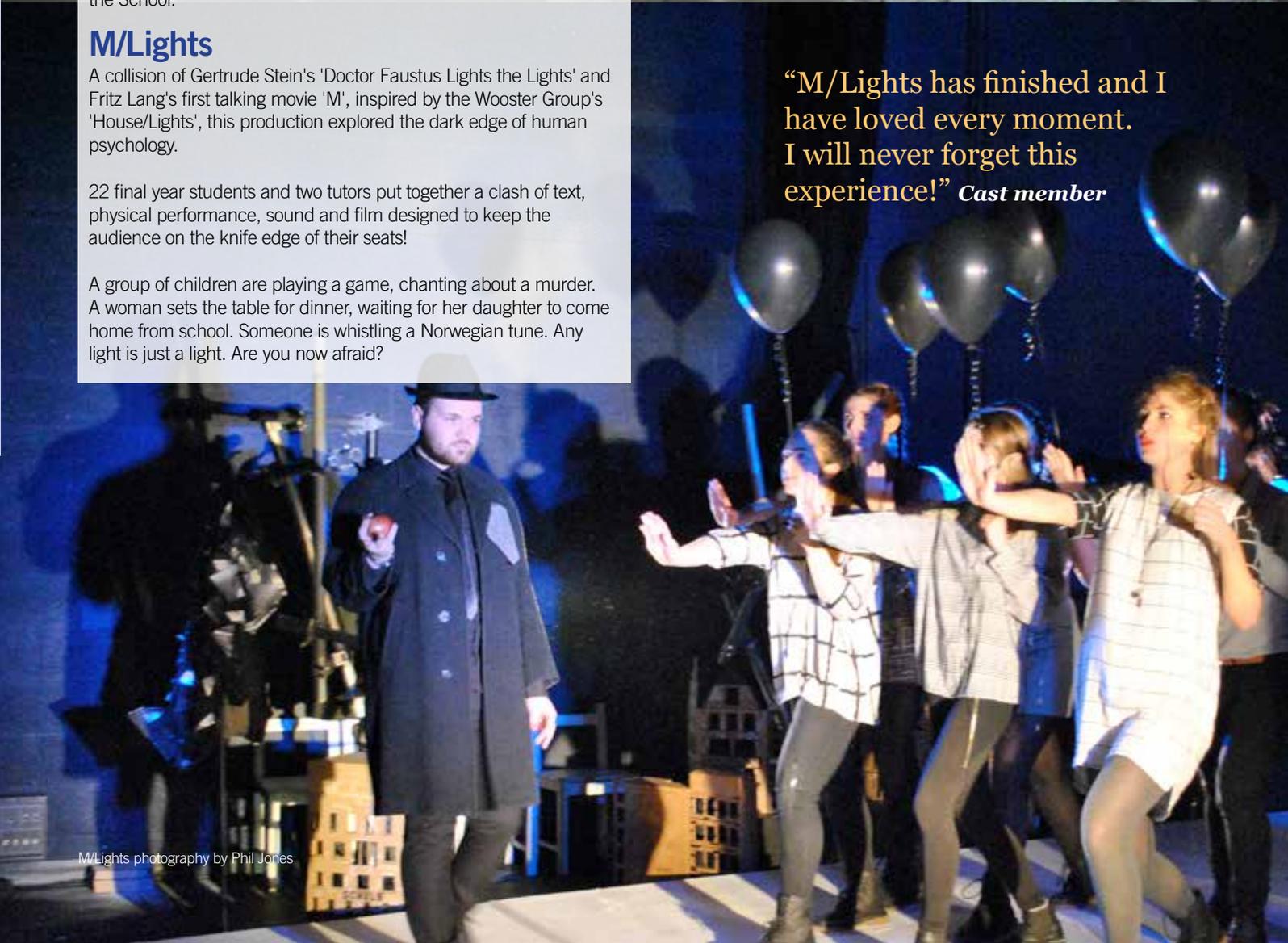
22 final year students and two tutors put together a clash of text, physical performance, sound and film designed to keep the audience on the knife edge of their seats!

A group of children are playing a game, chanting about a murder. A woman sets the table for dinner, waiting for her daughter to come home from school. Someone is whistling a Norwegian tune. Any light is just a light. Are you now afraid?



The Dreaming photography by Scott Palmer

“M/Lights has finished and I have loved every moment. I will never forget this experience!” *Cast member*



M/Lights photography by Phil Jones

Where are our graduates now.... An interview with PCI graduate Grace Savage

Tell us a bit about yourself

I graduated from The University of Leeds in 2010 where I studied BA Theatre and Performance. Since graduating I have become a professional beatboxer, actress, singer and occasional workshop leader. My background in performance has always been rooted in theatre. I started performing and taking acting classes around 8 years old. When I was at Leeds, I eventually plucked up the courage to start performing my first solo gigs. After I graduated I ended up doing a lot of work in theatre as a beatboxer and started to teach workshops in schools as well. I was around 23 when I started singing; I was spotted by a producer during a talent contest and she invited me to the studio the following week, we wrote a song and have been working together ever since, with over thirty songs written we are working toward releasing my debut Album. My career now consists of a healthy mix of music and theatre often with the two overlapping and complimenting each other. I have such a passion and love for both and am very lucky that I get to create and perform for a living.

What are your fondest memories of your time at Leeds?

In a list...because I love a list...

- Travelling to South Korea with The University to study Korean Culture
- Falling in love for the first time
- Writing and staging my first ever play (an adaptation of Hitchcock's 'Rope')
- Performing my solo beatbox set for the first time ever at a local open mic night
- Creating and performing in our final third year production of 'Magic and Impossibility'

What is your biggest achievement in your career so far?

Completing a UK tour of my one woman show 'BLIND' was a real test in my stamina as a performer and one of the most rewarding and wonderful experiences of my career so far.

Being named one of the Guardian's "Top ten standout Theatrical Performances" of 2015 for my role as Jade in 'Home' at The National Theatre was also a massive highlight.

Becoming a UK Beatbox Champion Two years running has been quite a significant achievement.

How do you think your degree has helped you in your career? In particular, what skills did you learn and how do you use these in your job?

The skills and life experience that I gained during the degree were invaluable. I look back on my time in Leeds now and see that it was an incredible opportunity to network with other creative people, experiment with ideas, hone my skills and decide who and what I wanted to be doing with my life. I wrote my first play, I taught my first workshop, I directed a company of thirty students in our first year...the confidence I gained and the leadership and collaborative skills I learnt from those projects has certainly been used in every project I have been involved in since I graduated.



Finally, what advice would you give to students currently studying on the BA Theatre and Performance degree programme?

Graduating can be quite a daunting thing so start building networks now, start testing creative ideas now, start forming companies now. Don't be afraid of failure – now is the time to embrace it. If there is no work for you when you graduate then create your own work. I was unemployed for about three months after I graduated so during that time I called my friend and we decided to make our own show. Most importantly - be nice to everyone you work with; every tekky you meet, every performer you collaborate with, every audience member you talk to after a show - it's really important. No one likes to work with an ego and the majority of directors and writers I know would rather cast/employ a nice person with a hard working attitude over a 'talented' individual who is difficult to work with.

Don't compare yourself to other people. Give the world what you have to offer, even if you feel it's not your best work, because "there is only one of you in all time. This expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost. The world will not have it" (Martha Graham quote) ...and that's not fair...because you are brilliant!

To read the full interview with Grace Savage visit www.leeds.ac.uk/pci