



stage@leeds

So far this year we have already had successful PCI productions of *The Mnemonist* and *Hippolytus*, LUU productions, including *Dracula*, and a variety of professional work. We are looking forward to *Pandora's Box* (18th -21st March), *Of Sheer Presence* (29th April – 2nd May) and *Pogo - A Punk's Progress* (13th -16th May) and *New Stages 09* (6th -7th March), a two-day celebration of creative work by postgraduate students which includes; a programme of new work, activities, workshops and keynote speeches from leading cultural



industries experts.

Rebecca Watts has decided to return to the RSC, and we welcome Steve Ansell as our new Theatre and Production Manager. We are sure he will enjoy working with the wide range of students who visit the theatre as audience members, as well as those who work in the theatre; as Box Office, Front of House, technical staff,

Welcome to the first edition of our PCI newsletter! We intend to produce regular issues through the academic year. The aim is to keep students up to date with new developments in the School which affect their learning and their overall student experience and the achievements of students and staff. Staff in the School work hard to ensure that the experience our students have is rich, engaging and rewarding and we are using this first edition to focus on some of the key initiatives and achievements. We anticipate that future editions will also include focus on student successes and also reflect the work of the Student Representatives and the business of the Staff Student Forum.

Student Surveys – we value your comments!

The National Student Survey, now entering its fifth year, is a census of students in their final year in institutions across the UK. Level 3 students are asked to reflect on their experience and give feedback on a number of areas including; the quality of teaching and assessment and feedback and their overall satisfaction. The data is available on the unistats website: (<http://www.unistats.com/>) so that prospective students and their advisors can use the results to help make informed choices of where and what to study. **But it is also extremely valuable to the staff of PCI to help us enhance the student learning experience.** The University of Leeds also runs its own annual Programme Surveys for students and L1 and L2 and for postgraduates. The information we can glean from all these programme-level surveys complements the information we get through other means (Module Reviews; feedback in classes; and through the Student Reps. and discussions at Staff Student Forum). We use the information to help plan and develop the programmes for future students and enhance the reputation of the School in general. **We want to encourage maximum participation from PCI in the NSS and the University's own Programme Surveys.** The NSS will be open for L3 undergraduates from Monday 9th February until Easter. The Programme Surveys for L1 and L2 undergraduates run End April until Mid June and PGT run Mid Jun until 1st September.

Teaching excellence rewarded

Alice Bayliss has been recently made a University Teaching Fellow. This is in recognition of her excellent work in Applied Performance which allows PCI students to engage with performance in a wide range of contexts and settings including schools, hospitals, prisons and community centres. Alice joins two other PCI staff that already hold awards for their teaching excellence and innovation; Peter Collis, who is working in the field of Deming management and its impact on graduate work and Professor Mick Wallis, who is a National Teaching Fellow. Mick is using his award to develop courses for independent artists delivering participatory arts experience to people with severe access needs. Alice Bayliss said: 'My UTFS award is going to enable me to concentrate on formalising arrangements with external partners and will allow for greater consistency between student projects occurring year on year'.

New Modules

We have been busy developing new modules for the coming academic year. These new modules have been designed in response to students' requests for more choice and also in order to make the most of staff expertise. The new modules are: 'Actor Training Regimes' a L2 option for T&P students, 'Cultural flashpoints in theatre, film and popular music', a L2 elective open to all PCI students. Also for next year, a new 40 credit 'Enterprise Project' option for L3 students has been approved. Briefing sessions on options for L2 and L3 undergraduates will be arranged before Easter so that students can make informed choices for the



Shadow work on the Performance Design level one module 'Elements of Scenography'

The switch to Blackboard

A major development over the last 6 months has been the move from the Nathan Bodington virtual learning environment to Blackboard. Early reports from the student user group have been very positive about the new VLE. First years have found it a big help in settling into University life. One said 'The VLE is fantastic! It is organised and easy to use and has helped me no end since starting at the University of Leeds.' And L2 and L3 students have greeted the switch from Nathan Bodington to the new VLE, appreciating the personalised nature of the interface, the easy navigation and the additional features. Tutors have also been pleased by how easily students have adapted to a new electronic submission system. Jon Brazil, the tutor with responsibility for e-learning, will continue to work with the student user group through the year, and is always interested to hear suggestions

and in other roles. Having a Box Office team is new this year, and has already made a massive difference to the friendliness of our welcome. We are currently exploring the idea of having a Theatre reception point, which will increase this even further.

The theatre is a vital part of the work of both PCI and of the university. It's a place for students to perform, to watch professional shows, often linked to research and learning opportunities and initiatives, and to be part of a thriving network of discussions about performance in a variety of contexts. We always welcome student feedback, with Steve



and Rob Pashley always happy to chat to students about their ideas.

Level two T&P module using interactive performance across the Campus to engage students in reflecting on leaving home and starting University

Space booking

Since the appointment of an evening porter, students have been able to book additional spaces in Man Made Fibres up until 9.30 at night (Mon-Fri).

There has been an excellent take-up and good use is being made of the rooms outside taught sessions. There are still some concerns about rooms being booked and then not used and also incidents of rooms being left untidy, but generally very responsible use is being made of the facilities.

following year's study. Meanwhile a new L2 elective 'Theatre, Technology and Performance' started this semester.

Assessment and Feedback

Over the last three years the School has been working to ensure that assessment, marking arrangements are clearly understood and that feedback to students is timely and helpful. We have developed common sets of criteria which all staff use and which are available to students from the start of each module. To go with this, we also use common forms of feedback sheets which refer to each of the criteria and give further comments and suggestion for improvement. We can see from the student surveys this initiative has been effective. This initiative has been extremely effective already. We are continuing to work at getting feedback out to students promptly. This year, staff have been asked to keep students informed of unavoidable delays in return of marks.

MARK Project

As part of our on-going commitment to developing practice in assessment and feedback, the School is involved in a research project: Making Assessment Relationships Known (MARK). Participation will help us enhance the effectiveness and transparency of assessment practice for both staff and students. Some of you may have already been part of the student focus group and all of you will soon be invited to take part in a questionnaire. We will report on the implications in the next issue. In the meantime, if you have any comments or suggestions about developing assessment procedures in the School, please pass them on to your Student Representative or email Joslin McKinney, Director of Learning and Teaching, PCI: j.e.mckinney@leeds.ac.uk

RAE success

The School is celebrating its success in the national Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008. PCI staff submitted a range of research outputs to the RAE, including books, performances, journal articles, workshops, and chapters. These were graded by a panel of experts, who found a noteworthy proportion of the work to be world-leading or internationally excellent.

How does staff research benefit students?

The high standard of our research activity benefits PCI students as it feeds directly into learning and teaching. Students are taught by staff whose work is at the very forefront of their discipline, gaining access to international knowledge developments as they occur. Modules at all levels draw directly on case studies from staff projects to provide students with in depth knowledge and practical experience of up-to-the-minute research activity. In addition, there are opportunities for students to become involved in staff research as co-researchers, documentors, and workshop participants, contributing creative and conceptual ideas. Recently students have danced with a 4-metre robotic limb to investigate how performance knowledge can inform robot design. Others have worked with digital projections to explore the role of the operator as performer in workshops with Lloyd Newson and DV8 Physical Theatre. Design students have co-created performances examining how audience members 'read' scenographic elements. PCI students are valuable assets to the School's research environment, and in turn they gain access to a wide range of experiences, skills and knowledge.



Photo: Student dancer working with a prototype limb for Spidercrab - envisaged as a cross between an architectural environment and a dance partner (Emergent Objects research project, principal investigator – Mick Wallis)
www.emergentobjects.co.uk

from the student point-of-view about how the facility might be made even more effective. If you have any comments, please e-mail Jon: j.brazil@leeds.ac.uk



Level three collaborative production of 'Hippolytus'

Staff Student Forum

This academic year, we have taken steps to further develop the Staff student Forum. Last year we established the value of being able to work with student reps as we identify and address issues, for example personal tutoring and communication in the school.

This year, we have more reps per course and at the first meeting (Nov. 10th 2008) we looked at key issues arising from the data from the Student surveys and the ways to address these in the School's Action Plan. We have also set up an area on the VLE for this forum so that all students have access to the minutes of the meeting.

It is hoped that this newsletter will also become a useful way to focus discussion and keep staff and students in the School informed about the work of the Forum.

Subsequent meetings will be on Mon February 4 -5pm, in Man Made Fibres G11a and Mon 27th April 4 -5pm, in Man Made Fibres G11a.

Staff and Student reps of all programmes form the core of this Forum, but any members of student or staff body are welcome.

If you have comments about the newsletter or ideas for items in future newsletters, please forward them to your student reps.