Our current Level 2 Theatre and Performance students have spent the semester working on Theatre in Education projects aimed at Key Stage One and Key Stage Two primary school children. As part of their module students have created their own Theatre in Education companies and devised a programme of participatory performance that will be delivered in local schools before Christmas. Each group has developed a company mission statement that sets out their values and details their approaches to using theatre and performance as a way of creating dynamic and interactive learning opportunities within the school curriculum. This year topics include working around the broad theme of light and dark for Key Stage One and a history project focussing on the life of Victorian children for Key Stage Two. The project allows students to work with local teachers and professional Theatre in Education companies such as the Blah Blah Blahs who are coming to present their latest show “Hide and Seek” to help students with the development of their own practice.

This project has brought a real feeling of excitement into the class. It’s allowed us all to build on our own individual strengths. Some of us have been fortunate enough to work with a variety of different people in the community and have done TIE performances before and it’s these experiences that have allowed us to create powerful pieces to share with the schools. We have really delved into the subject of TIE, exploring different aspects of the subject and for me personally it’s made me want to explore further career opportunities within this field.

Zuhal Cetinkaya
Theatre & Performance Level2
Questions regarding the role, value and impact of the arts are more important than ever at a time when arts funding is being squeezed at unprecedented levels. We live in an era of reduced public spending and ‘evidence-based’ policymaking, where governments are increasing the pressure to justify any public investment against tangible evidence of returns. This approach raises particular challenges for artists and arts organizations, who struggle to quantify the value of intangible benefits such as happiness, spirituality, escapism, wellbeing and solace. My research argues for a wider conception of ‘evidence’ so that policymakers can start to recognize the softer benefits of public investment and accept that public value cannot always be expressed in quantitative or monetary terms. In the School of Performance & Cultural Industries, students explore the value and impact of the arts at all levels and across all of our programmes. For example, in Cultures of Performance, Level 1 students explore the changing role of the audience; in Arts Marketing, 2nd year students study why audiences choose to engage with the arts and what this means for managers; and in our MA in Culture, Creativity & Entrepreneurship, we deconstruct and critically investigate the history of thinking regarding cultural value, tracing its development from Plato and Aristotle to the present day.

Dr Ben Walmsley
Personal Tutoring: A student’s Perspective

The School of Performance & Cultural Industries is quite a small, close-knit school in comparison to many others at Leeds, which is reflected in the personal tutoring system in that each tutor has a small number of tutees so can offer more time and a more personalised approach to each of them. It is a flexible aspect of the school in that students can call upon their personal tutors as much or as little as they choose and in my experience, personal tutors have always provided honest and well-balanced advice when queries or obstacles have arisen. The three years which PCI students spend on their undergraduate courses are mapped out in personal tutorials which results in a well-informed and individualised reference being provided for the start of tutees’ careers post-graduation.

Luci Fish Level 3
Theatre & Performance

“We are the 99%, and we are …?”

If 1% of the population truly controls 40% of the wealth and power, then this new work was theatre made for the rest of us. Performed over 99 minutes in Stage@ Leeds between 21 and 24 November, The 99% was a third year Performance Project piece that explored the most burning questions of the day through movement, music and multimedia performance - including a panoramic, 16-metre wide screen served by three projectors. Combining verbatim accounts from the Occupy Wall Street movement to the Arab Spring with original material, the company asked who we are when we act or think together rather than alone. It took us on a sideways journey between the madness of crowds and the wisdom of crowds: from mass hysteria, financial crises, tulip manias, panic and protests, to flash mobs, crowd-sourcing, social networks and zombie apocalypses. In other words, everything that can happen when I becomes We …

Supervising tutors: Dr Tony Gardner and Alison Andrews
Students from the Schools of Performance & Cultural Industries, East Asian Studies and English have been working with director and Visiting Research Fellow David Jiang to create an original performance drawn from the female characters of four plays by the canonical Chinese playwright Cao Yu. In 2012 the production toured to the Edinburgh fringe in August and then to China in November. Steve Ansell, stage@leeds’ Theatre and Production Manager, talks about this exciting experience:

On our first morning in China, we walked to the theatre where we would open the Shanghai International Contemporary Theatre Festival. My Chinese vocabulary stretches as far as ‘how are you’ and ‘thank you’, but once inside the venue it became obvious that the language of theatre extends far beyond the spoken word (a truth I would be reminded of many times during this trip). The sell-out opening night was a great success. We performed three times in Shanghai, and the final production was preceded by a formal reception for the cast, crew and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds.

An early start and a six-hour train journey took us to Qianjiang in Hubei province. Qianjiang is the ancestral home of Cao Yu. The company was greeted as official guests and visited Cao Yu’s tomb where flowers were laid on behalf of stage@leedstouring and the University of Leeds. Our performance took place in front of an audience of over 1,000 students. At the end of the show the audience rushed towards the stage to take photos and get autographs. The effect was more like a rock concert than a theatre performance, but it was very clear that cultural barriers were not an issue and our similarities were greater than our differences. We performed to our biggest audience in Chengdu, with 1,000 seated and a further 400 standing. They were less vocal than in Qianjiang, but no less excited. We had little time in Chengdu but we were able to visit the Panda breeding centre and see the newborn baby pandas. Once again this was made possible by the kindness and hospitality of our hosts, whose graciousness marked our entire stay in China.

In all three cities our company hosted workshops for Chinese students. These proved very popular, and in Chengdu the workshop was so oversubscribed that we had to have an audience. Once again it seemed that the language of performance is far more dynamic, subtle and universal than the spoken word alone. One of the aims of the project was to create a cultural bridge but it turned out the bridge was already built and we just needed to cross it. As I look back at twelve extraordinary days, it’s the power of theatre that looms largest in my mind – oh, and my newfound love of chrysanthemum tea!

Steve Ansell, Theatre & Production Manager, stage@leeds