New Stages 2013

Across two days in March, stage@leeds in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries hosted another successful New Stages Festival. Now in its 6th year, the postgraduate event showcased 12 original pieces of work ranging from drama and comedy plays, devised performances, poetry, music, film, dance, interactive installations... and a scavenger hunt.

New Stages is a fresh, diverse and student-led festival. It allows for those involved to collaborate with actors, directors, artists and technical teams to realise their creative ideas on to the stage.

On the first day New Stages opened with:  

*The Re-Ality of Facebook* by Holly Beswick, Christina Snowden and Michael Cunningham. This durational instillation invited audiences into an interactive Facebook page.

*Life You Don’t Know* written and performed by Hansol Kim and 5AM choreographed and performed by Dahee Lee made up our Korean double bill. Hansol Kim’s 15 minute radio play tackled discrimination in Leeds. Dahee Lee’s contemporary Korean dance highlighted the plight of housewives often isolated and marginalised.

*Dij Daakes’ Part A Di Night* written by Zodwa Nyoni was a stage play about a family that is forced to deal with the care of a disabled sibling when the matriarch suddenly dies. Paul Zulu of Roots Ltd, a team of African Caribbean people with learning disabilities, gave an inspiring performance as ‘Dwight’.

*Porters* written by Sam Hudson drew the audience into the comedic world of
New Stages
A celebration of Post-graduate work

The Life Lottery written by Sean Corrigan saw Rich recount his past in a sequence of numbers all related to a significant memory. Just as Rich is about to let go of his past and the numbers, they turn out to be the winning lottery numbers.

Watch Me Vanish devised and performed by Samantha Milligan and Megan Naylor invited a limited audience into the mind of Verity Taylor. This intriguing performance explored the depression and the conflict of personalities.

As evidenced in the list above New Stages offered a wide variety of performances. I’d like to encourage future postgraduate students to take part in this festival and to carry the success of 2013 onwards.

A big thank you to all those involved and we hope to see new audiences and new pieces of work in 2014.

Sarah Little, a student on MA Performance, Culture and Context, chose to take the Cultural Policy option this year and she has found it to be a very valuable experience.

She has just accepted the offer of a full-time job as a Researcher for a branding and cultural insight company based in Leeds and London, and she is certain that her experiences on the Cultural Policy module were critical to her success. She is thrilled to be starting work with the agency on 1st September 2013, before she even graduates from her Masters degree! She was attracted to the Cultural Policy module because of the chance to build her research skills. She believes that it is essential for performers and artists to be acquainted with policy basics.

Inter/intra-cultural Scenography

Dr Joslin McKinney travelled to Shanghai Theatre Academy at the end of March for a meeting of international practitioners and researchers in performance design. Speakers from Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, New Zealand, Mexico and China presented work related to the theme of inter and intra cultural contexts for stage design. Speakers from China included Liu Xinglin, winner of the World Stage Design award for set design in 2009, who showed how traditional Chinese principles of art and design are incorporated into his contemporary designs. Joslin’s presentation used examples of international scenic spectacle (Cirque du Soleil and Royal de Luxe) to discuss embodied responses to scenography.
On March 6th 2013 the University of Leeds’ Education Outreach Department collaborated with third year students from the School for Performance and Cultural Industries.

The cast of *Antigone* (third year Performance Project 8-11 May 2013) facilitated a workshop on adapting Greek text for contemporary audiences. Schools from across the region were invited to attend both a practical workshop delivered by the School of Performance and Cultural Industries staff and students and a series of lectures delivered by the Classics Department.

The workshop took place in the Centenary Gallery in the Parkinson Building and involved 16 AS and A-Level students. Dr George Rodosthenous welcomed the students and introduced the Study Day. He led exercises on characterisation and non-verbal communication based on Laban movement techniques. Students from the cast led exercises on identifying and portraying key themes, building and defining characters using improvisation as a tool to develop text.

The young people were also given the opportunity to see the cast rehearsing the opening of the show. This enabled them to explore the relationship between director and actor and to see different methods of bringing a text to life.

The workshop finished with an informal Q&A with the cast where the young people and their teachers asked about the process gone through to adapt a Greek text and enquired more generally about the School of Performance and Cultural Industries.

The day was a great success receiving high praise from the university organisers, teachers and students. The students learnt exercises which they could use in their A-Level studies and discovered the potential for higher education at the University of Leeds!

By Rosie Pollock
BA Theatre & Performance

Since graduating from the Performance Design course at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries in July 2012, I have worked as a designer and collaborator on various projects including community theatre, live art, site specific and black box theatre.

My first paid, professional job was as costume designer on Parrabbola’s community adaptation of *The Winter’s Tale*, which was devised and performed in both Ostrava, Czech Republic and Gdansk, Poland over a period of around 3 months. Upon returning to the UK I acted as designer/collaborator for Northern Creative’s *Museum of Terrifying Examples*: a piece of R&D at Theatre in the Mill, Bradford, which developed to merge live art, installation and performance. Following this, I worked as costume designer on Slung Low & Chol Theatre’s Northern Big Board, a site specific event at Shipley swimming pool, West Yorkshire.

Most recently I was employed by ALRA North as set and costume designer for *The Good Person of Sichuan*, performed at The Mill at the Pier. Since completing this project, I have become resident designer for ALRA North and plan to design for them for the foreseeable future. In between performances I have also set up a wardrobe and props store independent of the one currently used at ALRA’s London based theatre.

I love working as a theatre designer - every working day is different, and I’m lucky enough to see my own ideas transformed into reality. Although working in this environment involves long hours, extremely hard work and is often very stressful, I can’t imagine myself doing anything else.

Alumni Profile

Lucy Archbould
BA Hons Performance Design

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Architects of the Invisible

Review by Ronnie Kuriakose
MA Writing for Performance & Publication

Architects of the Invisible was a journey of chance, devised and performed by final year undergraduate students in stage@leeds on 24-27 April 2013. The play began with an uninvited silence. We sat there for a while, peering at the long line of the 17 member cast, expecting them to perform. Apparently, they had similar expectations of us. It was obvious then that this was comedy, and comedy as a genre never fails to entertain.

It was only after a quick bombardment of stats, regarding some of the unusual ways to die, that the play really took off. A well-rehearsed series of phases followed depicting the mediocre routines of a familiar morning, tempting the audience to just lean back and relax. However, we were soon pulled back to the edge of our seats with the chaotic intervention of overlapping monologues. The cast made a spectacular, almost fluent, transition of a methodical to disarrayed performance.

Despite the cast’s repeated attempts at testing the audiences’ intelligence with a mock ending, not one of us budged, and the play’s serious tone slowly disappeared. The cast and crew of ‘Architects of the Invisible’ took a chance here, leading the audience astray and then bringing us back in to an explosion of creative irony; it paid off ten-fold.

The set was interestingly elegant yet simple enough to be transformed to fit the verve of the play. Collectively, the cast and crew deserve praise for their light-hearted, entertaining and dynamic performance. Personally, I would give them a standing ovation.