



Arts and Humanities Research Council:

Beyond Text Workshop Programme

**The performance of disability histories: remembrance
and transmission**

September 2008 – August 2009

**WORKSHOP SERIES
KEY DELEGATE PACK**

This pack will include:

- 1. Introduction letter**
- 2. Life Story Snapshots**
- 3. Agenda for London workshop with times, address etc**
- 4. Map and directions of London Metropolitan University**
- 5. Profiles of Key Speakers, Theatre Workshop Leaders & Documenting Artists**
- 6. Future workshops**

Dear Key participant

Thank you for accepting the invitation to be a key participant in the exciting new seminar/ workshop series, *The Performance of Disability Histories*, recently funded under the Arts & Humanities Research Council's Beyond Text Programme. You have been invited because we believe that your involvement (as an arts practitioner, academic or student) will make a significant contribution to the development and success of the workshop programme.

This project was born out of a larger project, 'Time of our Lives' involving a collection of life stories of disabled people born in the 1940s, 1960s and 1980s. The aim of the workshop programme is to inspire academic-practitioner collaboration towards the transmission of disabled people's history to today's young audiences, using devised performance based on biographical research.

The programme will bring together academics [from different disciplines], performing arts practitioners [actors, choreographers, writers, dancers etc], and students/trainees in three themed events to explore issues around life stories, disability history and culture through the relationship between performance and text.

The objective of the whole series is to generate ideas, through the innovative collaborations, that can be used to create a larger-scale devised performance aimed at new generation audiences.

All three workshops will be documented, for the project and AHRC website, by either video, still photography or audio recording. If you have any objection to being recorded on any of these media, please let me know by e-mail.

Best wishes,

Sonali Shah
Principle Investigator
e-mail: s.l.shah@leeds.ac.uk
Tel: 07932 642960

LIFE HISTORY SNAPSHOTS

I mean, obviously my disability was noticeable, so you'd get kids calling you names, you know, but once they realised that, you know, that you would join in football and everything else, like anybody else, I think nobody then bothered at all. (Dan, 1940/50s)

'It wasn't constant, it wasn't really malicious either. It was just somebody needed a target and I was the easiest one, so, I don't know. It was, it was traumatic at the time' (Steve, 1980/ 90.)

The education of disabled children going up to the 1960s was actually controlled by the health service and not by education, so they had quite a large say in where disabled children went, and they felt it was best to send me away to a special school, for my mum and for me (Bob, 1950s)

I got left at this school when I was four years old... I was crying my eyes out 'cos my mum and dad had left me... (Tan, 1960s)

I was born up here in (Yorkshire) and apparently the doctors said, my feet were turned completely the other way, so the doctor said 'she wont live, you'll have her for a few days and she definitely wont live' (Maggie, born 1940s)

I was taken into an isolation hospital... my parents were only allowed to see me through a glass window in the door of the room that I was in' (Bella, 1940s)

'if I'd have been born sixty years ago I imagine that I would be in a closet right now... it'd be one of those where I'd be sat in a room, . Me family would keep me but it would be like I'd be in a room and they'd lock it and every so often they'd throw food in. Whereas the public life would go on down stairs and I wouldn't be part of it' (Steve, 1980s)

**WORKSHOP 1:
HISTORIES, BIOGRAPHIES, PERFORMANCES**

Date: 29th November 2008 Time: 10am-4pm

Venue: London Metropolitan University
London Metropolitan University
166-220 Holloway Road
London
N7 8DB

Programme of the day:

10am-10.15am:

Brief introduction of seminar series / welcome

Sonali Shah/ Mark Priestley

10.15-11.15

Academic paper examining the 'performance' of biographical research interviews and their textual disembodiment in interview transcripts

Dr Kip Jones

11.15-11.45

Time Travel with life histories (introduce concept of time)

Diverse City

11.45-12.45

Presentation on the emergence of disability theatre as embodied expression and counter culture

Jenny Seely (Director of Graeae)

12.15-1.15pm

Questions, Comments, open discussion

1.15-2pm

LUNCH

2pm-4pm

Creative devised performance workshop using stimuli from life story research (images, text, and audio extracts of life histories from different generations)

Diverse City (working with participants and students)

4pm END

VENUE DETAILS FOR LONDON WORKSHOP

ROOM: Henry Thomas Room,
ADDRESS: The Tower Building,
London Metropolitan University
166-220 Holloway Road.
N7 8DB

It is the reception at the foot of the tall high rise. The room is immediately adjacent to reception

Nearest tube is Holloway Road.

[Map of North Campus](#)

JENNY SEALY
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, GRAEAE THEATRE COMPANY

Jenny's directing career started with a Calouste Gulbenkian Director Training Bursary with Interplay Theatre Company. There she co-directed *Sea Changes*, the award-winning *Stepping Stones* and a new opera *Mad Meg*. Her reputation for devising signed plays for deaf audiences and creating multisensory theatre enabled her to become Artistic Director of Graeae where she has been since 1997.

All productions are fuelled by a passion to find a new theatrical voice which explore the how the aesthetics of access (sign language and audio description, diverse physicality and differing voices) can be integral to a production.

Graeae productions include *The Fall of the House of Usher* adapted by Steven Berkoff, *Fittings: The Last Freakshow* by Mike Kenny, *The Changeling* adapted by Clare McIntyre, *peeling* by Kaite O'Reilly, *Diary of an Action Man* by Mike Kenny (Time Out's Critics Choice for 2003), *On Blindness* by Glyn Cannon, *Bent* by Martin Sherman (which won DaDA Fest award for best production). Her critically acclaimed production of *Blasted* by Sarah Kane is now part of a new book about Kane's work.

Recent co productions include *Whiter than Snow* by Mike Kenny with Birmingham Rep, *Flower Girls* by Richard Cameron with New Wolsey and *Static* by Dan Rebellato with Suspect Culture.

She has just wrote and directed an adaptation of *Blood Wedding* at Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo in 2007.

Freelance include *Signs of a Diva* for the Drill Hall and *The Alexandra's*, a deaf, drag-signed song troupe. She lives with her partner Danny Braverman and their 14 year old son Jonah.

KIP JONES
READER IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
LEADER OF PERFORMATIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE GROUP

Dr Jones is Leader of the *Performative Social Science Group* at Bournemouth. He is also a published expert in the *Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method*. His use of the Method grew out a love of watching, listening to and telling stories. Jones is Associate Book Review Editor for the online journal, *Forum: Qualitative Research (FQS)*.

His greatest strength is his ability to get people involved—even excited—about the possibilities of creative human interactions, knowledge-sharing and the potential of qualitative research endeavours, including the use of tools from the Arts & Humanities in qualitative research.

His personal scholarship involves developing tools from the arts and humanities for use in dissemination of qualitative data, particularly through the use of new media and film—a *Performative Social Science (PSS)*. From this interest, the online newsgroup, *PerformSocSci* was created late in 2005. [[Join the online newsgroup](#)] Jones conducts Masterclasses, Workshops and Seminars on PSS, both at BU and other universities-nationally and internationally. He supervises PhD students, particularly those with an interest in PSS. You can learn more about him (and read/view some of his work) on his website *kipworld* (<http://kipworld.net>) which he describes as an artistic work-in-progress itself. His online video productions have had over 15,000 viewings internationally in less than two years.

CLAIRE HODGESON – DIVERSE CITY

A trained actor, dancer and director Claire has worked in higher education for the last 12 years as a senior lecturer in performing arts. As a university subject leader for the last six years, Claire has designed, developed and managed performing arts courses at degree and access level and has extensive experience coordinating both the admission and assessment processes.

Claire has always strived to enable under represented groups to access higher education, particularly in performing arts training, and she is a specialist in the field of disability and performance. Claire initiated, with Graeae Theatre Company, The Missing Piece: a unique training course for adults with physical and sensory impairments based at London Metropolitan University .

Claire has published work on disability and performance and the contemporary British identity in theatre, and in the last year she has been invited to speak about her work in Poland, Washington DC and throughout the UK.

JAMIE BEDDARD – DIVERSE CITY

Jamie Beddard is an actor, writer and director. His TV and film credits include Skalligrigg, Quills, I.D., Carrie's War and The Egg. He was formerly Associate Director at Graeae Theatre Company with particular responsibility for the company's education and new writing work - teaching on the 'Missing Piece' course, leading workshops and writing/developing forum projects. His disability-inspired piece *The Last Freakshow* was widely acclaimed. He is Associate Artist of Diverse City.

JONATHAN LEGGE – PHOTOGRAPHER

Jonathan Legge is a photographer and university lecturer in the East Midlands. He also designs and facilitates participatory arts workshops. His previous clients include The Arts Council, Disabled Parents Network, Loop System Architects, RMS Engineering, Nottingham County Council, New Perspectives, Creative Partnerships and The National Children's Bureau.

Jonathan will be documenting Workshop 1 using still photography.

FORTHCOMING WORKSHOPS

Workshop 2: Revising texts, devising histories

Date: 11th February 2009

Venue: Nottingham Playhouse

Brief aim:

- To contest the individualism and linear chronology of biographical interview research - unmaking the texts and devising performance elements for a more multi-modal transmission of remembrance.
- Make generational themes out of individual stories

Workshop 3: Performing lives, live performance

Date: April 2009 (tbc)

Venue: Stage@Leeds, University of Leeds

Brief aim:

- Will conclude the series by examining connections between the lives 'performed' in disability research interviews and techniques of live performance capable of transmitting such remembrances to a new generation.
- The culmination in this final day will include performance of a proto-play.