



Richard III Themed Training Day

Was an audience
ever in this
humour won?



Letter from the Chair

The Global Conference in Washington brought home to me the meaning of the 'I' in IMTAL: 'International'. IMTAL Europe and IMTAP (Asia/Pacific) are off-shoots of IMTAL, the American based organisation founded in 1990. Our parent organisation declares its mission is to inspire and support the use of theatre and theatrical technique to cultivate emotional connections, provoke action, and add public value to the museum experience.

Looking through our INSIGHTS magazines recently suggests that here in Europe we have flung our nets wider than this, and there is plenty of experience for us to bring back. We are, however, young practitioners of techniques well established in America and we too can learn a lot from the experiences there. We are already exploring ways in which our members can benefit from the IMTAL electronic publications and similarly how our magazine articles can be shared.

We will be updating our logo to the new style, and we are already examining the feasibility of hosting the next Global Conference in Europe. There is a great wide world of Museum Theatre out there, and we are very proud to be part of it.

Chris Gidlow

Welcome to IMTAL Insights, the journal of IMTAL Europe

*The International
Museum Theatre
Alliance has
promoted theatre
and live performance
as interpretative
techniques in cultural
institutions since 1990.*

IMTAL Europe members benefit from:

- Access to the Membership network for advice and support
- Reduced fees at training days and conferences
- Access to online resources
- A publicly searchable online profile
- Three copies of IMTAL Insights a year, recommended reading and news from our global partners

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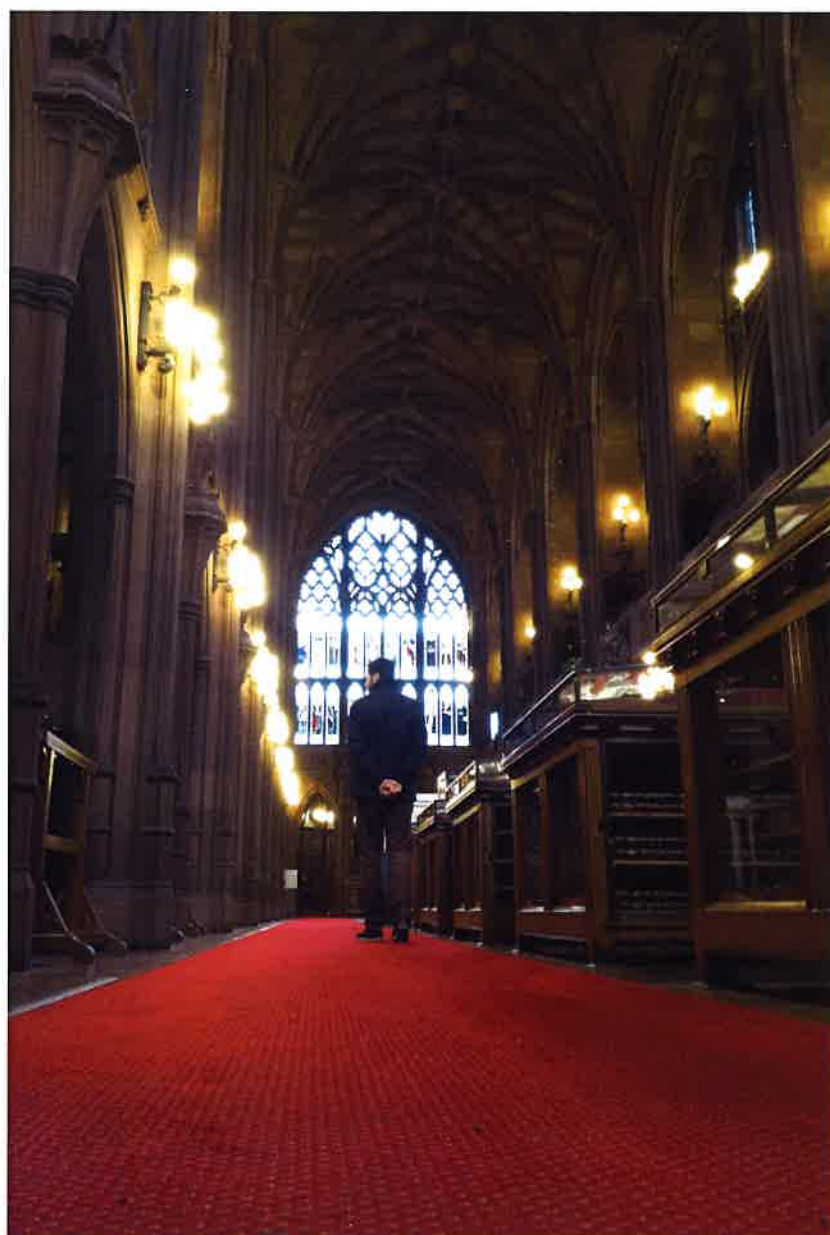
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Theatre| Company number
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News

Bookworms Wanted

For the spring issue we have an article planned reviewing a range of relevant books. If you would like to review a book (in exchange for a free copy) or you know of a book you would like to see reviewed, get in touch! Books don't have to be in English and nor do reviews; we are keen to give a Europe wide view!



All change!

Following our AGM in September, there have been a couple of changes to the IMTAL board

Steven Howe has stepped down from the board, I'm sure members will join the board will join the board in thanking him for his work as membership secretary, and for his performances at past conferences and training days and wish him the very best of luck for his future ventures.

The board would also like to welcome two new members Chris Cade and Richard Hodder, read more about Chris Cades work in his article on his contrition to our autumn training day on page X



Insights in 2014

As always we welcome contributions from members and non-members for future issues of Insights, articles, News, events and suggestions on what you would like to read are always welcome

The Deadlines for content for 2014 issues are;

Friday the 28th of March

Friday the 1st of August

Friday the 31st of October

Richard III

Playing the King at the Tower of London 2013

IMTAL Chair Chris Gidlow explores the theme of our Autumn training day



The Tower of London has significance as a world heritage site far beyond its importance as a surviving Medieval castle. Its intangible importance comes from the many stories, often of imprisonment, murder and execution, associated with it. Often the exact sites or the exact details are not known. Rarely is there anything tangible to display.

The stories lend themselves to Live Interpretation, so see episodes re-enacted, certainly, but also to engage emotionally with the victims, their oppressors and their fate. IMTAL and Historic Royal Palaces joined forces in September to interpret one of the famous figures, King Richard III, providing an interesting and dense case study.

Richard III, King of England 1483-85, would probably have been a little known monarch from an obscure period, like his predecessors Edward V, Edward IV and Henry VI had it not been for William Shakespeare's play about him. Shakespeare paints him as an outright villain, confiding his nefarious plots to the audience as he despatches one political rival after another, including two kings and his own wife. He is a compelling anti-hero, as likely to raise a complicit laugh from the audience as a shudder. This villainous portrayal of a real person provoked a backlash in the late 20th century from those who thought him unfairly treated. This continues to this day with Richard III societies defending him at every charge.

Onto this stage the King himself stepped when, last summer, his body was discovered. The resultant Richard III mania has not yet subsided, with an ongoing ill-informed acrimonious feud between those who want his body reburied near where it was found, in Leicester, or in the principle city of the Medieval North, York, which now involves the Justice secretary and the High Court.

The Tower of London is one of the key locations in Richard's History and subsequent legend. He ordered the first execution within its walls, that of his former ally Lord Hastings. He confined his nephews, Edward V and Richard Duke of York, to the Tower while he disinherited them and usurped the throne. These are known and undisputed facts belie to a degree the 'maligned saint' image peddled by his modern supporters. The 'Murder of the Princes in the Tower' (traditionally localised to the Bloody Tower, whence the name) was the greatest crime laid by posterity at Richard's door. The discovery of the bones said to be theirs in 1674 hidden in the Tower caused just as much stir as Richard's. Shakespeare dramatized the usurpation and the deaths of the Prince. He made Richard the murderer of King Henry VI and his own brother, George Duke of Clarence, at sites at the Tower still shown to our visitors to this day.

We interpret the story of Richard III in the Bloody Tower, where we ask visitors to vote on the evidence whether Richard III or his successor Henry VII was responsible for the deaths of the Princes. We mark the site of the discovery of their bones, using Victorian imagery inspired by Shakespeare. The Yeoman warders ('Beefeaters') in their Tour tell the traditional version of the story, sometimes inserting an element of doubt 'it's a mystery', sometimes suggesting that they are forced to do so to placate the Richard III society. This isn't true, but we are challenged by Riccardians, as supporters of the King are known, even on that limited presentation. In my view, we have to present the standard story first, as the first level of interpretation to give the visitors any chance of knowing what we are talking about and being interested in 'This is the Bloody Tower so called because it was here that Richard III was said to have had his nephews,

the 'Princes in the Tower' murdered', then proceed to levels of interpretation about the evidence and historiography of the issue. 'This is Henry III's water gate, in which a boy formerly known as King Edward V was neither imprisoned nor murdered. Although his fate is unknown it was not caused by his uncle Richard III.' would have few readers and visitors would still be looking for the Bloody Tower.

Live Interpretation of Richard is problematic because visitors will actually 'see' the king and perhaps witness his actions. While static or third person interpretation can be even-handed and cover the limitations of the evidence, Live interpretation needs a 'truth' and is set in a moment. The actors or interpreters must form a view of Richard's motivation and actions.

Our seminar consisted of a day where various practitioners presented their rationales for particular approaches and a second day where they were able to place those performances in front of the public. All those featured had worked at the Tower and all had proposed Richard III material for the site previously. It was extremely interesting to see how the different approaches played out.

These are my very subjective impressions, as the Live Interpretation Manager of the site:

First Laura Hadland, the Senior Curator of Leicester Museums explained the circumstances leading to the discovery of Richard's body, its identification and the subsequent media interest and the interpretation surrounding it. One of the most interesting aspects was the discovery that Richard had had a quite severe spinal deformity. His 'hunchback' had been a standard part of the historiography of Richard, frequently referred to by Shakespeare. Posthumous flattering portraits of the King had been altered to make the deformity more obvious. Riccardians, including one who had funded the excavation, were unanimous that this was a Tudor slur and that their 'Good King Richard' could not have been a 'hunchback'. I had always been uneasy about this. We don't hold medieval

views about disability and whether Richard was disabled or not should have been uncoupled from disputes over his guilt or innocence. Shakespearean portrayals of Richard tended to overplay his disability (Anthony Cher's 'Cripple' on arm crutches, and Ian McKellern's withered armed Kaiser come to mind) which strikes me as comparable to blacking up for Othello. On the other hand, there was no evidence of the Riccardians' claim that he was portrayed as a hunchback simply to blacken his name. Richard's Lancastrian opponents boasted their decent from Edmund 'Crouchback', first Earl of Lancaster, a famous crusader.

The first proposal came from Lara Muth of Bard Unbound, with scenes from Shakespeare's Richard III. Many visitors recognised (or assumed) that they were hearing Shakespeare and there was a general feeling that a 'One-stop British Culture shop' was on offer. The actors were dressed in modern costume with olde worlde flourishes, as is quite common in Shakespeare productions. This caused some consternation on site as it meant Richard III seemed to be wearing suicide-bomber jacket (on a high security site guarded by soldiers with live ammo). Personally, I did not think that this worked. In general I prefer Shakespeare to be modern dress and minimally propped, with a care taken to provide the props and costumes mentioned in the text. However, on site among all the other visitors, Beefeaters,

"Which version you deploy involves a strong idea of what message you want to put across"

Guardsmen and security officers, the actors looked nothing other than slightly eccentric. Many visitors do not have English as a first language and their only engagement with live interpretation is visual, being able to watch and take photographs. With the best will in the world, the scene of Richard courting Lady Anne, for instance, was visually just two highly strung emos having an argument.

Although many of the scenes were set at the Tower, it wasn't particularly clear that this was 'site specific' and in discussion Lara explained it as site sensitive, using the atmosphere and look of the locations to enhance the scenes. It was difficult for a visitor to follow the scenes physically, as they moved around the site, inside and out. The play obviously won a following of a small number of visitors who stuck with it. Some of the scenes were very strong. The wooing of Lady Anne was absolutely captivating, and placing it in a busy thoroughfare, which can literally be stopped by Richard worked very well. Clarence's dream and the use of the Medieval bedchamber worked well too.

On the negative side, as most visitors were not following the play, the actors needed to recap who they were and what they were doing, making eye contact with the public to draw them in. To traditional actors these essential devices are anathemas. So even when Richard did 'talk to the audience' he still spoke to a motional audience in the middle distance invisible beyond the footlights, rather than the real audience next to him.

Most problematic, from an interpretative view, by simply representing Shakespeare's play, minus, in this case, a physical deformity, were we not reinforcing the clearly false and distorted picture he gives? This was the problem which the Michael Oakley of the Oxford Shakespeare company tried to address. The OSC had approached me several times with ideas of how Shakespeare's Richard III could be presented at the Tower. They had put on the 400th Anniversary performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the Great Hall at Hampton Court where it was first performed, in more or less conventional modern style. I fully expected something similar. Michael however pitched something of a riposte. Gordon Daviot had written a complete sympathetic treatment of the King in the play 'Dickon' in the 30s. Daviot was a pseudonym of Josephine Tey, the mystery writer, whose detective novel 'The Daughter of Time' more or less kick started the modern Riccardian movement. Michael presented the story behind the play to the seminar and the actors read through sections which illustrated Daviot's methods. They contrasted scenes with the same ones in Shakespeare. Daviot's 'Dickon' was presented at the time as not only more sympathetic but more accurate. Certainly a key scene showing Richard's breach with his former supporter Buckingham read much more truthfully in the Dickon version. On the other hand, 'Dickon' was written in the extraordinarily mannered way of the time, akin to Noel Coward or TS Elliot's plays, and some of the 'modernised' speech sounded incredibly dated. I wasn't at all sure how this would play on the ground.

The OSC chose just two interior spaces in our medieval palace, for forth wall performances, costumed in period style, in settings dressed with tables and chairs. They went for a narrator giving the date, setting and context of each scene, something I think would have helped the Shakespeare scenes. One scene, in which Dickon outlined his quasi

*"Shakespeare
paints him as an
outright villain"*



socialist views, was not particularly successful. Poor lighting and strong visitor through flow did not enhance a rather densely talkie scene. However Dickon came into its own with two linked scenes centring on Richard's wife Anne. One involved Richard's niece, the sister of the Princes in the Tower, perhaps romantically involved with Richard (He was forced to deny publicly he planned to marry her). Next, Anne had to break the news to Richard that their only son had died. It was a very strong dramatic scene, holding the audience's attention while a crucial piece of history was unfolded. I felt the characters were being explored as humans and our sympathy was much more clearly enlisted with them than the rather distanced Shakespeare characters.

This having been said, I found the attitudes of the characters and their ways of expressing them heavily redolent of the 1930s and 40s, rather as Philippa Gregory's sympathetic White Queen characters tend to hold 21st century views. A strong emphasis on historical context is one of the selling points of our live interpretation company, Past Pleasures. They presented Richard III as a first person character to the seminar (which we had just done as an Adult education event), and talked about over versions we had



tried, such as the 'murder mystery'. What was presented to the visitors this time was one of our 'Beat the Block' events. Visitors meet first person characters who argue their own case, opponents who argue against them, and then choose which of the two to follow. Making the right choices and knowing when to switch sides will see the visitors evading 'death'. Choosing wrongly leads to find out their fate, as often as not death or imprisonment at the Tower. This gave the widest scope of any of the presentations, starting with Richard of York (Richard's father)'s first bid for power thirty years before the main action of the previous plays. A weakness with this is that Richard himself is not the focus, just one of the better survivors of a cast of very similar dynasts. First person characters are not able to deal with issues of historiography and the evidential basis of what they say. This is a problem with all the plays but is usually counterbalanced with a greater emotional sympathy. 'Beat the Block' takes a rather rough and ready approach, with screaming kids and broad brush characters. The way the company worked the site was exemplary. A lot of work was done barking up a crowd, and retaining it with frequent asides and direct appeals. The presentations had by far the biggest audience and the most followers. The link with the

site was not as clearly made as I would have liked. Costumes were authentic period with two very eye-catching knights in armour, one of which was Richard.

Finally East 15 Acting school presented their piece. E15 has a longstanding relationship with the Royal Armouries, based at the Tower. Part of their course specialises in stage fighting and each year they put on a play at the Tower with a strong fighting element. Their idea was very clever. The big set pieces would be the known battles, culminating in the Battle of Bosworth, as well as smaller fights. These were the crowd pleasers in which language was largely irreverent. Meanwhile, spread out over the site were little vignettes following the stories of various characters who might have been responsible for the death of the princes. Some of these were scenes from Shakespeare and some were devised pieces like Philippa Gregory's White Queen (particularly the story of Margaret Beaufort, the mother of the man who eventually killed Richard). These constituted a 'secret history' if you like, which culminated in the accepted public history of the battles. Using students, they were able to achieve a huge cast, populating the large site well. The fight scenes were top notch. They had chosen a 'Historic' look fairly common in amateur Shakespeare, so the sword



fighters and women in long dresses look eye-catchingly part of 'the past' but not any specific past. I'm not particularly enamoured of this, as I feel sure that visitors read them as 'accurate'. Although the vignettes and individual encounters could have worked well at involving the visitors and drawing them in, not all the students were comfortable or charismatic enough to carry this off, even though some of the scripted performances were strong. They were the only group to play Richard as disabled, having a dragging limp, which was highlighted in the Shakespeare scenes and downplayed in the fights and devised scenes.

In the seminar we also heard Chris Cade's take on his one man Richard III performance. One man shows of historical characters are hard to pull off without the framing of, in this case, a temporary exhibition around the reconstructed head of Richard, in York.

As crowd pleasers, the Past Pleasures and East 15 sets were by far the more effective. They summoned up large crowds and retained them for scenes, with Past Pleasures retaining the audiences for several scenes and location

changes. The actual business of involving the audience with Richard was not as well delivered as by Shakespeare and Gordon Daviot, who verbally craft a much stronger message than 'Support me, I am right!'. There seemed to be a trade off between a quality dramatic experience and a quantity visitor one. The pure plays needed to include a mechanism whereby characters could step out of the script or be supported by narrators or interlocutors who could, to explain at any given point what it was they were so eloquently talking about. Theatre involves a lot of framing paraphernalia, like a programme, an announced start time, a clear venue which it is difficult to provide in the context of a free flow visit to a heritage site.

Having followed the whole day with the awareness of the seminar which preceded, I felt I had had a good idea of the complexity of the issues and had become involved in the idea of a man from five hundred years ago being a real person. This seemed a lot stronger than the static exhibitions on York and Leicester. However, the actual history and the importance of the Tower to it had become



"Onto this stage the King himself stepped when, Last summer, his body was discovered."

left behind. So much of the big denouements chosen did not actually take place at the Tower or in the locations chosen. Perhaps the scenes from Shakespeare set in a bedroom at the Tower and performed in a bedroom at the Tower came closest to this.

I don't think I have come up with the definitive way of presenting Richard III to our visitors. If I could do the day again I would have picked a cast who retained the same roles in all the different versions, so they were visually consistent. Although I prefer my Shakespeare in unaffected modern dress, I think on site we need to make all our interpretations work visually, for the photo opportunity and the non-English speaker. With a single cast we could have used the HRP authentic costume stock for all the scenes. I would have made sure that either the scenes complimented each other or that the same scene (such as the execution of Clarence or Lord Hastings or the murder of the Princes) was clearly presented in all the different versions. Richard was, I think, the only character to appear in all four. I would have included crowd wranglers, identified probably with sashes

and badges, to work the crowds in the non-interactive scenes, maintaining flow and introducing new visitors to the scene. I would have also given a deal more thought to Richard's disability. As the discovery of his body made this one of the few 'facts' about him which is no longer disputed, it is a shame it is something generally ignored in the live presentations.

More important than the actual story and the individual techniques, however, was the fact that we as IMTAL showed there were so many 'Re-enactment/ Life Interpretation/Museum theatre' techniques. Which version you deploy involves a strong idea of what message you want to put across, the audience at which it is aimed and the site where it is put on. By showing how varied the interpretation of just one character at one site could be I hope we have gone some way to raising awareness of this variety.

"I think on site we need to make all our interpretations work visually, for the photo opportunity and the non-English speaker."

Bard Unbound on location

Some thoughts on producing Richard III at HM Tower of London by Director Lara Muth

I have a bit of a confession to make, I'm an artist – not a historian.

As a site-specific director I'm interested in using drama to inhabit museums and heritage spaces, to tune into the echoes of near and distant history, to make surreal spaces more real. So education often comes second for me. I usually select an extant text that is fiction or some mix of fiction and history. After all, most history becomes fiction anyway, once the winners are done writing it.

My goal is to combine the dramatic arts with literature,

architecture, history, philosophy and religious/cultural traditions in a real-time, interactive experience. My work has been called 'a film-shoot without the cameras'.

I was honoured to be invited to produce Shakespeare's Richard III as a part of IMTAL's 'Playing the King' two-day seminar at HM Tower of London in September. About 10 years ago, Bard Unbound was first to produce Shakespeare on location

there and it was a thrill to return to this material in more depth. But RIII is an easy-choice. I would be as keen to explore other plays in that setting like Hamlet, Murder in the Cathedral or Look Back in Anger. I was actually refused the rights to produce Man for All Seasons – figure that one out! RIII interprets past events, but another, quite disconnected

"I always want to draw the audience into the play."



play could open up new ideas of the space as it is now alongside its previous history. Museums and heritage sites are not just a frame for snapshots of the past, they are also living, breathing contemporary spaces and we, living people, have real relationships with these sites today.

I'm not just interested in what has happened, but what could happen in these spaces.

Acting is called 'playing'. It lets an audience have a less intellectual, less overtly educational experience and allows a more visceral, emotional one. My work is immersive for the actors and the audience. I always want to draw the audience into the play. That is my idea of success.

We now adhere to painstaking, historically accurate portrayals in film, television and even novels. This is a late-20th Century taste, I think, driven by the innovations of film. Shakespeare faced every kind of censorship, but dramatic anachronism was perfectly acceptable to his audiences. I like to think that producing Shakespeare in the modern museum setting is a fitting anachronism in itself.

Familiar stories are effective hooks on which to hang an educational agenda. Shakespeare's Richard III started IMTAL's presentation day serving as a springboard to look first at what we think we know. But Shakespeare's Richard is a very different man from history's fact. Still, the story exists as a pervasive myth. There is something deeply true and enlightening about the character(s) and that's why it survives through centuries of adaptation.

Drama is never about the characters, though. No one really cares about a kingdom or a horse. Drama is always about ourselves. We come to heritage sites to see fine

stonework and furnishings, to ogle at opulence and to marvel at its survival, to envy conspicuous consumption, but we could do the same watching Grand Designs in the comfort of our own home. Visiting HM Tower implies a journey of learning or exploration – we come seeking our own place in this place. Stories help us find our place; they are the means by which we stake out our emotional ground. And Shakespeare is a master storyteller, not just in English, but in any language. Therefore, I particularly enjoy using the wealth of his texts to bring spaces to life.

My work is 'site-specific performance immersion'.

'Site-specific' is a term that has suffered abuse in the last 20 years. Much of the time it just

describes performances outdoors or travelling trunk shows. But for me, it means a design that is unique to and inspired by the space where it will be performed. And I don't just mean in the general way that much of the action in Richard III took place historically at HM Tower of London. I mean that the pathway the actors walk and lead the audience is chosen to suit the nature of the drama: outdoor vs. indoor scenes, the way a bed, a staircase or a repetitive clock chime can inform the action and help get the story across. I only find these hidden gems rehearsing on location. It grounds the drama in the reality of the place – here, now, today. There is no need for elaborate, contrived set- or lighting-design when you are working in such a spectacular 3D

"Drama is never about the characters, though. No one really cares about a kingdom or a horse. Drama is always about ourselves."



environment. All you need are the essentials: people and clothing. That's where I focus my energy.

'Performance immersion' has become a very trendy phrase. I was so proud of myself twenty years ago when I thought I had made it up! To me it means the actors are immersed in the audience and the audience are immersed in the action. It encourages the audience to participate, to cast themselves, to live vicariously and to play. My goal is to fire up imagination, to move people, to entertain, to fill otherwise empty space and make silence meaningful. If storytelling can be ennobling, then education and entertainment are both well-served.

And I cut the text to suit. I usually adapt direct from the First Folio. In this production, we used six actors, three men and three women, presenting key scenes and allowing each actor a set-piece monologue. Our running time was less than an hour. By doubling roles, the structure of our abbreviated cutting gave the murdered Duke of Clarence the chance to revenge himself and come back as victorious Richmond.

For this production I made theatrical choices rather than feel constrained by fact, knowing that my colleagues would present their work focusing on historical veracity. That gave us a special scope to play. The cast was young. The costumes were modern and minimalist. I call the style my 'Bard in Blue Jeans' approach and it allowed for an eye-catching, straightforward production on a shoestring budget.

"There is no need for elaborate, contrived set- or lighting-design when you are working in such a spectacular 3D environment."



There are a few techniques I develop when working in such a special venue:

1) Externalise the action. If our understanding is made of 80% body language and other senses. I want actors to do what they're talking about, demonstrating change and relationships in space. This helps the performance remain accessible to the hearing impaired, to children and adults, and to English-as-an-Additional-Language visitors.

2) Raise the stakes and status. Playing for high stakes is a given, but many actors coming from a theatre background





find they need to work harder to project the status required to inhabit a heritage venue and to work face-to-face with audiences in a crowded space.

3) Translation, translation, translation. Artists and actors use one vocabulary and events managers often use another. Museums and heritage venues are often mixed-use, multi-tasking organisations. HM Tower enjoys, and sometimes suffers from, a dynamic tension between its military and civilian uses. 100% safety, sensitivity and courtesy is required at all time. My motto is 'charm and

persistence'.

My projects in museums and heritage venues have completely spoiled me for traditional theatre spaces. It can be hard for me to get excited about working in a black box after roaming unchecked over a World Heritage Site. And there are so many corners of history and corners of modern museums and country houses still left unexplored – I hardly know where to begin...

"I call the style my 'Bard in Blue Jeans' approach"



Richard III

Playing the King in His 'Fair City of York'

New Board member and presenter at our September training day Chris Cade discusses playing Richard III At The Yorkshire Museum.

I was booked to play York born 'Victorian Volcano Chaser', Tempest Anderson, at the Yorkshire Museum for three weeks in August 2013. However, there was an unexpected change of programme. The reconstructed head of Richard III was to be on display and there would be a new exhibition highlighting his associations with Yorkshire. Could I play him instead?

Of course I said 'Yes'. Then I worried about the age difference. Richard was just 32 when he was killed. I will be 60 next birthday.

The exhibition was entitled: 'Richard III: King and County' and had just four panels as satellites around the head, each mounted on a truncated pillar, part of the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey. There was also a video revealing how experts at Dundee University had used his skull to make the reconstruction following the Leicester car park discovery of Richard's skeleton.

One panel bore the title of the exhibition, the others were headed: 'Richard Plantagenet', 'Richard Duke of Gloucester' and 'Richard III King of England'. Each emphasised his Yorkshire connections, in particular the Battles of Wakefield and Towton and his Yorkshire castles: Pontefract, Sandal, Knaresborough, Scarborough, Sheriff Hutton and Middleham. They also highlighted visits to his 'fair city of York'.

The contemporary Middleham Jewel and the Middleham Ring were on display adjacent to the new exhibition along with a hoard of coins bearing Richard's head.

The only real historical artefact in the exhibition space itself was 'The York Boar Badge' which was also displayed in the central glass case. It was one of 13,000 badges which had been commissioned for the occasion of the investiture of his son, Edward of Middleham, as Prince of Wales in The Archbishop's Palace within the York Minster precinct.

The White Boar was Richard's emblem and this heraldic badge was worn by loyal supporters. I purchased a pewter replica of the silver original from the museum shop and wore it on my black costume hired from York Theatre Royal.

I 'borrowed' a period chair from the permanent 'York: Capital of the North' exhibition within which the Richard III display was housed and placed it at a significant distance behind his reconstructed likeness.

I placed a crown and a rosary on the 'throne' to signify royalty and piety. Richard was well respected as a warrior

Yorkshire Museum
**Richard III:
King and County**



**SPECIAL
Exhibition!**

**19 July 2013 –
13 October 2013**

Meet Richard III and find out how he was received in York. Discover his impact on Yorkshire. Throughout the summer the king's reconstructed likeness will be on display in the Yorkshire Museum's **Medieval Gallery** alongside objects from his lifetime.

Meet the King
5 – 25 August 10.30am – 4.30pm
A very special chance to meet Richard III as he tells the tale of his rise and fall, and how it is intertwined with the story of medieval York.
Drop in performances, throughout the day.



Make a Boar Badge
24 July – 1 September 10.30am – 4.30pm
Supporters of Richard III wore his emblem, the White Boar. Make a fabric or silver boar in support of the King.



king, but also as a man of daily prayer, devotion and worship.

The two props were also on hand to help willing visitors assume the role of his queen or his son at the York Minster Investiture. Richard, Anne and Edward all wore crowns on that day, it was reported, and they were 'praised above the stars' by the 'happy throng' of York citizens gathered outside. No wonder Richard thought of the city as his spiritual home.

As Richard, I was in the exhibition space for two sessions each of two hours duration for twenty one consecutive days. Visitors were invited to 'Meet the King'. Reactions varied. Some visitors steered a safe course around me and made it clear they did not wish to interact. Some approached and wanted to talk to me in the third person. Many held strong opinions about Richard III one way or the other and wanted to express them. Some wanted to question me as Richard. Others were happy to play a part and/or take a photo opportunity. Often these were children, but not always. Much of my time was spent with individuals or small groups.

However, I had prepared a scripted piece, which could last anything from 5 to 12 minutes. I usually began my tale when the number of visitors reached double figures in the exhibition. My first words were part of John of Gaunt's soliloquy from Shakespeare's 'Richard II' (Act II scene i): 'This Royal throne of kings...'

Some turned towards the 'throne' where I was sitting. I then stood and gradually approached them if they looked comfortable with the costumed storytelling. The visitors were contextualised as citizens of York and their numbers usually increased as it became evident that 'an audience with King Richard' was in session.

The scenario; It is August 1485, and I have suffered two personal tragedies: losing both my only (legitimate) son and my queen within a year of each other since the happy events of our triumphant entry into York through Micklegate Bar on 29th August 1483 and our son's investiture just over a week later. Henry Tudor, I inform them, is threatening to

"Richard was just 32 when he was killed. I will be 60 next birthday"



usurp my throne. He is likely to invade from exile in Brittany any day now.

I reflect on my time in the white rose county: my childhood at Middleham where I grew up with Anne, my wife to be, daughter of Richard Neville. He, the Earl of Warwick, was the tutor for my knightly training: a three year apprenticeship in the arts of horsemanship and swordsmanship. I was too young to fight with my father, Richard Duke of York, tragically killed at the Battle of Wakefield. The red rose House of Lancaster was triumphant that day.

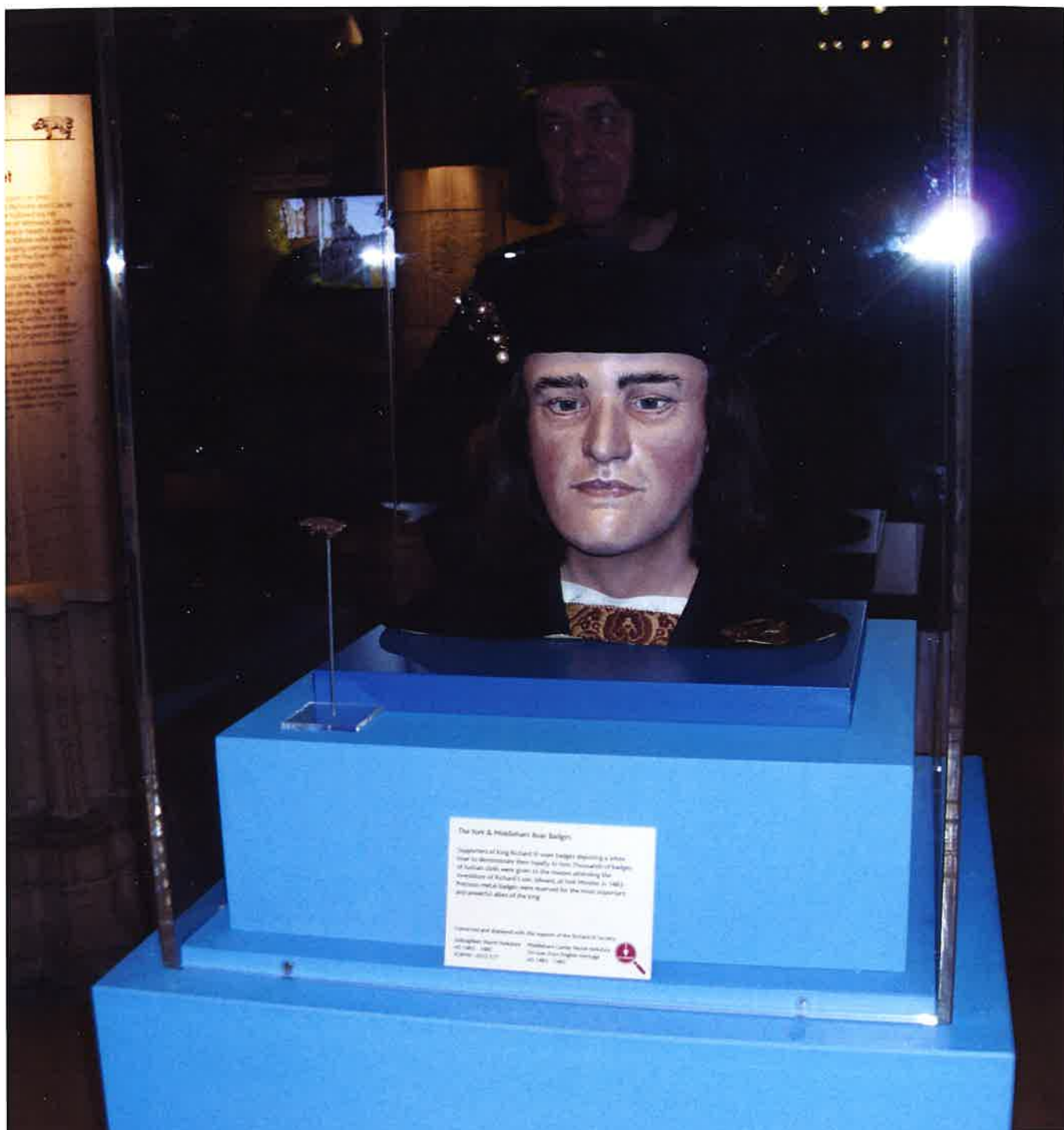
My only surviving brother became the first King of the House of York, Edward IV, in events following victory at the bloody Battle of Towton. I recall how he rewarded my loyalty

to him over the years with a title and responsibilities as his right hand man in both war and peace. Sheriff Hutton Castle became home and headquarters as I administered the Council of the North on his behalf.

Is it any wonder then, on his death bed, he named me as Lord Protector of King and Realm? Of course I would look after his sons I assured him, The Princes would be safe in the Tower of London.

Was it my fault that his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was found to be illegal before Edward V could be crowned? It was with reluctance that I accepted the throne myself at the

"Richard was well respected as a warrior king, but also as a man of daily prayer; devotion and worship"



insistence of the Duke of Buckingham.

Unfortunately, loyalty to me has not always been forthcoming and I have had to assert my authority. At Pontefract Castle heads have had to roll! But I am no tyrant. I am firm but fair as king and continue to oversee peace and maintain the 'common weal'.

I tell of the fateful day, 22nd August 1485, as I confidently lead the Royal Army into a field at Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, to face Henry Tudor, the pretender. This battle will surely end the Wars of the Roses....

I concluded with lines from Shakespeare's 'Richard III' (Act V scene iii):

'Advance our standards, set upon our foes, Fair Saint George inspire us With the spleen of fiery dragons. Upon

them! Victory sits on our helmets!'

The end of my story, but the saga of Richard III continues. On Friday 16th August 2013 news broke of distant relatives of Richard III, the Plantagenet Society, having been granted permission for a judicial review of the decision to rebury the king's remains in Leicester Cathedral.

Controversy continues to surround Richard five hundred and twenty eight years after his death. Could the 'fair city of York' be his final resting place after all?

Chris Cade is a freelance actor & storyteller: Find out more at www.chriscade.co.uk

"Many visitors held strong opinions about Richard III one way or the other and wanted to express them"

An Audience with Richard III

A chance to see more of the action from our day of performances at the tower of London, Pictures by Robert Piwko.





Evolving the story, reviewing the IMTAL Global Conference 2013

Foteini Venieri and Ingo R. Glückler give a European perspective on the Global conference in Washington DC





The IMTAL Global Conference 2013 in Washington DC was Foteini's first and Ingo's second experience of a Global Conference after the European hosted Conference in Belfast in 2007. Therefore, our overall expectations were high and our curiosity triggered! Unfortunately, due to the unforeseen government shutdown (that lasted exactly as many days as we were there) we couldn't visit the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution, where the conference would have been held normally. Luckily, we had the chance to experience some of the outstanding museum theatre performances regularly held at the Smithsonian and other well known museums. Moreover we had the chance to learn lots about the American IMTAL culture and their significant

focus on slavery and racism that is still considered a relevant issue, and gain a valuable experience of the different approaches between Europe, the Americas and a bit of Australia and New Zealand. The Asia Pacific presence at the IMTAL Conference was represented by IMTALers from Australia, who gave a valuable insight on the up-to-date issues and techniques of museum theatre on their continent, notably focusing on Aborigines and the preservation of their culture. An interesting aspect was a successful student museum theatre festival that bridged in a creative way between secondary education and museums. Nigeria and Taiwan gave a really international perspective

"Our overall expectations were high and our curiosity triggered!"





to the conference, unveiling the many different forms and narratives that museum theatre can adopt in different settings and contexts. For instance, colorful puppet shows in museums are very popular in Taiwan and are deeply rooted in the country's history. Austria's and Greece's representation as well as issues concerning the IMTAL Europe by Lara Muth, opened up different points of view and marked the European contribution to the conference, which was very appreciated by the primarily American delegates.

In brief, some issues where there were obviously different were, for example, the employment status of many American IMTALers who are usually working on a regular basis, as full time employees in respective museum departments, rather than as freelancers which is more common for European IMTALers. This status also offers them the possibility to work with generous funding and allows them to hire specialized professionals for each of the



phases that developing a museum theater piece involves: script writers, (stage)directors, technicians, actors, etc.. We also noted that the financial crisis that has caused so much hurt to parts of Europe and consequently the European museum sector lately was not obvious in the US museums sector. Another interesting difference was the purely theatre background of American IMTALers who are mainly actors rather than educators or historians.

Cultural differences were also obvious to us: we had to evaluate each and every presenter in a numerical scale from 1 to 5. Since we never encountered such a strange approach in Europe the issue was raised during a panel concerning the evaluation of museum theatre. In the context of the conference, evaluation was considered a "must" and we were told that presenters also wish to be evaluated. The answer covering the subject and the outcomes of a numerical evaluation was rather vague. A different content on the approach of social issues was also noted, influenced by the history and development of the American nation and the focus on individualism based on Protestant ethics and its spirit of capitalism. Both are significantly define notions such as social rights and freedom, as well as the way they are approached in museum theatre.

To sum up, the IMTAL Global Conference in Washington DC was an enriching experience! We look forward to more international gatherings also in Europe, hopefully accessible to as many IMTAL community members as possible!

The European contribution to the conference was appreciated by the primarily American delegates.



Reflections on IMTAL Global conference 2013 by Simone Mortan, IMTAL-Americas member and chair of the 2009 global conference.

The 2013 conference has come and gone and I'm still savoring the experience. This was my 6th global conference and once again I was inspired by the work that all of our colleagues are doing around the globe. People are tackling tough subjects and using theatre to help our visitors think critically about these issues. It is also so much fun during these conferences to reconnect with friends from around the world that I've gotten to know from past conferences. IMTAL has truly provided me with the opportunity to develop friendships with professional colleagues from around the world. I believe this conference had the most diverse representation from around the globe: nine nations and five continents represented in a conference of less than 100 participants is amazing!

Our first keynote address was by P.J. Powers who is one of the founders of a small award winning theatre company, **TIMELINE THEATRE**, in Chicago, Illinois. They focus on producing plays that are inspired by history that connect with today's social and political issues. One of the unique features of this theater is that with each play they produce the experience begins as you enter the lobby. They create an interactive museum like lobby experience that complements the themes of the play. Interesting that we

are using theatre in museum settings while they are creating a museum experience within their theater.

Of course the conference was held in Washington DC with many of us anticipating the opportunity to visit many of the Smithsonian Institutions. Unfortunately those plans collided with the politics of the U.S. government which shut down on October 1st thus closing all the Smithsonian museums. We were very fortunate that many of those planning the conference work for the Smithsonian Trust so while they were locked out of their offices they were still able to run the conference. They did a phenomenal job in the 10 days prior to the conference of finding a new venue for all the sessions and a restaurant that was able to accommodate the gala event. As the chair of the 2009 global conference I know what it takes to make all the arrangements and to have to revise all those plans at the last minute is an amazing task. The conference team did a fantastic job and was able to move the whole operation to a facility called **Artisphere**, only 2 blocks from the conference hotel. So, despite our disappointment about not being able to visit the Smithsonian museums the conference was able to proceed very smoothly. S. Xavier Carnegie performed *Nat Love in Love on the Range* and Terry Averil performed *John Brown* and Brian Taylor was the arbiter in the performance of *The Time Trial of John Brown*. So despite the Smithsonian Museums being closed we were still able to experience some of the wonderful theatrical programs delivered there.

One of the key elements of every IMTAL global conference that I have attended has been the chance to



visit a variety of sites by having field trips. This conference provided two such opportunities.

The pre-conference field trip to Baltimore included visits to the Jewish Museum of Maryland and the Maryland Historical Museum with theater performances by High School students from the Baltimore School of the Arts dramatizing Civil War stories from Baltimore's past under the direction of their teachers Norah Worthington and Richard Pilcher. We also enjoyed a performance of the Leo V. Berger Immigrant's Trunk Program with actress Katherine Lyons performing the Living history character Ida Rehr.

On the second day of the conference we all jumped on school buses to make our way to Mt. Vernon in Virginia, the home of the first U.S. President George Washington and his wife Martha Washington. We enjoyed a 30 minute chat with "Martha Washington" portrayed by Mary Wiseman who is quick to point out that her initials are also M.W. It was amazing to see someone who has the depth of knowledge of her character to be able to hold forth and discuss the life and times of George Washington in an extemporaneous question and answer format. Bravo! The field trip day ended at the John F. Kennedy center for the arts where we were treated to one of the daily live performances that are offered free to the public. We heard a trio of traditional Canadian musicians and our Irish friends would have felt right at home because the traditional music of Canada has many similarities to the traditional music I got to hear

in Ireland during the 2007 global conference.

Throughout all of this we were selecting from a wide choice of conference sessions that ranged from puppetry to improv, and evaluation to dealing with controversial subject matter. Our final keynote speaker brought out some nostalgia for many of us. Roscoe Orman, better known as Gordon on the children's program Sesame Street spoke about the importance of the work that this television show has done to educate children. Mr. Orman told us of his own beginnings in theatre working with an integrated theatre company touring the south during the civil rights movement, a tour that put the actors' lives on the line. And how that movement to promote greater tolerance in this country was really at the core of what Sesame Street wanted to teach young children. I know that for me, who spent many hours when my daughter was young watching Sesame Street together it was an emotional moment to "Sing, sing a song..." with Gordon.

All too soon the conference was over and it was time to say our goodbyes. I look forward to connecting with all my international friends at the next global conference!

Despite the Smithsonian Museums being closed we were still able to experience some of the wonderful theatrical programs delivered there

"I was inspired by the work that all of our colleagues are doing around the globe."

Voices of the City: historical routes through theatre. A performance walk in the city of Thessaloniki

Foteini Venieri shares project presented at the global conference in Washington DC

"Voices of the City: Historical routes through theatre", is the title of a performance walk, designed by Avra Avdi and Melina Chatzigeorgiou, School of Drama, University of Thessaloniki. The performance walk was implemented

from November 2012 till March 2013 and was evaluated, by Foteini Venieri, PhD candidate from the University of Thessaly, under the supervision of Niki Nikonanou, Assistant Professor, University of Thessaly. This article is a short version of our presentation in the IMTAL Global Conference in DC, including a description of the performance walk and the interpreters' experience evaluation.

The performance walk was part of the events organized for the celebration of 100 years since the liberation of Thessaloniki from the Ottoman rule. The performance aimed at enabling active citizenship by exploring concepts of the city through various phases of its history without engaging in nationalistic narratives. The performance addressed mainly to school groups. The interpreters were drama students close to graduation and recent graduate actors and actresses. The performance was only the first part of an educational project. The second part was realized at the end of the school year and included the presentation of the school students own group work, artistic, research or other, inspired by the performance.

The performance duration was 2:30 hours and run through part of the city's historic center. Six site specific performances were included:

1st: Byzantine church of St. Demetrius, the patron saint of Thessaloniki.

Themes: The founding of the city in 315 BC, its rich cultural heritage and the liberation of Thessaloniki from the Ottoman rule in 1912.

2nd: Labor Union Centre.

Theme: Social struggles for the workers' rights.

3rd: Court Square, a place which had a multicultural

"The performance walk was part of the events organized for the celebration of 100 years since the liberation of Thessaloniki from the Ottoman rule."





character throughout the centuries and now is a place where immigrants hang out.

Theme: Contemporary immigrants.

4th: Experimental school of Thessaloniki.

Theme: Two important educators develop their progressive ideas.

5th: Byzantine church of Panagia Acheiropoietos.

Theme: The everyday life of Greek refugees who arrived from Asia Minor in 1922 and found asylum in the church.

6th: Bey Hamam, bathhouse of the Ottoman era.

Key Themes were : a) The multicultural heritage which includes the ottoman, Jewish and Greek communities, and b) the attitude of active citizen.

Each site specific performance had a different tone and a different form. Various techniques and means of artistic expression were employed:

-3rd person narration with simultaneous dramatization (including other actors),

-1st person interpretation of testimonies,

-devised short scenes derived from testimonies,

-improvisation with actors in role who interact with the audience,

-songs and choreography.

The audience participation was achieved through open-ended questions addressed to the audience both in role and out of role.

The Interpreters' View; The evaluation of the interpreters'

experience (drama students and recent graduates) was realized using qualitative research methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, formed around three axes:

- Their involvement in the program's initial design and implementation
- Their experience during the audience interaction
- Their overall experience.

Research Results

Initial design and implementation; All interpreters felt that they had a personal involvement in the creation of the performance walk, thus constructing a sense of personal "ownership" and contribution in terms of their aesthetics as a group. Higher involvement was mentioned when they interacted with the audience in first person.

The combination of learning and entertainment was a common target for everyone. The majority approached it by trying to fully comprehend their role, stay focused and increase their level of energy. Few interpreters approached the target by questioning participants' views on social and heritage issues. Some interpreters referred to their effort in posing questions constantly to the audience and use audience experience as much as they could, while one student referred to her attempt to increase empathy and

"All interpreters believed that the higher engagement was taking place when questions were directly addressed to the audience."



use a sense of humor. The effort of remaining in the drama convention was underlined by some interpreter while adhering to the audience's needs was emphasized by a few. It's interesting that only one interpreter saw training in educational drama as a target.

However, the majority of students expressed their anxiety or underestimation of the program in the very beginning, a feeling that changed rapidly when they started performing in front of an audience.

Audience Interaction

Audience Interaction was the greatest challenge, as it was a skill they practiced for the first time. Nevertheless, the majority of the interpreters had a very positive impression. They noted that interaction was mainly depended on the student's mood and reactions and on their teachers' attitude. Some interpreters felt that teacher's presence blocked audience's reactions as well as theirs.

All interpreters believed that the higher engagement was taking place when questions were directly addressed to the audience.

Interpreters developed the dialogue based on the audience response, tried to pose questions and didn't force for answers. Instead, they offered historical data and provoked comparisons between the past and the present.

Overall Experience; All interpreters believed that it was an "interesting" and "revealing" experience. Few felt that a

positive "side effect" was the sense of collectiveness they experienced and believed that this was also transmitted to the audience. Additionally, some supported that their stereotypes on adolescents' development as well as on social issues were challenged causing an emotional impact on them.

All interpreters highlighted the fact that this experience significantly helped them in terms of personal development as well as in the development of interactive skills, drama skills and acting abilities followed by a sense of high self-esteem. Some mentioned that the experience challenged their social beliefs but also improved their knowledge of the city's history.

Conclusion

University students and recent graduates' participation as interpreters proved to be a significant benefit in many levels. Implementation trained them in performing street theatre and in distinguishing the needs of different audience groups. They developed a sense of collectiveness, improved their skills, and encountered real-life problems. Their participation in all parts of the program could further enrich their experience and train them both in the development of the design process and in applying drama practices in the classroom.

"the experience challenged their social beliefs but also improved their knowledge of the city's history"

Stories in Store. Impro in the Depot

Angela Pfenninger shares a project in which memories become a performance in the archives of the Historical Museum of the Palatinate, Speyer, Germany

What does a xmas tree stand, a 1950s wireless and a stepladder have in common? They are all part of the same narrative, interwoven momentarily, spun out of exhibits in the depot of the Historical Museum of the Palatinate, Speyer (HMP).

Improvisational theatre in the depot complemented the HMP's educational offerings aimed at children by introducing a format especially for the elderly. The depot served as a memory space, in which visitors' own life experience connected to the exhibits allowed for a dialogue between beholder and object, amateur and expert. Two improvisational actors from the group Kopfsalat served as guides along an 90-minute journey of discovery.

Dealing with an elderly audience, it became clear that there is no typical "senior citizen" and homogeneity is an illusion. Museum educators facing a mixed audience ranging from their sixties to their eighties are, in fact, facing two generations with marked differences in socialisation and preference. The demands of this target group thus can vary a great deal, but will likely exceed an attitude of mere passive consumerism. Rather than stressing the deficits older people may face (as is the case with many target group specific programmes), we considered the life span of our guests as their core asset by means of which a great many stories could be shared. For ease of access, we offered the tour in the afternoon rather than the evening, which was much preferred.

Pam Schweitzer's work with the elderly as outlined in her book *Reminiscence Theatre* inspired us to transfer the privilege of interpretation concerning exhibits onto the visitor by means of a theatrical approach. Why not look for personal stories that would breathe life into the depot treasures, maybe even capture what Schweitzer calls a





“vanishing ways of life?”

The depot offers a good environment for this as objects are not yet singled out for elaborate, awe inspiring presentation. Rather, they can be perceived in their sheer physical quality, which makes it easy to collect our elderly visitors' reminiscences of specific things. In doing this, we stuck to the section of the depot with the most stores dating from the 20th century, such as school furniture, store fittings, household utensils, agricultural tools and football legend Fritz Walter's settee. Recent and recognisable stock invited guests to explore their own personal past.

The curator gave the tour a certain direction upon which we had decided during a previous meeting with actors and staff. The route went along potentially interesting objects, and include open spaces that would allow for scenic improvisation. Whenever the curator had given factual information about object categories or particular treasures, the two actors would take the “stage”.

Visitors were collaborators, free to choose individual pieces from the shelves that they wanted included in the memory game, some of which were even taken down and carefully placed in a shopping trolley for later use as props. Guests related childhood tales and explained the daily use of objects, or their school or family rituals connected to them. I wrote down cues in order to supply the actors later, should they need it for building a scene. The actors used the stories as input for formats that are common in impro (telling a story one word each; “customer complaint” or “salesperson” routines) and acted these out spontaneously en route.

A shop sign in the shape of a giant top hat belonging to a traditional local milliner's called Niemand (which, incidentally, also means “Nobody” in German - a coincidence which was comedy gold for the players) evoked many an anecdote that people shared and enjoyed.

Finally, we reached an empty space of about 4 by 3 metres, with decent lighting and sufficient chairs for the guests. The finale, in which all the previously collected memories were interwoven, was in a rather complex, multi-layered 30-minute “Harold” format, where the audience could interject and contribute by setting the scene with verbal cues or handing in props - including the hat that Nobody has.

Challenges

Whilst impro methods are familiar to a younger crowd, not all senior citizens know what to expect. Therefore, we felt it appropriate to briefly explain the principle and alleviate any concerns that people may have had. Our audience were suppliers of memories, of their lifetimes' expertise become cues for actors. They did not have to actively participate.

I wasn't sure of the nature of the information people would share. In view of the possibility that it could be extremely sensitive, or even painful (for instance objects evoking memories of war, displacement or personal loss), I made sure we worked with experienced players who could capture all the performative value and omit potentially traumatising memories in a tactful manner.

The depot is normally closed to the public. Do to the lack of security measures, we had to make sure the group would stay together and not exceed a certain size.

Conclusions

The depot impro was well received by both audience and museum staff. Our feedback forms showed that people could relate to the format far more than expected. They felt appreciated as their practical knowledge and reminiscences were just as valuable as the expert knowledge of the curator. The fact that their own history was considered worth dramatising, and the entertaining, as well as frequently humorous rendition of their input, gave our visitors great joy.

For us, it was a new type of project. This museum theatre emerges on spec and, contentwise, is unrepeatable. It's neither a classic first, second or third person, nor scripted, approach, but draws entirely on visitor input and expertise. Apart from the necessary level of skill in the performers, it is easy to do, as long as the depot houses enough suitable material that can be handled, decent lighting, a seating area and some vacant space. However, museum professionals will have to temporarily suspend every educative urge, welcome the unexpected and switch places to learn from the customer.

“Visitors were free to choose pieces from the shelves, some of which were taken down and carefully placed in a shopping trolley for later use”

Does your book come back to life after death?

An investigation into the resurrection of medieval manuscripts and incunabula through live interpretation and emotional performance in the post-print era by Ingo R. Glückler.

This article was originally presented at the 2013 IMTAL Global Conference on creativity and innovation in today's museum theatre at Artisphere (1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209, USA).

Before getting on to the article there are two things that I want to impart: First, the author of this article is an independent historic interpreter, specialized in professional costumed interpretation. In addition he is the founder of a historic performance troupe that has performed at 28 historic sites run by the government of Baden-Württemberg in Southern Germany. Secondly, the author is the library director of the Catholic University of Linz in Austria. In this context he is publishing "interpretation – The International Bibliographic Database of Living History" (<http://www.livehistory.de/interpretation/>). Throwing both qualifications together will lead automatically to interpretation of rare books through live interpretation and emotional performance.

A library's mission is to build collections, provide comprehensive information resources and services, ensure the preservation and long-lasting availability of collections and - last but not least - to interpret written heritage. The first three tasks get a lot of attention today. In contrast, heritage interpretation of rare books has widely been neglected. Today, heritage interpretation in libraries simply consists of displays that exhibit the material aspects of books as a work of art taken out of context. Rare books remain mere decoration either stored in the mass grave of closed stacks or displayed in showcases as dusty fossils in rigor mortis. Contrary to the beliefs of many curators rare books don't speak for themselves. What a sender (here the displayed book) says and what a receiver (here a visitor) hears are typically two very different messages. Therefore, visitors need guidance, usually provided by object labels that display the title of the work, followed by the date and place of creation. As if that weren't enough, a paradigm shift is producing alarming symptoms. As readers turn to ebooks, the book, as we know it is dead.

It doesn't have to be like this. Behind every rare book, there is an even greater dramatic story that makes for great theatre. In the following text I will explore some essential aspects of uncovering these stories behind rare books and their intangible cultural heritage through live interpretation will be discussed.

The book has shaped our civilisation like no other medium. In order to interpret the sociocultural elements of

rare books by the means of historic interpretation we should look closely at three aspects of the book itself: The reader, the content and the author. Let's have a look at each of this three elements separately.

First, the reader: The rare book collection at the Catholic University of Linz contains 50.000 beautiful books written between 830 and 1800. For the last eight years or so nobody requested any of these books from our stacks. Since all of them are written in Latin or old German dialects, there are only a few classical scholars that could read them today. Thus, non-scholars do not understand rare books. Visiting a book display they look forward to making an excursion into book history with someone who is knowledgeable. Through historic interpretation only these visitors are able to grasp the book's content. In doing so the audience converts unconsciously from mere visitors to knowing readers. Thereby, performance is an effective teaching tool and has an emotional impact that is conducive to a long-lasting learning.

Secondly, the content: Historic interpretation enhances the visitor's appreciation and understanding of the book's content itself. Dramatic performances based on rare books are face-to-face encounters with social, economic and political history and concepts about life and society of bygone times. Moreover, visitors find personal meaning in things from the past. Through historic interpretation human destinies, emotions, mentalities, the spirit of the



age, interpretative frameworks, habitus and the imaginary world covered in the book can influence the visitor in a very special way. Books reveal their secrets through interpretation.

Finally, the author: As historical performers we are presenting an oral biography of an author who is connected with one of our rare books. The authentic embodiment of that author and the reconstruction of his character, personality, memories, conflicts, decisions and events which lie behind his work lead to understand what motivated him to write his book. The interpretation gives a voice to and celebrates the experiences of the author who usually is excluded from the grander narratives of conventional history. As historic interpreter we focus on overall themes of the book and on aspects of the character's life and his historical context.

Hence, library exhibitions are not really about books, they are ultimately about the people who created or were affected by those books.

Preparing a believable first-person character takes a lot of research on the author's social and material background as well as into the general time frame. Thus, the foundation work consists – first – of choosing a rare book and its author to portray, – secondly – the reading of the book, and – thirdly – the assembly of scientific material for a carefully scripted first-person narrative. Finally, in order to create the script one needs to sort and prioritize research material, determine a setting, convert the information from the book or the life of the author into good stories and arrange them into a series in order to show the interpreter's intent and focus.

Two examples: Among early accounts of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, the narrative „Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam“ of Bernhard von Breydenbach published in 1483 stands pre-eminent as the first to be printed with views of the places seen en route. The pictures add in great measure to the popularity and commercial success of the book. In a fictitious literary reading his “freshly” printed book is presented to the public through stories in a way that allows the audience to share the experience of transcending time and place. After a scripted dialog we then take questions in character. In a post-performance we as scholars discuss historical context with the visitors.

Another example: “The Spontaneously Combusted Pomegranate of the Christian Samaritans” published by Princess Eleonora of Lichtenstein in 1709 was a frequently used cooking book that contains 500 recipes for Austrian



cooking. In a TV-style cooking show we with the audience present and prepare 18th century recipes taken from “The Pomegranate” in an improvised kitchen studio.

To sum up, historic interpretation is a useful, inspiring, effective and entertaining way to unearth rare books from the mass grave of closed stacks. It dusts off and revives book-fossils displayed in showcases and provides a human face to artefacts. However, always remember: it is all about the audience enjoying and learning about the book, the author and his life.





10 point guide Fundraising

Editor (and some time grants officer and bid writer) Lindsey Holmes brings you top ten tips for successful fundraising, just in time for your New Years resolution to make your dream project happen...

1. Know your angle

Research current trends in grant giving, what aspects of your project will appeal? For example can you offer access to an existing and appealing hard to reach or under supported audience?

2. Make yourself known

Why should funders give you money? Proving you are known and respected within your field is an important stepping stone to attracting grant givers interest. Keep a record of evidence that shows this.

3. Consider all the options

Many people fall into the trap of not looking beyond the most well known grants, but there are lots of other options, lesser known smaller grants often mean less competition. Sponsorship is another avenue worth exploring.

4. Know what they want to hear

It takes a lot of time to fill out grant forms, so it's important to know what funders want to fund, speak to the funders, read the guidance notes, speak to past recipients, and ask others to proof your text. Both skilled and unskilled eyes are useful.

5. Don't Shoehorn

Some grants are really appealing, but don't waste your time applying unless you are sure that your project fills, its fine to change a few small elements of a project, but the project won't work (and is unlikely to get funded) if you just say what you think they want to hear, rather than what you want to do.

6. Don't waffle

When I worked as a grant officer, all applications that went over the word limit, repeated themselves or failed to get to the point went straight into the bin. Be clear, use short sentences and inspire with your passion, don't bore with your waffle.

7. Be realistic

Again do your research, use realistic and researched costs and time scales, Justify if you need to. If you haven't thought it through you will get found out.

8. Be innovative

No one wants to fund something that's been done before or doesn't change anything, spend time exploring new ways of approaching your themes. Research what other people in your field are doing.

9. 9 to 5

If you want to fund your work through grants you need to set time aside each week to make it happen, to look for funds, research grants and fill out forms. The longer you spend the more you will get back.

10. Start small

Nothing tastes like success, it's better to start by getting £100 on your first ask then getting turned down again and again for £10000, plus funders like to see you are tried and tested and what better way than building up your work through ever growing grants.