



IMTAL EUROPEAN INSIGHTS

Summer 2009

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM THEATRE ALLIANCE - EUROPE

European Affiliate of the International Museum Theatre Alliance

Inside This Edition

*Who? What? Why?
Where? When?*



*A Real Live
Steam Engine*



*Training Day held
at Manchester Museum*

YOUR IMTAL NEEDS YOU

This issue of 'Insights' drops through your letter-box at a time of major upheaval, with the 'Credit Crunch' affecting many of those involved in Live Interpretation. The Board recognises that now, more than ever, members need the support of their organisation.

The untimely announcement that our dynamic and talented Chair, Robert Forshaw, has been forced to stand down, means that the Board is down to just five members, two of whom are retired.

As a consequence we are looking for enthusiastic IMTAL members to

join or be co-opted onto the Board as active participants. This will ensure that the organisation is in a position to support members in what is a problematic time for many.

We need:

- A Chair person
- A Newsletter Editor. (NB 'Insights' would benefit from a regular Editor who would correlate articles and information from members and the Board. With a dedicated Editor we would aim to publish in February, June and October of each year).

- A Training Day Co-ordinator to liaise with members who have skills to share and to organise at least two training days a year.
- Hosts for Training Days.
- Articles, case studies etc. for the Newsletter (NB We have **no** articles in hand for the next edition of 'Insights').

Please contact John - Paul Coyle or Lynne Ashton (lynneashton@googlemail.com) for more information.

Your Board looks forward to hearing from you!

IMTAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND STUDY DAY - HAMPTON COURT

30 September 2009

IMTAL members are invited to Hampton Court Palace on the outskirts of London, England for the Annual General Meeting and to see presentations from companies currently working with the site.

Wednesday 30th September 2009
10am - 3pm (with time for exploring afterwards)

The AGM will include election of new officers to the voluntary board. Chair Robert Forshaw and Secretary John Paul Coyle have decided to stand down so we will be looking for new people to take on various roles to help IMTAL achieve its potential. Do please consider getting involved and see the news section for details.

Peet Cooper and members of The

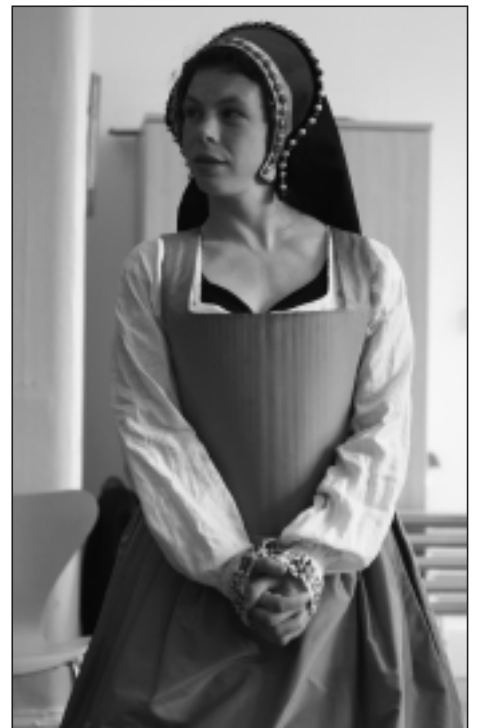
Misfits Theatre Company will present their FOOL PROJECT exploring the role of learning disabled adults in the development of court fooling.

Past Pleasures, one of the largest and most successful live interpretation companies in Europe, will discuss their latest projects and approaches.

There will also be time for networking, and exploring the site in the company of fellow IMTAL members.

Please put the date in your diary.

Please contact us at board@imtal-europe.net to let us know you are coming.



THOUGHTS FROM THE TREASURER

In these days of credit crunches, banking instability and recession it seems perfectly appropriate to include something in this edition of 'Insights' from your Treasurer. Although having no formal financial background – and therefore seemingly eminently well qualified to run any number of major banks – your Treasurer is always trying to work on Mr. Micawber's principle. As enthusiasts for the works of Charles Dickens will appreciate this was 'annual income £20, annual expenditure £19/19/6d – result happiness, annual income £20, annual expenditure £20/0/6d – result misery!' (apologies to younger IMTAL members who may well have to ask their parents/guardians/line-managers to explain these financial expressions).

IMTAL's financial position is not yet quite down to the last sixpence and our Report at the end of our Financial Year on May 31st shows a position which could be described as 'tight but manageable'. At present all bills to hand are paid and memberships, of which more in due course, are beginning to trickle in. Our one big 'out of course' and on-going expense concerns the re-organisation and revamping of our website about which you will be able find out more about elsewhere in this 'Insights' and which the Board hopes will have gone 'live' by the time you are reading this. All this does mean however that our total reserves to be carried through 2009-2010, once the website is paid for, will only be in the region of a couple of thousand pounds.

'So what?' the Treasurer hears you cry, albeit faintly, 'that amount in reserve would have Mr. Micawber jumping up and down with delight' And indeed you are right – but again, looking forward, IMTAL

really only has two guaranteed sources of income for each coming year. For one of these, income from Training Days and Conferences, your Board decided long ago that delegate fees, certainly as far as IMTAL members are concerned, should be set so as to guarantee covering costs, room hire, fees, catering etc. – but with only the most modest of surplus accruing as 'set-up' costs for the next Training Day.

Which leaves Membership subscriptions – IMTAL's only guaranteed and 'large scale' source of income out of which all operations and activities for the year must initially be funded. You will already have received your invoice inviting you to renew your membership from June 2009 to May 2010.

May I urge you to renew your membership as quickly as possible? If you are part of an Institutional Membership can I respectfully suggest that you pass the invoice on to your Finance Department for payment with due urgency? - and if you know someone who might be thinking about becoming a member of IMTAL then please convince them of the worth of what we are doing and ask them to get the cheque in the post.

In the, hopefully unlikely, event of you not wanting to renew your membership for the forthcoming year the Treasurer or Secretary would still be pleased to hear from you as this saves time and money on unproductive renewal reminders.

As you will have seen from your membership invoice it is proposed not to increase membership fees for 2009-10, indeed for those living in the 'Eurozone' fees have actually been reduced, to 35 euros for individual members and 100 euros

for Institutional Membership. At its meeting in Manchester in February your Board took the view that, in the light of the relative decrease in value of the pound against the euro in recent months it was not proper to simply allow individual European members to continue to carry, what were effectively, increased costs – and thus agreed the changes. Your Treasurer would ask members paying their subscriptions in euros to, wherever possible, to pay by credit transfer. The branch of the bank with which the Treasurer deals seems baffled by euro-transactions and therefore needs to make a charge for every little thing including simply banking non-sterling cheques; the statement informing the Treasurer that the monthly statement of account will be sent naturally attracts a charge! Euro-members, international currency markets aside, your Treasurer looks forward to hearing from you!

David Mosley
Treasurer.

PRACTITIONER'S SECTION

WHO? WHAT?

WHY? WHERE? WHEN?



Who are we? Where are we today? These were regular questions exchanged by my husband Aidan and I as we travelled into London on our way to work. To fellow tube passengers it may have appeared disturbing or at best alarming that they had unfortunately sat next to not one but two odd balls who were 'acting weird'. But as our museum location and therefore the characters we played changed almost daily, it was to us, par for the course. Who were we going to be? Ada Lovelace, Thomas Crapper, Marie Curie, Julia Margaret Cameron (19th century photographer- Science Museum) Vi, the Clippie, J.J the 19th century tube tunnel miner (The London Transport Museum), Alice the ARP warden, George the WW1 soldier (The Imperial War Museum), John Evelyn, Lady Nelson (National Maritime Museum at Greenwich), Martia Martina, the Roman slave, Mrs. Brown the Victorian grocer, William the costermonger (The Museum of London)..... The list goes on.

True, life was and is to this day, never dull, but writing and absorbing not only scripts, but the essential researched background material can be daunting. It is amazing how much information one can retain and, enlightening to discover the historical links between one character or another. This may be linguistic, knowing when it is o.k. to say 'o.k.' or practical in terms of costume and the implications of the physicality of the character. "Does my bum look big in this?"- really wasn't a problem for the owner of a crinoline!

The formation of our own company 'Play On Words' in 1990, consisting of three professional actors and one dancer, ran almost concurrently with our museum work. It soon became apparent that yes, theatre in non - theatrical spaces was not only possible but a positive challenge to a performer. Techniques to keep a school/museum/historical site visitor engaged in what may be a

chance encounter became paramount.

Do you answer in character when someone asks you directions for the toilet or pleads with you to examine their bad back? (a repeated incident when playing a nurse highlighting tuberculosis in World War II!).

How long can you expect a transient audience to stay with you?

How do you adapt your 'script' to inform the four year old and then the grandparent within the same encounter.

How do you allow your character to naturally project out from an audience which originally started with two and grew through your exchange to 100!

And, above all, how do you sustain the historical truth or scientific fact, but also embrace the interchange with a twenty first century audience.

Great lessons have been learnt and assimilated over our – gulp! – what must be now a twenty - year period of experience. Whether it be single characters, two or three -handers of set performance or 'Gallery encounters', the development of the process still continues as each project unfolds.

In recent years the company has made links with The Guildhall Museum in Rochester, partaking in educational programmes both in the museum and historical site - specific locations. Our work in the Channel Islands continues with an educational programme that has grown significantly over the last twenty years. We hope to be working this summer on a project looking at the history of the Guernsey Museum in Candie Gardens.

PRACTITIONER'S SECTION

Who? What? Why? Where? When? (continued)



Our work has expanded from the museum experience. We have both developed and written what started out as 15 to 20 minute performance pieces into one person shows. Tom Crean, Antarctic Explorer, is a one man show drawing on the life of an ordinary Naval rating who sailed with Scott and Shackleton. The show has toured all over from Australia to New York, winning various awards including an Edinburgh and New York Fringe First, performing in conventional theatres, schools, churches and even in a pub!

Sister Queens is a show depicting the lives of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth the First. It is about to go on tour in the U.K. and Northern Ireland later in the year.

The journey of museum theatre knows no bounds and we feel privileged to still be discovering and asking "what next"?

Miriam Dooley
Play On Words
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MANAGER'S SECTION

PERFORMANCE, LEARNING AND HERITAGE.

The Board has recently received a 'final newsletter' from Ruth Daniel of the University of Manchester concerning the Performance, Learning and Heritage (PLH) Research Project which came to an end in November 2008. A number of IMTAL – Europe members participated in the Performance, Learning and Heritage Conference held in Manchester in April 2008 and that Conference was fully reported in the Winter 2008 edition of 'Insights'.

Some of the information reported in the 'final newsletter' is quoted below:-

'The three and a half year project.....has culminated in publications (including journal articles, plans for an edited book, a searchable database and a DVD) and an international conference in Manchester in Spring 2008. An overview of the project and the findings is now available.

Please see the PLH website for information on how to access the Main Report and Executive Summary and how to order the DVD.
(<http://www.plh.manchester.ac.uk>
<<http://www.plh.manchester.ac.uk/>>)

Although the project grant has now come to an end, aspects of the research will continue. In particular, the database will continue to gather new and updated material; to that end, we are very keen to hear from, talk with and learn from practitioners in the field of museum theatre/live interpretation – performers and museum staff alike – and with other scholars and researchers working in the same or similar fields both in the UK and abroad.

The PLH project database was launched at the Spring 2008 conference and may be accessed by

the PLH website. It houses many digital resources connected to performance and heritage. There is also an interactive map which makes it easy to locate data. If members are involved with new initiatives or spot any major gaps in the information recorded and mapped then please contact Ruth Daniel at Ruth.Daniel@manchester.ac.uk

The PLH Research Report and Executive Summary and the PLH Report CD Rom and DVD pack are all available by the website. 'The pack includes the full Research Report – the project rationale, narrative, methodology and detailed findings together with detailed 'data trawls' from each of the 4 main case studies – and edited highlights from the four main case study performances; there are also extracts from keynote speeches (by Catherine Hughes, Baz Kershaw, Laurajane Smith, Tony Jackson and Jenny Kidd) given at the international conference.....held..in April 2008.

The performance extracts illustrate vividly and uniquely the diversity of museum performance and costumed interpretation practice, and the diversity of sites and audiences that the practice serves. Included are extracts from:-

- 'The Gunner's Tale' and 'The Chelsea Pensioner's' Tale at the National Maritime Museum (London) – for the general public
- 'First person interpretation' and 'the great debates' at Llancaiach Fawr Manor (a 17th century manor in South Wales – for organised school groups
- Triangle Theatre's 'The Pollard Trail', in collaboration with the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum (Coventry) – a 'heritage trail' for the general public
- 'This Accursed Thing' at The

Manchester Museum – for general public and organised school groups

Together with the report they provide an important and timely means of accessing the research findings and a unique research, study teaching and training resource, for use by researchers and students in theatre/performance studies, by practitioners and by museum learning and public programme managers'.

(The Report CD-Rom + DVD pack is available at the subsidised price of £10 in the UK and £15 worldwide – both prices including postage and packing.

The CD-Rom and DVD sets may be ordered by downloading the form on the PLH website and returning the form to the stated address. A book – 'Performing Heritage: research, practice and development in museum theatre and live interpretation' edited by Tony Jackson and Jenny Kidd - will be published by the Manchester University Press later this year. See the PLH website for details.)

In conclusion, from Professor Tony Jackson, the director of the Performance, Learning and Heritage project:-

'The Performance Learning and Heritage research project has shown emphatically that performance has with good reason become a powerful resource in the range of interpretive methods on offer to museums and historic sites. Performance can bring alive and draw out deeper and new meanings from collections and buildings, and has its greatest impact when planned carefully to work in close conjunction with the collections, exhibitions and architecture.

Just because this research has

MANAGER'S SECTION

Performance, Learning and Heritage (continued)

unearthed the complexity of performance in museums, it is critically important not to see this as overly daunting but rather to look again at performance as a new and under-explored tool, an extraordinarily rich and valuable method of engaging the active participation of diverse audiences in making everyday relevance out of their shared heritage. In addition, we believe that, through creative partnerships – as seen in this report – museums can learn new skills and approaches that will help them to open up the entire process of interpretation for the institution as a whole.

The research has, inevitably, raised as many questions as it has answered, but we hope that it will act as a springboard for further exploration and analysis of the success and weaknesses of different modes of performance and their use at different types of site. We hope too that it provides a basis for further development and enhancement – and indeed expansion – of the repertoire of interpretive and educative strategies available to museums and heritage sites. We welcome feedback on the contents of the report.....and look forward to studying the outcomes of any future such research.

So – do please use the resources available on the website while they are still live, and please send information and queries, especially relating to the mapping of practice worldwide, to me, Tony Jackson, at the e-mail address below. Any information, brochures/leaflets can be sent to the postal address below. They will be added to our extensive archive (which also remains 'live' at least until October 2010). If there is anything that should remain confidential or needs to be anonymised before adding to the database, please make that clear when sending.

With best regards – and many thanks – to everyone who has supported our research directly or indirectly over the years, Tony Jackson and the research team.

(Contact details for Professor Tony Jackson:-
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jackson@manchester.ac.uk)

CURATOR'S SECTION

DRESSING THE PART?

IMTAL members will all be aware of the importance of costume – and the difficulties of balancing the realities of cost with a determination to reflect a period and a character's position in society as accurately as possible.

Military re-enactors will know the importance of having a uniform which is accurate to the last button- although even the best and most rigorous research can still be challenged!

However for more general costume we often suggest a period and a character through a style of dress which is familiar to audiences through portraiture and photography.

At the IMTAL weekend in Bath last year, Bristol based costumier Rebecca Sellors ran a historical costume workshop at the The Fashion Museum which challenged some of our preconceptions. For one of the exercises she provided

costume drawings with deliberate errors for us to decipher and discuss. Some of these drawings are reproduced here.

Look carefully at these designs. There are several things wrong or out of period. Can you see what they are and can you see how they might distract audiences. Maybe we need to be more careful than we initially thought!!

MENS UTILITY SUIT



1894 MOURNING DRESS



CURATOR'S SECTION

Dressing the part (continued)



Rebecca Sellors* provided us with an 'answer sheet' and suggested that we might have noticed:

Man's "utility" suit from 1941 –

In 1941 "utility" clothing regulations restricted the cut and fabrics that could be used in order to save both labour and materials. A new suit would therefore have been made as two rather than three pieces. It would not have been made with a matching waistcoat. (Pullovers and tank tops with suits became more common at this time.) The jacket would also have been single rather than double-breasted, and would not have had pocket flaps, nor would the trousers have turn-ups as this would have been considered a wasteful use of fabric.

Man's "Tudor" clothing from 1520 –

The top half of the picture is fairly accurate. However, the bottom half is out of period. It is only much later that salops lengthened down to the knee. In the 1520's they were much shorter and would also have

had panes on them. Patterned tights would not have been worn at this time. The flat leather shoes of the period would be more likely to have a square toe and often slashing. By law only the nobility could wear gold embroidered fabric.

Lady's mourning dress from 1894 -

Mourning dress at this time was subject to strict rules. This lady would not have been seen wearing the purple coloured trim or jet jewellery until a year and a day after the death of her husband. Only in the second stage of mourning was any relaxation of the full black un-adorned mourning dress acceptable. If this lady was recently widowed, and was dressed like this, she would have been considered quite scandalous!

Lady's dress from 1922 –

In the early twenties long straight skirts were more common. This commonly recognised "flapper" style became popular later in the decade. The asymmetrical cloche shape of the hat is also from the

end of the decade. At this period in the early twenties hats actually had larger oval brims, shaping the face. Although the colour is correct for daywear, the fastening (a zip!) is not. The cut of the dress would also have been more unstructured, without body shaping. Women of this period would have attempted to appear much less "busty" by wearing a straightening and flattening corset or girdle.

**Rebecca Sellors studied Theatre Design at Nottingham Trent University. She then went to work for the famous London costume house Angels where she worked on period costumes for several high profile movies, including "Elizabeth I". After some time working for the Det Ny Teater she returned to England. She now lives in Bristol and works freelance as a costume designer and maker for theatres, movies and museums. She can be contacted via email at rebeccasellors@hotmail.com*

'A REAL LIVE STEAM ENGINE'

E.Nesbit's evergreen railway story *'The Railway Children'* adapted by Mike Kenny was advertised as being staged at the National Railway Museum from 18 July to 23 August, 2008, 'featuring... A Real Live Steam Engine'. The biggest challenge, according to York Theatre Royal director Damian Cruden, 'has been making a theatre space at the NRM'. A large tent, previously a permanent exhibition area, was chosen. Blackout, to allow for a full lighting rig, and a sound system were seen as essential. The set, designed by Joanna Scotcher, transforms the space. The stage is the length of the auditorium, some 50 yards in all, with an existing railway track running between constructed platforms through the middle. Railway symbolism is evident in all of the furnishings and fittings. The sound and lighting desks are in 'signal boxes'. The audience are housed in traverse on raked seating. 'Platform 1' with lettered rows and numbered seats faces 'Platform 2', both with overhead canopies, either side of the railway line. There is a 'bridge' at one end and a black sheeted 'tunnel' at the other. A pre-show of platform activity from a cast of twenty (including ten children) as passengers and railway servants creates an immediate busy Edwardian station atmosphere. The lights go down and the performance begins.

Roberta, Peter and Phyllis are played by young adult actors but readily believable as children, in flashback. It is clear that the trio are from a privileged background. They are whisked away from London up to the wilds of Yorkshire. The children do not understand why. It is the railway that takes them on the adventure of their young lives. Mr Perks the porter at their new local country station welcomes them and encourages their interest in the



timetabled routine of station life.

A mixture of storytelling and dialogue, with the introduction of characters from the company as needed, means five of the actors taking on multiple roles. However, it is the use of the 'real railway track', once part of the marshalling yard for York Goods Depot, which makes the production so special. Sections of staging are pushed or pulled along the rails into place by stage hands as 'rooms' or 'railway compartments' arrive for the next scene. The sections serve as 'bridges' between one platform and the other, one scene and the next. Assorted luggage on the moving

platforms acts as furniture for home or carriage and stores costumes for changes. It even becomes the heavy boulders which are rocked and then pushed by the team of young child actors onto the track as the 'landslide'. This leads to the famous red-petticoat moment, as Bobby courageously halts the oncoming 11.29 train and averts a disaster.

The engine heading for the potential catastrophe is real. It is none other than Great Northern Railway 'Sterling Single No1' from the National Collection. There is effective use of a smoke machine on her dramatic entrance through



MEMBER'S CORNER

A Real Live Steam Engine (continued)



'the tunnel' into the auditorium and loud sound effects of screeching brakes as she comes to a halt, just in time. It is a stunning end to Act One.

Bobby learns from old newspapers that Father has been found guilty of selling state secrets and is serving five years penal servitude. Now she knows why Mother has been crying. She realises that she has reached that junction in life where the points have changed and she is to be sent along a different track from her younger siblings; towards adulthood.

Two translucent black curtains are physically drawn along the track to extend 'the tunnel' into the auditorium for the paper chase scene. The boy in the red jersey who was seen entering the tunnel at one end does not come out of the other. Moving flashing lights and accompanying sound effects travel along the track making the audience feel as if they are inside 'the tunnel' as a train rushes through. We fear for our three heroes who are intent on a dangerous rescue attempt. Thankfully, all are safe. It turns out the boy is the grandson of the Old Gentleman who has returned their waves from the daily London train. Bobby confides in him and seeks his help. Stirling Single then makes a second entry with a contemporary

carriage to spontaneous applause. The platforms are enveloped in dry-ice 'steam' which gradually clears to reveal 'My Daddy!' to Bobby. The family are re-united. It is a tearful happy ending.

Sitting facing the other half of the audience allowed a rare opportunity to watch reactions. Young children and adults alike are engaged throughout an emotional shared journey. They identify with 'the railway children' through their squabbles and escapades. It is wonderful to see part of the museum used as a conventional theatre space with a story totally appropriate to its surroundings. Performances, mostly two per day, could bring numbers of up to 25,000 to the museum over its five week run. Sixteen of its fifty four performances are beyond normal opening hours. This ambitious venture is a very positive step towards making the museum a cultural venue fully accessible to the community.

'Theatre in Museum', as we might call this production, is different from 'Museum Theatre'. The genres have different aims and a different rationale. 'The Railway Children' audience are pre-booked especially for the production. My observation was that after the show they walked from the theatre space through the museum and out to the car park or into York. General visitors do not come to the museum with the express intention of watching a Museum Theatre production. Yet what regularly happens after a show is that some members of the audience stay behind to talk to the performers, because they feel they can. The actors in Museum Theatre provide an interface between the objects of the collection and the audience themselves.

'Making a theatre space' was a challenge in terms of a commercial theatre's pre-requisite for a self-

contained environment which can be controlled by the artists. That does, however, distance the professionals from their public despite the close proximity of the actors to the audience. Every weekend of the year the NRM's resident Museum Theatre Company, Platform 4 Theatre, makes an informal theatre space in and amongst the exhibits. They catch an audience. Original platform furniture is placed as required and then returned at the end of the day as if theatre had never taken place. This routine has been followed for eighteen years with fifty different productions, usually two different plays per day at various locations in the museum. Still, Platform 4 reaches 20,000 visitors a year through its 400 weekend performances. There is no box office, no charge, no lettered and numbered seating, no black-out, no sound track, no back stage, no interval. The Theatre Royal has a company of nearly thirty on site for each performance. Platform 4 has a company of seven, including the writer/director, but only two, generally taking on multiple roles, are on site for performance days. The Museum Theatre shows last around twenty minutes. 'The Railway Children' runs at two hours. One is inspired by fact, the other by fiction.



MEMBER'S CORNER

A Real Live Steam Engine (continued)



Platform 4 Theatre performs not only alongside real steam engines but also on them. It is from the footplate of GNR Sterling Single No.1 that the engine's true story was portrayed; her part in *'The Races to the North'* of 1895 with fellow actor alongside on rival engine, 'Hardwicke'. The Theatre in Museum production uses Stirling Single as an inanimate actor; 'the first real locomotive to star in a stage adaptation of E.Nesbit's *The Railway Children*' (programme page 5). She certainly enhances the Theatre Royal performance and validates the setting, but *'The Races to the North'* aimed to aid understanding of the important part played by Stirling Single in 'real' railway history.

'Museum Theatre is a cohesive event where the theatrical activity does not just happen to be in a museum setting, but the theatrical activity is essentially dedicated to the overall aims of the museum itself'.

(Dr. Chris Ford: The 'Theatre-in-Museum' Movement in the British Isles, University of Leeds, 1998)

Platform 4 Theatre has performed on 'Mallard' recreating the 1938 world record breaking run of 126mph, on a LMS Black Five engine recreating the circumstances leading up to the death of heroic engine driver John Axon GC on a runaway train and in another play, representing memories from the oral history archive, on 'Evening Star' relating the events of the end of steam in 1968, on a GWR engine modelling the life of footplate men under pressure on a goods train, on a NER locomotive pointing out York's strategic significance on Britain's railway map, on a Midland Engine telling the tragic story of a driver's widow and on 'Agenoria' and the sectioned replica 'Rocket' explaining the dawn of railways. Platform 4 has even performed on a 'real live steam engine' or two moving under their own steam. In *'The Railway Children'*, Stirling Single is shunted in by a diesel. Sorry to spoil the illusion!

In 'From Eggs to Elephants' a tank

engine steamed into the self same theatre space some ten years before and coupled up with a freight wagon inside the tent for the actors, a shunter and a guard, to demonstrate the story of freight. In *'The Battle of The Gauges'*, the audience boarded two open topped carriages, hauled by the replicas of Stephenson's 'Rocket' and Brunel's 'Iron Duke'. The actors playing the two great engineers travelled on the tenders of their respective engines, one on the narrow gauge, and one on the broad gauge. They disembarked and stepped onto a stage representing Gloucester Station at a break in the gauge for a heated debate as to which should become the standard gauge throughout the land. The captive audience by this point were in traverse facing each other across the stage. They had the opportunity to vote as the 1845 Royal Commission. They then made the return journey back along their respective tracks noticing, with insight, the difference in their width.

The aim is for Museum Theatre audiences to leave informal theatre spaces informed and continue their journey around the museum looking at other parts of the exhibition in a new light.

Certainly, the objects in the collection at NRM are mostly static. Both forms of theatre, in their own different ways, breathe life into them and the museum. Long may they both continue!

Platform 4 Theatre begins its 19th season at NRM on 4 April 2009, every weekend.

York Theatre Royal and 'The Railway Children' return to NRM 23 July – 3 Sept 2009 inclusive.

Written by Chris Cade,
www.chriscade.co.uk a co-founder of Platform 4 Theatre at the National Railway Museum in York
www.nrm.org.uk



'LESS OF THE VERBAL'

– report on the Training Day held at Manchester Museum

Friday April 3rd 2009.

Twenty –four delegates from as far afield as Berlin, Basingstoke and Bolton along with two facilitators and your Treasurer gathered in the friendly environment of the Manchester Museum for a Training Day which promised 'Less of the Verbal'



Who needs IMTAL delegates anyway?

Our facilitators, Alison Hale and Emily Capstick of Peoplescape Theatre, explore new approaches to theatre in museums and they provided a day packed with fully-inclusive performance, good, practical ideas, thought-provoking discussions and gales of laughter. For a day which was billed as 'less of the verbal' the noise levels produced by the delegates were remarkably high – but these were IMTAL delegates so would you expect anything else?

Alison Hale takes up the story:-

'The day began with a performance of 'Over the Sea to London' our multi-sensory performance for young people with learning disabilities developed with the Museum of London. It is usually performed in the 'Warehouse of the World' gallery at the Museum London Docklands. When we developed this session we wanted it

to be accessible to the children with the most profound physical and learning disabilities but with flexibility for it to work for more able audiences. We certainly got the chance to test out that flexibility at the IMTAL training with a twenty-five strong adult audience! We had been challenged by our initial audience to produce theatre with less words, more interaction, touches, smells, and puppets. But we have now started to use this approach to make accessible theatre for all. During the day, we explored how it is important to make the audience feel safe – that visitors to museums, whoever they are, can be intimidated by drama. The participants noted that the use of musical instruments, a sea drum, cloth passed over the heads of the audience to signify the sea, and small wooden boats with cloves/shells / feathers attached to them, all contributed to creating a non-intimidating and creative atmosphere. An atmosphere where the audience felt not only comfortable with watching but able to get up and participate themselves... and participate they did! The moment when the whole group, in role as new warehouse workers helping the character 'Lady Isabella' with a problem, decided to get off their chairs and form a small circle in order to coax a scared bird (played by a puppet) back into its cage, was one of those special and lovely moments you get in participatory theatre where the audience really take over the running of the play. Later in the day we explored object manipulation and use of puppets, through discussion and performance. Everyone leapt to the challenge of creating their own 'Less of the Verbal' performances retelling the story of the "Three



Testing the senses – Jade with one of the scented boats sailing 'over the sea to London'

Little Pigs". We made available various 'props' and potential multi-sensory items that the group used with great aplomb. The participants were really playing, having fun – and it showed in the performances which were filled with creative energy. We also talked about incorporating object-handling within the story (as in "Over the Sea to London") and the participatory techniques we use such as forum theatre and putting the audience in role which are drawn from our influences, people such as Dorothy Heathcote and Jonothon Neelands, and the theatre-in-education movement. We ended the day with a discussion about how the ideas that had come out during the day could be developed into the participants' own work. We hope that some of that creative energy we witnessed on the day continues in the work, (the "play"!), in museums around the country.'

Your Treasurer sensed a feeling of reluctance to break up at four o'clock and a definite sense of a day well spent.

Thanks then on behalf of the IMTAL Board to Alison and Emily, the good news is that they have offered to provide a repeat day at a different venue in the near future; so if you missed this one – watch this space!

IMTAL 2009 GLOBAL CONFERENCE

We have been asked to advertise the IMTAL Global Conference to you the membership of IMTAL Europe as registration is now open.

(NB The Board will pay £30 to an agreed delegate for a report on the conference which can be used in the next Newsletter.

Please contact David Mosley (dwmosley@talktalk.net) if you wish to take this on).

Museum Theatre on the Edge
Hosted by the Monterey Bay Aquarium
Monterey, California
August 23 - 27, 2009

The board of IMTAL America wish their European cousins to know that the 2009 Global IMTAL conference promises to be an exceptional program full of thought-provoking sessions, enlightening discussions, exciting performances, and of course, the breathtaking scenery of the California coast. The program includes a keynote address by Luis Valdez, founder of El Teatro Campesino, a field trip day in which attendees will visit the Steinbeck Center and historic San Juan Bautista, a festive Fandango event, and a Gala Dinner.

Conference Registration Instructions:

You may register in one of three ways:

- To register online and pay with a credit card (via Paypal), (International attendees are encouraged to use Paypal.)
- To register online and then mail a check separately (Mailing address will be provided.)
- To register through the mail and pay by check, a printable registration form will be available here soon. (Note: IMTAL cannot accept credit cards as payment for mail-in registrations.)

	Member	Nonmember
Full Conference Registration (includes all events Monday-Thursday)	\$420 (includes 1-yr membership)	\$550 (includes 1-yr membership)
Speaker/Presenter	\$320	\$450
Single Day – Monday (includes Fandango)	\$200	\$250
Single Day – Tuesday (Field Trip Day)	\$200	\$250
Single Day – Wednesday (does not include Gala Dinner)	\$200	\$250
Single Day - Thursday	\$125	\$150

Accommodations:

A block of rooms is being held at the Victorian Inn in Monterey. As soon as they are available for booking there will be information available here. If you would like to be matched with a room mate, please email us. Please note if you are planning to rent a car, there is an additional fee to park at the hotel.

Travel:

Flying into Monterey Peninsula Airport (MRY) is very expensive and usually requires a connecting flight from Los Angeles (American or United Airlines), San Francisco (United), Denver (United), Phoenix (US Airways), or Las Vegas (Allegiant Air). Taxis from Monterey Airport to downtown run about \$10-\$12(US). Alternative arrival destinations include Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC) or San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and taking a shuttle bus (Monterey Airbus) which runs between \$30-\$45(US). The ride is about 90 minutes to Monterey.

Getting Around:

Once you have arrived in Monterey, the free WAVE (Waterfront Area Visitor Express) buses run continuously from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on a circular route between downtown Monterey and the Aquarium. The conference hotel is also a short walk from the Aquarium and Cannery Row where there is a selection of restaurants.

Tentative Program Schedule

All events occur at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey, CA unless otherwise noted.

Sunday, August 23, 2009

- 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM: IMTAL-Americas Board Meeting (open to all members)
- 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM: Registration Open
- 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM: Visit the Aquarium/Evenings by the Bay extended hours
- 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM: Sunset Sail (optional social event, additional fee)
- 8:00 PM - 10:00 PM: Trolley Ghost Tour (optional social event, additional fee)

Monday, August 24, 2009

- 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM: Registration Open
- 9:00 AM - 10:45 AM: Welcoming Remarks and Keynote Address
 Luis Valdez, Founder, El Teatro Campesino
- 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM: Concurrent Sessions

CONFERENCES

IMTAL 2009 Global Conference

- 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM:** THE POWER OF STORY: Spice Up Your Docent Presentations with Anecdotes and Storytelling
PRACTICE INTO RESEARCH - RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: The Impact of Performance in Museums
- 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM:** IMTAL International Board Meeting (invitation only)
Travel to Monterey Historic Park and Heritage Harbor
- 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM:** Concurrent Sessions (at MHP/HH)
CREATIVE DRAMATICS: A Portal for Pre-School Science Learning (double session, ends at 4:05 PM)
ENCOMPASS: Original Compassion Plays, a production of "KICK"
- 3:20 PM - 4:05 PM:** Concurrent Sessions (at MHP/HH)
CREATIVE DRAMATICS: A Portal for Pre-School Science Learning (double session, started at 2:30 PM)
SARDINES: Caught "By the Dark of the Moon" and Packed "When the Whistle Blew"
- 4:05 PM - 5:30 PM:** Visit historic adobes in downtown Monterey
- 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM:** Festive Fandango Event (included in registration)

Tuesday, August 25, 2009:

- 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM:** Field Trip Day (included in registration)
The Steinbeck Center
Historic San Juan Bautista
El Teatro Campesino

Wednesday, August 26, 2009:

- 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM:** Registration Open
- 9:30 AM - 9:45 AM:** Welcome and Announcements
- 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM:** Concurrent Sessions
LEAP FROM LEARNING INTO FUN: Improv as an Educational Tool in Museums
FROM PEE-WEE to PIAGET: Creating Developmentally Appropriate Shows
THE IMTAL MUSEUM THEATRE STAFF TRAINING MANUAL: Help Us Write the Book (Literally!)
- 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM:** Lunch
Time to Explore the Aquarium and Cannery Row

- 1:30 PM - 2:15 PM:** Concurrent Sessions
EAST SIDE WEST SIDE LIFE
STORIES: Oral History
MAKING MUSEUM THEATRE WITH INTERNS AND STUDENTS
THE MORE THE RULES, THE GREATER THE CREATIVITY
- 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM:** Concurrent Sessions
PEOPLING THE THOUGHT SPACE (double session, ends at 4:05 PM)
HOW TO INTERPRET FEMALES AT AN ARMY MUSEUM?
- 3:20 PM - 4:05 PM:** Concurrent Sessions
PEOPLING THE THOUGHT SPACE (double session, started at 2:30)
WON'T YOU COME AND HELP? Processes and Participation: Museum
Theatre Edging into the Fens
Break
- 4:05 PM - 4:30 PM:** Concurrent Sessions
- 4:30 PM - 5:15 PM:** "ON THE EDGE" A Model for Inter National, Inter Institution, Inter Actions
LITTLE LIGHTS & "LITTLE WOMAN" The Story of the Corset at the V&A Museum
- 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM:** Gala Dinner

Thursday, August 27, 2009:

- 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM:** Farewell Address and Invitation to Australia in 2011
- 10:30 AM - 11:15 AM:** Concurrent Sessions
WALKING ALONG THE NATIVE EDGE (double session, ends at 12:05)
A TALE OF TWO CITIES OF THOUGHT
- 11:20 AM - 12:05 PM:** Concurrent Sessions
WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY
"WUNDERKAMMER:"
CURACTION IN ACTION
WALKING ALONG THE NATIVE EDGE (double session, started at 10:30 AM)

For further information please go to www.imtal.org

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

THE PAST IS STILL TO CHANGE:

PERFORMING HISTORY FROM 1945 TO THE PRESENT

Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Humanities
Vytautas Magnus University
Kaunas, Lithuania
October 21-23, 2009

The conference is focused upon an important issue for contemporary society – that of interpreting the past and writing its history. The subject of the conference refers to critical historiography, proposing that history is not a stable body of fact(s) but a shifting range of meanings produced by different cultural, social and political practices (such as rituals of public memory, historical re-enactments, museums, memorials et al.) and that the general images of the past are substantially affected by art (literature, visual arts, theatre, film, performance). The conference will open a discussion concerning the performative means of (re)constructing the past, going beyond a passive interpretation of historical texts, activating a participation in the 'performing' of history. The act of performing history also describes history as an academic discipline which is involved in (re)construction and (re)interpretation of the past. Consequently the conference will discuss the problems of research and evaluation of the past as it is faced by researchers of the legacy of the Cold War, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltic region.

One of the major aims of the conference is to discuss these problems on an interdisciplinary basis, to reveal the complex multidimensional significance of the concept of *performing history*. Contributions are invited from different fields and disciplines – history, political science, social sciences, culture studies, literary research, theatre studies and visual art studies – both concerned with the past and the forms of remembering the past in contemporary society. Suggested topics include:

- Re-enacting the past: performance as interpretation of history
- Performing political action: public events and civic rituals
- Historical event/theatrical event: parallels, contexts, and methods
- Theatre of history: witnessing, spectatorship, participation
- Personal memory/collective identities
- (Re)mapping the past: site-specific practices and places of memory
- Mediated memory: readings of historical resources
- Aesthetics and theatricality of political regime(s)
- Carnival of history: memory and mass culture

Presentations of the conference will be limited to 20 minutes. Registration form containing abstract (up to 400 words) should be sent to the address below by **March 31, 2009**. Accepted papers will be notified by **April 21, 2009**. Conference fee: 50 EUR (it covers conference materials, coffee breaks and opening dinner). You may address the organizing committee for a **conference fee waiver**. Selected papers of the conference will be considered for publishing in the peer-reviewed journal.

Conference Board

Academic Committee:

Prof. Svetlana Boym
(Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts)
Prof. Leonidas Donskis
(Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)
Prof. Boris Groys (New York University)
Prof. Padraic Kenney (Indiana University, Bloomington)
Prof. Freddie Rokem (Tel Aviv University)

Organizing Committee:

Assoc. prof. Edgaras Klivis
(Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)
Assoc. prof. Jurgita Staniskyte
(Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)
Dr. Linara Dovydaityte
(Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)
Dr. Ruta Mazeikiene
(Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)

REACHING OUR MEMBERS

– A REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF IMTAL'S NEW WEBSITE

As many of you will have noticed, we have been having some difficulty updating and refreshing the IMTAL Europe website of late. We were all very grateful for the time and energy that our former board member, Loic Benot spent on managing the company that were hosting and moderating the site. However, following his resignation from the board, communication with the French based web masters became much more difficult.

We have therefore decided to create a new website. This is being built by Judith Ogden in a simple but effective user-friendly format so that it can be updated regularly by a board member, rather than us having to ask our web hosts to manage it. Judith has great experience in this area, having built sites for several choirs and amateur theatre groups with large and diverse memberships, as well as many professional companies and organisations.

Although much of the content of the existing site will remain the same, there will be several new features on the new site that will be of benefit to IMTAL members, and to their potential clients and customers.

The principal change will be that members will have the option to create and regularly update their own professional profiles in the database of members. There will be space to input contact details, a profile describing what you do (1000 characters), an image and links to your own websites.

There will also be a search engine built in to the site, so that if a client is looking for a supplier who works with a specific period, using a particular set of skills, based in a certain area, they will have a much better chance of finding them. This new feature will enable the services that members offer to be made accessible to non-members as part of their marketing strategy.

On the home page there will be a scrolling selection of featured member profiles that will change daily, therefore acting as a shop window for both the members themselves, and more fully representing the wide range of members that we at IMTAL Europe are proud to be associated with. This replaces the "member of the month" feature.

As the board members will be able to update the site, we anticipate it becoming much more dynamic, with more regular news updates, a resources section, communications about forthcoming events and summaries of past events. Downloadable documents can include articles, documents and features as well as the ever popular newsletters.

Instructions on how to update your profile will be on the site, and an email will be sent out from the secretary once the site is ready to go live.

In the meantime, get thinking about how you will want your profile copy to appear (maximum 1000 characters) and especially think carefully about what key words you want to include that may be picked up by the search engine.

Anna Farthing

STOP PRESS!!

Website goes live on August 1st.

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

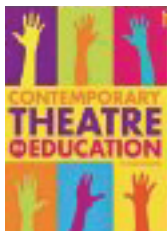
THEATRE, EDUCATION AND THE MAKING OF MEANINGS: ART OR INSTRUMENT?

BY ANTHONY JACKSON

Published by the Manchester University Press (2007)
Hardback – ISBN 978 07190 65442 – priced £55
Softback - ISBN 978 07190 65439 – priced £15.99

Anthony Jackson is Senior Lecturer in Drama and Co-director of the Centre for Applied Theatre Research at the University of Manchester. But as many IMTAL members will know, Tony is also the leading academic in the field of theatre in education and in particular in "performing heritage". His books are also very readable and highly regarded both by scholars and practitioners in the field.

The book is described as "a study of theatre's educational role during the 20th and the first years of the 21st centuries... the variety of ways the theatre's educational potential has been harnessed and theorised, the claims made for its value and the tension between theatre as education and theatre as 'art': between theatre's aesthetic dimension and the 'utilitarian' or 'instrumental' role for which it has so often been pressed into service."



I found it fascinating and truly comprehensive. I think it will be of particular interest to IMTAL readers as it puts the kind of theatre that takes place at historic sites and in museums firmly within the long and venerable tradition of theatre in education and theatre as education. It will be of use to anyone having to advocate for the use of theatre as a learning medium rather than as solely entertainment. It will also provide ample ideas for those faced with the task of generating material as there is a diverse range of case studies, some of which are illustrated, representing activity over nearly a century of educational theatre.



Topics covered include an early use of theatre to campaign for prison reform; workers' theatre, agit-pop and American living newspapers in the 1930s; theatre's response to the dropping of the atom bomb in 1945; post-war theatre in education; theatre in prisons; and the as mentioned before, the use of performance in historic sites.



Tony's new book, "Performing Heritage", stemming from his recently completed major three year research project into performance, learning and heritage, will be out early in the New Year. In the meantime, I would consider this latest work a great investment and a good read.

Review by Anna Farthing.

Contact Details

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