

Pinter play restaged 50 years on



GRAHAM BURKE

The first play by Nobel Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter (Hon DL 1998), which was first staged at the University 50 years ago, was restaged in May this year in the same room in the Wills Memorial Building.

The Room had its first production in the University's Drama Department in May 1957. The play was introduced to the department by a student, Henry Woolf (Cert in Drama 1957), and performed in a converted squash court. To mark its 50th anniversary, Simon Reade, then Artistic Director of Bristol Old Vic, re-staged the play with third-year drama students.

The students had close contact with those involved in the original production, including Harold Pinter and Henry Woolf. One of the performances was attended by actress Auriol Smith (BA 1958) who played Mrs Sands in the original production.

One of the performances was recorded by the British Library Sound Archive as part of its Theatre Archive Project. The project, which is supported by the University's

Alumni Foundation, also hopes to track down those involved with the 1957 production to capture their memories for a series of oral history interviews which will be conserved at the British Library and the University's Theatre Collection. The original cast and backstage team, audience members, reviewers and anyone else with memories of that first production are invited to contact the project team. Contact Jamie Andrews on jamie.andrews@bl.uk.



THEATRE COLLECTION

Top: production photo from the 2007 performance. Above: the 1957 performance.

Welcome

Welcome to the newsletter for Drama: Film, Theatre, and Television alumni. In addition to the rest of the news you will read here, there are two notable things to report on. Firstly, the University has decided to allocate £13 million for a new Graduate School and Research Centre. This will allow us to redevelop the site adjacent to the current premises behind 29 Park Row. The building will house a third performance space, a centre for research students, space for visiting artists and research projects, a gallery and a digitisation suite to ensure that our work can be showcased locally and globally. We will also substantially refurbish the Theatre Collection to ensure the highest standards of preservation and secure its long-term future as a museum. The new building will allow us to expand our Masters teaching, our PhD recruitment and our research capability. The build is expected to begin in 2009 for completion in 2012.

The second is the very sad news that Professor George Brandt passed away in late September. George was a key figure in the history of the Department. He was one of the first academics to establish film and television as a subject of study in the UK. George pushed through the Postgraduate Certificate in Radio, Film and Television, which gave many bright graduates from all kinds of disciplines the opportunity to acquire the creative and intellectual framework for a professional career. We have lost a charismatic and challenging teacher to whom generations of graduates are indebted.

Jon Dovey, Head of Subject, and **Jacqueline Maingard**, Head of Education

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New staff

DR CATHERINE HINDSON,
LECTURER IN PERFORMANCE
STUDIES

'My teaching and research is focused on popular performance and gender. Recent research has focused on celebrity female performers working in London and Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. My current research agenda has two interconnected strands. I have an ongoing fascination with the popularity of stage illusion on the Victorian and Edwardian magic and with how ideas about magic influenced, constrained and encouraged female performance. I am also focusing on the Beerbohm Tree Collection: a body of material held by the University's Theatre Collection.'

TERRY FLAXTON, CREATIVE
RESEARCH FELLOW IN HIGH-
DEFINITION IMAGING

'At dusk, lights seem to glow too brightly. For instance, traffic lights seem too green or too red. This is because the brain is switching between two technologies within the eye and brain – the rods and cones – which have different functions: one to see colour and the other to see luminance. Using this idea as a metaphor, and extending it to take in the definition or resolution of an image, there could be said to be a boundary where the brain reacts to different levels of image definition with either belief or disbelief. To investigate this liminal space, I will be creating various installations that exploit this cross-over point.'

PAUL CLARKE (PhD 2005), GREAT
WESTERN RESEARCH FELLOW.

'Performing the Archive: the Future of the Past' is hosted by the University, in collaboration with Arnolfini and Exeter University. I will be organising public dialogues with artists and academics, speaking around past works held in the Live Art and Arnolfini archives. We will explore best practice in documenting events for the future, ways of animating the archives and using them as resources for reuse and revival. Hopefully this will lead to a major exhibition, performances and a conference at Arnolfini.'



The tale of a transit van

A chance conversation with a tutor had a remarkable outcome for Greg Bailey (MA 2007).

Reading for a Masters in Archaeology for Screen Media, I had reached that critical stage in the academic juggling act when I had to decide on a dissertation topic. I was hoping to find a subject for a short audio-visual work, which would reflect on archaeological process and theory while being original and watchable. I was at the wheel of the van driving a small group back from field trip when Dr John Schofield outlined his plans for the summer. Together with my friend Cassie Newland (MA 2005, PhD Archaeology and Anthropology 2005-) he intended to archaeologically investigate a contemporary motor vehicle. They planned to undertake a study of the contents, bodywork and engine and record the oral history of the van from the people who used it. You might say that I immediately

jumped on the bandwagon, except that our vehicle, generously donated by archaeologists at the World Heritage Site of Ironbridge Gorge, turned out to be a Ford Transit van, the erstwhile 'backbone of Britain', now just another MOT exam failure.

Even before work started, our project attracted media attention. Ongoing debates on several well-established archaeology websites and a feature on the BBC web site were followed by a mention in *The Guardian* and a cover story in *British Archaeology*.

My dissertation film *In Transit* came to form an integral part of the 'van project'. The film was shown at various archaeological conferences in the UK and has also been chosen for screening at academic conferences and archaeology film festivals in Canada, Australia, Spain and Italy. It can be viewed at www.archaeologychannel.org/.

Media practice

Some 40 delegates from the UK and overseas attended the third annual symposium of the Journal Of Media Practice, organised this year in association with the Department of Drama and convened by John Adams.

The main focus was on ways in which practitioner researchers are developing or locating their work in research contexts. The key themes that emerged included the importance of referencing creative, theoretical and critical influences in ways that do not over-determine the work itself; the importance of robust yet sensitive peer review systems and criteria; and the need for established means of publication, exhibition and dissemination of practice research works. The discussion was followed by the launch of the Screenwork DVD, edited by Jon Dovey, which provides an innovative means of disseminating peer-reviewed media research practice.



Illuminating the past
**Bristol brings rare magic lantern
 slides back to life**

A remarkable collection of picture stories that fascinated audiences before the invention of the movie camera has been restored to life thanks to the University's Theatre Collection.

The seven sets of late 19th-century, hand-tinted magic lantern slides were used to educate, entertain and mystify audiences. They tell stories with such evocative titles as *Christmas in*

Paradise, *Nellie's Prayer* and *Scrub, the Workhouse Boy*.

The stories are part of an archive of more than 400 magic lantern slides which have been conserved, catalogued and digitally preserved. They are now available for viewing and free educational use via the Theatre Collection's website www.bristol.ac.uk/theatrecollection/.

in brief

FRINGE FIRSTS

Four former students of the Department won 'Fringe Firsts' at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this year (out of 15 awarded): Mark Ravenhill (BA 1987), Dan Rebellato (BA 1989), Tim Crouch (BA 1985) and David Greig (BA 1990).

UNINVITED GUESTS

Paul Clarke (PhD 2005)'s company Uninvited Guests, which he started while a student in the Department, was invited to be part of the British Council showcase of the best new and experimental theatre in the UK.

STUDENT Q&A

David Nicholls (BA 1988), screenwriter of the feature film *Starter For Ten* and the comedy series *Cold Feet*, returned to Bristol in March to take part in a Q&A session with current students as part of Screentest, the national student film festival.

BAFTA AWARD

Jeremy Brock (BA 1991) was awarded a BAFTA for 'Best Adapted Screenplay' for *The Last King of Scotland*. Jeremy worked with Peter Morgan to adapt Giles Foden's novel.

GLOBE BACK IN BRISTOL

Miles Gregory (PhD Drama 2003-) oversaw a programme of open-air theatre in Bristol during the summer, which included a production by London's Globe Theatre.



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Theatre Collection

In 2009 the University will celebrate its centenary and to mark the occasion it has just launched the Centenary Campaign. The £100m campaign is the University's most ambitious initiative to date and will transform how Bristol develops throughout the next century. The Department's Theatre Collection is one of just 21 projects chosen to be supported by the campaign. It aims to raise £1.5m towards a purpose-built museum, specialised archive storage and improved research facilities.

For over 50 years, the Department has been in the rather unique and very special position of having the Theatre Collection housed within it. Over the past decade or so many changes have happened, including the acquisition of major archives such as those of the Bristol Old Vic, Irving Family, Live Art, London Old Vic and Welfare State International. The collection also achieved museum status in 2001.

This has been accompanied by soaring visitor numbers, which now

include schoolchildren, academics, researchers and theatre practitioners, as well as the general public and students and staff.

The Theatre Collection is now regarded as one of the UK's greatest theatre archives. However, in order to do justice to this unique record of our national cultural heritage, and to use it as a platform to develop new and exciting teaching and research activities, we need to establish a modern museum space and state-of-the-art archive facilities. Additionally, activities generated by the proposal will help the Department to maintain its position at the forefront of current drama theory and practice. In the longer term, the purpose-built strongrooms will ensure these world-class archives are protected for future generations to learn from and enjoy. Our hope is that gifts to the Centenary Campaign will provide seedcorn funding for this ambitious programme of works. For further information about the campaign visit www.bristol.ac.uk/centenarycampaign.

Colouring in

A new project researching the history of colour film in the first half of the 20th century has received a major grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Led by Professor Sarah Street, the three-year project, entitled 'The Negotiation of Innovation: Colour Films in Britain 1900-55', is a comparative analysis of colour film processes introduced to British filmmaking during this period. It aims to provide an economic, cultural and aesthetic history of colour film, based on archival sources, the film trade press, related literature/periodicals and textual analysis.

The team will investigate how emergent technologies had to make a case for their superiority in a market that was dominated by cheaper, black-and-white films. Hundreds of films will be analysed, ranging from silent films that used techniques such as tinting



and toning, to films that were celebrated for their experiments in colour cinematography, including Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *Black Narcissus*. In the second year of the project, the Department will host an international conference on Colour and Film and in 2009-10 the University will run a series of lectures on the theme of colour.