Monk, Nicholas, Carol Chillington Rutter, Jonathan Neelands, and Jonathan Heron. "Re-opening Spaces: Between Production and Curriculum." *Open-space Learning: A Study in Transdisciplinary Pedagogy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 92–115. The WISH List. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849662314.ch-004>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 00:42 UTC.

Copyright © Nicholas Monk, Carol Chillington Rutter, Jonathan Neelands, and Jonathan Heron 2011 2011. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Re-opening Spaces: Between Production and Curriculum

Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.
(Albert Einstein, interviewed in 1929)¹

It is March 2008 and a group of higher education professionals are asked to leave Strathclyde University's 'Innovative Teaching for a 21st Century Europe' seminar room and walk down to the lakeside of Loch Lomond. Befitting the best features of the OSL project, a new and 'open' space is immediately established for the use of creative learning and performance practice. The participants are asked to recite some lines from Macbeth, breathe the Scottish air and *experience* Shakespeare's verse. This intervention adopted an experiential approach to address issues of university pedagogy. It demonstrated our work with students through participation and enabled the group members to engage more fully with the subsequent requirements of the workshop and its theoretical implications.

This snapshot is a useful introduction to a chapter that is an analysis of the practical possibilities of the 'liminal' space between theatrical production and the academic curriculum. This chapter records and reviews two practice-as-research projects undertaken at The CAPITAL Centre between 2008 and 2010: 'The Fail Better Residency' (theatrical production, practical workshops and devising processes) and 'Re-performing Performance' (Shakespeare archives in teaching and learning). The first project made use of the knowledges of theatre practitioners and their potential in academic and transdisciplinary environments. The second project begins from the material remains of Shakespearean performance and their potential in digital and pedagogic environments. Both are offered here as self-contained and specific case studies, although connections will be drawn through ideas of the 'liminal' and the 'maverick' in relation to processes of production and curriculum. In fact, each case study explores the space between production and curriculum and the emergent possibilities for students, educators and practitioners. In both cases spaces are opened – or re-opened – in order to promote experiential

learning, creative teaching and embodied research. Traditional hierarchies are dismantled and students work as collaborative practitioners.

The Fail Better case study re-opens textual space through theatrical production, practical workshops and devising processes. Using a theatre company with an existing affiliation to the University, Fail Better Productions (run by Warwick alumni), we researched and developed the concept and methods of OSL in a collaboration that became a formal artistic residency. Using theatre practitioners as re-animators of text, and rehearsal methods as re-interrogations of text, students worked in direct collaboration with the resident company. This section focussed on the first year of residency which began by recruiting a student ensemble to perform a world premiere² at The CAPITAL Centre and the Belgrade Theatre Coventry. Between 2008 and 2009, practitioners from the resident company also offered transdisciplinary practical workshops for over one thousand students exploring a wide range of texts (from Beckett to Shakespeare, Gogol to Ovid, Søren Kierkegaard to Sarah Kane). In addition to this, they worked with students to devise new work for the stage, co-ordinated the first annual New Work Festival with students as artistic collaborators, and developed applied theatre across the university. In the case of practical workshops for the English department, between 90 per cent and 100 per cent of participants rated their experience of workshops as 'excellent' or 'good' (in most cases the former).

Working with the resident company through theatrical production, members of the student ensemble evaluated their learning as follows:

The ensemble nature of the company also permitted a fantastic degree of collaborative work, allowing the possibility for the cast to sculpt a significant amount of the action around the script ourselves. The flexibility and interpersonal dexterity of the director facilitated this and was fantastic. In short, an eye-opening experience, one which has inspired me and which I hope to repeat.

From a practical point of view I had the chance of practicing and learning new techniques of set construction. This let me appreciate how much work is involved in building a space for performance – especially the amount of consideration to detail – not just in terms of thinking of the smallest nuances to build an atmosphere, but also to the details of the concepts and characters of the piece.

I also believe that the experimental nature of our rehearsal process greatly contributed to the success of the show. I have learnt that it is possible, and in some cases necessary, to deviate from the text itself and indulge in a devising process around characters and themes in order to fuel the performance and make it richer.

I really liked how [the director] worked with us. I liked the way the games were fun but had a purpose directly related to the work we had to do. I only really realized the significance of this during the performance. The first night I felt lost and all over the place, and I felt daunted when I could hear the audience react. That night I thought about how many of the games involved really listening to the reactions of people around you. I learnt to retain more focus I feel.

The student voice is cited here to amplify the creative and intellectual potentials of ensemble work and performance practice. These four testimonies reflect the collaborative, spatial, experimental and formative nature of theatrical process and its unique capacity to develop the personal, social and emotional growth of the participant. The residency project enabled students and practitioners alike to establish a new space for collaborative learning; a space *between* production and curriculum. The practices from theatrical rehearsal facilitated new kinds of learning and discovery. The projects were neither unique to drama education nor higher education; they were a blend of what was possible in the space between these centres of authority.

In this chapter we attempt to offer three transferable modes for artistic residency within higher education environments, as well as using our digital archive to illustrate moments of artistic and academic revelation. Our three examples relate to the resident company's different channels of engagement, and can be loosely defined as: theatrical productions; practical workshops; performance process. There is reflection at the end of the section upon the theoretical and pedagogic implications of these modes of practice. We begin with theatrical production and a line from Lorca's *Play without a Title*: 'DIRECTOR: This is not a theatre' (García Lorca 2008: 80). In Lorca's unfinished play, a director refuses to allow the performance to commence and instead challenges the on-stage audience to 'recognize these things deep inside yourselves'. Like Lorca's fictional director, the resident company designed and delivered a programme that re-valued the rehearsal process

as a learning experience for the participants. This project created a practical and aesthetic space in which to establish a student ensemble, working to professional theatre practices and open to emerging opportunities for applied performance in higher education settings.

The intensity and immediacy of an ensemble and a production team in performance generates an event that not only exhibits the embodied learning of the ensemble, but also stimulates new learning for the audience. Having the opportunity to work as professional artists in a resourced environment, small groups of undergraduates developed both performance and interpersonal skills. Working as devising performers or members of the production team, the students were treated as collaborative artists and professional colleagues. Rehearsal was structured and implemented to the highest standards and included engagement with a director, designer and translator. The production opened at Warwick as a world premiere, then played alongside a major production at the Belgrade Theatre Coventry for an audience of international practitioners and scholars. However, the production also operated as a catalyst for academic learning across the university. As part of the induction programme for English and Theatre Studies as well as Philosophy and Literature, students attended the performance and participated in follow-up interactive workshops exploring the conceptual underpinnings of the production and Lorca's text. 'European Theatre', a large optional module in the English department, placed the production at the heart of its curriculum and required students to attend both the production and a tailor-made learning event.

Despite academic tensions between the traditional text-based study of theatre and the emergence of performance studies as a paradigm shift with the discipline, opening night was attended and reviewed by postgraduates of both Shakespeare Studies and Performance Studies as a formal component of their work. Delivering an educational experience of mutual interest to these groups is another example of the capacity for creative events to establish a shared space for dialogue. For students of the MA 'Shakespeare in Performance' module, the production stimulated discussion about 'recycled Shakespeares' and analysis of Lorca's poetic re-appropriation of characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the case of the postgraduates of International Performance Research, the production initiated dialogue about the line between performance and identity, theatre and reality and other issues relating to contemporary performance.

The Philosophy students felt their learning was enriched through engagement with text (and opened up through performance). Having attended the production and its subsequent workshop, first year students of Philosophy and Literature specifically evaluated the impact of the experiential work upon their academic study:

‘It challenged the perception that one, as an audience member, is merely a passive part of the theatrical process.’

‘I’ve also questioned how I interpret texts.’

‘A very interesting, engaging and stimulating experience.’

‘I will think about a text in more of a physical way.’

‘It allows one to view drama in a more innovative way and see literature as an active rather than passive art.’

‘It was helpful to examine the diverse ways literature can be analysed philosophically.’

‘I think I will think more deeply and precisely.’

‘The workshop added a sense of personality to art. It is important to add personality to work.’

These students are articulating modes of practice – challenge, questioning, engagement, physicality, innovation, diversity, precision and personality – central to the OSL approach.

The performative space celebrates these attributes, which may not be equally true of the arenas of lecture and seminar. The pedagogic benefits of this performance project are clear: a theatrical depth for those immediately involved with the production, as well as a range of cultural opportunities for students, publics and institutions. There is no need to re-iterate the communal and transformational nature of performance here, but this often-theorized area lies at the heart of the success enjoyed by this project.

Like learning, performance is ephemeral; it hits the ‘impact agenda’ and then evaporates before there has been a chance to document it. As suggested already, the digital – as opposed to the textual – may enable us to capture moments of performance, whether academic or artistic. To enable this, it is important that educators insist on self-reflexivity not only for themselves, but also for their students. In this project, every member of the student ensemble was required to document his or her process through a medium of their

choice. The reflective journal was offered as a model of good practice which many of the participants adopted. We also had, however, blogs, sculptures, mind-maps and enough material to hold an exhibition outside the performance space. Perhaps the most engaged piece was an unedited video diary which captured the learning in a way usually hidden from the educator.

Reflecting on performance (and its remains) allowed us to articulate an analogy to learning: theatre-making has universal principles that reveal its participants at their best: 'small means, intense work, rigorous discipline, absolute precision' (Brook 1968: 67). These principles were central to our work with the students, but they also dictate a performance-based pedagogy that informs the most accessible channel of this residency: the embedded practical workshop.

The practical workshop is, of course, central to OSL activities: as Vladimir pleads in *Waiting for Godot*, 'let us do something, while we have the chance!' (Beckett 1965: 79). The process-based model of creative learning encourages formative learning with opportunities to demonstrate this learning (as summative) *through* performance. In 2008/9 over one thousand students engaged with OSL through workshops designed and delivered by resident practitioners exposing students to an inclusive model of a practical workshop. This 'open-space' approach requires the student to participate in a learning experience that enables them to be both creatively and intellectually engaged in multi-sensory activities adapted from theatre practice and drama education. Alison Shreeve reports on the interplay between artistic practitioner involvement and disciplinary academic learning (Shreeve 2010). Her categories of identification reveal the different levels which creative practitioners can engage with higher education settings. These are: 'dropping in' (transferring knowledge), 'moving across' (using examples from practice), 'two camps' (bringing in your own practice), 'balancing' (exchanging knowledge) and 'integrating' (eliding knowledge).

The first three categories of interaction reinforce the boundaries between creative practice and higher education (ranging from the practitioner as resource to a healthier reinvigoration of practice through engagement with research). The last two (balancing and integrating) remove barriers between two worlds and reveal the practitioner collaborating with academy staff and students. Our aim was to move beyond the 'dropping in' nature of CAPITAL's earlier association with practitioners, towards strong examples of balancing and integrating to facilitate the exchange and elision of knowledge. The

resident company's first year of practice focussed on three rich areas for Arts and Humanities provision, based on their existing specialism: the drama of Samuel Beckett and Sarah Kane, Shakespeare in contemporary performance and recycling of myth in new work for the stage. As a result of reflective practice and cycles of evaluation, the resident company moved towards a more 'open' approach for year 2, favouring a transdisciplinary approach that aimed to 'balance' and 'integrate' through its various collaborations.

The first strand involved the practical exploration of Beckett's drama through workshops embedded in modules across the department. The workshops were offered in place of existing seminars to all students of 'British Theatre Since 1939', 'Literature in the Modern World' and 'European Theatre'. Having adapted the resident company's already established expertise in exploring Beckett through public performance, we extended this strand to offer creative learning events exploring the drama of Sarah Kane, another playwright the company had staged professionally.

'Literature in the Modern World' is a course for most first year undergraduates in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies. For many years Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* has been taught by lecture and seminar. At the invitation of the course convenor, the resident company designed and delivered a practical workshop exploring the text in performance using methods from rehearsal as part of an inclusive workshop model. As we at the University enter our third year contributing to this module, we encounter finalist students who have come to expect the practical workshop as part of their literary studies and respect the role it plays in preparing them for life beyond university. Here is a representative selection of statements from the student evaluation forms:

'I enjoyed it, there was no pressure or intimidation to perform which left me feeling more encouraged to.'

'Really good to work in a different space doing something which isn't merely sitting around discussing [the] play – [it] makes you think more [when] performing, moving, watching, listening. V. enjoyable.'

'Made sense, or grasped at a sense of a play that can be very austere.'

'Very enjoyable, insightful and educational.'

'This should be done with all texts/plays of a difficult nature as it adds variety.'

‘Excellent awareness of how students are to learn best – awareness of [the] comfortable/uncomfortable border.’

‘I was dreading it, but was more than pleasantly surprised. Thank you.’

‘Really enjoyed myself; the way we worked in pairs and as a group meant it was a very open and unintimidating space.’

Like the space, the openness of the question at the end of the form (‘any other comments?’), gave these students the opportunity to capture something important to hear: their *enjoyment* of the embedded workshop. Enjoyment despite initial dread, enjoyment and the inference that lectures and seminars may not be equally enjoyed, enjoyment *because* risks were taken in a safe space. This is especially noteworthy given the text under investigation; Beckett in practice can be accessible and enjoyable, Beckett in the academy can be difficult and critically complex.

Our Shakespeare strand of practical workshops (on *Richard II* and *King Lear*) revealed similar findings to the Beckett work, most notably the call for the department to adopt a ‘hybrid’ approach to teaching and learning; activities relating to Shakespeare in performance are dealt with in the next case study (Re-performing Performance).

Although the residency project exists within the context of a research-intensive community of scholars, the performance process has provided a prized resource for inquiry-based teaching and learning within the university. As Ceres states in the first scene of *The Persephone Project* (Fail Better Productions’ second performance project with the ensemble), ‘We’re starting with a search’.

This section offers further examples of residency projects, informed by our increasing transdisciplinary approach to OSL. Certain core theatrical practices (ensemble learning, spontaneous improvisation, practical experimentation) have re-opened spaces for collaboration and exchange across the university. The first project of this nature explored retellings of myth, and challenged the student ensemble to develop and perform a new writing project, based on the Ovidian tale of Proserpina. Having re-told this myth in various incarnations since 2006, the resident company re-opened their process to the undergraduate ensemble in both 2008 (through practical workshops modelled on a theatre laboratory format) and again in 2009 (as a devising process leading to a performance at the first New Work Festival). Collaborating with a theatre director and a designer, these

students worked as creative collaborators and devising performers. This creative project provided another environment to refresh and renew a group of students interested in performance opportunities and the application of these skills to other contexts.

The New Work Festival, which provided students with the opportunity to show their own work-in-progress performances (both curricular and extra-curricular), alongside professional projects, was a culmination of the residency programme. This unique three-day event celebrated the uses of creativity and performance through devising and new writing processes. It included plays written and performed by lawyers, a visiting youth theatre group, new work in translation and assessed performance work for new practice-based modules. This festival was repeated in the second year of residency, which brought various new projects into focus and ensured a creative environment for performance learning and artistic risk. This event demonstrates the impact of the residency, subsequently extended to include: (a) transdisciplinary learning, working with every faculty across the university to embed workshops and initiate new partnerships; (b) production placements, developing the ensemble through special projects and 'real world learning'; (c) performance research, exploring and documenting the discoveries emergent from theatrical processes.

The next example engaged the student ensemble as 'applied performance' practitioners in both training and creative contexts. Our Networking session for the Graduate Skills Programme required this ensemble to simulate a role-play experience for the training participants. As part of this session, the ensemble's developing performance skills became a resource for both pedagogic research and graduate training. The 'lively action' emergent from the interplay of doctoral students and undergraduate performers, facilitated by a research fellow and a theatre practitioner, established a popular event in the graduate student calendar. Here is a practical commentary showing the workshop facilitation for this session:

The 'Practical Networking' workshop was offered for early career academics and postgraduate students wanting to develop their professional practice. The session uses methods from drama education and applied theatre to encourage an experiential response and high levels of participation. In the hour preceding the workshop, members of the student ensemble are taken through a practical workshop to

prepare them to work in role during the training session. Certain factors are emphasized such as the 'given circumstances' of the situation and the use of 'status playing' to enhance improvisation. The performers are given specific roles, characteristics, status number and objectives in relation to the forthcoming activity. The participants are briefed before they enter the space with the following text:

You are attending an interdisciplinary academic conference at a prestigious college of the University of London. You are seeking employment at such an institution and this department has been advertising for an Assistant Professorship. You will be giving a paper as part of the day and you are determined to impress. When you enter the room you will be standing in the 'registration and welcome' phase of this conference. There will be in-role characters in the space (representing associates of this highly respected department) and you should interact with these characters as well as each other. You should behave as yourself, but use this opportunity to experiment, explore networking challenges and be prepared to take some risks. Have fun.

They are introduced to the dramatic space gradually and they are required to immediately engage with the experience. They often move between habitual behaviours demanded by the situation itself and new possibilities emergent from their interaction with the ensemble and each other. Some engage totally with the task, taking far more social risks than they might in real life; others find the performance conditions challenging but the situation ensures engagement from all. Eventually, this activity is brought to a close by the facilitator (usually remaining in role to introduce the start of the conference). At this point, the performers and participants form a circle to reflect on the improvisation. Pairs are created, to encourage evaluative discussion from every member of the group, and each pair will share a reflection with the circle. This practice ensures a shared sense of focus, makes the facilitator aware of group concerns and sets the agenda for the focus of the subsequent workshop. It is important at this stage to draw out the challenges of 'networking' and establish a definition to use over the course of the session. It is also useful to introduce the performers one by one, allowing the participants to reflect on their interactions and discovering during

the first activity. The final task for the performers could involve the identification of positive methods of communication and engagement during the role work, especially if this can be generalized to repeated modes of interaction.

There follows a 'status' workshop, using methods adapted from Keith Johnston and Brigid Panet. The resident company have found that these methods are transferable to most workshop situations and appeal to a large range of participants (from students of Business to professional actors). During this session the facilitator works with the early career academics as an improvisatory ensemble to emphasize the importance of non-verbal communication and flexible inter-personal approaches. Using a pack of playing cards to introduce a simple scale from high status to low status, this mechanism provides an inclusive and enjoyable way to incorporate performance into training sessions. Ephemeral concepts of 'presence', 'energy' and 'flow' are activated by this approach, and identified as central to effective communication and meaningful 'networking' encounters.

The session has a final stage to transfer the applied theatre methods to the working life of the participants. This 'active plenary' required the individuals to compose an engaging account of their research specialism or professional focus. They are asked to make sure that this account is time-limited and clear to any non-specialist audience. Once they have this text, they work in pairs to coach each other in the delivery of their 'pitch/monologue'. At this stage they are encouraged to use methods developed in the earlier part of the session and identify status numbers as part of this process. Small groups are then formed so this work can be 'performed' in a safe and supportive environment. To close the session, the small groups relay the effective modes of communication and ways in which listeners were engaged during this activity. The whole group returns to a circle at this point to relate the experiential work to the objectives of the session and patterns of behaviour for future professional practice.

The final example from the resident company's different channels of engagement is an event for Brain Awareness Week entitled 'Shakespeare and the Brain', a collaboration between university neuroscientists, psychiatrists,

scholars and the resident company. Members of the public were invited to the Warwick Arts Centre to hear academics in conversation and see scenes from Shakespeare performed by our undergraduate ensemble. This event established multidisciplinary opportunities across departments, leading to new understandings and pedagogic possibilities. This area of 'applied performance' makes use of the expertise of a devising ensemble to ensure the success and quality of an event. This particular event required creative management and performance skills to incorporate the scientific and literary components. Specific specialisms relating to the use of spatial and technical elements ensured the best possible shape for the event. The specific transfer of knowledge (from researchers to the public) was made possible *through* performance. As with the New Work Festival, 'Shakespeare and the Brain' occupied the 'liminal' space between production and curriculum.

For Turner and Schechner, 'liminality' can be defined as 'a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities' (Turner 1990: 10–11). Inciting the liminal, and positioning the performance as a space between boundaries or disciplines, we can consider the transformative and subversive nature of creative acts. In a university context, theatrical processes and productions represent liminal states between one position and another. 'Liminality', as cited by Meyer and Land, also suggests difficulty and challenge, especially in relation to the 'portals' of higher education experience:

A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. (Meyer & Land 2006: 3)

Once we have accepted the 'threshold concept' within higher education practices, then we should look to practitioners and processes that best support the liminal and the transgressive. The theatrical rehearsal and enactive workshop are models of inclusive, accessible experimentation. As self-reflexive and ensemble-orientated spaces, they allow students to

experience threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge in a safe, creative environment. These cycles of practice make creative use of failure and take social risks in order to heighten their sense of engagement and efficacy. Over time, values emerge from the liminal, and meanings exist *between* centres of authority. In this sense they represent a positive challenge to authority, and can also be understood in terms of the maverick.

The case study that forms the second part of this chapter concerns the notion of 'maverick spaces', and focuses on the Re-performing Performance project. The project re-opened archival space through innovative teaching methods, e-learning strategies and practical workshops. Our starting point was the idea of 'Maverick Shakespeares', as defined by Carol Chillington Rutter in an essay that sets out to consider

the work of three theatre directors whom British critics have celebrated and slammed: they're the awkward brigade, scrappers, innovators, anarchists, the avant-garde, wreckers, visionaries, purists, vulgarians mindlessly courting controversy, geniuses. They are mavericks who, as much playing the system as bucking it, have achieved for Shakespeare in Britain over the past quarter century a radically alternative performance life to the 'official' one on view at the NT and RSC. (Rutter 2005: 338)

From the conviction that the maverick might also represent a positive challenge to the received wisdom of Shakespearean pedagogy, we began to imagine a new kind of performance archive, made *live* through performance-based learning and digital projects documenting an ephemeral process. Collaborating with the very same theatre companies under analysis in the 'Maverick Shakespeares' article, we planned to transfer their radical energy to teaching and learning. Using the theatrical process as the best available model, we wanted to re-animate literary texts, re-create performance archives and, both literally and metaphorically, re-perform performance. In consultation with various theatre companies and cultural organizations, we initiated a practice-based approach that introduced new learning strategies and digital resources to encourage the use of archival materials as creative and educational stimuli. Our work with these objects responded to the ephemerality of performance and learning, and made use of both dramatic and digital 'open spaces'. The records of this work are now available and

are divided into four sections: 'Staging the Dream', 'Staging the Witches', 'Reading the Archive' and 'Reading the Object'.

We also launched a resources area, which included the Nobby Clarke Northern Broadsides photographic collection, and RSC performance histories as downloadable material for teaching, learning and research. The following is the Re-performing Performance project description:

Shakespeare Studies at Warwick is defined by the premise that Shakespeare's plays make their meanings in performance. Performance speaks an international language. Performance gives immediate, embodied access to 400-year-old texts and a physical route into Shakespeare's astonishingly rich but (increasingly) remote writing. But performance is ephemeral. So how do we capture performance? How do we hold it in an archive, and how do we animate archived theatre records to re-perform performance for research, teaching and learning? Working with actors and directors, designers and musicians at The Royal Shakespeare Company, Footsbarn Theatre Company, Northern Broadsides, Cheek by Jowl, the National Theatre and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, we at the CAPITAL Centre are creating 'The Live Archive'.

Beginning with materials deposited with us by Northern Broadsides, we are making a digital archive of promptbooks, production photographs, costume bibles, set designs, programmes, posters. Working with Footsbarn during their recent visit to Warwick with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a student research team documented the performances and associated events.³ This material is now being used by our students as part of this unique website. We imagine this e-learning resource in two ways.

Firstly, this website is a record or guide of our own pedagogic work with archival material. Using Shakespeare's most ephemeral roles as a starting point, we re-construct his witches and fairies using the archive as creative stimulus. We offer a range of possibilities for using theatre records in a range of performance-based learning experiences. We encourage our students to engage practically with the complexities surrounding performance and memory. We offer downloadable introductions to specific collections and critical analysis.

Secondly, we challenge you – the user of this website and the participant in this project – to generate your own content by browsing our resources and re-performing performance in your own teaching and learning spaces.

This section considers two of these digital spaces in detail ('Staging the Dream' and 'Staging the Witches') before reflecting on the pedagogic implications of 'Maverick Shakespeares'.

Staging the Dream was our first project and related to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, in particular, to the following challenge:

Let us recount our dreams. (Act IV, Scene 1, line 195)

This line, spoken in the Shakespeare play by a sleepy Demetrius after being woken by Theseus and the hunting party (and described as 'a wood-bird' beginning to 'couple now'), reminds us of a preceding line on the nature of the ephemeral:

These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned in clouds. (Act IV, Scene 1, line 183–4)

'Far-off mountains turned in clouds' serves as useful description of the archival process in relation to performance. The difficulties and complexities surrounding this process were part of the central investigation for our community of learners and researchers studying Shakespeare. To enable the students to 'recount our dreams' we conceived of a new kind of archive, inspired by existing practice, meeting current demand for technology-enhanced learning and using theatre records to stimulate a variety of performances: creative, pedagogic and critical.

There are a variety of models to observe when thinking about the use of archival records in relation to Shakespeare Performance Studies. From the hands-on work of visiting undergraduates of literature at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust,⁴ to the vocational training of students of theatrical production at South Bank University (in collaboration with the National Theatre),⁵ the record can act as powerful symbol and stimulus of the practice it documents. Likewise, digital projects from Christie Carson's 'Designing Shakespeare'⁶ or Nicoleta Cinpoes' 'The Jacobethans'⁷ to the latest e-learning developments at the V&A or the National Theatre all signal a hyper-real turn in archival practice and associated education work.

Various attempts have been made to make the archive perform a more creative or experiential function within higher education. The active

use of material records and the passive use of digital objects are modes of transmission that seem to represent a problematic threshold between the past and the future. Each activity could be enhanced or subverted by the communities of practitioners, scholars and educators working with the collections. In this study, student-researchers had the opportunity to enhance and subvert archival practice by becoming directly involved in the practical documentation of performance and the creation of alternative records. We focussed on a practice-led investigation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as part of a wider project exploring the use of Shakespeare archives in teaching and learning.

We began with two 'Maverick Shakespeare' companies – Northern Broadsides and Footsbarn Theatre Company – and two very different productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Having recently acquired, on loan, the Northern Broadsides theatre records as part of CAPITAL's live archive project (in collaboration with the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies), we were keen to 'resuscitate' these records in our performance-based learning environments. Co-incidentally, Warwick Arts Centre had programmed Footsbarn's revival of their *Dream*, to be performed on campus in their tent on midsummer night 2008. Prior to this, Footsbarn would also be giving their first London performances in over a decade by staging a 'Shakespeare party' at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in June of the same year. We decided to document these events. A team of four undergraduate researchers began the process of documenting selected Footsbarn performances at Shakespeare's Globe and Warwick. The four students were recruited through a formal application to the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme and an interview process led by The CAPITAL Centre. This particular project was a unique opportunity for interdisciplinary practice-as-research with a range of cultural partners including Footsbarn Theatre Company, the Warwick Arts Centre and Shakespeare's Globe. Exploring the capacity for undergraduates to work as both collaborators in research and producers of knowledge, ideas about the nature of archival practice and theory were unsettled and reconfigured.

Exploring several research questions at once, the students became particularly interested in trying to capture and record the experiential and liminal effects of the Footsbarn performances. It was suggested that they document how performance transformed (a) the Shakespeare play, (b) the

company's aesthetic and (c) the Warwick environment. To contextualize their documentation of the local performances, we organized a field trip for the team to attend and record their experience of the Footsbarn Shakespeare Party at Shakespeare's Globe on 24 June 2008. As advertised on the Globe website:

- Through a riot of visual theatre, masks, dance, puppets, magic, circus and the juicy bits from the *Complete Works*, 16 performers from 11 countries will throw a truly unforgettable Shakespeare Party.
- Drawing upon the traditions of carnival, this will be a party to end all parties – a delicious feast of colour, comedy and music.
- For 35 years the acclaimed and totally unique Footsbarn Theatre have been spreading Shakespeare's genius across the world. Now, for the first time in fifteen years, and following their sold-out production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Paris, Footsbarn return to London with their new show specially conceived for Shakespeare's Globe.⁸

One of the highlights from the digital archive includes rare footage of Footsbarn performers leading the audience from the Globe's yard to the piazza. Responding here to their interest in the spaces between spectators and performers, the undergraduate researchers captured a genuinely liminal no-man's-land, and here we recall Turner's 'fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities'. This experience became the catalyst for our documentary project at Warwick. The following outputs and records were decided upon: interviews with audience and company members (now available as learning materials on the website); records of the transformation of Tocil Field into a performance space (with additional footage taken inside the Footsbarn tent);⁹ video from a three-camera shoot capturing the full performance on Sunday 22 June 2008; digital files representing a 'live archive' but subject to a standard meta-data system.

We have these materials, but are they theatre records? Or are they acts of glorious failure? For how *does* one document a riot, a party or a dream? In seeking to archive performance, we all become Demetrius (turning 'far-off mountains into clouds'). Furthermore, this project unsettles

traditional boundaries between learning archives, digital repositories, cultural memorialization and intellectual property. These students were learning about performance, not only through performance but through the responsibility of the researcher trying to remember performance for future learners. One of the research students reflected on this very problem:

When choosing what material from our archives to put on the website, I found more challenges with objectivity. Inevitably my opinion of 'the best' material to upload would be different than someone else's, and it would portray my take on the experience. To combat this issue, I asked other people's opinions on what should be uploaded ... I wanted the clips to be un-biased, so [we] used a spreadsheet to calculate the ratio of audience comments, and to calculate the subject areas most touched on. [We] then took into account comments that were most often said when editing.

Another student elaborates:

I learnt to be open-minded and analytical about the way in which our archives could be utilized within teaching and learning, making sure that our materials were extensive and multifaceted enough to be interpreted in a wide number of ways. The experience not only forced me to assume the role of the creator of learning material as opposed to my role thus far as a student, it also forced me to re-evaluate and reflect on my definition of learning material itself. I found my previous (perhaps conventional) conceptions of what constituted a learning material greatly challenged. I began to acknowledge how the process of learning could be enhanced by the use of digitized media materials like the ones we sought to create in our project.

Here we have undergraduate students engaged with research methodology and open to the ethical implications of their practice. The students discuss how the resource 'blends both the academic and the experiential' and reflect upon the 'new means of interacting with a production'.

Indeed, this approach to documenting performance answers some questions and challenges posed by scholars in the field. For Holland and

Orgel: 'We need to ask, as essential questions: what did the audience see, and how did they feel about what they saw?' (Holland & Orgel 2004: 1).

Dealing with performances and events as opposed to poetry and narrative either allows us to adopt non-scribal modes of documentation and unconventional approaches to preservation, or it heightens the importance of the material object and adoration for the published text. The ephemerality of the live event would seem to demand either the documentary permanence of the textual record, or a paradigm shift towards a new kind of record that re-simulates liveness in its very form, and therefore respond to Eugene Ionesco's principle that 'only the ephemeral is of lasting value'. Quoted by Baz Kershaw in his *Theatre Ecology*, this 'absurdist dictum' is re-cast as a central concern for the trans-discipline of Performance Studies. When considering the demarcation between live events and documents, Kershaw comments on the 'fault-lines being redrawn' in relation to practice-as-research projects: 'Some truths concerning the past were resuscitated in the present through knowledge created *in* performance' (Kershaw 2006: 36). For Kershaw, working with the archive is an act of 'resuscitating performance', and the archival record can re-stimulate the creative process. To better understand the knowledge contained within a performance of Shakespeare, we should explore and capture the experiential mode of performance before applying this to our knowledge of the text and its editorial past.

For Richard Schechner: 'Too little study has been made of how people – both spectators and performers – approach and leave performances. How do specific audiences get to, and into, the performance space; how do they go from that space? In what ways are gathering/dispersing related to preparation/cooling off?' (Turner 1982: 186). This comparison between the audience's preparation and reflection with the performers' preparation and reflection proved a rich area in relation to our students' learning. Cited here, it carries with it the suggestion that there may be a pedagogic equivalence to be explored. How do students and educators prepare and reflect? How do they gather/disperse in relation to the learning space?

In this particular project, the learning space was also a performance space, and the students' unconventional behaviour towards it (as practice-based researchers) stimulated new knowledge and possibility. Whether Shakespeare's Globe or Footsbarn's tent, the theatrical environment was a rich resource for capturing learning, performance and memory. Our Shakespeare in Performance module for MA students of English used

these digital documents of the midsummer performances to recapture their impact. Against this work, the MA students were asked to carry out traditional archival research at Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and to share their research with the group under the titles of 'Space', 'Transformation' and 'Fairies'. This enabled each student to research an individual production at Stratford and learn about theatrical responses to the challenges of the text across performance history. These activities included discussion in seminar, documentation on a web-platform, an experimental glossary of terms and an open-space presentation. Returning to the Globe Theatre as a stimulus for radical archival practice, we presented these postgraduate students with the original material records relating to Northern Broadsides' performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and highlighted key preservation issues. In role as detectives solving a mystery, they pieced together a detailed description of a production that none of them had witnessed. Re-performing a performance that seemed 'small and undistinguishable', they were able to speak on record with authority for half an hour which now serves as a tertiary record on our website. This work invited students to use archival material in the open space of postgraduate classroom. It heightened participation, engagement and connection with the materials, but it did not yet require them to re-embody the performance memories. For this, we must return to the 'weird sisters'.

'Staging the Witches' responds to a performance history of the 'weird sisters' and the material remains of theatrical productions of *Macbeth*, and this section will reflect upon a series of experimental workshops exploring Act I, Scene 1. Along the way we demonstrate the value of kinaesthetic methodologies – as well as the uses of digital technologies – to enrich advanced textual study of Renaissance literature. This evolving workshop model was initially delivered in three different contexts: for local school children (as part of our Widening Participation programme), for final-year undergraduates (the core English module 'Shakespeare and Selected Dramatists of His Time') and for academic communities (at New York University's 'Shakespeare: Page Stage Engage'; Strathclyde University's 'Innovative Teaching for a 21st Century Europe'; and the 'Shakespeare Association of America' in Chicago 2010). This hybrid of Renaissance text, modern performance history and learner-centred practical work demonstrates ways in which it has been possible to factor an intellectual component into the workshop-based version of our compulsory third-year Shakespeare module at the University of Warwick.

This practical workshop makes use of both archival material and rehearsal methodologies, and represents another richly liminal space of possibility, between production and curriculum. As already noted, the archival space exists between performance and memory as well as providing a fertile pedagogic opportunity for work that re-opens texts, spaces and concepts. The first stage of the session juxtaposes an open space with the first page of the text in the folio edition. The participants stand together as an ensemble and begin to use voice and physicality to animate two highly rhythmic lines from Shakespeare:

Fair is foul and foul is fair/
Hover through the fog and filthy air.
(*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 1, lines 11–12)

The following is an edited transcript of an interview that conveys the workshop facilitation in close detail:

I begin the workshop by getting the students to recite the text, to understand the rhythm, to release energy in their bodies, to get their voice working, to think about themselves as actors, as performers of text, as performers of ideas. We haven't yet used the word 'witches', we haven't yet thought about what the play might mean, what it might have to say about violence, about ambition, about revenge. We simply have students speaking text, responding to themselves and each other through movement. They are then given a task to imagine what an audience might see on stage at the opening of this play. Who are these three characters? Are they indeed 'weird sisters' or are they in fact 'witches' with supernatural associations. Without a significant academic introduction, we're asking students to think for themselves and then show physically – through a tableau – what the audience might see at this moment of the play. And through this process, they're considering what kind of imaginative world forms the location for these events. With very clear restrictions of time and space, the students come up with an image to show the other groups. This image is then decoded, it is 'read' – as a text might be – simply as an image. The other groups are asked: Who are we looking at? Where are we? What are the bodies telling or showing us? What kind of world might we be in? What kind of production are we in?

It's at this point when the interests of the group emerge. Some students characterize the witches as bureaucrats coming to the end of a formal meeting, asking when the three are due to meet next in the boardroom. Sometimes we are shown strange creatures, physically ungendered by members of the group, entwined together in some surreal way. Alternatively we might be shown something quite traditional – three women sitting around a cauldron, clearly adding the bit and scraps they have collected during the day. Once this process of creating, physicalizing and reading the images is over, I then introduce selected archival images from the plays performance history.

To begin with, a selection of images from the Royal Shakespeare Company archive (at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust) is used to evoke what we frame as a 'history of possibilities' as Carol Chillington Rutter terms it.

Notes on Archival Image One (Trevor Nunn 1976)

Three women are alone on stage, creatures of an uncanny world, and products of a world that is already dark (or has a lurking darkness?). A claustrophobic feel, the physical proximity is incredibly important in 'reading' their weirdness, in understanding that their weirdness is also human. A three headed creature or three creatures bound together?

Notes on Archival Image Two (Adrian Noble 1986)

Clearly shows three women, but also scavengers of the battlefield. They have higher status than the previous production and show generational difference. They are women who could fight at any moment. This image sets up the idea that the violence contained within the play is somehow given voice or permission by these women. They are bound within the same pattern of violence: the battlefield, the armour, and associated rituals.

Notes on Archival Image Three (Dominic Cooke 2004)

Emphasizes the weirdness of these sisters; he uses a stark setting, ropes, partially masked figures, strange physical behaviours which conjure out of nothing. And indeed this is where this opening scene can have particular potential in the live theatrical setting. Creating something out of nothing is precisely what magic does in the play, but it is also what theatre companies do on a daily basis. Creating an illusion for Macbeth to believe in, is a similar situation to the audience experience.

Cooke's production has a sense of the maverick about it, the sense of the experimental which we have seen on some Stratford stages, but there are mavericks elsewhere. The Northern Broadsides 2002 production, for example, had three figures literally emerging from the earth. As the audience walked into the performance space – in this case a renovated industrial mill – the earth, composed of rags and earth-coloured fabrics, seemed ordinary enough until the witches arose out of these materials, blues-women singing and dancing in clogs, feminine but powerful.

Thinking about these modern witches sets up the idea of transgression. They don't have to be female; they are often simply transgressive creatures. Even if we think back to the earliest performances at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, we encounter men playing witches. There's something quite monstrous about bearded ladies, men in make-up, something literally 'trans'-gressive. Of course, Shakespeare's was an all-male stage and part of their weirdness might indeed contain something of the pantomime dame or the drag queen. Is there something transgressive about their gender as well as their acts?

Using these archival images at this stage of the workshop, allows the students to question their own choices thus far. They're not being fed this information as an introduction; they already have their own embodied experience to put it against. Some of the choices these practitioners have taken will be representative of choices students will have made in the session. They may challenge ideas or assumptions about who their characters may be. Once the participants have had the opportunity to explore and discuss the range of choices represented by this visual content, they can then return to their own images, to think again about the choices they've made. They are given an opportunity to explore, adapt, or challenge the interpretations they have already made and then to think again about how they want to imagine these first key moments of performance, before we see movement, text and other elements added.

This process of students reflecting, adapting, making critically informed interpretations and presenting these ideas performatively, represents the CAPITAL approach and suggests some engaging ways of encountering Shakespeare as a performance text. It doesn't replace traditional models of lecture, seminar and discussion, but it is certainly a useful way of encouraging students to think theatrically, embodying the

text – the physicality of the text – and from that position, moving on to more critically informed viewpoints.

This facilitation guide was given in the context of using ‘Staging the Witches’ as a workshop within a third-year Shakespeare module.

Approaching their learning as rehearsal, these students were required to engage both physically and emotionally with Renaissance text. Using digital technology and archival material to enhance this process, this account exemplifies the objectives and achievements of the Re-performing Performance project. Using the concept of ‘Maverick Shakespeares’ as our starting point, we found a creative space for Renaissance text in a contemporary classroom that must embrace the digital in order to evolve. We allowed our students to become their own version of these maverick practitioners, taking risks, challenging authority and accepting the possibility of failure. The learners’ freedom to re-master Shakespeare’s plays proved a useful starting point to textual analysis, as their engagement ensured a higher level of commitment to the issues at play. Beginning with the unknown (what can we make with this text today) but moving towards the known (what was known about this text yesterday) creates new pedagogic opportunities and liberates the creative potential of the student.

To conclude: on one level, the Re-performing Performance project re-thought the relationship between archival space and learning experience. In turn, the Fail Better Residency re-thought the relationship between performance space and learning experience. These spaces are so often associated with cultural production, yet they might also have tremendous potential in relation to learning process. The performance archive and the theatrical performance have an open authority that can be best explored through playfulness, risk-taking and creative learning. In Diana Taylor’s *The Archive and the Repertoire*, she explains that there is a rift: ‘Not ... between the written and the spoken word, but between the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e. texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e. spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)’ (Taylor 2003: 19).

We believe that the case studies covered in this chapter offer a selection of approaches that, like Taylor’s thesis, challenge these traditional divisions and re-open the spaces of production and curriculum to achieve creative and reflexive approaches to learning.