

Round table: Research organisations for theatre and performance

Leading figures of four major theatre and performance research organisations discuss the impact of the RAE 2008 and current developments in the field

This event took place at Central School of Speech & Drama on 25 February, 2009

Panel:

Christopher Baugh (CB), Vice-chair, The Society for Theatre Research (STR)

Maggie Gale (MG), Chair, Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA)

Edward Scheer (ES), Chair, Performance Studies international (PSi)

Brian Singleton (BS), Chair, International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR)

Chair:

Andy Lavender (AL), Dean of Research, Central School of Speech & Drama

About Christopher Baugh:

Chris Baugh is Professor of Performance and Technology at the University of Leeds, and is leader of the university's research group in

Performance and Technology. His research interests include stage design, scenography and technology. He is also a professional scenographer in his own right, and was chair of the sub-panel for Drama, Dance and Performing Arts for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). He is Vice-Chair of the Society for Theatre Research (STR).

About Maggie Gale:

Maggie Gale is Professor of Drama at the University of Manchester. Her research interests are in the areas of gender and performance, British theatre 1900-1960, theatre history and historiography, and contemporary theatre practice. She also has an interest in applied theatre from her time as a theatre worker and trainer with special-needs community theatre projects. She is the Chair of the Theatre and Performance Research Association, TaPRA.

About Edward Scheer:

Edward Scheer is Associate Professor in the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies at the University of Warwick. His research interests include contemporary performance and multimedia arts, and he is published on Butoh Narrative Theatre and Performance Art. He is the former Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Centre for Contemporary Performance; Performance Space in Sydney, Australia; and is Founding Editor of *Performance Paradigm*, an online journal of contemporary culture, and performance. He is the President of Performance Studies international (PSi).

About Brian Singleton:

Brian Singleton is Associate Professor and Head of the School of Drama at Trinity College, Dublin – a school of drama, film and music. His research interests are in the field of Orientalism and inter-culturalism in performance, with a particular specialism in Irish, British and French cultural history. He is a former editor of *Theatre Research International* for Cambridge University Press and co-editor with Janelle Reinelt of the

book series *Studies in International Performance*, published by Palgrave Macmillan. He is President of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR).

Andy Lavender: Our four guests cover a large number of areas across research into drama, theatre and performance, and represent a number of different constituencies in publishing, as well as their own research organisations.

Each of them will give a quick snapshot of the organisation that they're here to represent – in terms of its remit, its particular attributes, any shifts in its profile recently and its contribution to disciplinary development. Then we'll open out to ask questions about what's happening to our discipline and what's changing in terms of research. Ed, shall I ask you to begin with the remit of PSi and associated considerations?

Edward Scheer: Well, some of you may know Performance Studies international [PSi], which started in New York about 18 years ago. It was formalised in 1997 as an organisation and we're just coming up to our 15th conference, which will be on 'Mis-firing, Mis-fitting and Mis-reading', and it's in Zagreb in June [2009].

I'll give you a snapshot of the organisation. This is really tough because, as I'm sure my colleagues will agree, sometimes an organisation like this has a feeling of a nuts-and-bolts operation, trying to engineer very specific outcomes. So actually standing back and seeing where it is from a broad perspective is sometimes the last thing you get time to do. I welcome the opportunity to try to do that now, but I'm not sure how accurate it will be.

We have about 1,200 members internationally, from 43 different countries, and we try and keep track of them through a monthly messaging system which goes out with a little update/reminder about what's happening. In terms of the other aspects of the organisation, it is member-based. We've been focussing

on governance since I took over in 2007 and trying to really address issues about how you properly represent those members at a board level, while keeping an eye on what the organisation is supposed to be doing.

And what the organisation is supposed to be doing, we think, is maintaining the quality of the annual conference, which is the key event around which the network is structured. We're very conscious of trying to maintain some critical distance around that event, so that it's not the phenomenon that we're all familiar with – of a travelling circus where you parasitically invade an urban centre for a week and then disappear and never go back again. We're trying to move away from that model of an annual conference, and to reinvest some of the capital of the organisation – human capital, financial, intellectual, cultural – back into the institutions and the cities that have hosted the annual conference. Trying to find the best way of doing that is one of the things that has been occupying the board in recent months. We've been looking at different options there, but I think that's been a shift in our profile as well.

Historically PSi was a great big organisation, very American: the majority of members were from North America, the conferences were in America almost every year or every second year. Over the last, five to ten years I guess, it's gradually moved away from the United States and we no longer have discussions at board level about when we are going back to America. And that's interesting. The previous president, Adrian Heathfield, was I think perhaps the last president to have to deal with that particular problem. He had one conference in New York, which was great – slightly chaotic, but great – and they'll probably go back to Toronto in 2010. But there's no sense of the pressure that there once was to address that particular part of the constituency.

I guess the pivotal thing in the recent history of the organisation was the Singapore conference that we had in 2004, where there was a lot of local cultural work – critical work – before and after the conference, which really subjected the idea of an organisation like PSi to some fairly rigorous going-over. The assumptions about an Anglophone conference, which I know

Brian's organisation has had to deal with, came to the fore there in a city where you have other international languages – Tamil, Mandarin etc – and we were all speaking English. So, as a result, largely, of that conference and the fantastic work that the organisers did around it, the organisation started to rethink itself and really started to address and grapple with the small i at the end of PSi – what that word 'international' might mean.

I think it's still a work in progress, obviously, but at least we've dismantled the unspoken North American hegemony. And, you know, I'm the first Australian president, so that amounts to something – and there are quite a few Aussies on the board and that's not a bad thing, although it's pretty expensive getting them all over for a meeting. We'll probably get to how we structure meetings and organise events later.

AL: The other organisations all have 'Theatre' in the title. Can I ask a sort of idiot's question? What is 'performance studies'?

ES: Well, it encompasses the breadth of human symbolic activity, I would say. So, it doesn't necessarily occur within a theatrical context. The papers that people present at PSi cover the entire spectrum, as you might expect, from art performance and performance in an aesthetic context to cultural performance, to modes of symbolic activity. So the old cultural performance models of prayer, ritual, song, dance, drama are a whole selection of those.

Often you end up talking about ritual and ethnography – at least, in the American model you do. I actually think the English model is pretty different. It does seem to me to be much more focussed around art performance. The model of the institution of the theatre is much more significant here than it is in the States or in Australia, that's my perception. The idea of practitioner perspectives is very big here and, in some sectors of performance studies, the idea of a practitioner perspective is a strange thing.

What's a practitioner in Performance Studies? A former colleague of mine suggested that a sex worker would be a suitable practitioner if you wanted to

get a practitioner's perspective on the field. And there are sex workers sometimes presenting work at PSi. I mean, not *practice*-based work, but research. So, it's a more diffuse field I guess – it's a less disciplined discipline, and doesn't really refer to itself as a discipline in fact, but as a field. Richard Schechner [Professor of Performance Studies at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University] has said that by 2010 it'll probably all be over and we'll have a new paradigm – except we don't really know what that's going to be yet.

AL: Thank you. Brian, the IFTR?

Brian Singleton: International Federation for Theatre Research: it's actually bi-lingual, *la Fédération Internationale pour la Recherche Théâtrale*. It was started in 1955 here in London at the British Academy, when a group of academics during the height of the Cold War decided that they would use their international contacts in order to transcend the stalemate of European politics. The first conference was held in 1957 and the reason I mention the history is that that has really determined what the mission of this organisation is. It's an NGO that's affiliated to UNESCO, and we do have a very political dimension to the work we do. We're not just concerned with paradigm shifts in the Academy, we're actually concerned about salaries in the Third World and the inability of many scholars to travel, or even to conduct their own work. And also about the inequity within scholarship itself and the inability of certain scholars in certain countries to get published, because publishing is not necessarily the output that is prevalent in those societies, and yet it is in the 'First World' and that is the measurement.

So my job as president is really to organise, or to help organise, an annual conference. We also have a publishing wing. We have a journal, *Theatre Research International*, published currently by Cambridge University Press. We've also got two book series, of which I'm editor of one with Professor Janelle Reinelt, and we've another one with Rodopi, the Dutch publisher, that's really to publish the work of our working groups. In addition to the conference, we currently have twenty-four working groups running alongside.

These are people who meet up, who get together because... it could be a thematic working group or it could be a paradigmatic working group.

The working groups started in 1991. The first two that met were Performance Analysis and Theatre Historiography. Again these were largely driven by the members of that time who were for the most part – just picking up what Ed was saying – European or North American. Certainly when I joined the federation in 1990, 88% of members were from either Europe or North America, or Japan. Japan was always right in there at the beginning. Roughly 50% now are North American and European, so that's been a massive change. That's occurred in during the presidency of my predecessor, Janelle Reinelt, who had a particular drive to make the Federation actually international. But that's caused major problems, because of what Ed was saying: you know, the dominance of the English language in the international arena of universities. Given the fact that we are a bilingual organisation, we conduct our entire business in English, apart from the one French speaker on the executive. But members have the option to speak in either English or French, and that's not necessarily translated, so to be on the executive you have to have a working knowledge of French.

But, when we move around the world we encounter huge problems because... for instance, we were in South Africa two years ago when I took over the presidency, and I can't remember how many languages there are in South Africa alone! We allowed people to speak in their local languages, and they were translated into either English or French. These are colonial languages and – we had a large discussion about this in 2007 – any language that we use is by necessity an imperial language, because of its pervasiveness and its currency.

In terms of the Theatre Studies, is it 'Theatre Studies' or is it 'Performance Studies'? Certainly when we began in the 1950s – and I wasn't even born – if you look at the scholarship at the time it was very much essentialist history, coupled together with dramatic literature. But of course that was emerging before even the first British drama department had been created and it was

out of that that Theatre Studies started to develop in other countries. That's actually part of the mission statement that we have: the development of the pursuit of knowledge in relation to theatre. We've now added 'performance', not in the title, but within every other subtitle that we have it is Theatre and Performance. We don't add 'studies' yet.

What's happened now is, of course, since the First World academy has shifted towards Performance Studies, so too has the work of the federation. But one of the things that I said on my keynote address last year [2008] at the conference in Korea was that, to a large extent, Performance Studies has emerged in North American universities and is driven very much by first-world paradigms. It isn't all-pervasive, you know – we have many members, particularly the sub-continent, who only encounter Performance Studies when they get to an IFTR conference. Their problem is very much a local one. There are many local theatre societies in which practitioners dominate and the historians and theorists have absolutely no ability to get their work published. That's an inherited tradition where the practitioners were the ones who got the training, and everyone else who talked about performance came out of PhD programmes on aesthetics generally. So, there was no training necessarily in history or theory of theatre.

My own particular view on this is that Theatre Studies or Performance Studies are very much particular to the locality, particular to an individual society and it's impossible for us as a Federation to create an international language of Performance Studies, an international language of Theatre Studies, because these two subjects are emerging at different times with different agendas all over the world. It's not our business to set a standard for the whole world, but to allow each of the nations or societies to develop their own engagement with it.

AL: Sounds a bit like the church!

BS: Which one?

AL: Maggie, TaPRA?

Maggie Gale: TaPRA, Theatre and Performance Research Association, basically began with an inaugural conference in 2005, so we're a very new organisation in comparison to the two that have just been talked about – and Brian was part of that original set-up. TaPRA came out of a perceived need to have a comparatively local base in which organisations and people could discuss their research, and we borrowed from the IFTR model of having working groups.

TaPRA evolved largely in response to the 2001 RAE [Research Assessment Exercise]. We had an association, SCUDD – the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments – which didn't necessarily address research specifically, and that's what we wanted to do as an organisation. We saw that there was a space to create an environment in which people could come together in groups, we have twelve themed working groups at the moment – and that we would have an annual conference with a membership attached. We grew from 60 people in the first year to 200-220 at the last conference. We are now in our fifth year.

One of the things that we wanted to address originally was to create an environment where there was less hierarchy than in some other organisations. We wanted a strong postgraduate body and I think it's one of the things we've succeeded at – we have two postgraduate Executive Officers and have developed, over the five years, events at the conferences specifically for post-graduates. So publishers come and talk to them about their work, they have academics run different kinds of sessions for them, and their research is integrated into the working groups. So they don't have a separate working group for postgraduates, but we've accommodated needs that they've identified: we now have a post-graduate prize where last year we had publishers bidding to give us the highest amount of money! We also have a postgraduate bursary system.

One of the things that's happened over the past four or five years is that the working groups have now gone through their first generation of convenors into their second generation of convenors – who have a much stronger sense of the mission of the working groups. So this year we've got four or five events between conferences, set up and run by the working groups, where they're focussing on particular aspects of their work, which they then replay and develop at the conference itself. Originally, the working groups were in touch by email contact and now they're formulating one-day meetings and one-day symposiums that focus on particular scholars – so that's been quite a successful aspect of the work of the organisation.

As chair and founding member of the organisation, I took over from Viv Gardner, and we're actually in the same institution. It's not hugely competitive to get onto the executive! What we try and do is to facilitate the organisation of these working groups more than anything else. We have a remit to keep everything running but our membership is self-perpetuating, really, so one of the things that has happened with a new generation of convenors taking over is that those working groups have got a new momentum which again, I think is one of the successes of the organisation.

AL: That sounds good. I'm sure we'll come back to the question about working groups because that seems to me fundamental to how the IFTR operates as well. But let's move to Chris for the Society for Theatre Research.

Christopher Baugh: Longevity has its attractions! The Society for Theatre Research (STR) is the oldest of the professional organisations; it's over 60 years old. Interestingly, it was a major force in establishing our profession. It worked with [Professor of Drama at Bristol University] Glynne Wickham and then Hugh Hunt [Professor of Drama at Manchester University] to found the first two drama departments. It was very instrumental, for example, in winning the battle with, and on behalf of, Hugh Hunt for Single Honours. Bristol began university drama with Glynne Wickham, but that was a Combined Honours – the university insisted on that. But [founder member of the Society] Jack

Reading and the Society fought very hard, and Manchester accepted a Single Honours programme, which began in 1961...

BS: 2...

CB: ...in 1962. Also – as Brian's given us the date – in 1955 it was Jack Reading and Glenn Wickham who initiated the idea of the IFTR being, exactly as Brian indicated, a way of combining the many varied theatre and performance traditions around the world. Not in any way to homogenise, but simply to allow them to meet and to enrich each other by their interface, so to speak. [The STR] was also the founder our oldest professional academic journal in *Theatre Notebook*, which is still going strong. It was the founding energy behind the Theatre Museum. In part because its original founding members, in a world when there was no such thing as professional theatre researchers (because there were no university departments of theatre research – Allardyce Nichol was probably the closest to being a professional theatre researcher) it was a mixture of people, as indeed the Society still is, of non-professional people: museum archivists, museum collectors etc. So it's inevitable almost that the founding energy behind the Theatre Museum should have come from the Society for Theatre Research, indirectly, and it marked an interesting rite of passage.

TaPRA would have begun in any case, as Maggie has indicated, round about this period – in part as a result of RAE 2001 and in part as a result of the SCUDD not really satisfying the professional research needs of what had become a very large community of professional theatre academics and scholars. The Society of Theatre Research was founded by individuals and it sponsors the individual – it finances, it has research awards. If you go to the website – which is an interesting website for all those interested in the history and technique of the British theatre – it's very clear, it has a banner headline statement of its identity, and that has been its mark all the way along. It gives research awards. Now, in this day and age, when your faculties pooh-pooh anything less than a three-figure piece of research funding, the research funding that you get from the Society for Theatre Research is very, very small.

It's in hundreds, certainly not in thousands – it may be in a single thousand, but it's in small figures.

However, as a matter for your interest, this financing regularly serves as a *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval to allow people to gain much greater awards. We've given people things like £550 to begin a database of folk plays and, on the strength of that initial award, people have gone away and got thousands in heritage funds – particularly American scholars who say, 'Look, I've been given £500 by The Society for Theatre Research in Great Britain, I need some more.' The STR, because of its age, because of its longevity, seems to serve as some validation. So, the research awards are enormously valuable.

Of course, you all know the journal and its contents are primarily historical. Although its definition of theatre has been very, very broad, pioneering studies in pantomime, pioneering studies in popular performance, pioneering studies in street performance etc were all very much central to the Society's ambition. It also manages, for interest just to give a fuller picture, the Edward Gordon Craig Fund – which is money originally from Edward Gordon Craig on his death in 1966, more recently from his son Teddy Craig who died in 1996. And that has funded a sporadic annual Gordon Craig lecture, which was frustrated, sadly, while Teddy Craig was alive, because Teddy Craig insisted on vetting the Gordon Craig lecture before it was delivered. I was terrified because I was due to give it in 1998 and he wanted to see it. Sadly he died, but since then the first of a new series was held here and is now co-sponsored by Central with the Society for Theatre Research and will become an annual lecture around a broad remit of scenography etc. The Society's particular place, I think, will become apparent in a larger discussion, particularly in the light of the evidence base that RAE 2008 has created – the evidence of 1,800 research submissions – the sense of what is going on in the discipline, where the movements are and where, therefore, the particular challenges exist for an organisation like the Society for Theatre Research.

AL: Right, thank you. Some common themes might be to do with publishing opportunities, organisations that create opportunities that perhaps respond to changing pressures in publishing, or questions about what publishing means to different people in different places and the cultural value of publishing.

It seems to me there's something to do with enabling a plurality of activities and not being able to be mono-disciplinary or perhaps even particularly centrist about the way research is conceived. Hence the proliferation of working groups that might suggest a flattening of hierarchies, but there might be other kinds of hierarchies in play.

Variously, there appears to be a gravitation of cultural energy, if you like, away from the US. Chris has talked about – in fact a couple of people referenced – the establishment of professional research activity in Drama, Theatre, Performance. These organisations enable that, now, with a very firm evidence base, and that relates to what appears to be a trajectory for the discipline over the last say 40 or 50 years.

We've located that development from around the mid-1950s, drama departments begin to be established in 1962, and then through to the establishment of TaPRA as both a pluralist but discipline-specific organisation in 2005. The RAE 2008, in which drama appears to be robust, perhaps marks the end of that phase of disciplinary development where drama/theatre is now squarely embedded within the academy, has its own protocols and those protocols are now understood and accepted by the research infrastructure more broadly.

So, if this provides some initial areas of discussion, should we start with the question of what now is the discipline, and perhaps start with Chris – your reflections on the RAE 2008 would probably address this?

CB: First of all, I do recommend that you read – how shall I say – sensitively the subject overview that the sub-panel prepared which was made public on the 5 January, 2009 – in part because we had to be somewhat polite, or

formal, in our language, and also because it's a hefty document and therefore you perhaps need to read between the lines. Maggie and I can leap in with either examples, or to contradict, since the paradigm has certainly shifted. There is a massive shift in paradigm, putting it crudely, from Theatre Studies to Performance Studies. For example, just looking at the topic of Theatre History, there were half a dozen submissions located around theatre of antiquity in various forms – either looking at it purely as a classicist, or as a classical topic, or looking at in terms of contemporary significance. Very little was covered after that – you could count the submissions almost on the fingers of two hands – until you get locked into the 19th century. Maybe three or four submissions located around the late 17th and 18th century, maybe several submissions, and I'm talking about individual projects, not a submission of four. Obviously if somebody is a specialist in early modern theatre looking at theatre at the time of Shakespeare, all four are likely to be the same, but there was a very small number – an absolute dearth – of people looking at Dramatic Literature generally.

And there are several indications of why, not only the excitement of performance as Ed has, as it were, not defined but articulated. In other words, if at one end is human symbolic activity as appropriate within the field of performance study, then that is a giddy diversity and many people, for obvious reasons, are exploring that diversity. But there are other, slightly more sinister reasons – which is why I suggested that you might well read the overview quite carefully.

I referred rather cynically to our faculties frowning upon us if we get a research grant that is less than three figures, or thousands – or at least that's the ambition. Where are we likely to get a research grant of those figures? The Research Council, and the Research Council defines research in a really rather precise way. We, the sub-panel, had the difficult problem in our overview report on the one hand of celebrating the fact that external funding has risen from £5 million a year to over £16 million a year in the period from 2001 to 2008, and celebrating the growth from the AHRB [Arts and Humanities Research Board] as a board to a full scale research council. We

wanted to celebrate that fact and yet, on the other hand, it offers a very, very... not limiting, but a very prescriptive and a very precise definition of research. It's impossible for a single scholar to gain funding from the AHRC [Arts and Humanities Research Council], other than one of the small, rather few in number research leave schemes.

It's about interdisciplinary. It's about collaboration. And some of the strengths of the research that was submitted were people taking hold of that interdisciplinary and producing some spectacular world-leading paradigms... Mind-blowing, in other words – pushing the boundary, pushing what is or what may be Performance Study to new limits or to new boundaries, actually taking the opportunity to work with a cognitive psychologist, to work with dance, for dancers to work with sound designers, to work with scientists, to work with people in health professions, to cross boundaries in some really quite spectacular ways.

On the other hand, perhaps the weaker submissions show the pressure of the AHRC and the way its definition of research, its modality of research if you like, insists that whatever you're interested in you have to funnel it through these collaborative, potentially interdisciplinary, multi-institutional contexts. One of the challenges – that shift from Theatre Study to Performance Study – is very, very clear; very, very marked.

Do you want to add anything about any of this?

MG: I think also that more than ever before – certainly more than 2001 RAE – film scholars, media scholars who were either identified in single units as a film department or departments that have traditionally been seen as drama, have expanded their film coverage. Those areas of research were certainly far, far, far more present than they've ever been before in terms of the work that we were looking at.

CB: Yes, let me give you a metaphor. In one of our Panel O meetings we were looking at the way in which different sub-panels were grading and their

basic shapes and profiles, and Art History was actually doing quite well – it was fairly high. We were wondering why, compared with the others, and the guy from HEFCE [Higher Education Funding Council for England] gave us an interesting metaphor. He said, 'I can't talk about your particular subject, but let's take the topic of economics, for example. There are departments of economics throughout the country where there are economists who know their area of research, they know their journals, they know their discipline. They're tending to do quite well. Now, there are business schools where there are lots of economists and the business schools are not doing very well because the business schools – whilst using economists and providing a home for economists – are also stretching the boundaries of definition of what is, if you like, Business Studies and what Business Studies research is going on.'

Coming back to art history, the Art History departments are relatively small. They know precisely their journals, they know each other, they've got a very defined field of activity and they're doing quite well. Look at Art and Design schools throughout the country, which was the biggest of all the submissions within our Panel O. There are a lot of art historians in the University of the Arts and the University of the Creative Arts. But there are also lots of art practitioners, art teachers, art researchers who are pushing the boundaries of their subjects – and it's when you get people pushing the boundaries of the subjects that you're getting onto potentially thin ice. Some people rise above the ice and skate and produce world-leading research, others may flounder in the new areas, in the new grounds.

And in a sense, I'm not saying we suffered from that, but that's one of the challenges we face. In that we've left the security of Theatre as an activity, we've left the security of Theatre History, we've left the security of Dramatic Literature and we're setting out Odysseus-like on this journey in very exciting waters, but also waters which are filled with all sorts of pitfalls, because of their lack of definition, because we're treading new ground. And it can therefore create spectacular success, but also an inability to get it together, or an inability to understand and cope with rigour.

It's interesting how throughout the exercise we had the three criteria by which we judged research: originality, significance and rigour. And by the end of the exercise, by far the greatest of these three was rigour. It became the thing that actually marked out... there can be tremendous originality, there may well be some significance within the discipline, but to undertake that research with rigour, particularly if you're having to define what rigour means... If you've undertaken a piece of practice as research, where there aren't the protocols and the academic language, if you like, of a journal article or a monograph, where you're actually creating your own sense of rigour, that's quite hard. Which is why in the subject overview we make those comments quite carefully, we thought, about practice as research. There was some brilliant practice as research, and practice as research that suffered because it hadn't articulated its own sense of rigour and was not carried out with rigour.

Audience Member 1: On that last point, with hindsight might you have asked practitioners to do something different? I know you went back to the 300 word statement as a way of giving access to the research, focus and methodology of the practice and this evidence box – did that seem to work as a process, or might you have done it differently having seen the practice?

MG: I think one of the things that I found extraordinary in that process was the huge range of interpretation in terms of what people thought those statements were. People ranged widely in their interpretation of the significance and function of the contents of their evidence boxes. You literally went from a leaflet – three sentences – to a box with DVDs, with reports, with a journal article. We left it open to interpretation and the variety of responses to that was quite astounding. So, in terms of how people took on board the meaning of those boxes and the way in which they may have had to create content in those boxes, the response to significance, originality and rigour was really varied.

AL: I was going to ask Brian – Ireland didn't undergo the RAE...

CB: I've offered to come and do one if...

BS: Yes, Chris has already offered to come over and do one...

AL: And Brian is going to implement it.

CB: I understand there are some people in some departments in Ireland who feel left out and are commissioning their own private RAEs!

AL: Brian, do you recognise the sense that Chris has given of a discipline in transit, that now is inherently collaborative and actually interdisciplinary; also in some sense departing from Dramatic Literature and, up to a point, Theatre History, and embracing performance more broadly?

BS: Do you want me to talk about Ireland or internationally?

AL: Well, I think expressly in relation to the IFTR, what you see of that international context.

BS: Well, it's interesting listening to Chris on this because when you're talking about the state of the profession – of research as it is here in Britain – this could be the same statement you could make about IFTR research and the fact that we don't know where we're going. And I think that's possibly to do with the fact that we're coming at it from so many different perspectives. What fascinates me when you mention rigour is that one of the things that the working groups within the IFTR helped to establish for certain, say, practice-based researchers, is a methodology of rigour in the absence of one. I'm not sure where you want me to go with this really, other than to say that what's happening here is indicative of many countries.

One other thing that I'm interested in, and particularly when you mentioned the AHRC driving types of research... I'm currently involved in the European Commission and when you're looking for rigour it's the opposite with the European Commission, because they want as many international contacts as

possible and the first criterion for funding is pushing the boundaries. Where should we go? I mean, the funding providers are pushing this in different directions.

We give out lots of money every year, but that's really for people in what we call Band C and Band D countries economically – so it's really subventions, it's not really rewarding research, because we don't privilege one type of research over another. And one of the big problems we have is at one point do we say, 'No, you can't present your work at our conferences or working groups because it's not vigorous enough, it's not challenging enough, it's not pushing enough boundaries.' Or do we avoid this because we want to be as inclusive as possible, because we know that in the national context, within certain national contexts, people are working, that they're working in isolation and there is no national academic rigour. So, effectively, we're stuck in this quandary between inclusivity and this innate desire to improve and to establish a rigour. It's a quandary we can't resolve.

CB: There was a sense of disappointment... I think it was because we've all been aware through SCUDD over the last eight years... In fact, the working group on practice as research, which met regularly between 1996 and 2001, delivered its articulation of practice as research to HEFCE, and that was taken over by HEFCE word for word and became part of the RAE 2001. Out of that emerged Baz Kershaw [Director of PARIP], the PARIP [Practice as Research in Performance] project, and the afterlife of the PARIP project – the work of Professor Robin Nelson, tirelessly touring the country giving research seminars in practice, developing. There's also been a big debate on the development of practice-based PhDs etc.

In other words, over the past eight years, there's been such a focussed debate on practice as research, upon the attempts to develop appropriate methodologies and rigour, we were frankly in the sub-panel surprised in some areas only – not universally, but in some areas – that that debate, as it were, had borne such little fruit. The difficulty, of course – and we thought about this long and hard in the sub-panel when we were creating the criteria – we

thought we were sufficiently open in our suggestion of what the 300 words might or might not contain to allow people to make that definition, and what a portfolio box ought to contain, without being over prescriptive, because the last thing the sub-panel wanted to do was to impose [a definition] of the rigour of practice as research. As Maggie said, the enormous variation is still there, but this is the challenge of pushing the boundaries.

MG: Can I add to that? You know, it's an irony isn't it that the funding bodies are giving you money to develop research which pushes at the boundaries, but when you're pushing at the boundaries you then remove yourself from the group with which your research might be associated. I think that's partly problematic, but I also think that within our discipline we come from, traditionally speaking, individual scholarship. Not that it's not interdisciplinary at all, but to work collaboratively requires a different kind of thinking and a different kind of process of researching that not all of our institutions can accommodate – certainly not financially and certainly not practically. And I think it demands a different kind of creative thinking in some ways, and there clearly has been a generation of scholars who've worked as individuals and now that is not the dominant mode, but we haven't quite caught up in terms of our ways of working. It's because it comes from a science model, and that funding comes from a science model.

But also in terms of rigour I think we haven't yet as a discipline learned to reach out to other disciplinary methodologies and apply them with confidence to the ways in which we work. And yet in psychology, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, even in economics, theatre and performance are used as models of practice in order to assess certain kinds of research questions. And I know that one of the things that came up in the historiography group last year at the TaPRA conference was that everybody borrows from us, but why don't we borrow from them? I kind of think – yes, ok, let's just borrow, but you have to be rigorous in your borrowing of those kind of research modes. So I think there is a sort of generational shift as well as that funding shift and also the shift in terms of publishing is absolutely integral to how people's research careers can develop. In some institutions now if you can't get your work

published, you can't do it, and that was not the situation of 10-15 years ago – we were allowed to take more risks than even if many didn't take up the opportunity to do so.

AL: So we'll come onto the drivers of funding and publishing. Ed, you were going to come in previously, has that moment passed?

ES: Oh, well probably, but... in a way, what you were saying earlier about your observations on the panels and this diffusion of content and methodologies across various disciplines, I noticed it's really where PSi began. So, I wouldn't say that represents any kind of shift from the perspective of the field of Performance Studies at all; that's what it's always been, there to encompass and to encourage. It's a real problem, however, in the UK that the research councils aren't keeping up. I don't know how that's addressed – perhaps there's a role for our organisations in increasing our visibility and advice feedback mechanisms to the research councils. I don't know if these are important questions. In a way, you know, I don't simply represent the UK perspective on that so there's a sense in which PSi, because it's a nomadic organisation, isn't really based in any particular location and therefore isn't really home to any particular model of conducting research.

But I'd also say that, like IFTR, we are trying to encourage research of a kind, I guess it's an Applied Theatre model – like with the Dwight Conquergood Award that we give every year is to somebody who's working with communities which are impoverished or struggling. We try to encourage artists and activists who are working in poorer countries to apply for that award, and we have had situations where the applications didn't stack up, didn't meet the rigour test and that is a really difficult call, you know... You really want to bring that person into the discussion, but at what level would that become a meaningful discussion? And I think that's where we had to make some hard decisions about maintaining... I mean, one of the core businesses of PSi is essentially the conference – so we have to maintain the

quality of that exchange as well as fulfilling our ethical brief to encourage research and practice in poorer parts of the world.

AL: It's interesting that both PSi and the IFTR are very consciously looking at ways in which you internationalise your remit and allow a sort of integration of different sorts of research in different places. You've spoken, perhaps in a connected way, about a seepage of... well, is it research power from the US? It's not necessarily anti-American to say as much. Then, separately, it seems to me that the RAE allows the UK to profile its research as particularly robust in our field at this moment in time. What's happening there? And you, with your Australian perspective, are the best person to ask!

ES: Australia is about to embark on an RAE-light exercise, involving a lot of metrics. And of course there are no systematic metrics for this field in Australia. So, in a sense, Theatre and Performance Studies isn't even on the map, you know.

AL: Centres of gravity shift. Is it possible to say there is a new centre of gravity, or in this more plural environment where people are more connected and multiplicities play out differently, does there cease to be a centre of gravity?

ES: Yeah, I think that's true. I think there are different centres of intensity really. Scandinavia for us... last year the conference was in Copenhagen and there was a massive influx of Scandinavian performance studies scholars from different fields. That was fascinating. We want to go back and reinvest and have a smaller symposium with those people and some of the PSi people as well. Zagreb this year is looking like a very similar thing – a lot of interest from the Eastern European countries. What's evident in the past is we've just moved on and said 'it was nice to meet you', you know, 'have a nice career'. What we'd like to do now is, slow down, come back, re-invest, not exactly institutionalise, but maintain the conversation somehow. And there are different models we're investigating for doing that. But, I don't know if there's a shift in the centre actually, I just think the centre has dispersed. America will

always be powerful if you can have some of the NYU [New York University] people turn up to your conference, they attract numbers, as they have a certain star quality. I think that's undeniable. But, that doesn't mean you're constantly trying to maintain that relationship at the expense of other relationships.

AL: Yes, Brian?

BS: Yes, I agree. Research hasn't shifted in terms of a power base. The capital is still where it always was. But what we're doing is I've launched an initiative on more sustainable development of research in specific countries depending on what they need. We've two projects at their very beginning, one in South Africa and one in India. The South Africa need, which they identified themselves, was in writing up their practice. Because most of the people working in theatre departments are practitioners, a lot of them are working in theatre for development in fact: huge projects on HIV, AIDs, education etc, but they just do it, they don't write it, they don't analyse it. They don't really have a paradigm for what they do. So we're setting up a workshop there in order to...a running workshop, and we're going to fly in some people from around the world – I'll mention no names yet – to have an ongoing relationship with individual scholars.

In India, it's totally different. They're fascinated with practice as research, given their own tradition and the separation of aesthetics from actually doing it. And so this is a much more advanced project. We're hoping late this year/early next year to have a two-week workshop where all the young scholars from all over Europe will descend on Hyderabad to work with people involved with practice as research internationally. And again, it's as much about writing about it and discussing methodologies and theoretical models and paradigms for the practice. And we hope to see that as an annual event in India. So, I think it all depends on the local particular need and that's the route I've gone down.

MG: This might be really obvious, but I think the research culture in this country has grown and developed in line with an expansion in the sector. When many of us went to university, we were in very small departments, or we may have trained at drama schools or whatever. Now everywhere has three or four times as many students as once it had. You've gone from five to nearly 50 per cent participation. There are more people working in the sector. And I think there are more people from practice-based backgrounds who've come into the Academy. And that's going to have a reverberative effect on the development of research cultures in the UK context.

CB: I think also as practice as research has become embedded within individual departments up and down the country, we are actually generating practitioners who'll find a practice-based fulfilment within the academy, and that was very, very rare before 2001. Maggie just talked about people coming in and there are some spectacular examples of people who have been working, let's just say, professionally in one form or another and come into the academy and undertaken research. There is some very fine practice as research undertaken within that context, and the AHRC creative fellowships has facilitated that enormously. But we are beginning to create jobs for our own students – students who have ambitions to practice. We are creating departments where those ambitions can be satisfied, where practice can be undertaken.

Historically, before 2001 – it could have been 1998, whenever, you know, it's not a precise date – people graduated and left in order to undertake practice and then maybe come back and reflect upon that practice or develop it a bit further within an academic context. It's now much, much more possible for people to remain within the academic environment, either through a taught MA or even onto a practice-based PhD, and maintain their practice and develop their practice within our own world. I think that's something that's really very, very rapidly developed over the last eight or nine years – let's just say since the last RAE.

Certainly, as far as the evidence, the important thing, and why I'm really grateful to Andy for today in a sense, is not only to talk about research organisations, but to expand upon the RAE because it will never, ever, ever happen again. But the evidence base... well, we may have worse than the RAE... the evidence base that has been gathered. There are 16 people selected by the UK university departments through SCUDD, 16 people who examined nigh on 1,800 submissions from 600-odd academics up and down the country. The sheer evidence base, the picture that that has generated, if you like, is really quite remarkable and I think it's a useful thing irrespective of the value of the RAE. And I hope that a week tomorrow you all get lots of money! 5 March [2009] is when the funding is announced.

Audience Member 2: I must respond to Brian, because it's very interesting talking about these important development projects. I get very worried when I think people are doing fantastic things about HIV, which have such a practical use, and then they have to write about it. Why do they have to write about it? I mean, if it's going to help the practice, fine. But if it's just to support the mechanisms of research funding of things that are extrinsic rather than intrinsic to the practice, then I get worried, then I get concerned. I see that with the practice as research methodology's emphasis we get to the situation where we have fantastic methodologies, but what's produced in the end has no real value apart from the discourse around it. It worries me, I suppose, that the Western view is putting another framework on practical work in situations where it is so important.

BS: Yes, it isn't the Western view. It actually comes from within South Africa itself – we didn't say you have to do it.

AM 2: Yes, sure.

BS: I think what they're aiming for is international funding, and so therefore this is a means to an end.

AM 2: To do the practice though, not just to write about it.

BS: Oh yes, absolutely. That's irrelevant to them in a way. It's a very strategic thing that's occurring there.

[short break]

AL: I think we should pick up with the issue of publishing, which has been raised in different contexts throughout the discussion. That may connect with funding. Maggie, do you want to kick us off with this, because you identified this as a pertinent issue?

MG: I suppose I've noticed in my dealings with publishers over the last couple of years that – and I know the new REF [Research Excellence Framework] system is going to validate journal-based publications more, so I'm not talking about those – but in terms of publishers that I've dealt with, they are less and less interested in monographs because they perceive them as unsellable, and what they want more and more are textbooks. And however innovative one might be with a textbook – and you can be – they have a certain perception of what students need and the level at which one should write for the student body, and I think it clashes with the research agenda hugely.

I'm involved in two books series – one with MUP [Manchester University Press] and one with Routledge. MUP, because they're a charity really, have much more of an open remit. But certainly Routledge are moving almost entirely away from the monograph. And I think our research agendas, to some extent, are defined by what publishers perceive as being sellable. And that may fit in with a career development profile. But for example at the University of Manchester their latest strategy on research is for people to publish less and better – whatever that means – and that's another kind of factor, that's their interpretation of the RAE results. But the days of the monograph and the series of monographs are over in terms of what publishers are prepared to commit to economically from new career researchers.

CB: Just before the break, we were talking about the huge industrial scale of the expansion of our discipline within universities, therefore we've created a vast market. I appreciate exactly what you're saying, Maggie, we've actually created a huge market for publishers to fill with a new kind of textbook. A higher level, in other words, a beyond A-level Theatre Studies, a university text book in our discipline of a kind that never existed before. Which is why there are so many series, you know – the Palgrave *Performance and Theatre Practice* series, the endless Routledge series. So there will be monographs, the problem is they will hover between the highly scholarly academic monograph and the accessible top level undergraduate text book if you like. I mean we don't use textbooks as such. So, the old-fashioned scholar's monograph will disappear, but the monograph will stay there in this new form.

ES: I think Routledge got their fingers burnt recently with the *Theory 4* series, I don't know if some of you were across that but... Phil Auslander will not thank me for raising this again... but do you know what happened with that?

AL: Explain it for everybody's pleasure.

ES: Well, the editor, who no longer works with Routledge, decided, 'I've got this whizz-bang commercial idea – Routledge are now owned by Taylor & Francis, they'll love this. We'll just get a book of theory drafted and we'll apply it to different disciplines. So, it's essentially the same book, we'll just rebrand it, different author etc.' This was fine. They did *Theory for Religious Studies* first, [William] Deal and [Timothy] Beal. Basically 80% of that material became *Theory for Education*, *Theory for Fine Art* and then the next one was *Theory for Performance Studies* with author Phil Auslander who, unlike some of the other scholars, was a major name in the field, so all of a sudden people started to read this book and discovered it was pretty much the same as the first one. And this caused all kinds of problems.

To cut a long story short, it's now being withdrawn from sale and pulped because it was causing too much controversy. And it's a model that I don't think Routledge are going to hurry to repeat! We had a session about it at the

last PSi annual conference, which was attended by about 100 people, some of whom were calling for blood and some of whom were urging restraint, and Routledge were in attendance at that. I think they would have heard the concern from the sector really. And it was interesting, there was a lot of investment in the Routledge brand from theatre and performance, Performance Studies in particular, and I noticed that Palgrave are now starting to pick up where Routledge left off. Brian has a series that's looking pretty interesting actually.

But the other underutilised resource perhaps is online material. My journal *Performance Paradigm*, which we started in Australia, but is read by about seven hundred and thirty or forty people internationally, is very easy to access – you just go online and read it. We don't print, so we didn't need a massive budget, we just put the articles online. That's a model that I think is underutilised in our field. But I notice that performance research is trying to move into that terrain, slowly.

AL: That might suggest a forum for sharing or manifesting practice, because it seems to me that now, given developments to the discipline and what you've said about practice submissions to RAE, for all of the problems around that, we should be able to look more confidently at publishing platforms that show enquiry in and through practice. So, questions around publishing aren't necessarily to do with the nature of the monograph or the number of journal articles that one produces, but how practice is published as part of the research endeavour. Do you accept that?

Audience Member 3: Palgrave is about to launch its series of readers in theatre practice.

AL: Indeed.

AM3: Metier is starting a new theatre practice series as well.

CB: They're all in it!

AL: But those are still books though...

AM 3: These are books with DVDs though, and that is becoming more common.

AL: Ah, yes, well that is interesting. So, having the audio-visual resource, which might be online, as well as live performance, opens up a proliferation of publishing opportunities.

AM 3: I think what's gone is just the old scholarly monographs, the single format book, which is just paper. That seems like something that is going to become less and less common and actually you will have the web stuff, which is supplementing the book, and you will have audio-visual. And why print photos when you can have much higher quality resolution on a DVD at the back? That's where the research institution could do interesting things, I think, related to where publishing's going. And how does that feed into the research it generates? What Maggie was saying about Manchester – if you look at the new AHRC scheme for research leave, that's moving away from the 'two terms get a book out' model, which is just unsustainable. And that's led to this proliferation of books, you know, which I think I've been partial to as well, which verge on being textbooks, rather than more sustained enquiry that you can do within a Fellowship scheme that the AHRC are developing.

MG: I think one of the things about text books is there is a wide spectrum of definitions of what a text book is, and isn't. On the one hand you've got the Routledge series that Ed was talking about, where Routledge do want to do something cheap, quick, easy and mappable onto different disciplines. Routledge are also re-publishing seminal texts that they think students will buy. I'm not sure how much market research they've done – our students don't really buy books, they tend to get them online. I'm doing a project with Routledge in which they've already invested about £40,000 – that's a lot of money, even for Routledge – and I don't know if it's innovative or not, but it's a

big text book that involves source materials, copyright permission clearance, essays, that sort of thing.

Only the big publishers are going to be able to put something like that together. And you have to sell it to them as a project they can market, when actually they're the people who have the systems that can do marketing profiles. I suppose what I'm trying to say is that I don't think there's anything wrong with textbooks per se, but as a researcher, you now become more responsible than ever for sussing out the market. Where do we think the discipline's going? How do we map the canonical and the global?

AL: So, that sense of where the discipline is going is partly driven by, defined by, the academic community, in an environment where research activity is now professionalised. There's a larger volume of students engaged in it anyway, there are funding drivers that help to determine it and publishing opportunities partly through conference and seminars arranged by your own organisations that help to get the word out. Does this effect, nonetheless, disconnect with theatre practice? Because you might argue that you look to cutting-edge, contemporary theatre practitioners for where the discipline is being developed. But those people don't necessarily articulate their work as research, their work isn't necessarily figured at your conferences. On the other hand, developments in the discipline are articulated by this professionalised academy who might themselves be practitioners, but perhaps practitioners within the academy. Does that make sense?

ES: Well it does, it's a very familiar problem isn't it? But, to look at it from the example of the conference, one of the issues for practitioners attending a conference like P*S*i is traditionally that you can't get funding for something unless you're giving a paper. So, how do you get around that? This year we're experimenting with something called shifts, where people can collaborate on more creative modes of presentation. So you can have your research questions, your abstract, but the mode of delivery for that will not be reading a paper but will be some kind of performative instruction. So in a way, there's a bit of leisure domain with the logic of the paper; people will be applying for

conference funding to ostensibly give a paper, although that's not what it will be at all. I guess what follows from that is what publishing potential is there, particularly for the artists involved in that mode of presentation, and that's where we reach another kind of problem. *Performance Research* has artists' pages. Actually, in Croatia there's another interesting performance journal that does this as well – has different modes of presentation – but are they refereed? Are they peer reviewed? They are and they aren't. Again, it's a fudge. The editors certainly look at it and make critical comments, but whether or not it goes out to two blind referees... I don't know if that's really how that works.

AL: I also suggest, perhaps more positively, and to come back to the DVD, that the academic becomes partly a curator as well as an editor and a critic.

Audience Member 4: It seems to me that, as always, there is a symbiotic relationship between whatever bodies are setting the funding mechanisms and the outcomes we gravitate towards – as much as we like to think we are setting the agenda for that. And that's also seen by practitioners in industry. In this country, what actually gets produced, we like to think, is governed by our radical artists, but frequently is actually governed by what the social inclusion agenda of the government for the arts is at a particular time. So, what actual cutting-edge work is being produced, what we're actually then engaging in as academics and researchers, and producing ourselves, is to say the least, not necessarily purely governed by our own interests. But with new modes of showing and disseminating work, I'm wondering how long it will be before institutions grab that by the horns and have downloadable websites where we can stream examples of work, where we can also place articles alongside that in our hosting environment. And what governs whether that work is successful or not is how many people then want to engage with that work, be it in industry or from other academic institutions. And at which point that global community becomes much more proactive, because you can literally gear into whoever's work you're interested in.

AL: Chris and then Brian have indicated they'd like to respond.

CB: One, and it's not me putting it there, one fly in that particular ointment is the Department of Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) – their utter, utter, utter belief in the sanctified phrase of 'peer reviewed'. It's a phrase that has the same political overtones as 'patient choice' or 'parental choice' vis-à-vis education. In other words it's something that is an unspoken, a Platonic good, an Aristotelian good that cannot be questioned, however badly it operates. The peer review college operates very badly for the AHRC, but, it's peer reviewed, therefore it's sanctified. And one of the problems, inevitably, is being able to put in place something that can satisfy that notion of peer review, if you're putting practice online, if you're streaming practice and using electronic publication.

I don't agree with it, because I am pretty convinced that, with a few exceptions, there are probably few journals that I think are genuinely peer reviewed with, I hate to say it, but with appropriate rigour. There's a lot of bad practice in that area, but that's one of the things that makes it difficult which of course is why the paper, the God almighty journal article coming from STEM subjects, coming from science subjects, this is how knowledge is made, this is how a contribution to knowledge, the HEFCE definition of research, that's how it gets into the public world. That's why we're forced to use the word 'the paper'. That's why we're having to start thinking purely in terms of journal articles, because of this paranoid belief, or this utter belief in peer review being an unhallowed good.

ES: On the upside of this there's been a metastasis of new journals in our field. So there are plenty of places...

CB: There are indeed, and some of the newer journals, thinking of things like *Contemporary Theatre Review*, are offering absolute models of peer review rigour and quality and are beginning to define what peer review should be all about. Absolutely.

BS: Just a response to that. One of the success stories of our disciplines is general publishing. I had a meeting with Cambridge University Press in November, because they publish our journal at IFTR, and they, *Theatre Research International* (TRI) and *Theatre Survey*, have all bucked the trend in journal publishing and they've all made profits – even increased their profits on last year, on 2007. We discussed where this might go in the future – because a lot of the sales are digital sales, the vast majority I have to say are digital. But the digital version is just a version of the print copy, and where I think it should go is that there should be a new... a re-examination of that, there should be a real digital journal version, not just a copy of the print. Which would allow for incorporating practice and whatever in more exciting ways and I think that's right for development.

I think Palgrave's series are doing really well, I'm glad to say, but it's interesting what is selling in terms of monographs and certainly anything in Performance Studies. We published a book very early on in our series called *Dance in the Global City* by Judith Hamera, and dance scholars seem to be buying monographs for some reason, whereas, you know, theatre historians are not buying the monographs. They're just sold to libraries, and they're too expensive. They're £60 or £70 each. But really, the exciting possibility of the future is electronic journal publishing because people can download the individual article. They don't have to subscribe, they don't have to buy, and it actually increases sales.

MG: How did Cambridge respond to that? In terms of my understanding of Routledge also, they don't have the personnel to do that kind of development work. So what they want is for you to provide materials for the webpage, but actually you need dedicated designers to do that.

BS: They outsource all of that work. It's actually all being done in India, believe it or not. And they want it done as cheaply as possible.

ES: They're falling behind the American publishers – MIT Press, for instance. Look at what they're doing online now. PAJ Books has a very different online

presence than it does as a physical object. You have hyperlinks and photographs...

CB: But that may break, I mean, TRI may break the traditional publishers. I tried to publish a DVD with my book and Palgrave said no. You see DVDs will have a short shelf life. It's ten years at the very most. There's still a feeling that the monograph has got to have a longevity, even when it goes out of print it will still be there in twenty years time as a marker of thinking in whenever it was published. Whereas if we can loosen, as it were, and free up the making available of digital journals, which deliberately and in a celebratory way have a much shorter shelf life, and rightfully so, then it may well break the mode and make it easier for the sort of forms of publishing that we've been talking about and feeling are desirable, particularly for practice... may well, you know, come out in digital journals.

BS: But I also do predict that the monograph will be going in the same direction.

CB: I hope it does. I hope it does. I think people will have more confidence. Cambridge toyed with their *Shakespeare in Performance* series that Christie Carson edited in the early 2000s, I think, or the late 1990s – issuing them with a CD Rom with loads of pictures. They had so many problems with the 'CD Rom doesn't work in my computer' thing and the fragility of early CD Rom technology. I think we're getting a little bit more confident.

BS: Well, you know all our students, unless they can get access to it on Google Scholar, they're not going to go near it. Of course they don't realise that you can only get a certain number of pages on it, so you've got to buy the whole book, but I do think that's where it's going to go. I still think the monograph is going to be a marker of scholarship.

CB: In that context, do give some good quality time to the AHRC's new Fellowship Scheme. It's one of the major achievements of [AHRC Director of Research] Shearer West, she's only been there a few months but she's really

fought hard. This is the replacement for the Research Leave Scheme, which was mentioned a moment ago. It's much, much more flexible, it's very attractive, I think, to a great number of researchers in our area in Theatre and Performance Studies. Do look at the guidelines, which have only just gone up on the AHRC web early last week or the week before. Do read those carefully; it really is an exciting scheme.

Audience Member 4: The conversation about research associations has actually moved towards talking quite a lot about money and product and, to a certain sense, management and marketing. And I think the business of research, currently in the UK, is a disciplinary mechanism in the Foucauldian sense – ie everybody knows that it's shit-awful to win a big research project if you're an academic because actually you spend the next three years as a manager, managing the project, and the actual thinking is done by your assistants. I think that's the way that research has gone and we all speak it, we have to speak it, this is the real world, we are a properly disciplined subject. I don't know whether there's any space any longer – and this is where the old fogey bit comes in – for, in quotes, 'the real world', which everybody knows is measured by financiers.

The 'real world' in which we now exist, to talk about associations which somehow change the relationship between the Academy and those outside. And when you were talking about STR I was thinking: so how much do we continue to incorporate amateurs in our conversations about the discipline? And somebody else was talking about practitioners and things and I was thinking: how much do we still incorporate, or try to incorporate, those who are actually in the industry there?

I'm not talking about this half of the Academy that has its own company and does its own stuff, but remains an academic, I'm actually talking about the people who have chosen to live a different life. And how much our research associations are looking at different ways of making the new knowledges – if there are any new knowledges to be made. I think we've all ended up, I'm not saying it's you guys in particular – I think it's all of us, me particularly most of

the time as my colleagues will testify – banging on about management and money and outputs and that sort of stuff. But I'm aware that I've become disciplined as a particular creature of UK PLC and UK Universities' PLC and actually have now lost the mental capacity to think of new associations and other audiences.

CB: Well, of course the Society of Theatre Research was founded, as I said, by non-professionals...

AM4: That great radical moment of 1948...

CB: And it still welcomes them. Now the non-professional research it typically, but not exclusively, focuses upon history and one of the great strengths of the Society of Theatre Research is a commitment to the development of the archive. They are desperately important. I am passionate... obviously my CV shows what I do about theatre history and about the performative theatre. So I value that enormously. Sadly, as our evidence in the RAE showed, that is a very, very tiny proportion of the work of our departments. And the other organisations, quite rightly, serve this huge industry of professional researchers, with their needs for management and the needs for outputs and the articulation of outputs, because that's the world that we live in.

AM4: But there is that issue about what sort of conditions for what engagement you create. We're creating a world where a lot of people say: 'Ooh, well, there's no longer any space for me to engage in. Nobody does archives anymore, I once had a remote interest, I'm not going to get interested now...' That's not the way things are going and you can come at it the other way and say what spaces are we opening up and what spaces are we closing down in our institutional tribe.

ES: I would say in PSi we recently looked at this question in relation to institutionality: were we becoming an institution, and is that a problem? And some of the members were particularly keen for the board to become much more transparent and I ultimately felt that the board needed to be incredibly

rigorous and organised and clear about what we were doing so that we could facilitate a more successful ecology for the organisation. Ultimately we looked at Mary Douglas' book from 1986, *How Institutions Think*, and the more we looked at that and compared what that was talking about and what we were doing, we realised we're not really an institution at all, and we have to engage in a certain amount of management speak and organisational disciplinary behaviours to facilitate the health of the ecology, so that it can maintain itself. It can have a shape and a structure that isn't too chaotic but isn't surveilled and controlled in an absolutely rigid sense either. I don't know that that's a problem in the same way as you've articulated. It's obviously a problem for the universities, but for our associations, I'm not sure that that's a real issue. I should think the more managerial you are, the more space there is for open debate in these forms of discussion.

AL: There are a couple more questions, Brian...

BS: Just very, very quickly and just to respond... I agree that we are becoming disciplined, but I think we're not actually representative of the organisations that are out there. We're very similar actually in what we do. Perhaps STR is the only one that incorporates the lovers of theatre. But, we've got UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette), SITMAS (International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts), the scenography organisation whose name escapes me – is it OISTAT (International Organization of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians)? There are all sorts of other professional organisations that incorporate what scholars and practitioners... it's actually driven by practitioners in fact, and so the institutionalised researcher hasn't had a major impact on them.

AM4: But you have to look at their profiles, who's making the biggest impact where?

AL: We'll move towards the close; there're a couple more questions to pick up.

Audience Member 5: This is actually a question that I've been nursing since the beginning of the discussion. Maybe I'll just introduce myself briefly because I'm new to London. I'm a lecturer in Theatre and Performance Studies in the English Department at King's, and I do Text and Performance there, that's run jointly with RADA. So I actually am working very much in this joint space between theatre-makers, but also some of theory, and a lot of the developments at King's are actually responding to so many of these kinds of questions that have to do with curating spaces that bring the theatre etc inside a university and an institutional context, but also thinking of them in parallel. The question that I have, on some level relating to that, is coming back to this question of institutions and global and language. So maybe the language is discipline and institutionality, but also on a very basic level, the problem of the English language and French, as with AFTR. I'm a member of the CID UNESCO (Conseil International de la Danse), which is an international dance council. I'm going this April to Turkey for the international congress there. There's the international conference in July.

I've so far been quite baffled by the degree to which it's run as an amateur congress, although there are thousands of members and, as an organisation based in Athens, actually has a very second language – English as a second language – web presence. And all of my communications have been in very broken English, very illegible, very difficult to manage. It seems to me to attract not at all the world of dance scholars who go to CORD (Congress on Research in Dance), and to those kinds of congresses, or increasingly to those zones in IFTR and PSi. Well, PSi has always included dance in the past spectrum, but IFTR which is actually opening up to dance, that is a sort of academic dance scholarship community, whereas what the CID UNESCO attracts is dancers from Romania who are showing, in a non-discursive, academic, language.

And this goes a little bit back to this comment that you made before and to this problem of South Africa and doing the practice of Aids research or Aids helping etc. Presenting 'these are our dances in Slovenia', 'these are our

dances in Romania' – that's what you get when you go to this congress. You get a certificate that shows that you went and you get a DVD actually in their congress proceedings. But there's a really interesting, I think, question that it raises in terms of the reach and institutional legitimacy that comes from lingua franca English, an English language and a university base structure that on some level shapes the discipline or shapes the thinking and shapes the practice in a way that's utterly different from the model here.

So, it's a reflection, a question. It's a huge question that I have in terms of what UNESCO's role is on some level, what's been the model with FIRT in terms of helping theatre research develop in a way that dance research is only just beginning to do. But, also where those two actually meet – not in the dramatic literature so much, but in that place before theatre. Where theatre was actually dance theatre, in all traditions; where actually dance and theatre are just two sides of one coin. Dance develops, or is an art form on some level on its own; theatre on some level can be as well. But there is historically an anaesthetic live arts, a place where theatre and dance are actually a single activity. These are a range of questions: they have to do with languages of institutions, it has to do with these centres of where these organisations are instituted, and what's this discomfort that we have, that I've experienced myself, attending a congress such as this, that doesn't actually have a, sort of, discursive frame that actually incorporates or recuperates it into the academic world that these other congresses function within?

BS: You know, I don't think it's necessarily... it's not a language problem. I think it's a question of discourse. I think we're operating in multiple discourses here, in the different organisations and going back to a previous point, which one has the most power? Which one's driving the agenda? And I think certainly the discourse of research is definitely doing that. But I'm not sure what the agenda is behind your question. Do you want the dancers to actually speak in our discourse of research or do you want us to dance?

AM5: Well, I do want us to dance, that's for sure. I think we all do and we've lost it. We all are built to and we've lost it. I've been interested in getting more

involved in CID UNESCO and, on some level, I see this as this world organisation that has an enormous membership and that doesn't actually have any currency in the academic – I'll call it a community, with all of the problems that that poses – and so it's a curiosity as to... and maybe it's just a way bigger conversation... this isn't the space for it. I'm interested in how to even begin to think about what it is that this could be, whether we would want it to be like what these other models offer. Here's what seems like a slightly dysfunctional, but yet quite extraordinary and very off the beaten path kind of organisation, and is there a space... how would we even envision growing something like that?

BS: Many of us who work – you particularly, Ed – in contemporary performance have this problem. When you're working, do you work alongside practitioners with your own separate discourse, do you become a practitioner yourself so you've got a research discourse and a performance practice discourse, and how do the two interface within yourself, or with someone else, a practitioner? I think this is something that we're all faced with as contemporary performance researchers. I don't think there's an answer to it.

MG: No, and I'm not sure why one organisation has to speak in the language of another. One of the things that I perceive about TaPRA, and I was one of the people that started it off as an association, is that it embraces the idea of plurality and the practices that engage and the discourses that are lively and are engaged with are to some extent self-created. So, if there's an organisation that wants to interface with another organisation, then it's for the people who want to interface to make that happen. I don't think we're in the business of setting an agenda that everybody has to follow.

AL: It may be ironically that this is a moment of opportunity, rather than problem, in relation to what you're saying.

AM5: Yes, I know, but that's what I mean.

AL: Funding agendas are more international, as they require cross-sectoral collaboration and, in any case, applied theatre is probably becoming much more embedded and extended, so that would argue for the sort of connect that I think you're articulating.

That discussion could go on and on. I'm conscious of time. Let's take a question from Caitlin and then we should probably wrap up, I think, unless there are other burning questions.

Audience Member 6: I'm not sure this is answerable, but I just wondered, given that all of your organisations place such an emphasis on getting people together and on the annual conference, what some of the environmental challenges are for that. And twenty years from now, is it still going to be possible for everyone to be flying to a conference and doing things in a way that we're very accustomed to now? What are your organisations doing to address that, to get ready for it?

ES: Well, the killer application hasn't been created yet for video conferencing. And it strikes me as amazing that this development, the development of this particular area is so slow. It's such a common need, and yet at Warwick we're playing around with our own system... trying to bring our partners within UMA in Amsterdam and Helsinki together for a week of discussions... and that's hugely difficult. And that's just with half a dozen academics – so, with 600 people meeting in Zagreb this year, I don't know how else we do it. But one thing I will say is that the carbon footprint is huge; it's going to get bigger for these conferences for the foreseeable future. So you have to make it count you really have to use the time properly. And that's what I advocate to all of the members who come, that they really use this time to make a difference to their discipline and to the people that they're working with. I think that's the best you can hope for, until the killer app comes along.

BS: And, you know, our carbon footprint is huge as you can imagine. But it's the same as PSi, you know – a lot of the work that's done is done, not in papers, which would be teleconferenced, it's done between panels. And I

think there's no way around that, and I think that interactivity is the only way that we can help scholars who come to the conferences to learn. Some of my colleagues in Europe and America are quite cynical about conference-going. They go to give their papers and meet up with friends, but actually there are so many scholars who go there, particularly younger scholars and scholars from developing countries, that go there actually to learn and they're taking notes constantly that they'll take back home with them. And I think that's really useful, but one of the things we've discussed in the IFTR is having more regional conferences, not the big annual conferences when the whole world gets in a 747, but where people can stay within their region... and that's got its downsides as well, particularly given the bulk of the research scholarship in Theatre Studies happening in the First World.

AL: There are working groups that sustain their activities and develop them outside of conference and work through sub-groups, so that may be one answer to what you're asking.

ES: Can I just say that Khalid Amine, who is based in Tangier in Morocco, has an annual performance studies conference and it's largely around ethno-musicology and literary studies and he's subservient to the people that are paying for this event every year – it's not the Moroccan government, it's the Goethe Institute in the American Consulate But, why I'm mentioning it is because they get funding to leave Morocco and travel around to our conferences, but I went to his conference last year and he really made it plain to me that he wanted to encourage scholars from our neck of the woods, who can get funding to travel for conferences, to attend his annual event in May to give him some support, to give him some visibility and raise the profile of the discipline in that part of the world. So that, one day, he might be able to get domestic institutional support to drive the culture there.

AL: I think that instance and the various things that it represents might be a good place to pause. So, thank you very much to Ed, Brian, Maggie, Chris. And thanks to everyone for coming.

Websites

The Society for Theatre Research (www.str.org.uk)

Performance Studies International (www.psi-web.org)

International Federation of Theatre Research (www.firt-iftr.org)

Lightwork (www.lightwork.org.uk)

Research Assessment Exercise 2008 (www.rae.ac.uk)

Arts & Humanities Research Council (www.ahrc.ac.uk)

ENDS