



The Ensemble Review

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Editorial Notes:

By 2015 there will have been more than 50 members of the student ensemble. Jonathan Heron has led the Ensemble since its inception over five years ago and commissioned this review last year. Lucy Katz, who wrote The Ensemble Report (Part I), was an ensemble member 2009-12 and MA in English 2013. A working group including Susan Brock, Amy Clarke, and Nicholas Monk (IATL staff) subsequently reviewed this report. Three current members of the Ensemble worked with Francesca Duncan (ensemble member 2009-12) on three responses to the report (Part II), which cover alumni/membership, inter/trans-disciplinarity and new practice in 2014. In recognition of this collaborative research process, 'the Ensemble Review' published here is a co-authored publication between staff, students and alumni.

Preface

Five years on from the establishment of the 'Student Ensemble' at Warwick, a student-led review has taken place. The report that follows, commissioned by IATL and written by postgraduate Lucy Katz, raises some new questions about the work of the past and the pathways of the future. Three undergraduates, Oliver Ashforth-Smith, Luke Lampard and Alasdair Pidsley, have been undertaking practice-based research in response to the report, and their work forms the second half of the review process. A graduate theatre company, Fellswoop Theatre led by Bertrand Lesca, Jesse Meadows and Fiona Mikel, (Warwick alumni) have run a pilot project for the new student ensemble in 2014. Jonathan Heron (the IATL Senior Teaching Fellow) has proposed that the Ensemble contribute to the fiftieth-anniversary celebrations of Warwick in 2015. He has also instigated a new collaboration between the Warwick Arts Centre and the Ensemble, which will lead to performance projects in 2014 and 2015. These public events will ensure that the teaching and learning potential of the Ensemble is fully realised and recognised by the university.

The creative/performance projects, discussed in detail in the report, underpin the pedagogic imperative of the ensemble and enable members to explore trans-disciplinary learning and research. Members have already been offered 'real-world learning' through production placements and academic opportunities through 'laboratory' processes. A crucial aspect of this work has been the creation of practice-based research positions for students to document and evaluate pedagogic interventions with Chemistry, Philosophy, Maths and English. One particular ensemble project at Warwick Arts Centre in 2011 allowed a group visit to Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital to explore the use of simulation in psychiatric education.

The IATL Student Ensemble, enabled by the Fail Better Residency at the CAPITAL Centre (2008-10) and embedded by the Open-space Learning project, under the leadership of Jonathan Neelands (HEA, 2009-11), has therefore become a unique university resource. In fact, the ensemble regularly feature as 'poster children' of Warwick's current Teaching and Learning innovation. As Susan Brock recalls,

the ensemble's creative projects, though outstanding intellectually and artistically, were originally conceived as a means to develop the ensemble, provide training for the members and to serve as an incentive to them, rather than an end in themselves. One of the driving forces behind the establishment of the ensemble was to build capacity to deliver kinaesthetic, active, performance-based teaching across the University. (2013)

Susan's excellent administrative support allowed this group to flourish, not only in its creative work, but also in this essential pedagogic role within the university. It is a testimony to her contribution that the group now imagines its pedagogic interventions as 'learning performances'.

Looking a little further back, the establishment of the ensemble itself came from a period on intense experimentation between Nicholas Monk, Carol Chillington Rutter, Jonathan Neelands and Jonathan Heron, documented in *Open-space Learning* (2011) which the student-written report draws from fairly heavily. Earlier on in this process, Rutter wrote that,

At CAPITAL we want to engage with 'troublesome knowledge'. What we've learned in the studio and rehearsal room this year is that *real* learning takes us beyond the known, the comfortable, into a place of high risk. Risking, we recruit Beckett to our project: 'to be a *student* is to fail...' (2008)

Rutter's vision of CAPITAL as a space for play, and Neelands' work on ensemble pedagogy, complemented Monk's study in trans-disciplinary pedagogy and Heron's collaborative practice-as-research allowed students to become co-investigators and co-facilitators.

The report that follows documents a period of innovation within higher education, where students have been empowered as co-creators of knowledge and pedagogy. Digital documentation of this work is available in multiple formats at www.warwick.ac.uk/iatl

PART I

The Ensemble Report



Persephone workshop (2008), The CAPITAL Centre, photographer: Peter Marsh

Executive Summary:

Since its inception in 2008, the IATL (formerly the CAPITAL/Fail Better) Student Ensemble has continued to provide students, from across the university, a platform on which they are able to develop their academic, creative and personal identities through participating in theatre-based workshops and productions. Also at the heart of the Ensemble's work, is its commitment to outreach in academic disciplines where active learning does not normally feature. Whilst helping to embed OSL and theatre-based pedagogic practice in, to offer an example, Mathematics and English, the Ensemble continues to prove itself to be a rich resource for many departments across the university. Its cultivation of 'ensemble values' within a learning environment is a perpetually evolving process, and in its current moment, the Ensemble is poised to begin a new cycle of work in 2013-14 that brings together Warwick Alumni, as well as current students and staff from across the university to form an 'ensemble network', dedicated to the continuation of these principles, as well as the extension of OSL and theatre-making in diverse disciplines within the university.

Summary of Contents:

1) Past

a) The idea of ensemble

- i) CAPITAL opens in 2005 to develop pedagogic practice based on **active learning and participation**. This is extended through Fail Better's residency, the development of OSL and the creation of IATL. Knowledge and experience involve **risk taking, experiment**, and the **embracing** of the potential of **failure**.
- ii) **'Play'** or **'speilen'** allow students to **learn *through* as well as *about* drama**, bringing together mind and body in the form of action.
- iii) Ensemble fosters characteristics such as **cooperation, imagination, patience and trust**, which are as vital in the learning environment as rehearsal room.

b) The evolution of the student ensemble

- i) Early activities were the Lorca, *Persephone* and *Discords* projects, two New Work Festivals, the BeckettLab workshop series and applied theatre projects.
- ii) **Process-led practice** resulted in challenging work, dealing with the **'unknown'** and **'unfinished'**.
- iii) Projects **stimulated new learning** across the university.

2) Present

a) The Ensemble's recent work

- i) Split into four categories: **laboratory (performance experiments), verbatim (interdisciplinary projects), adaptation (collaborative processes) and archive (participatory events)**.
- ii) Most recent work included **workshops** from Alumni and guest artists as well as an **'open house'** theatre event. - Highlights ensemble's commitment to **open up work** to the **wider university community**, as well as **strengthen**

professional, creative and educational links with Alumni.

b) What the Ensemble means for members: past and present

- i) Students able to develop their academic identities and approaches to learning, and cultivate skills that can be deployed in other creative and 'real world' endeavours.
- ii) The Ensemble's values and strengths include: trust, simplicity, continuity, broadening interests, focus and failure, practical exploration and research.

c) Ensemble values in 2013

- i) Recent members show encouraging desire to **experiment** *more, to further push theatrical and theoretical boundaries*, illustrating success of ensemble environment as a **safe, equal space**.
- ii) Jonathan Neelands notes that knowledge is **'problematic, provisional and unfinished'** and the **'laws'** of the learning group must be **constantly renegotiated**.
- iii) In light of this, the Ensemble is at an **optimum state** at which to progress.

3. Future

a) Proposals

- i) **'A collaborative forum'** an **'ensemble network'** to connect past, present and future students, both **online** and through **meet-ups and creative events**.
- ii) **'Workshops'** – a varied selection delivered by **Alumni** in order to **stimulate learning** for students and provide a collaborative **'engine room'** for fledgling theatre-makers.
- iii) **'Productions and Showings'** – providing **focus** and encouraging **clearer communication** of complex ideas, as well as **educating audiences**.

b) **Continuity**

- i) **Entrench** ensemble **values** further and **amplify** specific ones further.
- ii) Turn **attention outward**, creating a truly **public, open space** that will **increase participation**.

c) **Problems to address and overcome**

- i) **Practicalities** of ensemble network.
- ii) Maintaining **symbolic importance** in university context.
- iii) **Increase participation** whilst **maintaining** a '**theatre of choice**'.

d) **'The joy of starting again'**

- i) **Embracing fear** and the possibility of **starting again** as **vital** for **creative and pedagogic progression**.
- ii) Notion of '**starting again**' built into **fabric** of the **evolving ensemble**.
- iii) Ensemble network must link not only students and alumni, but **continue to link together Warwick's diverse academic community**.

1.PAST

a) The Idea of the Ensemble

In 2005, the CAPITAL centre was opened as a partnership between the University of Warwick and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Supported by the Higher Education Funding Council England, CAPITAL was one half of Warwick's two CETL's and sought to 'use theatre performance skills and experience to enhance student learning' (*Open Space Learning*, ix), alongside drawing on 'university research and resources to shape the development of the RSC acting companies' (CAPITAL Website). Whilst rooted in and maintaining strong links with the English and Theatre departments, the scope of CAPITAL spanned all faculties within the university, with a constant emphasis on active learning and participation regardless of academic discipline. This sense of active and embodied learning is expanded upon by Bate and Brock's review of Warwick's bid for CETL funding:

The bid spoke of building upon existing excellence in which the arts of creative thinking are developed through forms of teaching and learning that emphasize *active performance* on the part of both teachers and students. (Bate & Brock, 343)

The partnership between teachers and learners, the sense of an experience that is borne out a space equally shared was at the core of CAPITAL's work, and something which was carried through in the Open Space Learning (OSL) project in 2009, and developed further with the establishment of IATL in 2010, where this report will have its focus.

Fail Better Productions, a theatre company comprised of Warwick alumni, were invited back to the university to take up a residency within CAPITAL in 2008, having been running workshops with students in 2005/6. The company worked with staff and students to deliver CAPITAL's commitment to developing creative learning, whilst themselves developing as a working, professional theatre company within the context of a university. In their first year of residency, the company's work had three strands: 'Beckett in Performance', a practical exploration of Beckett's work, 'Shakespeare in Performance', workshops focusing on the interpretative choices and technical requirements of performing Shakespeare on the contemporary stage, and 'Re-writing Myth', a development of one of Fail Better's existing concepts in collaboration with students, professionals and academics on the *Persephone*

Project. It is in the latter of these three strands that the principles of the student ensemble were established, something I will expand upon later. What is certain however, is that since the residency began, *Fail Better's* effect on teaching and learning in the university has, as Monk et al notes, 'proved to be considerably more far-reaching than originally projected' (*OSL xi*), and has contributed to the form and continuing evolution of the IATL student ensemble as it exists today.

The earliest successes of the Ensemble are a direct result of both the professionalism that was maintained during time spent in the rehearsal room, and a willingness to experiment with students on work that was both inside and outside of their academic scope. The work of the Ensemble was defined by, and continues to be defined by, an eagerness to *try* things out and probe the 'unknown' in a way that extends far beyond the pushing of theatrical boundaries, but actively dismantles the 'comfort zone' that students often find themselves in, in their learning environments. A readiness to embrace failure as an integral part of both the learning and creative 'experience', was at the crux of the Ensemble, a luxury not afforded in academic work, where emphasis is on securing high marks is frequently a result of 'playing it safe'. Indeed as is noted in the Series Editor's Preface of *OSL*:

Experience involves risk taking, it involves experiment, it involves not knowing the outcome of particular avenues of exploration, but being willing to take the opportunity that the opening of a space affords them.

(*OSL*, vi)

The ability to take opportunities and risks, to be free and fearless in a university context is something that is only rendered possible through both the creation of an 'ensemble' and the cultivation of a sense of play. In *For The University*, Thomas Docherty writes in favour of the university as both a bedrock of, and model for, any democratic society. In it, he writes extensively on the significance of play as a concept which whilst regarded with suspicion and as a frivolity, should nonetheless be allowed to flourish in an unregulated form 'at the centre of a University', as something which 'makes its own rules autonomously as it goes along' (Docherty 56). The role of play, or 'playful waste' (Docherty 65) that was encouraged in both teachers and learners by *CAPITAL*, *Fail Better*, and now IATL, should not be seen as

unnecessary, as a superfluous accoutrement to the work of academics and students in the lecture hall or seminar room. The kind of play that was propagated in the first instance by Fail Better is one which encouraged students and teachers to be both active and equal participants in the learning process by using drama-based workshops to extend understanding of their fields. This is encapsulated by Friedrich Schiller in *Letters on an Aesthetic Education*, who denotes the power of 'speilen', a concept that includes:

Both the childhood activity and play-acting [...] Speilen brings body and mind together in the form of action once more. Theatre is the prime location for the activity of learning and teaching.

(Docherty 54)

As well as extending opportunities to students in terms of allowing them to gain experience of working in a professional theatre context - learning *about* drama - the most enduring part of Fail Better's residency at CAPITAL and the thing that has been fully integrated into the work of IATL, has been their original commitment to 'speilen' – the possibility of freedom and discovery that learning *through* drama offers. The latter of these is multifaceted, as 'speilen' affords both the chance to develop innovative theatrical practice alongside a genuine exploration of any given discipline; as is stated in the *OSL* Preface, 'where performance and creativity both thrive, both are enhanced' (*OSL* vii). These concepts are realised successfully through the formation of an 'ensemble'; a collective group given focus by a single aim that simultaneously 'depends on (and respects) the individual, eccentric talent' (*OSL* 3). At around the time that RSC Artistic Director, Michael Boyd, was re-embracing the 'ensemble' way of working on RSC productions in Stratford, so too was CAPITAL utilising the Ensemble way of working as a 'bridging metaphor between the rehearsal room, the classroom and *OSL* in the context of higher education' (Jonathan Neelands in *OSL* 80). The set of values and characteristics that are at the core of Michael Boyd's ensemble methodology are cited by Neelands:

Cooperation / Altruism / Trust / Empathy / Imagination / Compassion / Tolerance /
 Forgiveness / Humility / Magnanimity / Rapport / Patience / Rigour

(*OSL*, 81-2)

These values, Neelands implies, are central to the success of theatrical practice, but are equally applicable to the practice of active participation in pedagogical situations. At the crux of them lies a commitment to learning through openness and team work, a sharing of ones own ideas and a sense of generosity of spirit in the receiving of the ideas of others. Fail Better applied the principles of ensemble to every facet of their work within the university, but it was the student ensemble, which began as part of Fail Better's residency and continues to evolve now under IATL, where these principles became more entrenched with students from across a number of faculties. In its more established form, the Ensemble was able to be the primary means of bridging the ways of learning both *through* and *about* drama.

b) The Evolution of the Student Ensemble

In its earliest days, the Ensemble did not work towards specific aims or with desired outcomes. The first established and professional piece of work the group created, a new translation of Federico García Lorca's *Play Without a Title* by David Johnston, was shown at the start of the Autumn term 2008. It played to full houses at the beginning of October in Warwick, and later for one night in November at The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry as part of their 'Beyond Spanish' series. Director Jonathan Heron says of the process:

With this production we are attempting to deliver something unknown and impossible. We are exploring the capacity of theatre and performance to create substance out of unfinished, lost or abandoned text. Working in an academic and pedagogic context, we are playing with plays about plays and working with students to create characters within characters.

(Fail Better website)

In this statement, Heron not only reaffirms the commitment to 'play' and the desire to uncover and communicate something hitherto 'unknown', but he presents the Lorca project as the culmination of an ambitious and challenging *process*, driven by the will to challenge both the students and conventional theatrical practice. During the project, students were treated as 'collaborative artists and professional colleges' (OSL 94), lending a professionalism and sense of discipline which has been maintained throughout the work of the student ensemble. The discipline found in the creative ensemble environment is invaluable for the

students' formal academic study, encouraging a rigorous approach to course work and an enthusiasm for the process of researching, as opposed to a focus only on the quality of the assessed work. Furthermore, Fail Better's initial work with students aimed to use 'theatre practitioners as re-animators of text, and rehearsal methods as re-interrogators of text' (OSL 93), a practice embedded in the company's approach to *Play Without A Title*, where they 'designed and delivered a programme that re-valued the rehearsal process as a learning experience for the participants' (OSL 94). The concepts of re-animation and re-interrogation of texts fits in with the belief that learning is never be finished, and work in the Ensemble allows it to remain an open-ended and constantly evolving process. The cultivation of ensemble values and the process-centric nature of the Lorca project was undoubtedly enhanced by the short, intense rehearsal time, affording a valuable insight into life working as part of a professional theatre company, as well as strengthening the ability of the student cohort to tackle a new translation of a traditionally tricky play. The 'laboratory' style of rehearsal process and its emphasis on experimentation is still a bedrock of the IATL ensemble, and one student reflected that it 'greatly contributed to the success of the show' (OSL 94). The freedom and space to experiment was noted also by Zoe Walsh in her reflection on her three years in the Ensemble; she speaks of the rehearsal process as a valuable space for learning, or 're-imagining' or 're-interrogating' text, something that student theatre significantly lacks. Indeed, it was in this environment that the practices of the student ensemble were crystallised:

The 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.

(OSL 94-5)

Indeed the Lorca project proved to be a unique learning experiences for both participants and audiences. As part of the process, students were instructed to keep a reflective journal in any medium of their choice, with journals, blogs and video diaries were all exhibited on the first night of the production at Warwick. This dimension of 'self-reflexivity' (OSL 94) embedded in the process, allowed the Ensemble to reflect on the process as a *learning experience*, which could then be applied to their academic endeavours. For audiences, the

Lorca project became an event which 'stimulated new learning' (OSL 95), acting as a catalyst that extended beyond the theatrical event:

Opening night was attended and reviewed by students of Shakespeare and Performance Studies, delivering an educational experience of the capacity for creative events to establish a shared space for dialogue.

(OSL 95)

The production also stood in relation to the 'Shakespeare in Performance' strand of Fail Better's first year of residency and was well attended by students from the English Department.

If the Lorca project opened up a practical and aesthetic space for the Ensemble to realise itself within a pedagogic context, the *Persephone* project continued to solidify it. After a series of physical workshops in Summer 2008, the Ensemble began examining the myth of Proserpine, part of the 'Re-writing Myth' strand of Fail Better's residency, during Spring Term 2009. The company had an interest in the retelling of the Proserpine myth for a number of years, with readings of draft scripts of *Persephone* taking place in 2006 and 2007, their interest sparked by the theory that 'myth is suicidal, it needs to be created and destroyed in regular cycles of practice' (Fail Better Residency Film, CAPITAL website). Rather than the intense rehearsal process of the Lorca project, *Persephone* benefited from an ongoing R&D process, stretched over a longer period of time. This rich and fruitful process started as an exploration of mental illness and parental relationships, but resulted in something 'more absurd and abstract' (Fail Better Website); an examination about the continued necessity of and meaning of myth itself, its inexpressibility and yet the compulsion inherent with each retelling. Using Laban and Beckett, the Ensemble worked again in a laboratory-style space with a purely research-based focus, culminating in a staged reading at Fail Better's first New Work Festival in May 2009. Similarly to *Play Without A Title*, the Ensemble challenged themselves to effectively offer one version of a 'finish' for an unfinished play that explored the boundaries between illusion and reality, working towards something Lorca envisaged as a 'Theatre of the Impossible' that examined the dangers and compulsion of myth as a form that helps us 'understand and misunderstand the world' (Fail

Better Website). In pedagogic terms, the Ensemble was already cultivating an atmosphere where students could take risks in favour of testing conventional and received limitations and dealing with challenging concepts, that here manifested in innovative pieces of performance. The *Persephone* project 'premiered' as part of Fail Better's inaugural New Work Festival in May 2009. The festival, titled 'Recycling', offered a platform on which the Ensemble's work was shown alongside visiting companies, professional new writing and other student performances, allowing them a means of gauging reaction to the experimental nature of their work. The festival provided not only receptive audiences, but it was characterised by its openness and ability to engage students and staff on a trans- and interdisciplinary level; offering another space for 'speilen', where risks can be taken and learning stimulated for both performers and audiences.

During 2009, the *Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts* (OSL) project, funded by the Higher Education Academy's National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, began, combining three NTF's from Education, Creative Writing and E-Learning at CAPITAL Centre, to continue their work developing 'new forms of creative pedagogy associated with workshop practice and collaborative learning in flexible teaching spaces' (OSL website). A bridge project between CAPITAL, whose funding ceased in 2010, and IATL, who continue to host and develop its work, OSL's focus was on 'enactive modes of learning in professional practice' (ibid.) The central principles of OSL were already embedded in the work of the Ensemble, with the classroom already transformed into a laboratory in which the students could cultivate their ability to:

- formulate new problems, rather than depending on others to define them.
- transfer what one learns across different contexts.
- recognise that learning is an incremental process involving making mistakes and learning from failure.
- focus one's attention in pursuit of a goal.

(ibid)

It was in this spirit, and with desire to break down the boundaries between academic and vocational study, that the Ensemble began its second year in October 2009. After another recruitment process, the new group, comprised of undergraduates from all years, began work in the *BeckettLab*, a series of practical explorations of Beckett's work. Fail Better's continued

interest in Beckett's drama was here extended to the Ensemble in the 'theatre laboratory' and began with the group's interpretation of Lucky's tirade in *Waiting for Godot* and Mouth's monologue in *Not I*. As the weeks progressed and the process deepened in scope and ambition, the group strengthened as an ensemble and began to examine Beckett's dramaturgy, as well as playing with the notion of a 'theatre machine'; using 'Beckettian modes of physical restriction and aesthetic formalism' (CAPITAL website), to push against the boundaries of theatrical form and the disruption of form. Furthermore, Fail Better's production of *Rough For Theatre II* at the Oxford Playhouse in December awarded one member of the Ensemble a performance role in a professional setting. The *BeckettLab* also tied into the company's commitment to open up their professional work to the wider university community. At the end of November 2009, Fail Better hosted an interdisciplinary symposium in the WAC entitled *Beckett and the Brain*, a 'lively exchange between scholars and practitioners from theatrical, medical, literary and neuroscientific backgrounds' (CAPITAL website). The symposium explored the work of Beckett through both performance and discussion, including two readings of Beckett speeches by ensemble members, and encapsulated the growing ability of the Ensemble's work to stimulate learning *through* drama in disciplines conventionally taught in a straightforward lecture/seminar format.

In the Spring Term 2010, the Ensemble deepened their devising work, and, informed by the findings of the *BeckettLab*, premiered a work-in-progress showing of *Discords* at the second New Work Festival, 'What's Past is Prologue'. Building upon the notion of a 'theatre machine', the piece was performed from within an:

Intensely restrictive shape to move through numerous iterations and performance patterns. Isolating simply the performer's heads, which emerge from a 'cabinet of curiosities' - or perhaps an archive of disembodied heads.

(Fail Better website)

Using fragments of Shakespearian text from *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, *Discords* opened the festival with a series of short, intense performances to small audiences. In January the following year, *Discords* was developed further and given a full, professional production at the WAC as part of Fail Better's tenth anniversary double bill, alongside *Diary of a Madman*. The

sell-out performances were especially well attended by students, especially the first year philosophy students, who participated also in a post show discussion with the director and performer of *Diary of a Madman*.

Discords, like the Lorca and *Persephone* projects that preceded it, benefited hugely from the depth of the R&D process afforded to the Ensemble. Its radical experimentations with form surpassed anything they had done before, and illustrates the degree to which stylistic and conceptual risks were encouraged throughout the workshops. The production itself undoubtedly divided opinion amongst audiences, but the rigorous and professional nature of the rehearsal process meant that each decision was well-informed and meaningful; the safety of the Ensemble environment eliminated each performers fear of 'failure' meaning that performance limitations were stretched, creating an ambitious, innovative and intense theatrical experience over which all ensemble members felt a strong feeling of ownership. Surprisingly, it is a sense of ownership and control over one's own work that is often difficult to achieve in academic study, where course structure and content can easily feel dictated. For me, the experience of *BeckettLab* and *Discords* was one during which I felt confident to alter the path of the work we were creating together, as well as building upon the ideas of others which manifested in a piece of theatre which I felt that I was an integral part in. This altered my approach to my academic work, as I began more to interrogate the texts and concepts that I worked with, in order to form strong personal perspectives which in turn strengthened the quality of my assessed work.

After CAPITAL's funding ceased in July 2010, both it and Reinvention, a journal of undergraduate research and Warwick's other CETL, were merged to become the Institute of Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL). As well as continuing the work of CAPITAL in terms of developing creative, workshop-based pedagogies, and the work of the OSL project, IATL's objective was to 'foster a pedagogy that is committed to innovation, interdisciplinarity, inclusiveness, and internationalisation' (IATL website). The student ensemble became an integral branch of IATL's work in the university community, widening their scope as they have become involved in a wider range of faculties, as well as engaging in applied theatre work with both staff and students. In the second half of the Spring Term and throughout the Summer Term in 2011, after an ensemble training day that prepared them

for various applied theatre events across the university, the Ensemble participated in a wide range of events in several departments. The first of which, a 'Maths and Drama' event, included readings by ensemble members from plays with a mathematical focus. The session then developed into an enactive workshop with students and staff from the maths department in an event reminiscent of *Beckett and the Brain* in terms of continuing to engage academics and students from disciplines where learning through active performance was hitherto untested. At the end of the Spring Term, some ensemble members began the 'Clinical Skills Laboratory' by taking a field trip to University Hospital Coventry to observe the use of role play and simulation in medical education, as the first stage of Fail Better's innovative project with Psychiatry. After the Ensemble observed the work of the simulated patients, the project continued to grow, resulting in the Summer term, with a 'psychiatry and performance' event that included a series of readings, some by ensemble members, for medical students and staff. This creative exchange between two practice-based student groups, reconnecting the humanities with medicine, was a successful first step in reconnecting the work of the company with the medical and psychological disciplines. Warwick alumnus and ensemble member Zoe Walshe notes how the Ensemble has given her the confidence in events such as this to 'hold her ground' ('Teaching and Learning Showcase 2012', web) when engaging with students and staff from disciplines radically different to her own. In this event, the openness of the space gave every participant's expertise equal weight, as everyone engaged with the topic from their own academic and personal perspective. In the final applied theatre event of the year, the Ensemble participated in a 'workshop facilitation' training day for early career academics and higher educators, in which members performed a group of learners within a simulated classroom, bringing the OSL project to a wider audience within staff in the university. All of these projects mark another turning point in the work of the IATL ensemble, as the group became a far more active and highly useful agent within other faculties of the university, engaging staff and students as well as providing a platform for the learning of ensemble members themselves that extended beyond their formal academic limitations. With a slightly sharper pedagogic as well as theatrical focus, the Ensemble's 'laboratory' way of working, and commitment to being both trans- and interdisciplinary meant that the group was able to further their work with faculties that were unused to active and workshop style learning.

2. PRESENT

a) The Ensemble's Recent Work

Several new members joined the group at the beginning of the academic year in 2011, in time to start the IATL ensemble's current programme of work, which during 2011-12 fell into four distinct processes: laboratory, verbatim, adaptation and archive. The 'laboratory' process was a series of practical experiments exploring the theme of time. The Ensemble began by examining representations of theatrical time using both Shakespeare and Beckett, before moving onto more challenging and conceptual work that involved devising short performance fragments using both philosophical and scientific texts as stimulus, as well as considering biomedical and mathematical representations of temporality. The laboratory process was reminiscent of 2009's *BeckettLab*, in terms of the groups theatrical approach to textual materials, but went deeper in transcending disciplinary boundaries through working so extensively with complex, scientific subject matter rarely explored in a creative and practical setting.

The 'verbatim' part of the Ensemble activity saw the group edit together a verbatim script comprised of student testimonies that were extracted from undergraduate research about interdisciplinary pedagogy, something that the IATL ensemble itself supports and developed. The group of four students then performed the piece at the 'Interdisciplinarity in Teaching and Learning at Warwick and Monash' event and the 'Student-as-Producer Showcase' in the Autumn Term. During Spring Term 2012, a group of ensemble members participated in a learning experience for Cultural Policy Studies', illustrating again how useful a resource the Ensemble were becoming across the university, in aiding the learning of students from a variety of faculties, and a research project led in collaboration by Dr. Daniel Katz from the English Department and IATL teaching fellow Jonathan Heron. The project, an exploration of *After Lorca* by Jack Spicer, was both a parallel and progression of the Lorca project three years earlier, but was directly tied to Daniel's AHRC academic fellowship. Katz notes the 'participatory or dialogic quality to the poetry' (*After Lorca* film, IATL website), which invites theatrical intervention and provides a reinvigoration of Spicer's texts for Katz's own research interests, the theatrical interests of the Ensemble group and the extra-curricular academic interests of its student members. The culmination of the Ensemble's work that year was the

'archive' process; the materials of the Fail Better performance archive was opened up to the group, whereupon they worked intensively for a week and devised a new performance installation from 'the fragments of previous productions, creating a new piece of theatre for a ghosted museum' (Fail Better website). *Fragments* was performed continuously over the course of one day, and using text from across the dramatic spectrum, it was performed 'in a dream space somewhere between performance and memory, characters drifting from one play to another and the audience free to explore' (ibid.). *Fragments* was another moment of theatrical innovation for the Ensemble, who went further this time in pushing the conventions of the audience/performer relationship, as well as creating something entirely new from a huge backlog of texts and dramatic styles; it was the students who were, under direction but independently, re-animating and re-interrogating text in rehearsals. The final performance of *Fragments* was well attended by company and former ensemble members, as well as members of IATL and Warwick staff. The evening culminated in an informal, collective reading of Sarah Kane's *Crave*, perhaps marking the first step towards the creation of some kind of 'ensemble network', whereby new and old members of the group could, facilitated by IATL, continue to work collaboratively.

Indeed, the most recent work of the Ensemble has ventured down this path to great success, as the 2013 Spring and Summer Terms have several past ensemble members and guest workshop leaders return to IATL to deliver sessions on various subjects. Bertrand Lesca, assistant director on Cheek-By-Jowl's production of *Ubu Roi*, ran a workshop with members on themes of the show. Assistant Professor (TCD) and Theatre Practitioner (Painted Filly, Dublin) Nicholas Johnson, Fail Better Associate Artist and Warwick Alumnus Christopher Tester and BBC Carleton Hobbs Award Winner and Warwick Alumna Stephanie Racine returned to Warwick to deliver workshops to the current ensemble, and the group also took part in a script reading of *Troilus* by Jack Spicer, leading on from the *After Lorca* workshops of the previous year, and participated in an 'open-house' event on theatre practice, an accessible workshop for student theatre-makers across the university. In June, Bertrand returned again with Jesse Meadows and on behalf of FellSwoop Theatre they ran a workshop with the group exploring their company's ensemble methodology and theatrical approach.

The latter two of these events highlight the current direction of the Ensemble, and its commitment to simultaneously open up its work to the wider university community, as well as strengthen professional, creative and educational links with Warwick alumni.

b) What the Ensemble Means for Members: Past and Present

Belonging to the IATL ensemble has had a lasting, and in many cases profound, effect on its members. Participating in workshops and production within the Ensemble has allowed students to develop both their own, individual academic identities and approaches to learning, as well as cultivating skills and establishing values that can be deployed in other creative and 'real world' endeavours. As part of this report, I sent a short questionnaire to ensemble members past and present asking them to write of their experiences within the group and how, if at all, their time in the Ensemble still informs their attitudes and practices. The responses that I gathered are detailed in full in the appendices and have been analysed alongside the most recent set of feedback forms completed by the group at the end of the Summer Term 2013. There are several common threads evident in the answers I have considered, so I have gathered my findings into several categories:

Trust

When working collaboratively in a creative environment or rehearsal space, the notion of trust is at the core of successful ensemble working, especially when devising. Ben Jacobs (English and Theatre/2010) states that the most important thing that he learnt during his time in the group was to 'invest in the devising process and trust the members of the Ensemble to produce organically. Trust yourself, and each other'. In order to truly engage in a learning or creative environment, the ability to have faith in one's own abilities and ideas is equally vital as having faith in the abilities of others. The kind of trust fostered in the IATL ensemble and in OSL projects can be translated well onto personal academic endeavours; having belief in your own ideas, and, as Francesca Duncan (English and Theatre/2012) claims, 'not being fearful of them', allows students to cultivate trust and confidence in themselves which in turn means that risks and challenges are more likely to be readily embraced. Francesca goes on to say that the development of ideas in the Ensemble was done with the knowledge that there was 'not a single right answer'- a belief that many undergraduates may feel to be true within their courses, even within the arts and humanities,

yet being released of this pressure is both liberating and conducive to advancing personal learning. Shubham Saraf (Economics/2013) mirrors this sentiment, claiming that 'faith and belief' in his instincts was integral to the success of the Ensemble work; instinctual or 'gut' reactions to ideas or stimulus is something also that often goes hand in hand with the most fruitful kind of learning.

Simplicity

Whilst being incredibly lucky to be afforded access to IATL's facilities and spaces, part of the success of the Ensemble comes from the fact that the only 'resource' the Ensemble draws on, are the minds of its members and the physical possibilities of an empty room. Francesca speaks of how there is a 'myth that is propagated that one needs lots resources and money to make theatre [...] but we were just people in a room'. Whilst this is true for theatre, the same can be said for learning in almost any field; an open space full of enthusiastic, forward-thinking, trusting individuals who are willing to take risks will have a more positive and possibly more mentally stimulating outcome than a technologically or resource rich environment. Shubham also comments on how the group came up with 'good material created from nothing', thus putting the emphasis back on the participant, the *learner*; through stripping away the accoutrements of the classroom, even down to the desks and chairs, the students are at the heart of the work they create.

Continuity

Whilst the undergraduate life-span may only be three or four years, previous ensemble members have expressed a desire to be kept up to date with and even participate in the workings of the current group of students. Either through email, as Francesca suggests, or through the creation of a London-based ensemble working in tandem with the Warwick group, something Ben Jacobs thinks would be a good idea. There is certainly an appetite for the creation of a more established 'ensemble network', as is proven by the success of Summer 2013's workshop series delivered by various Warwick and ensemble graduates and associate artists of Fail Better/IATL, as almost all members mentioned on their feedback forms their desire for more guest practitioners to run workshops in a varied areas. Indeed something that I personally valued during my three years in the Ensemble, is the fact that the group spans over all years and welcomes participants from all disciplines.

This promotes a sense of continuity: a 'passing on' of ensemble values which means there is an element of peer-to-peer teaching at the heart of the group, as well of course, reinforcing the fact that the Ensemble is constantly evolving, its work never completed as there is no specific goal to work towards, meaning that the group can constantly be refreshed with new members. For Francesca, this worked in two ways, not only did she 'learn a lot from the older students about how to tackle an unfamiliar text [...] and how to translate that text into performance', but working with older students in this way meant that already, in the first term of her first year, she felt 'a valuable and equal member of the learning environment at Warwick', something that is certainly an alien feeling for many first years cocooned in the 'fresher experience'. Introducing students to the Ensemble process and IATL early on in their academic careers has therefore, a very positive affect on the cultivation of their academic identities, making them more adaptable and open to new ways of working, as well as making them feel they have more control over the course of their studies and are more willing to take risks.

Broadening interests and attitude to learning

Despite largely being drawn from the arts and humanities, the Ensemble members did not feel confined by their subjects, with the themes covered in the group sparking interests and engagement with complex fields of study and difficult concepts. Ben comments on how the strength of the research process 'reinforced the importance of investigation across the board and further how every discipline feeds into each other', illustrating how the interdependence of each discipline is made apparent once active learning and a workshop style of teaching are employed. As part of Francesca's work in the Ensemble, she assisted on an OSL project with the mathematics department, an experience that she said made her think creatively about her own approach to learning. The Ensemble thus allows students' access to learning in fields that would otherwise be cut off due to chosen course of study, an experience which can change and broaden the learning of their own subject. Indeed in Francesca's case, the Ensemble cultivated for her an extended interest in the intersection between art and science, something which she wishes to pursue in future creative work. Similarly, Thom May (English and Theatre/2012) writes of a renewed interest in performance art as a 'cultural exploration rather than practice', illustrating again how ensemble can change perspective on learning and working. For Shubham, an economics student, the Ensemble methodology has informed his

'productivity' in his academic work. He praises the ensemble ethos of 'talk as little as possible and get straight up and start working', exposing again the students' cultivation of trust in their own ability and instincts, taking educated leaps in assessed study and being responsible over the course of their learning. This can also operate effectively both ways, as the academic interests and approaches of students at the 'receiving end' of the groups activities and workshops are likely to be broadened also when engaging in active, embodied learning and ensemble practice, something encapsulated by the success of Francesca's OSL work with mathematics.

Focus and Failure

Almost all of the Ensemble's work is research-led rather than than production focussed; a liberating experience for students engaging in student theatre and a departure from the 'product focussed' course structures of essays and exams. Francesca notes that workshops were always 'very focussed but without deadline pressure', something that frequently inhibits the enjoyment of personal study. Thom May makes another interesting point from the perspective of a writer, as for him, that fact that rehearsal focus was pulled away from the production was a release from 'the obsession with the endgame that saps the joy of starting again'. In this opinion, Thom identifies that whilst the workshops are disciplined and rigorous, they actively encourage mistakes and failure which in turn force you to rein in your ideas, stay mentally grounded, and take another approach. Indeed, the joy that comes from the uncovering of problems and finding solutions is amplified if they are overcome by the students themselves; rather than being spoon-fed solutions they are actively encouraged to have a stake in their progression in their subjects, accepting failure as an integral part of this process.

Research and preparation

Nearly all of the answers that I have evaluated have shown a particular enthusiasm for the Ensemble's research-led approach, and the time that is always afforded for investigation and exploration. Ben notes that despite the fact that the Lorca project was scripted, the degree of experimentation afforded to the cast 'made us feel like we had made it from scratch'. When students are afforded the time and resources for an in-depth R&D process, their grasp on their subject-matter is likely to be heightened, and in Ben's case,

increasing a sense of ownership over any output. The research techniques and methodologies have been, in Thom's case, excellent provisional training for his current job as a substitute teacher. He notes how the OSL style of learning has been great preparation for 'various aspects of teaching and its expectations, like the 'negotiation of space' with students: using movement and a sense of space to teach, in both Maths and English'. The Ensemble has in this case quite literally been a practice or rehearsal space, allowing students to prepare and research before deploying what has been discovered in future employment in the educational sector.

Practical exploration

The fact that IATL has physically opened up a space for practical exploration and active learning seems, for members, to be at the core of their enjoyment of the Ensemble. As well as allowing members to forge links between disciplines and theatrical styles, the change from a conventional classroom learning style means that by physically embodying ideas, students can form deeper and more meaningful connections with any given subject matter or stimulus. Indeed Shubham notes that his time in the Ensemble has been interesting as it has allowed him to 'create tangible images and creative pieces from highly intangible ideas and concepts' and Thom says how the focus on authors and their theatrical styles, combined with text, has richened the theatrical process, as opposed to just focussing on textual interpretation. Both of these opinions show how accessible complex concepts can become when physically embodied, and can even be examined in tandem in order to contrast and compare, thus deepening understanding.

It seems that the values that working in the Ensemble has instilled in its members are nothing short of 'life forming', as Ben Jacobs claims. It seems that through physically embodying concepts and ideas in an open space, students can exercise control over the development of their academic identities, increasing a sense of ownership over what they are learning. 'Spelien' has again proven to be at work; the Ensemble is a space for play-acting, it is a rehearsal and a practice space that invites mistakes and a rediscovering of the 'joy of starting again', through which the whole group can collectively learn. The commitment to *exploration*, to research and investigation puts the focus wholly on learning, releasing students from the pressure of a product whilst simultaneously endowing participants with discipline

and a rigorous approach to any of their endeavours, whether this be academic, extra-curricular, creative or 'real world'.

c) Ensemble Values in 2013

The majority of the most recent crop of ensemble members have just completed their formal studies, and their testimonies mirror much of what their predecessors say. Despite the fact that the Ensemble is constantly in flux and perpetually evolving, it seems that there are certain values that are firmly entrenched in all members, past and present. Although the testimonies are brief in nature, there are several common themes within them that are praised:

- the variety of topics and concepts covered through a range of dramatic styles
- the combination of academic and practical learning which feeds productively into formal study
- a space to explore, test and make mistakes
- the embracing of challenges rather than avoiding them
- question things taken previously for granted
- a lack of 'performance deadline' contributing to a greater understanding of stimulus

These characteristics, alongside those expanded upon in the previous section of this chapter, show us that five years into its life, the Ensemble environment now confidently fosters in its members skills which are transferable to all areas of a student's life. What is most striking in this recent set of testimonies however, is the almost impatient eagerness to learn and experiment *more*, to further test academic and creative boundaries, and to generally extend learning further than formal studies would allow. If we measure the current views of ensemble members against Neelands' (inspired by Boyd's) analysis of ensemble values, it seems that in its current existence, the Ensemble is at an optimum state in which to progress. Neelands says:

In OSL learning there are flexible and less hierarchical uses of space, and knowledge is considered *problematic, provisional and unfinished*.

('Learning to play with Shakespeare', *OSL* 79, my italics)

These last italicised characteristics have wholeheartedly been embraced by the group, as well

as reinforcing the idea that whilst the Ensemble remains flexible and non-hierarchical it will always feel like, for the members, their work is unfinished and there is always the possibility for more. This notion is reminiscent of another of Neelands':

The demands of living and learning together in drama requires, in any case, a form of constitutional learning based on negotiation and continual renegotiation of the 'laws' in the learning group.

('Learning to play with Shakespeare', *OSL* 80)

It is this negotiation and renegotiation of the Ensemble's 'laws' that mean it is both easy and important for the group to both expand its academic scope and incorporate new members from diverse academic backgrounds. The space that has been opened to students by participating in ensemble activities is in an ideal shape to continue to do so, and the organic and gradual nature of its evolution means that an expansion across the university, and between past and present members would be hugely beneficial for the educational, personal and creative development of students and alumni.

3. FUTURE

The Ensemble has proven to be a defining force in the lives of its participants, and the questions that now must be asked revolve around not only the future direction of the Ensemble's activities and the perpetuation of its core values, but how these values can be actively extended to the wider university community via the IATL group. It seems now, as the Ensemble is poised to admit its third student cohort, that the group must concern itself also with supporting the members that have passed through the Ensemble, not only in terms of keeping them up to date with the progress of the group, but inviting them back in other capacities, such as creating theatre and running workshops with present members. Drawing on the most recent set of student testimonies from the outgoing ensemble, as well as suggestions from the questionnaires sent to past ensemble members, there are an encouraging number of common threads in the responses that provide us with a strong basis on which to plot a future course of action for the Ensemble.

a) Proposals

A 'collaborative forum'

One of the recent student testimonies made a case for the creation of a forum within which past and present members could share ideas and potentially create new work together. Such a group, an 'ensemble network', would not only continue to strengthen ensemble values for alumni, but would open up a space in which past members could teach present ones in a peer-to-peer style that eschews hierarchy in favour of equality and is already at the core of the Ensemble values. This would also likely enhance the confidence of current members, as well as providing a positive example of graduates who are working successfully within theatre -an aspiration shared by many of the current student group. Furthermore, a 'forum' or 'network' in which members are returning to either test new ideas or share new ways of working implies that the 'learning' of members is never finished. As included in the previous chapter, Neelands states that 'knowledge is considered problematic, provisional and unfinished' ('Learning to play with Shakespeare', *OSL* 79), and it is the latter of these that an ensemble network would continue to support. In light of this, it seems therefore that not only is the Ensemble itself evolving, but the academic and creative identities of past and present members are doing so too. This 'network [through which] to share skills and advice' (student testimonies), could, as was suggested by another student, happen partially online, which would be a practical, easy and immediate way to keep past members up to date. The creation of an online forum or newsletter, as suggested by Francesca Duncan, could then be complimented with her suggestion of some kind of 'event to bring everyone together'. The results of such a meet would surely be fruitful, as was the case with *Fragments* in 2012, but would extend the participation of past members through allowing them to create something more established.

Workshops

Almost all of the recent student testimonies responded incredibly enthusiastically to the workshops that they partook in during the third term of this year, praising both their variety and their content, with the radio drama workshop especially gaining praise. Several responses also showed a desire to explore different, challenging theatrical forms, or 'in-depth practical theatrical studies on certain performance styles or practitioners', as one student said that

there was little room for this in his formal studies. Another expressed a wish to explore 'newer', 'untested' and 'avant garde theatre techniques'; desires which are indicative of the Ensemble's ability to create a space whereby participants feel confident to challenge convention, refusing to take a simple route and instead constantly trying to negotiate with the 'unknown'. Another student wanted to see a continuation of the work that mixes 'old and new', evident, for example, in combining Shakespearean text with Beckettian dramaturgy. As well as progression and expansion for its own sake, ensemble members want to continue to make connections across and between disciplines, illustrating an encouraging will to root practical exploration in academic or theoretical research and study not dictated by formal course of study. It is in this spirit therefore, that future workshops should be conducted; through sustaining the theatre-laboratory format, workshops should encourage participants to challenge their knowledge and experience, drawing on established ensemble values in order to question both theatrical convention and accepted or established concepts in any field of study. This can be mutually beneficial for those running, or initiating the workshop or theatre-lab, especially if they too wanted to tread new theatrical or thematic ground. The Ensemble began as an extension of Fail Better's creative interests, and a sort of 'engine room' in which students and company members worked in tandem on the company's established interests. It is fitting therefore, that at this stage in the Ensemble's life, Warwick alumni who have set up their own theatre companies, or are theatre-making in another capacity are invited back. Running workshops with current students is equally valuable for both parties, as the leaders not only exhibit the type of work they make, forging relationships, reigniting links with Warwick and potentially recruiting new collaborators, but they are able to work with a receptive group of participants well versed in ensemble methodology, with which to further their own explorations. This has already been successful in the case of Jesse Meadows and Bertrand Lesca from FellSwoop, and should be entrenched further in future.

Productions and showings

Francesca Duncan notes that the future course of the Ensemble, should better learn to 'balance between explorative workshops and production focused rehearsals', something that does indeed resound with the most recent set of student testimonies, as one student expressed a desire to 'continue some of the projects that we started'. Whilst the rich R&D

and laboratory work is so strong and beneficial because it is without the material and time pressures of performance deadlines, some kind of showing, or development of a certain set of 'experiments' may give the group a stronger sense of direction and focus; a momentum with which they would have to be clearer on their creative decisions in order to connect with an audience, and especially an audience unfamiliar with theatre-making. Mounting full scale productions is difficult for several reasons, so need not become a regular feature of the group's work, but would nonetheless be an exciting and occasional challenge. As was the case with the work- in-progress performances at the 2009 and 2010 New Work Festivals, showings would give the students' focus, and keep the group grounded in terms of realising complex ideas physically and theatrically, and gauging audience response. With so many avenues of inquiry having been opened up in the Ensemble in the last few years, the opportunity to realise some of these would be an effective way of honing ensemble members' academic and creative capacity further.

b) Continuities

As well as embarking upon a new set of activities, it is equally vital for the Ensemble to further entrench in its members the positive attributes and skills that can be extracted from the core ensemble values and used in multiple endeavours. The Ensemble is, necessarily, evolving and changing, but with this evolution I believe there to be room to amplify certain characteristics of ensemble practice alongside what ever direction is taken, both for the pedagogic and creative benefit of all involved.

Whilst it is vital to maintain the variety, depth of exploration and commitment to fostering ownership and equality in the rehearsal room that has become so central to ensemble practice, and is so valued by its members, the group must continue to simultaneously turn their attention outward into the wider university community, examining where and how it can embed its values and practice in other disciplines. This has been strongly initiated in work with psychiatry and medicine, amongst others, bringing together ensemble members with academics and other students in order to collectively further understanding. In this sense, and in relation to the third proposal I offer above, the Ensemble should continue to forge strong connections to those that they work with and perform in front of. An observation of Neelands is relevant here again:

Crucially, the space is open to others, and it is a shared public space constituted in order to negotiate meanings socially and artistically.

(Neelands, field notes, 10 April 2010, 'Learning to play with Shakespeare', *OSL* 81)

The Ensemble must endeavour to be open to all, whilst enhancing the learning of its members, it should try equally to invite others, many of whom may not be familiar with active or theatre-based learning, in order to advance pedagogic practice across the university. In the context of a production or showing, participation falls just as strongly on the audience, the recipients, as it does the performers; the audience is of course as vital a component in the theatrical experience as the actors, and this is what ultimately gives meaning to performance and means that the widest array of students and staff will be involved in the work of the Ensemble.

c) Challenges

With this kind of expansion imminent, it is necessary that the Ensemble work hard to maintain their reputation and value within the university, as well as continuing to allow participants to shape their academic and creative identities. Due to the gradual, organic evolution of the group, I do not believe this will be much of a problem, and the challenges of the group lie in other areas. In his questionnaire responses, Ben Jacobs wholeheartedly agrees that there should be some kind of ensemble network, but suggests that this should be based in London, with the Warwick ensemble acting as a 'spring board' for future collaboration. Whilst practically this is a viable suggestion, as many graduates, and especially those trying to get into the arts or theatre, move into the cultural hub of London, I believe that it is important to retain Warwick's campus as the seat of any future activity. In terms of practicality, IATL is equipped with the resources and spaces necessary to support any larger-scale activities, and as not all participants are in London, Warwick provides a safe and familiar atmosphere for all. Symbolically also, it is important that the focus of the Ensemble remains at Warwick and within a pedagogic, university context. We have already established that learning and 'the student' are at the crux of the Ensemble, with a space already established in which educational and creative hierarchies have been broken down, and a commitment to truth and a sense of trust retained amongst the group, thus meaning that

uprooting the Ensemble from its current setting would be unnecessary and likely unproductive.

One of the biggest challenges that the Ensemble faces is how to increase interest from students from areas of study with little or no relation to theatre making. The majority of the Ensemble since it began has belonged to either the English or Theatre departments, and this is largely inevitable. Despite a few significant exceptions from philosophy, sociology and economics, the group is ultimately self-selecting, with those who have a prior knowledge or interest in theatre-making most attracted to studying arts-based subjects, and therefore most likely to audition for the group. Whilst being successful in gaining an even spread across the year groups, the focus of the group must now be on encouraging people to join, or at least participate in workshops or active learning, who do not necessarily have any prior knowledge or interest in theatre making or active learning. An observation of Neelands here is useful:

In every drama class students have to make a positive choice to join in or not. Without this willingness, bred of interest or engagement, there can be no active drama [...] there has to be a theatre of choice.

(*'Learning to play with Shakespeare'*, *OSL* 83)

In other words, forcing students into working with the Ensemble in order to ensure a more even subject spread is likely to be counter productive, whilst opening up ensemble processes to more students in more departments is a good idea, forcing them into active learning will be detrimental for the wider group. Hopefully, the more the Ensemble engages with students, especially from the sciences, the higher the chance that they would feel confident working in a more direct way with the Ensemble on another occasion.

d) 'The joy of starting again'

Aside from stating that he wishes the Ensemble to expand 'catastrophically and dangerously', Warwick English and Theatre alumnus Thom May made a valuable comment about the ability of the Ensemble to put the joy back into the idea of starting again and disregarding an 'obsession with the endgame'. Where it is commonplace for most students to face this prospect, the possibility of failure, with apprehension and fear, the Ensemble continues to

be a force which embraces it as a vital element for creative and pedagogic progression. What it needs to do now, however, is to invert the notion that failure is negative and instead strongly embed it as a central part of all its endeavours across all disciplines. As an indefinitely evolving entity, 'starting again' is built into the fabric of the Ensemble, so embracing a fresh group of students, and the formulation of a new 'ensemble network' remains a stimulating prospect. In only a few years, the Ensemble has proven itself to be an invaluable resource in the development of pedagogic practice across the university; uniting staff and students from several faculties and encouraging them to readdress the balance between teaching and learning and renegotiate the dynamics of the learning environment through utilising the principles of 'Open-space learning'. For the student members of the Ensemble, belonging to the group offers a platform on which the student can, and must, take an active role in the direction of their education, and foster a commitment to 'speilen', a bringing together of the activities of mind and body in order to learn through active participation, using drama as a to learn *through* as well as *about*. The Ensemble is poised to begin a new cycle of work, and through its continued commitment to ensemble values, its expansion will interweave the work of several faculties and Warwick students past, present and future, creating a network that does not just connect people, but links together the broadest range of the university's academic interests.

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Part II

Student Responses to the Ensemble Report



BeckettLab (2009), The CAPITAL Centre, photographer: Wei-Jean Cheah

1) Membership and Alumni

a) A Timeline of Student Ensemble Projects

2005: The CAPITAL (Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning) Centre opens as a collaboration between the University of Warwick and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Jonathan Heron, Artistic Director of Fail Better Productions, collaborates with Carol Chillington Rutter on a series of Shakespeare workshops.

2006: The Philosophy and Literature weekend enables Jonathan Heron to collaborate with Eileen John and Michael John Kooy with Warwick students at Kilve Court, Somerset. The workshops focus on the drama of Samuel Beckett and the performance of philosophy.

2007: Fail Better Productions are commissioned by the CAPITAL Centre to perform two Beckett plays in their new building at Millburn House, University of Warwick Science Park. *Rough for Theatre II* and *Ohio Impromptu* are performed in May 2007 at the CAPITAL Carnival and revived in November 2007 for the conference 'Beckett and Visual Culture'.

2008: Fail Better Productions become the resident company at the CAPITAL Centre. Their work within the university is centered on CAPITAL's objective of developing creative thinking through forms of teaching and learning that emphasise active performance on the part of both students and tutors.

Summer 2008: Work on the *Persephone Project* begins with the first Ensemble participating in a series of physical workshops in collaboration with Fail Better designer Nomi Overall, associate Christopher Tester and performer Helen Bradbury.

Autumn 2008: The Ensemble present a new translation of Federico Garcia Lorca's *Play Without a Title* to full houses at Warwick, triggering other educational and academic events. This was the world premiere of David Johnston's translation and it subsequently transferred to the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry for 'Beyond Spanish: the Many Lorcas' on 1 November 2008.

May 2009: Fail Better and CAPITAL present a New Work Festival entitled 'Recycling', offering a platform on which the work of the Ensemble can be shown alongside visiting companies, professional new writing and other student performances. The Festival includes a showing of the *Persephone* project and a range of interdisciplinary collaborations including the *Faust* project and work with the Law School.

Summer 2009: Four production placements were offered to students for the Edinburgh production of *Diary of a Madman*, with the following creative/production roles available: Assistant Director, Assistant Producer (Publicity), Assistant Producer (Press) and Assistant Stage Manager.

Autumn 2009: An expanded Ensemble participates in *BeckettLab*, a 'theatre laboratory' workshop series that explored the theatre of Samuel Beckett in relation to devising process and actor training. One Ensemble member went on to perform Beckett with *Fail Better* at the Burton Taylor Studio, Oxford Playhouse.

January-March 2010: Using the outcomes of the *BeckettLab* workshops as a starting point, the Ensemble develop and rehearse a piece for the second New Work Festival in May. During the period the Ensemble also contribute to teaching and learning events with various departments including Cultural Policy Studies.

April-May 2010: The second New Work Festival entitled 'What's Past is Prologue' presents another selection of work-in-progress student performance projects alongside the work of professional theatre artists. Visiting companies include the Oxford Youth Theatre and associates of the Royal Shakespeare Company. The Festival opens with a series of small, intense performances of *Discords*, devised and performed by the Ensemble.

31st July 2010: CAPITAL's HEFCE funding ceases, but the 'Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts' HEA funding runs from 2009 to 2011, sustaining the Ensemble's core activities. The HEA project establishes a formal Student Ensemble for the first time, available to every faculty for collaborative pedagogic events.

1st August 2010: Warwick's two CETLs, the CAPITAL Centre and the Reinvention Centre, merge to form the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL), a new home for the re-branded 'IATL Student Ensemble'.

September-December 2010: The Ensemble engage in a rehearsal project to continue to devise and develop a final performance of *Discords (after Shakespeare)* in a rehearsal process in which the student ensemble create the final version of the production and train in the methods of the choreographer Laban. During this period the Ensemble prepare for projects with Philosophy and Psychiatry.

January 2011: *Discords* is shown alongside *Diary of a Madman* in *Fail Better* Anniversary double-bill at the WAC. In performing in a professional production, ensemble members gain experience working in a 'real world' touring company. Performances were attended by OSL project teams and participants from Psychiatry, Philosophy, English and Theatre Studies, which led to a series of pedagogic interventions in 2011.

February 2011: Ensemble members participate in a training day, preparing them for applied theatre events across the university. The group specifically focuses upon the use of improvisation and simulation as a pedagogic method for groups including medics, academics and teachers.

March 2011: Members of the student ensemble perform extracts from plays exploring mathematical knowledge in a 'Maths and Drama' event, leading into an enactive workshop. Also in this month, ensemble members

attend the 'Clinical Skills Laboratory' by taking a field trip to University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire to observe the use of role play and simulation in medical education (part of the OSL 'Psychiatry and Performance' project with Dr Matthew Broome).

Summer Term 2011: The Ensemble participate in a diverse range of events: a 'workshop facilitation' training day for early career academics and higher educators, in which the Ensemble perform a group of learners within a simulated classroom; a 'psychiatry and performance' event which included a series of readings by Ensemble and Fail Better performers Jonathan Broke and Helen Bradbury, for medical students and other practice-based student groups, re-connecting the humanities with medicine; and the Teaching and Learning Showcase in which a panel of five ensemble finalists reflect upon their experiences with IATL.

Autumn Term 2011: The Ensemble begin a series of workshops or 'practical experiments' exploring the theme of time and temporality. Some members also devised and performed a verbatim script, created from student testimonies extracted from undergraduate research about interdisciplinary pedagogy. This was first performed for an event with Monash University in Melbourne, and revived for the Student-as-Producer Showcase at IATL.

Spring Term 2012: Dr Daniel Katz and Jonathan Heron collaborate through a series of workshops for the Ensemble, based on the exploration and adaption of *After Lorca* by Jack Spicer. The Ensemble also contributes to a selection of interdisciplinary projects, including a learning experience for Cultural Policy Studies and a research project for the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Summer Term 2012: The Fail Better archive is opened up to ensemble members, who over the course of a week devise a performance installation from the fragments of previous productions, creating a new piece of theatre for a 'ghosted museum'. The piece entitled *Fail Better Fragments*, was performed several times over one day in April 2012, and was well attended by several past members of the company and student ensemble. This created the conditions for an 'ensemble network' that would extend to include graduate companies.

Autumn Term 2012: A process of research and development took place, following the Ensemble's contribution to the 'Beckett and Brain Science' workshop at Warwick in September 2012.

Spring Term 2013: Returning ensemble members participated in four workshops facilitated by guest practitioners including a workshop with former ensemble member Bertrand Lesca (Cheek by Jowl/FellSwoop Theatre), which was accompanied by a visit to watch *Ubu Roi* at the WAC. A movement workshop entitled 'Speaking Without Language', delivered by special international guest Assistant Professor (Trinity College, Dublin) and Artistic Director (Painted Filly, Dublin) Nicholas Johnson took place in February 2013. Fail Better associate and Warwick alumnus Christopher Tester and BBC Carleton Hobbs Award Winner and Warwick alumna Stephanie Racine returned to Warwick in March to deliver workshops to the current ensemble. The

Ensemble worked again with Daniel Katz for a script reading of *Troilus* by Jack Spicer, leading on from the workshops of the previous year, and participated in an 'open house' event on theatre-practice.

Summer Term 2013: Previous Ensemble members Bertrand Lesca and Jesse Meadows of FellSwoop Theatre return to Warwick to run a workshop with the current ensemble, in order to develop the idea of the 'ensemble network'. Lucy Katz is commissioned to write the Ensemble Report, in collaboration with Jonathan Heron.

Autumn Term 2013: Preparation for a pilot project run by graduate company FellSwoop Theatre focussing on student research around the idea of Utopias. There was a desire to recruit new members of the Ensemble from a wider range of University departments, particularly in Social Sciences, so current Ensemble members and representatives from FellSwoop Theatre held meetings with staff from Social Sciences, with the aim of engaging their students. In November 2013, a meeting took place to review the Ensemble Report and make plans for new projects.

January – March 2014: The pilot project with FellSwoop, led by former Ensemble members Bertrand Lesca and Fiona Mikel, culminates in a performance project in the Humanities Studio in March entitled *To Know How You Stand*. The project recruited ensemble members from seven different departments within the University – English, Theatre, Law, History, Philosophy, Film and French – and many more participants through the performance events. A focus group took place between current Ensemble members, FellSwoop Theatre and alumni of the Student Ensemble to reflect upon the impact of CAPITAL and/or IATL. The focus group helped to evaluate the FellSwoop pilot project, and look forward to the next project, now confirmed to be led by alumnus Josh Roche and his company Fat Git Theatre.

Summer Term 2014: An evaluative workshop with the Ensemble, led by FellSwoop Theatre, reflected upon *To Know How You Stand* and an introductory workshop, led by Josh Roche, laid the foundations for the FatGit project which begins later this year.

b) The Development of an Ensemble Network

As the above timeline shows, the Student Ensemble has been growing and evolving since its inception with the Fail Better residency in 2008. The idea of 'an ensemble' was a central part of the CAPITAL Centre's vision, which stimulated creativity in students through 'active performance'. In line with the resurgence of the Ensemble model at the RSC under Artistic Director Michael Boyd, the Student Ensemble became a means for CAPITAL to exercise its interdisciplinary goals, by upholding notions of community, creativity and diversity within the University.

The Student Ensemble has become increasingly diverse; the 2014 FellSwoop project included students from seven different departments and reached even more through the performance of *To Know How You Stand*. This initial pilot project was targeted specifically at the Social Sciences, and the upcoming project with Fat Git Theatre aims to further broaden diversity by engaging areas as diverse as Life Sciences and Creative Writing.

Having an academically diverse range of membership is vital to the Student Ensemble, as it continues to support IATL's inter/trans-disciplinary pedagogic ethos. Furthermore, by expanding in to the model of a 'Ensemble Network', that unites current students with graduates of the University and the Ensemble, the Student Ensemble becomes a place not only for current students to work together creatively but a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration across generations of students. The input of Ensemble alumni who have gone on to a range of post-graduation careers – a study of the current list of 50+ Ensemble alumni shows that the majority have gone in to either theatre practice, postgraduate research, or teaching – informs the current work of the Ensemble. The FellSwoop project gave Ensemble members an insight into professional theatre practice, informed by the tools Bertrand and Fiona have developed since graduation. Furthermore, the influence of former member Tegid Cartwright – who now works in professional camerawork and who documented the creative process with Edward Davis – was to shed light on how film and editing work can support and embellish upon both research processes and performance projects. The intention of the Ensemble Network is that it is also beneficial for the returning members, and that the interdisciplinary nature the IATL ensemble can inform their own work. For instance, for theatre practitioners from FellSwoop Theatre to work with a diverse group of students – with little or no formal training in performance – informed how the Company may be able to develop *To Know How You Stand* in to a community-based project.

The project run by FellSwoop Theatre in the Spring term of the 2013/14 academic year was a pilot for how an Ensemble Network might work, bringing together not just a range of current Warwick students, but past students also. The upcoming Fat Git project can capitalise on this, creating an ensemble that can transcend borders both within and beyond the University.

2) Transdisciplinarity: the Past, Present and Future Ensemble

‘To promote the vision of an inclusive academic community where learners, teachers and researchers are all seen as scholars and collaborators in the common pursuit of knowledge’

(IATL Website: Terms of Reference)

The democratic ideal outlined above represents IATL’s aim of transdisciplinary education. In attempting to do so, IATL and the Student Ensemble move along a scale of multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinarity (see Monk et al, 2011; Kershaw and Nicholson, 2011)

- Multidisciplinarity: the collaboration of people from various disciplines, with each working in isolation to discuss a topic from the point of view of their discipline.
- Interdisciplinarity: a collaboration of different disciplines in which separate disciplines aim to interact to improve and challenge each other’s knowledge.
- Transdisciplinarity: the ideal in which a transcendence of disciplines results in a space of shared knowledge with no disciplinary boundaries.

The Student Ensemble has been involved in projects engaging with many departments including English, Mathematics and Psychiatry. The English Literature projects were directly connected to the Fail Better residency, and focussed on considering texts studied in literature through theatrical means, such as ‘Beckett in Performance’ as part of the *BeckettLab*. This represented a multidisciplinary project including interdisciplinary events, as the two disciplines improved each other’s knowledge of a text that was related to them both. Between 2010 and 2012 the Ensemble interacted with Mathematics through the ‘Maths and Drama’ event and a workshop on ‘Teaching Abstraction in Open Spaces’. In the latter of these, the mathematical theme of abstraction was explored physically, without textual basis, for example through human card shuffling and a ‘predator-prey’ game. The lack of textual basis in this workshop represents a breakthrough in transdisciplinarity possibility, as mathematics was being explored and understood through theatrical processes. This allowed for transdisciplinary moments through the creation of a shared learning space, not firmly based in one discipline or another. Another project involving the Ensemble was the ‘Psychiatry and Performance’ event in 2011. In this project, the Ensemble first watched a

medical training role play delivered by students of Warwick Medical School, after which followed a 'creative exchange' in which a medical audience engaged with performances and rehearsed readings of texts by Nikolai Gogol, Sarah Kane and Shakespeare from *Fail Better* and the Ensemble. This represents an interdisciplinary event, as the two groups remain firmly grounded in their own disciplines whilst improving each other's knowledge.

In the academic year 2013/14, the Student Ensemble has been involved in FellSwoop Theatre's project, *To Know How You Stand*, which was a pilot project for the 'Ensemble Network'. Having learnt from earlier events, as summarised above, the project engaged with performance, not through exploring theatrical texts, but instead approached the concept of utopia, marginal societies and general politics through interdisciplinary methods. Run by members of the graduate theatre company FellSwoop, the project included eleven members of the Student Ensemble, for many of whom it was their first ensemble experience. The students came from a range of seven disciplines, making it the most diverse ensemble incarnation up to 2014, with representatives of English, Theatre, History, Law, Philosophy, Film/TV, and German. The project focussed on asking probing questions to the members about political ideas and ideals of utopia, often explored through physical exercises and embodied research. The performance sought to be interactive and question the opinions of the audience, to encourage them to approach the topics through their own perspectives and disciplines.

To Know How You Stand was an interdisciplinary event, but with transdisciplinary moments emerging within the laboratory environment. Initially, students were firmly rooted in their individual disciplines in how they responded to the themes being explored. However, as the project developed a relaxed environment was created and students gradually felt comfortable to step beyond these limitations, whether directly related to their discipline or not. The extra-curricular nature of the project allowed students to approach themes outside of their own discipline from personal perspectives, and many Ensemble members felt the workshops had provided opportunities for them to discover their own opinions alongside the opinions of others. The fact that the project focussed on themes that transcended disciplines allowed for a shared learning environment to be created where at times disciplinary boundaries were forgotten.

With the Ensemble's involvement in the FellSwoop project coming to a close in March 2014, it is important to consider how the Ensemble can develop and what changes can be made in the University as a whole, to support the pursuit of transdisciplinarity. An initial step would be to maintain the focus of Ensemble workshops away from theatrical texts and towards large conceptual and universal ideas, as this may make it easier to engage with new departments that are currently untouched by 'open-space learning'. In the future, it might be helpful for the Student Ensemble to have a greater level of interaction with the interdisciplinary modules run at Warwick, perhaps through running workshops with them on topics of particular difficulty or with exceptional research value. There are currently eleven undergraduate modules run by IATL that are open to all students, which aim to,

'Understand the symbiotic potential of traditionally distinct disciplines, and to stimulate collaboration through group work and embodied learning'.

(IATL Website: Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Modules)

An ideal next step for transdisciplinary progress within the university would be the introduction of a specific interdisciplinary degree, in which students would not approach interdisciplinary modules from the starting point of any particular discipline. This is, to an extent, being implemented in a select number of postgraduate courses at the University, but to establish this at undergraduate level remains a challenge. The introduction of a specifically interdisciplinary degree would result in students tackling thematic issues without remaining grounded in a specific discipline, helping to create a shared learning space with no disciplinary boundaries. For such a degree to succeed, new extra-departmental support systems would have to emerge, and communication between departments would need to be at the forefront. To understand the specific value that Ensemble process might have in that context, *To Know How You Stand* will now be treated as a case study in order to consider the experiences of the student-participants and how this might inform future projects.

3) Case Study: *To Know How You Stand*

a) The Student Ensemble and FellSwoop Theatre

The founders of FellSwoop Theatre returned to Warwick to lead a politically driven theatre project called *To Know How You Stand*. With IATL, Bertrand Lesca and Fiona Mikel recruited eleven students from seven separate academic departments including Social Sciences, alongside the Humanities, bringing together numerous viewpoints, perspectives and academic backgrounds. Whilst some of the students came from Theatre Studies, and a few had been involved in similar ensembles before, many of these students had no personal experience of theatre in production and limited experience of ‘open-space learning’ environments. The political and philosophical content of this project also contributed to attracting students from many different departments to work together as an ensemble. Together, the Ensemble devised and performed *To Know How To Stand*, a piece of theatre that studied the ideas of Utopia using audience interaction as a tool to start an open and shared dialogue.

In evaluating FellSwoop’s project, we began to gather feedback from members of the Student Ensemble who were involved throughout the process and a focus group of Warwick alumni theatre practitioners who were invited by IATL to return to the university as audience members. In addition to discussing this particular project, the returning Warwick practitioners considered what impact that their involvement with IATL had on their careers since leaving. Graduates concluded that the Ensemble provided them with two things: skills that were easily transferable to their lives outside University, and a network of inter-connected Warwick alumni. Similarly to the students, the returning practitioners agreed that IATL provided a ‘laboratory space’ in which experimentation could be supported. They agreed that the freedom found in at IATL was more difficult to achieve outside Warwick; there is ‘less of an emphasis on research, dramaturgy and open-space learning in the professional world,’ as one graduate explained during the focus group.

In addition to the positive influence on theatre making, there was general consensus amongst current and graduate members of the Ensemble, that workshop based collaborative

learning is not just positive preparation for theatre practitioners, but also as a means of education beyond curriculum focused study. One graduate spoke of IATL's 'potential for learning in different ways and looking at how you get beyond institutionalised ways of learning'. IATL's approach to learning and education is not simply about creating the finished product of a performance, but the process of 'making'. Much of the embodied research and devising produced during the workshops for *To Know How You Stand* did not make it in to the final performance, and although this was found to be frustrating at times, the practitioners wanted to make clear that those contributions still had a value beyond what could be presented before an audience. It should also be noted that an extended period of engagement would have facilitated more input from the academic community.

As we reflect on FellSwoop's work with the Ensemble, the next project with graduate company Fat Git is just beginning. Again, this project will be focused on 'process over product', and will benefit from a longer time scale to devise and develop, something that would have been advantageous for *To Know How You Stand*. As the Ensemble moves, once again, into a new cycle of work, it builds upon the momentum created with FellSwoop, which can hopefully be sustained over the course of the next project. New students will join current members of the Ensemble and re-create an evolving network of practice.

b) Student Ensemble Feedback [PTO]

Works cited

Kershaw, Baz and Nicholson, Helen (eds.); *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, Edinburgh University Press (2011)

Monk, Nicholas with Carol Chillington Rutter, Jonothan Neelands and Jonathan Heron. *Open-space Learning: A Study in Transdisciplinary Pedagogy*. Bloomsbury Academic (2011)

What did you expect before the rehearsal process?	Were your expectations realised?	What has been the most interesting/rewarding aspect of the rehearsal process?	What has been the most challenging/difficult aspect of the rehearsal process?	Would you like to see wider use of more practical teaching methods?
To be honest, I didn't really know what to expect! I think I didn't expect that we would be given such free rein to explore any ideas that interested us (which is an aspect of the process I really loved.)	Everything really exceeded any expectations I could have had. Rehearsals have been so fun, thought provoking and completely different to anything I have done before	Seeing everyone working together so well, and listening to the other ensemble members talk passionately. Having a safe space to say whatever you believe has been so refreshing and inspiring. Also dancing, running around, singing and generally going a bit wild has really helped me blow off steam when I'm stressed	For me, presenting ideas practically to others was initially a bit daunting as it is well out of my comfort zone. But this is also one of the most rewarding aspects for me, because it gave me a nudge into being confident about my opinions	Yes. I find that concepts stick in my mind more securely when learnt in a practical way. Although traditional seminars/lectures are important, they can be difficult to engage with at times.
A collaborative, research-based devising project.	Sort of. It became less of a communal project and more of a 'here is the structure we've come up with, please write this, this and this to fill in the gaps.' But I did get a lot out of the exercises in and of themselves.	Forcing myself to articulate my ideas I've been too scared to do so up until now.	Having things I wrote/worked on cut from the piece. It was difficult to come to terms with this, each time this happened, but the piece was better as a result.	Maybe, but I think you would have to consider the fact that this would be awful for some people.
Lots of discussion. And play.	Partly, there was less discussion, more play	Time pressure, and being part of a large group creating together	Meeting people, talking about the ideas, and the fun of it/ Dancing, and pushing things too far.	Yes I would, I think getting up and trying things is very rewarding and deepens the experience and learning.
A lot of discussion, coming to terms with my own views through struggling with big ideas.	Most definitely.	Not always knowing where I myself stand with my own views. Juggling both sides of an argument and having to make decisions due to time constraints.	Learning about completely new political ideas and how these can be merged with physical theatre to create a very important piece of work that is still being spoken about a month or so on.	Most definitely. It's so helpful to talk about ideas and then put them on their feet, really reveals why we think the way we do. Our views as constructs of upbringing, society, media etc.

Postscript



FellSwoop workshop (2014), Humanities Studio, photographer: Peter Marsh

Over the course of a year, the Ensemble Review has developed, over a sustained period of analysis, an evaluation of inter/trans-disciplinary projects and an audit of the current membership and alumni. The review has also reflected upon the journey from the Fail Better residency to the FellSwoop project, across five years of work. In the true spirit of the Ensemble, the review is a co-authored and a multi-vocal response, and whilst it is necessarily a work-in-progress as the Ensemble continues to evolve and flourish, it documents the group's identity in 2013/14. It is important the methodology for this review follows the same democratic model that is practiced in workshops and rehearsals. The Ensemble's ongoing commitment to collaborative experimentation through embodied research will ensure a bright and broadminded future for students and graduates to explore the space between, and beyond, disciplines.