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## **IATL Strategic Project**

### **PLAYWRITING AT WARWICK**

#### Introduction

In a broad sense this strategic project has been exploring: What makes playwriting at Warwick University unique and how could it be developed further? The basic idea of this project is to identify, formulate, and further develop the distinct and innovative creative and pedagogical features of new writing in the School of Theatre and Performance Studies and to explore if these practices could be developed further into a unique Warwick brand. We are interested in multidimensional aspects of writing for theatre and performance. We explore how the material for a play, as well as solutions for solving structural or other issues in the writing process could come from a variety of places and disciplines (literature, poetry, visual arts, music, history, daily news, modern media, everyday life, etc.) We examine transferable aspects of playwriting and other forms of creative writing, asking: How could dramaturgical techniques aid structuring of a novel? How can dramatic structure be explored by visual means? How can playwriting techniques and workshops be utilized in teaching in a variety of disciplines?

#### **What has been happening so far?**

The following distinct aspects have been emerging through this project:

- 1) The project has been enhancing and further supporting vibrant playwriting activities of the Warwick students through workshops, artist talks, opportunities to meet some of the leading UK playwrights and to learn about different strategies and approaches to developing work for theatre and performance.
- 2) So far, this has also been a great way to explore the interdisciplinary dimensions of the project through synergies with staff and students from other disciplines including English and Creative Writing, Italian, Linguistics, Sociology and Law. This has been done through discussions related to a particular topic (i.e. history and creative writing, issues of writing about ethnicity and religion, questions of gender, etc.) and through workshops, attended by both staff and students, where playwriting skills have also been understood as transferable

pedagogical tools (i.e. playwriting exercises as a means of teaching a foreign language). We have also been collaborating with IAS on the event "Processing Performance/re-tracing identities: mapping intersections in research and performance praxis", and in partnership with IAS Early Career Research Fellow Awelani Moyo, which will take place in May.

- 3) Links with some leading practitioners in the field of playwriting and performance writing have been made and there are possibilities to keep and further enhance these links in the future.
- 4) We have opened a variety of topics and explored how we could think about issues such as politics, history, war crimes, gender, religion, violence, identity, language, and audience both through discourse and through creative practice of playwriting. We have addressed various aspects of the playwriting craft, but also explored different approaches to the writing process dealing with the relationship between form and content, body and writing, image and dramaturgy.
- 5) Students have been engaged and encouraged to work on the project independently and/or create collaborative sessions with guest artists (i.e. PhD candidate Natasha Davis worked with performance artist Guy Dartnell, Lead Student Learners are preparing a session for the summer term, etc.).

### **Work in progress and plans for the next term**

Our Lead Student Learners have been working hard on compiling the archive of plays developed at Warwick to be featured on our website. They have also been finalizing the editing of the podcasts that will serve as a documentation of our workshops and as a learning resource.

In the Summer Term we will explore the "Processing Performance/re-tracing identities: mapping intersections in research and performance praxis" in partnership with IAS Early Career Research Fellow Awelani Moyo. The event will involve playwright Mojisola Adebayo, Dr Michael McMillan, Dr Yvette Hutchison and others. A local school will also be invited to the workshop with Mojisola Adebayo, which might be a great way to explore further impact possibilities of this project.

We will also look into the development of new writing in the UK and opportunities for emerging playwrights. This will be a student-lead

event and our Lead Student Learners are particularly interested in the work of London based Soho Theatre and their new play development programs.

We are also joining forces with Warwick Business School to create a Playwriting Prize open to Warwick students for a short-play written in response to a particular case study relevant to the Business School teaching, that they plan to use in the classroom. The call for submissions will be announced shortly after the Easter Holidays.

### **Other Aspects**

We have been using the project website and the students have also created a Facebook page for the project. This does not only help with the practicalities of advertising for our events and booking places on our workshops, but also increases visibility of the project and enables a more immediate communication.

We also hope that the website will serve as a creative and pedagogical resource beyond the duration of the Strategic grant once its archive of plays and podcasts go live. We have already received inquiries about some of the podcast material from staff members who would like to use it as a teaching resource.

### **Conclusion**

So far, we have been very pleased with the development of our project and the ways in which it has been able to meet its aims and objectives. It is going really well not only in terms of fulfilling its goals, but also as a means of inspiring new ideas to enhance playwriting at Warwick and also to think about these activities as ways of developing new teaching tools and resources across disciplines.

We will give a presentation at the Teaching & Learning Showcase in June.