

**Class Concerns:**  
**Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy in the UK**  
**University of Glasgow, 5-7 September 2023**



**Census, Malandra Jacks. Photograph: David Hall**

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September**

12 – 1: Registration [ARC reception]

1 – 1.30: Welcome and Introduction: Liz Tomlin [ARC 237b]

1.30- 2.30: Keynote 1: Dave O’Brien, ‘Making the Creative Majority: Can education break the class ceiling in the arts?’ [ARC 237b] chair: Stephen Greer.

2.30-3: Coffee break [ARC lobby]

3 – 4.15: Curated Panel (A): *Class Exists* [ARC 237b] chair: Matt Hargrave

Rebecca Hillman, University of Exeter  
Aparna Mahiyaria, University of Exeter  
Sarah Weston, University of Manchester

4.45 – 6.15: Theatre Performance: [James Arnott Theatre, Gilmorehill]

*Census* by Malandra Jacks

6.15 – 7.30: Drinks reception: [Performance Studio, Gilmorehill]

## Weds 6<sup>th</sup> September

9.30 – 10.45: Keynote 2: Sivamohan Valluvan, 'Cultural Studies (of race and class) in the time of the nation' [ARC 237b] chair: Katie Beswick

11– 12.45:

Panel (B): *Theorizing Class* [ARC 237b] chair: Simon Murray

'The Sticky Situation of Class'

Paul Geary

'Are We the New Ecological Class?'

Kamila Mamadnazarbekova

'Race to the Bottom: Proletarianization and Racialization in the British Theatre'

Tom Six

'Grenfell Memorial Walk: the claiming and staging of the 'working-class' subject'

Linda Taylor

OR

Participatory Performance: *Learning and Researching in a Class Society: SEPTEMBER 11 and SEPTEMBER 6* [ARC, Studio 2]

Francesco Sani

12.45- 1.45 Lunch [ARC lobby]

1.45– 3.15 Interventions: Katy Baird and Anna Maria Nabirye

Midpoint reflections and discussion [ARC, 237b]

3.15 – 3.45 Coffee break [ARC lobby]

3.45 - 4.45

Panel (C): Working-class and queer [ARC 237a] chair: tbc

'Queer performance methodologies and representing an intersectional working-class'

Amy Terry

'"Picking My Scabs for Your Entertainment" – Class, queerness and trauma in the solo works of Scottee'

Stephen Greer

OR

Panel (D): Dramaturgical Innovation: Staging working-class lives [ARC 237b] chair: Linda Taylor

'Inclusion Paradigms: Autosociobiography on Stage in France, Germany, and Britain'

Lianna Mark

'Class and melancholia in *Standing at the Sky's Edge* (2022): a musical play about Park Hill Estate, Sheffield, featuring the songs of Richard Hawley'

Matt Hargrave

5 – 6.15 Round-table discussion: *What Should/Can Universities Do?* [ARC 237b] chair: Katie Beswick; respondents: Jacqueline Bolton, Pippa Frith, Burcu Güney, Hassan Mahamdallie, Anna Maria Nabirye

6.45 – 7.45: Theatre Performance: [James Arnott Theatre, Gilmorehill Halls]

*After Party* by Annie Lowry Thomas

## Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September

9.30 – 10.45 Keynote 3 – Jenny Hughes (University of Manchester), Rhiannon White (Common Wealth) and Ffion Wyn Morris (Freelance Artist/Researcher) "How to build a movement: Where are all the bin men and dinner ladies? How do we make performance with, by and for them? How do we perform, tell stories and reimagine what is possible?" [ARC 237b] chair: Liz Tomlin

11 – 12.15:

Panel (E): *Beyond Figuration* [ARC 237a] chair: Paul Geary

'Beyond Figuration: Working Class Energetics in Pata Pata and Elephants' Graveyard'

Carl Lavery

'Intervocal Transformations: a classed and queered voicing-dancer in Instant Composition (IC)'

Robert Vesty

OR

Panel (F): *Cultural Policies and Practices in Scotland* [ARC 237b] chair: Graham Eatough

'Who works in theatre and the arts in Scotland?'

Orian Brook

"We don't get visits from artists, and we don't get workshops" – school pupil (17) How class is framing arts access for children and young people in 21st Century Scotland'

Siân McGregor

"We Were Never Encouraged to Speak Up": Capital and Community for Female Leaders in the Scottish Cultural Sector'

Katie Hart

12.30 – 1.30: Closing Reflections

## **Abstracts and Bios**

### **Tuesday 5th**

#### **Keynote 1: Making the Creative Majority: Can education break the class ceiling in the arts?**

Class, and other demographic, inequalities are well entrenched in the arts. This is true of both the cultural workforce and the cultural audience. A huge range of literature demonstrates the fact that arts and culture are highly exclusive. The recent *Creative Majority* report suggested 'what works' insights for hiring and commissioning in the workforce. It also identified a range of issues that go beyond who is hired and who is commissioned. This talk considers one part of the follow up to that research- on access to creative education- as part of understanding and challenging inequalities. In doing so the talk connects current debates on arts education to broader questions of social mobility and class inequality in the arts. The analysis presents data from HESA, UCAS, the 2021 Census, and a systematic literature review to show; the dominance of degree-level education for creative workers; how arts education is failing to support diverse routes into creative work; that the alternatives, for example apprenticeships policy, has also failed. The paper concludes by thinking about individual narratives of arts and creative education and their connection to creative careers. Ultimately the analysis suggests systematic changes are needed across arts education, arts careers, and arts policy to address inequalities.

Dave O'Brien is Professor of Cultural and Creative Industries at the University of Manchester. He was part of the research team for the *Creative Majority* report and is working on its forthcoming follow up about inequality and creative education. He is the co-author of *Culture is bad for you*, as well as numerous papers on the cultural and creative sector. He is currently co-investigator on the AHRC funded Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, as well as working on projects about class in the television industry, valuing culture and heritage, and taste in contemporary Britain.

#### ***Curated Panel (A): Class Exists***

This curated panel will consist of a series of provocations in response to the question in the call for papers, 'Are there dangers in foregrounding class in conversations about inequality?' We will present arguments for why class is a critical part of the discussion of inequality within theatre and performance practice and scholarship, arguing for the significance of class as an analytic lens. Questions of identity, intersectionality, and representation are significant in the context of cultural industries structured by inequality, lack of access and diversity, discrimination, and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. However, we argue that recalibration of discourses on class, with the view to foregrounding structured relations of economic exploitation under capitalism is crucial to tackling these injustices. Furthermore, we contend that class is an important factor in discussion of global inequality, and that imperialism must be integral to discussions on decolonisation, within arts practice or the University. In this curated panel, we each present our own specific interest: Rebecca will consider the significance of class in cultural activist initiatives in workers' movements; Aparna will draw upon continued relevance of class in cultural movements from the Global South; and Sarah will examine class in the context of studying theatre and performance in higher education. We finish by making a series of provocations and recommendations for theatre and performance to engage

with class beyond concerns of access and representation. Rather than three separate papers, this panel will take the form of a creative, interweaving dialogue, demonstrating how each issue is bound to the other through the lens of class.

Dr Rebecca Hillman is a senior lecturer in drama at the University of Exeter. Her research explores the role of theatre, performance, and other cultural work in political activism. In particular, she is interested in working-class culture and performance of the labour movement. This is the focus of her current project: *Performing Resistance: theatre and performance in 21st century workers' movements*, funded by the AHRC. Her research is often based in practice and has developed in collaboration with trade unions.

Dr Aparna Mahiyaria is a lecturer in drama at the University of Exeter. Her research covers street theatre practices in New Delhi and the importance of political organising for enhancing the efficacy of politically engaged theatre. In the past, she has worked with the Indian Cultural Forum, a New Delhi-based organisation that platforms local and international debates on politics and culture. Her current research explores cultural heritage and performance practices within the workers' cooperative movement in Kerala.

Dr Sarah Weston is a lecturer in theatre studies at the University of Manchester. Completing her PhD at the University of Leeds in 2018, Sarah's research explores the social and political value of performance training in community contexts. Sarah also works as a theatre practitioner, co-running Salford Community Theatre.

## ***Theatre Performance: Census***

**Census, is a communally generated history of a working-class area in constant transition.**

Using their rich history steeped in Mancunian charisma and wit, the award-winning Malandra Jacks (Chloe and Josh) will celebrate their North Manchester community, Moston. Lacing personal stories, with spellbinding projection mapping to unpick the complexity of present-day working-class identity.

The show will present a powerful mix of autobiographical material; alongside the abundant lived experience of community members, to ignite local pride, and much-needed conversations.

About Malandra Jacks:

Malandra Jacks are a theatre and creative company sharing authentic stories through combined arts. Led by their passion for people and creativity they create dynamic and socially engaged live theatre, film and installations.

### **CREATIVE TEAM**

In their creative team for *Census*, Malandra Jacks are joined by Kate Bradham (Dramaturg), Andrew Crofts (Technical Consultant), Faz Barber (Set Designer), Greg Harper (Composer), Roxy Daykin-Moores (Producer), Tom Mills (Set Maker), David Hall (Projection Visual Designer), Julia Samuels (R&D Creative Practitioner), Tony Sweeten (venue technician).

### **CREDITS AND PARTNERS**

Commissioned by Contact and hÅb, with rehearsal space support from Salford University New Adelphi Theatre. Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Manchester City Council's Neighbourhood Investment Fund.

## **Wednesday 6th**

### **Keynote 2: Cultural Studies (of race and class) in the time of the nation**

This talk focuses on how influential cultural studies/sociological accounts of culture find themselves in increasingly awkward positions vis-a-vis the rejuvenation of English nationalist politics. Not least, the ways in which today's new right nationalism and its claims to working-class legitimacy selectively absorbs some basic cultural studies nostrums but for decidedly reactionary effect. Concomitantly, much mainstreamed anti-racist research risks becoming complicit in this wider nationalist class conceit, having adopted analytic and moral orthodoxies that are less responsive to working-class cultural horizons. Against both these contrasting closures, I look to profile contemporary research that, drawing from Paul Gilroy's wider interventions, returns to the study of everyday multiculturalism – where culture is approached as a lived-in question distinctly working-class conjunctural contingencies that usefully preview more radical and solidaristic political possibility.

Sivamohan Valluvan is Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *The Clamour of Nationalism* (Manchester University Press, 2019) and has written widely on cultural and postcolonial theory. He has also contributed to *Salvage, Renewal, Red Pepper, Progressive Review, Discover Society* and *The Guardian*.

### ***Panel (B): Theorizing Class***

Paul Geary: 'The Sticky Situation of Class'

To describe class as 'sticky' is to conjure up the ways in which it adheres to an identity, in a long-lasting and persistent way, remaining fixed in place. To describe it as a 'sticky situation' evokes its potential to be problematic, awkward or difficult in a given circumstance. Despite the supposed malleability of performative identities, with opportunities to reconfigure or recreate oneself, class remains sticky: it continues to assert itself in even the most personal, internal or intimate performances of self, and thus retains its adhesive strength as a social glue. From a highly personal sense of oneself as a classed subject stems the persistence of social hierarchies. In this paper, I will offer an outline of the performative constitution of classed identity as both intimately personal and ideological, paying particular attention to the deeply embedded operations of interpellation that make class so sticky. In the first half of the paper, I will explore how class is a force in the development of sensing-thinking-feeling subjectivity, to the point where it becomes unconscious second nature. In the second half of the paper, I will outline some of the implications of the stickiness of class for theatre and performance, including how the arts council's participation in the government's 'levelling up' agenda promotes mere 'social mobility' rather than combatting the systems and problems of classed identities. I will conclude by addressing how class-consciousness-raising in theatre needs to operate at a deep level, exposing the ideological figuration of personal identities. To do this, I will utilise ideas from Martin Heidegger to critique over reliance on 'lived experience' and instead engage with the more difficult work of 'Being-historical thinking' or 'mindful meditation' (engaging with ideological, socio-political and material circumstances in order to begin the process of claiming agency and challenging political systems).

Paul Geary is a lecturer in Drama at the University of East Anglia. His work focuses on the senses, experience, ideology, and performance philosophy. He is the author of *Experimental Dining: Performance, Experience and Ideology in Contemporary Creative Restaurants* (Intellect, 2022)

Kamila Mamadnazarbekova, 'Are We the New Ecological Class?'

Danish sociologist Nikolaj Schultz co-signed with Bruno Latour his short text *On the Emergence of an Ecological Class*. For his field research Schultz went to the French island of Porquerolles, where he recorded rising tensions between islanders who profit from flourishing tourism and those who want to limit its impact on landscapes. Communication of climate science has been way too pedagogical, insists Schultz, and one way to make it more political is revisiting marxist categories : to oppose production to reproduction, to question control over the means of destruction in what he and Latour call the New Climatic Regime. British theatre is sensible to this kind of disaster sociology. Island as a literary trope often reappears as a mini model of the world, lost paradise, fascinating, mysterious, exploited, abandoned, hosting a catastrophe, turned into prison or resource colony. Awakening volcano of Tristan da Cunha in Zinnie Harris's *Further Than the Furthest Thing*, recently revived at the Young Vic, proposes such narrative of seduction and displacement. In Kae Tempest's *Paradise* the tragedy of Sophocle's war hero takes place on a remote island destroyed by capitalism and pollution, inhabited by exclusively feminine local community, where class concerns are amplified by gender and racial differences. At the same time, if we stay true to revolutionary logic, we may find ourselves facing new moral dilemmas and different versions of the old 'trolley problem'. In *The Trials by Dawn King* a jury of youngsters pronounces its verdicts over life and death of older survivors of climate collapse followed by rising food scarcity, and they very much take into consideration the defendants' previous consumption habits and environmental consciousness. In this article we would like to inquire how British ecodrama redefines the notion of class with its historical connotations, such as values, appropriations and cultural distinctions.

Kamila Mamadnazarbekova is doctoral student at Sorbonne University preparing her thesis on landscape theatre and concepts of nature on British stages of the XXIst century with Elisabeth Angel-Perez. Kamila earned a Masters degree from Le Mans University with a thesis on Philippe Quesne under the supervision of Anna Street.

Tom Six, 'Race to the Bottom: Proletarianization and Racialization in the British Theatre'

In recent years, two patterns have emerged in British cultural production and its sociological analysis: firstly, a hardening of the constraints of commercial logics that have shaped funding since the 'neoliberal revolution' of the late 1970s, and secondly an increased investment in class, commonly understood as an identity position shaping workers' capacities to succeed in the 'creative industries'. This paper will argue that these tendencies should be understood as part of the longer history of the ways in which the post-war creation of a British theatre sector both committed theatre to represent the nation, and produced new conditions for its subsumption to capital accumulation. Such an analysis must recognise at least two things. First, that class relations are rooted in proletarianization, a dynamic process that is generated by the logics of capital accumulation. Secondly, that the reproduction of cultural institutions depends, ideologically, upon the disavowal of this process. I will propose, moreover, that an attunement to processes of racialization – the flexible and contingent ways in which racialized groups are produced and reproduced – can reveal both the ways in which the cultural sector is governed by the logics of

proletarianization and the basis of its ideological commitment to framing social relations as identity positions. Although much of my handling of these issues will be necessarily theoretical, I will offer a critique of treatments of class as an identity in theatre studies (e.g. Essin 2021), and illustrate my argument with examples drawn from ongoing research projects with partners in the sector that seek to analyse and alter practices and policies at the intersections of racialization and the political economy of contemporary British theatre production. In short, this paper will argue that neither class nor race is an identity; rather they are always interlocking ways of ordering people in the service of power.

Tom Six is Reader in Politics and Performance at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, and an editor of the journal *Studies in Theatre and Performance*. His current research focuses on the politics of race and racialization in theatre and planetary performance. He is the author (before 2023 as Tom Cornford) of numerous essays on theatre-making and its politics, and of *Theatre Studios: A Political History of Ensemble Theatre-Making* (Routledge 2021), as well as co-editor of *Michael Chekhov in the Twenty-First Century: New Pathways* (Bloomsbury 2020), and a special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on director Katie Mitchell (2020).  
<https://www.tom6.space/>

### ***Participatory Performance: Learning and Researching in a Class Society: SEPTEMBER 11 and SEPTEMBER 6***

SEPTEMBER 11 is a participatory performance that explores the constitution of social identity and political positioning through role play and the creation of a collective soundscape. By thematizing the history of Chile between 1970 and the coup d'état of September 11 1973, the piece explores concepts such as the constitution of class identity, democratic participation, and the adoption of different models of economic production and distribution. During the performance, participants are exposed to different forms of textual material, including poetical texts, material drawn from the historical archive, and extracts from the work of economists from different schools of thought. The relation to information is decentralized and collectivised. Text is made accessible by my own performance of it, group readings mediated by a metronome, which participants decide to enact on a voluntary basis, and fragments of writing distributed over the performance space.

Building on Bertolt Brecht's experimentations with the Learning Plays, SEPTEMBER 11 employs participatory performance to foster modalities of critical confrontation with social participation. The piece proposes a critical realignment of the concept of social class in neoliberalism understanding that the concept of class, far from being less applicable to modern divisions of wealth and power, has shifted from a disciplinary one (labelling of social groups) to an evaluative one (evaluation of individual performance according to social standards). As philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato states, in the neoliberal age 'the rich and the poor inhabit the "same world" in the sense that they are exposed to the same semiotics of information, publicity, television, arts and culture.'<sup>1</sup> SEPTEMBER 11 proposes an embodied and collective-oriented modality of reassessment of the way history is learned, commented upon, and translated in cultural paradigms that generate social subjectivities.

Francesco Sani was born in Vigevano, Italy, in 1995. He is currently conducting a PhD at De Montfort University, Leicester, exploring the practice of the Brechtian *Learning Play* in the context of theatre for education and community theatre.

### ***Panel (C): Working-class and queer***

Amy Terry, 'Queer performance methodologies and representing an intersectional working-class'



In the foreword to the published script of *Class* (2020) Scottee states: “There is not just one way of being common. Within the working class there is a whole spectrum of experiences that are determined by geography, economics, cultural capital, race, ability, and gender — my experience isn’t ‘the experience’ — *Class* is just one of the experiences, but to you, we’re a we” (9). Queer and trans\* working-class artists are uniquely positioned to critique stable definitions of what it means to be working-class. Coming from an oppressed group that has attempted coalition in gay liberation movements, but also struggles from the erasure of community for certain members, queer and trans\* practitioners often seek out methodologies that do not foreclose on individual identity or seek out sameness. This paper gives an overview of my current research into how queer performance methodologies open up space to discuss an intersectional view on class both in performance and scholarship. I will first position myself as a queer, working-class theatre maker and academic to give context to the research. In doing so I will ground the work in my creative and academic professional experience. I offer an overview of some of the methodologies queer, trans\* and working-class solo performers use in their work. In particular, I look to coalition; anger; care against neoliberal self-care; and disidentification as the methods of performance used by practitioners such as Travis Alabanza, Mojisola Adebayo and Scottee. I argue that these artists and methods offer an intersectional perspective on working-class subjectivity that has a political aim of liberation beyond the representation of trauma. I end the paper with looking to spaces and audiences, and what it means for these queer forms to migrate from the club and cabaret scene to the mainstream.

Amy Terry (they/ she/ he) is a working-class theatre maker and PhD candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London. Their research focuses on queer and trans\* solo performance and working-class representation. They have performed their work at Camden’s People Theatre, RADA and Tate & Lyle Working Men’s Club.

### ***Panel (D): Dramaturgical Innovation: Staging working-class lives***

Lianna Mark, ‘Inclusion Paradigms: Autosociobiography on Stage in France, Germany, and Britain’

In recent years, mainstage theatres in Europe have seen a boom in adaptations of works of “autosociobiography”. Coined by French novelist and Nobel laureate Annie Ernaux and currently en vogue in German and French literary discourse, this (much contested) term describes works that mix autobiographical narration and sociological analysis. Principally associated with Ernaux herself and her friends and compatriots Didier Eribon and Édouard Louis, these works — and the related critical discourse — have travelled widely and garnered significant critical acclaim. At their heart is the figure of the “class defector” (“transfuge de classe”), whose reflections on their own lived experience are often sparked by journeys of return. This is the case in *Returning to Reims* (2010), in which Eribon traces the role of homosexuality and education in facilitating his “escape”. Louis’s oeuvre tells a similar story, identifying in exclusion — first from his working-class background due to his homosexuality; then from the bourgeois milieu accessed through education — the driving force of its politics.

This paper focuses on the relationship between education and inclusion/exclusion that undergirds these autosociobiographical accounts of class mobility. It reflects on how this relationship varies from France (where the works originate) and Germany (where their reception has been most enthusiastic and their theatrical adaptations most numerous), to the UK (where the latter have toured but been less successful). Comparing Thomas Ostermeier’s production of *Returning to Reims* (2017) and of Louis’s *Who Killed My Father* (2018), with Debris Stevenson’s *Poet in da Corner* (2018)

– another story of class ascent spurred by intersectional forms of exclusion – it probes the divergence between the “inclusion through education” paradigm, typical of European welfare state ideology, and the “inclusion through counterculture and its mainstreaming” championed by Stevenson. It then reflects briefly on the limits of the autosociobiographical mode, and asks what a British autosociobiography might look like.

Lianna Mark is Assistant Professor of Contemporary English Literature at LMU Munich and Associate Research Fellow at the “Temporal Communities” Excellence Cluster at the Free University Berlin. She holds a PhD from KCL and is currently writing two monographs: *Narrating Political Engagement on Stage: British New Writing in the 2000s* (Bloomsbury, 2025); and *Theatres of Autofiction* (CUP, 2024).

Matt Hargrave, ‘Class and melancholia in *Standing at the Sky’s Edge* (2022): a musical play about Park Hill Estate, Sheffield, featuring the songs of Richard Hawley’

There are two dominant sociological narratives about Park Hill Estate, Sheffield: utopian municipal dream gone sour and post-industrial decline. Between 1979 and 1989, 40,000 jobs were lost (in a city of 200,000 people). Sheffield/National Theatres’ *Standing at the Sky’s Edge* (2022) tells the story of three families inhabiting the same Park Hill flat at different times between 1960 and 2020: a working class family dependent on the father’s steel wage; a family of Liberian refugees; and a single middle class woman moving to the (now gentrified) flats from London. This paper reads the play through the lens of melancholia. Richard Hawley’s music - like the play itself – is a kind of meta-verse in which ‘class concerns’ sing subliminally as a melancholia for something lost. Hawley, who has been referred to as the ‘maestro of melancholy’, embodies what Mark Fisher calls ‘postmodern retro’: ‘historical sounding’ belonging neither to the present nor to the past but to some implied ‘timeless era’ (2013:11). The paper teases out the relationship between his music, the play, and what Cynthia Cruz calls the ‘melancholia of class’ (2020). Cruz argues that ‘because neoliberalism insists that there are no social classes...by default the working-class does not exist...[it] is a ghost, which is to say alive, but not living, a double, a contradiction’ (2020:7). The play implicitly consigns the working class to the past. The paper asks: what are the affects of doing so? What structures of feeling are produced by this? And by extension what does it mean to define the middle class as the present – as the play’s author Chris Bush says - in housing ‘only [made] possible through private investment [serving] a [now] different kind of person (2020:7)? The paper offers textual analysis of the play in relation to theories of melancholia. In so doing the paper seeks to provide generative readings that map melancholy to social and historical forces, that, in Walter Benjamin’s words ‘arm one instead of causing sorrow’ (1999: 481).

Matt Hargrave is Assistant Professor in Theatre and Performance at Northumbria University. He is the author of *Theatres of Learning Disability* which won TaPRA’s 2016 ECR Prize. He is working on a project investigating stigma and performance.

## ***Roundtable: What Can/Should Universities Do?***

Chair: Katie Beswick

Katie is Senior Lecturer in Arts Management and the Programme Director for BA Arts Management at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research and writing concerns issues of class and culture – she is the author of the books *Social Housing in Performance* (Methuen 2019) and (with Conrad Murry) *Making Hip Hop Theatre*.

Jacqueline Bolton is Senior Lecturer in Drama and Theatre at the University of Lincoln. She has published edited collections on the British playwrights David Greig (*Contemporary Theatre Review*, 2016) and, with Siân Adiseshiah, *debbie tucker green* (Palgrave, 2020). Her monograph, *The Theatre of Simon Stephens*, was published by Methuen in July 2021 and she is currently working on an edited collection on the stage and screen works of Dennis Kelly with Dr Nicholas Holden.

Pippa Frith is an award-winning Producer based in Birmingham. She is Director (Producing) at international festival *Fierce*, and has been with the organisation for over 6 years. She has delivered the three most recent festivals, and in 2022 *Key to The City* and *The Healing Gardens of Bab* – two major projects commissioned by Birmingham 2022 Festival (the Commonwealth Games cultural programme). She takes a lead role for the organisation as a consortium partner on Horizon: the international showcase for performance created in England. Pippa is a member of Area Council for Arts Council England and sits on their national Disability Advisory Group, she is also a Trustee of arts in criminal justice charity Geese Theatre Company. Her freelance portfolio has covered a broad range of practice including live art, theatre, dance, podcasting, and more. She likes work that sits on boundaries, challenging preconceptions about the world around us. She has been guest lecturer at a range of universities including University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University and Worcester University.

Burcu Güney is a Graduate Teaching Fellow at the University of Lincoln. She is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and educator who is actively engaged in the fields of music and theatre. She has completed her MA in Creative Writing and is currently working towards her PhD in 'Case Studies in Cultural Assets: Higher Education Institutions, Regional Ecologies, and the Arts and Cultural Industries,' under the guidance of Dr Jacqueline Bolton.

Hassan Mahamdallie is an author, commentator, playwright and theatre director. He started out as an actor/teacher in Theatre in Education and community theatre in the 1980s. He is Director of the progressive UK fellowship the Muslim Institute, and senior editor on its journal Critical Muslim. Hassan is the founder of theatre company Dervish Productions. His latest play *Quiet Rebels* toured the UK in Autumn 2022. Hassan writes extensively on art, culture and democracy, British working class and Black history and politics, and issues of racism and Islamophobia. He wrote and launched Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity and Equality in the Arts (2011). He has written a political biography of designer/socialist William Morris, edited a book on defending multiculturalism, as well as blogging on his experiences as a working class kid in the punk rock scene of the 1970s. He is a Governor of Rose Bruford College for Theatre and Performance [www.dervishproductions.com](http://www.dervishproductions.com)

Anna Maria Nabirye is a multi-disciplinary artist and performer working across visual arts, performance, fiction, documentary, theatre, screen, social practice and fashion. Her focus is on amplifying the stories of marginalised peoples with an emphasis on Black Women in the western diaspora through celebration and joy. Recent works include multimedia visual arts work *Up In Arms* - that centred around conversations on the complexities of interracial friendship, co-created with Annie Saunders, this social practice work formed, an exhibition, 3 channel film and performance, commissioned by the De La Warr Pavilion and produced by Artsadmin. *The Funnest Room In The House Afterword* was an audio work commissioned for Whitstable Biennale 2022, after her original installation was destroyed by fire, the work combined documentary and myth as it explored Black British Kitchens. Nabirye co-founded and runs Afri-Co-Lab, a creative community dreaming space in East Sussex. Commissions and collaborations include The Royal Court, V&A, SBC, Brighton Museum, Guest Projects, Eggtooth, Home Live Art and DLWP. She also runs sister company AfroRetro, an ethical upcycling label working with makers both local in South East England and Southern Uganda. Acting credits include the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, The Almeida, The Gate, Film4, BBC1 and BBC2. Nabirye is also an educator and director and has

worked and created programmes and workshops for Yale School of Drama, Carnegie Mellon, National Theatre Institute, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, LAMDA, Half Moon YPT and London Philharmonic Orchestra's Junior Artists.

## ***Theatre Performance: After Party***

*An election plays out on a television.*

*A party plays out on Zoom.*

*A group of people come together in a darkened room.*

*Maybe they're friends or maybe strangers, but nobody wants to go to bed and nobody wants to go home.*

After Party is an autobiographical performance of personal and political comedowns growing up in the aftermath of New Labour.

It begins with the election party Annie's Dad threw in 1997, and reimagines possible parties from the past, present and future, all scored by a live DJ.

It's a show about late nights, early mornings, Zoom seshes, party politics and men who let you down. It's about Britpop, Brexit, broken promises and 7am breakdowns. It's about Tony Blair and all of our Dads.

After Party takes on a new charged relevance in a post pandemic world, where parties were prohibited (except in Downing Street) and politics feels hopeless.

What comes after the party, and what comes after that? You know what they say, things can only get worse...

### CREDITS

Written and performed by Annie Lowry Thomas

LX Design: Louise Gregory

DJ: Poppy Morney

Video Support: Daniel Hughes

Technical support: Tony Sweeten

Produced by Hacks

Supported by Creative Scotland

### **Audience Notes**

Loud noises, strobe lighting, flashing lights, strong language, smoke

Recommended for ages 16+

## **Thursday 7th**

**Keynote 3: "How to build a movement: Where are all the bin men and dinner ladies? How do we make performance with, by and for them? How do we perform, tell stories and reimagine what is possible?"**

Rhiannon White (Common Wealth) and Ffion Wyn Morris (Freelance Artist/Researcher), in conversation with Jenny Hughes (University of Manchester),

How to build a movement is a conversation about the urgency for change in an often hostile and inaccessible cultural sector. A call to action to shift things, to reimagine what the arts can be - challenging old hierarchies, established cultural tastes, outdated assumptions and traditional practices.

We'll explore our own lived experience of code-switching, security and risk from our day-to-day working lives, and debate issues of class and place, class and Welsh language, and class and environmental crisis.

We'll share our approach to co-creation fresh from researching our new production 'We No Longer Talk' developed in partnership with groups living in public housing estates in Cardiff and Bethesda, celebrating the cultural wealth held by these underserved and over-pressurised communities

Jenny Hughes is Professor in Drama at the University of Manchester (UK). Recent publications include a co-authored book, *Theatre in Towns* (Routledge, 2022), an output of the collaborative AHRC project, 'Civic Theatres: A Place for Towns' (2021-2022). She is currently working on a monograph-in-progress, provisionally titled *Theatre as Social Art: A History of Performance and Civic Practice, 1786 - 1906*. Her research interests include the histories of civic theatre, theatre and socioeconomic justice, activist theatre and performance, and theatre in sites of emergency.

Ffion Wyn Morris is the founder of award-winning collective Ladies of Rage a DIY initiative that platforms women and gender minorities in MOBO and electronic music genres. Ffion has over ten years experience working in the arts in Wales for organisations such as Arts Council of Wales, Poetry Wales Magazine, and Aubergine Café & Arts.

Ffion currently works at Wales Millennium Centre as a Community Engagement Producer, working on projects such as Butetown Carnival and Llais, Cardiff's international arts festival. Ffion works as a freelance artist and producer and is currently working with Dathliad Cymru Affrica and Common Wealth.

Rhiannon White is Co-Founder and Co-Artistic director of Common Wealth. Common Wealth are an award-winning site-specific political theatre company – making work that speaks to the here and now. Common Wealth have over fifteen years of experience making socially engaged work, recognised for experimentation with form and approach to co-creation.

Rhiannon has made work in Palestine, Chicago, Perth, Helsinki, Berlin and across the UK working with grassroots and established organisations such as National Theatre Wales, Circus 2 Palestine, Imayla, National Theatre (UK) Chapter Arts Centre & Southbank Centre. Rhiannon is a recipient of a Clore Cultural Fellowship and a Creative Wales Award. Rhiannon was a panel member on the Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society chaired by Julia Unwin and is currently a trustee at the award winning Grange Pavilion.

### ***Panel (E): Beyond Figuration***

Carl Lavery, 'Beyond Figuration: Working Class Energetics in Pata Pata and Elephants' Graveyard'

What would it mean to go beyond the idea of a figure when it comes to working-class representation? Perhaps, it might reveal the limits to the practice of figuring, a word that, if we take

the prefix fig into account, now means to fix and freeze, to impose a rigid Aristotelian hylomorphism onto the dynamic, unseizability of working-class 'substance'. To figure, then, runs the danger of voiding the world of process, moulding fluxes and flows into pre-existing shapes, replacing the restless flux of history with the stasis and static of metaphysics. What could be more perverse?

This paper looks to contest the idea of working-class figuration (indeed figuration in general) by drawing on two performances: the first Miriam Makeba's vocal theatrics in her famous hit record *Pata Pata* (1967); the second, the practice of otiosity or laziness in Peter McDougall's play *The Elephants' Graveyard*, broadcast as part of the BBC's *Play for Today* series in the long hot summer of 1976. In both performances, the concern is not to figure or fix working class identity, but instead to express it as an energetics. Put differently, the onus is on the workings of class as opposed to the working class. I want to suggest that a specific type of aesthetic politics becomes possible in the shift from idea (noun) to force

(verb); one that insists on performance as an expression and process of/for becoming and not simply as mode of identification with figures that supposedly exist outside and beyond it.

As a way of expressing working class energetics, the paper will constellate theoretical analysis, personal recollection, and video and song, all of which are conceived as a general practice of life writing.

Carl Lavery teaches at the University of Glasgow. He has published on ecology, politics, and performance in a number of journals and books. He is currently working on a book about what it means to 'get a taste for landscape' through performance.

Robert Vesty, 'Intervocal Transformations: a classed and queered voicing-dancer in Instant Composition (IC)'

This paper uses the idea of 'intervocality' (Cahill and Hamel) with reference to a voicing-dancing figure to examine how acts of voicing are shaped and re-shaped in the context of improvisatory dance-based performance. Drawing on my practice-led research in Instant Composition (IC), I will explore voicing as a series of movement events performed in multiple registers that are ever-shifting according to socially and culturally constructed identities. Voicings are performed by bodies that are never abstract but always in material co-production — embedded in, yet unfixed by complex gendered, physiological, and ideological histories and subjectivities (Thomaidis). Firstly, I want to consider how 'intervocality' might usefully reveal the voicing-dancing figure as differentiated from the improvising actor. Unlike 'theatre improv' where the effort to take on characters in scenario-based structures often demands an audible marking of vocal transformation that occupies fictional space, in IC, when improvisers produce vocal material as part of their instantly composed choreography, there is quite often a 'characterless' (Delgado-García) quality to the vocal conjuring that calls into question the very issue of transformation. Arguably, the voicing-dancing figure occupies an autobiographical space where intervocalities are revealed in particular ways. Secondly, I am curious about how such considerations might usefully interrogate issues of class and queerness within an intersectional frame of identity. Both as an academic and improviser, I speak through myriad intervocal transfigurations, having passed through a working-class upbringing towards more middle-class destinations. My ever-changing 50-year-old voice also resonates with the embedded echoes of my pasts - my child's voice and its broad (Lancashire) tones, my teenage estuary (Essex) accent, my adult (acting-schooled) Received Pronunciation and all the while shaped by a confidence infused by queer anxiety and class-based uprootedness (Hoggart). This paper therefore takes account of intervocality as a volatile and mercurial feature of classed and queered revelatory

processes that has implications for how a voicing-dancing figure might be (re)considered within the context of IC.

Dr Robert Vesty (he/they) – performer | educator | researcher | Feldenkrais practitioner (UK). Robert is Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Programme Leader for the MA in Professional Arts Practice at Middlesex University. Their performance practice works through instant composition, bringing voicing and moving together. Their practice-led PhD (Material Words for Voicing Dancers) looked at the role of voicing in improvisatory dance, while wider research interests include queerness and class in relation to voicing as a generative constituent of personhood. [www.robertvesty.com](http://www.robertvesty.com)

### ***Panel (F): Cultural Policies and Practices in Scotland***

Siân MacGregor, “We don’t get visits from artists, and we don’t get workshops” – school pupil (17)  
How class is framing arts access for children and young people in 21st Century Scotland

In spite of efforts in many spheres to counter inequities, class – in whatever way it manifests and is described - continues to affect access to compelling arts experiences for children and young people. A lack of parity is clearly allied to the divisive current political and sociological landscape which – intentionally or not - frequently assesses arts offerings by virtue of all aspects of quantifiable “impact demonstration” or “instrumental outcomes”, as opposed to intrinsic worth which is arguably more widely valuable (Selwood, 2010; Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; Holden, 2006). Yet the youngest participants in my recent fieldwork (for the project Valuing Young Audiences) imposed no such judgements upon their arts experiences, seemingly unaware of such concepts. No matter their backgrounds and circumstances, many proffered incisive, confident responses and discussion based upon their own reactions and subjective interaction with live performances.

However, closer analysis of the data gathered from participant groups from two very different settings starkly revealed that issues of class are still prevalent – and potentially more covertly so than was evident in previous generations. Regardless of their level of privilege, both groups were demonstrably subjected to similarly powerful influence and gatekeeping by significant adults, and social or other systems. This revealed that the effects of preferencing ‘measurable’ impacts continue to delimit and influence access to the arts, despite the children’s responses initially seeming to disregard or even dissipate class-imposed barriers. However, amongst one group, I observed the effects of potent interventions, which offered agency, the possibility to upend hierarchies, support aspirations, and act as a formidable catalyst - providing an ideal opportunity which can not only empower the child but, in time, transform the sector itself. I interrogate the reasons behind this, and the effects on 21st Century children when their closest adults are able to select and curate whatever they see, hear and do - and what happens when such a possibility is unavailable.

Siân Mitchell MacGregor is a doctoral researcher, working collaboratively on the SGSAH-funded project Valuing Young Audiences with the University of Aberdeen and Imagine (Edinburgh International Children’s Festival). A graduate of the University of Glasgow and a professional Production Manager, she is interested in spectatorship, and the intersections of practice and scholarship, especially in small-scale.

Katie Hart, “We Were Never Encouraged to Speak Up”: Capital and Community for Female Leaders in the Scottish Cultural Sector

This paper will advocate for the importance of considering social class in our discussions about gender inequality in the cultural sector. Drawing on findings from my doctoral thesis, which focused on Scottish women's cultural leadership, I will argue that social class remains key to intersectional analysis of women's experiences because of the continued dominance of middle-class voices in the theatre sector. This paper is based on interviews I carried out with female leaders in Scottish theatre and will consider these conversations in relation to theories of social and cultural capital. In doing so, I will argue three things. First, I will argue that university and drama school degree programmes are often built on the implicit assumption that students are middle-class or have access to types of capital which are less accessible to working-class students. This assumption shapes the university experience, and often contributes to the exclusion of working-class students. Networks and communities found in spaces such as university or drama school can play a key role in an individual's professional network, and so I will then move on to argue that the emphasis on informal networking in the sector is disadvantaging working class women and potentially limiting their opportunities for leadership. Finally, I will focus on working class women who are holding leadership positions in the sector, asking how their social class shapes their experiences as leaders and informs their practice. It is my hope that this paper will demonstrate the importance of intersectional approaches to gender inequality in the specific context of Scotland's cultural sector, and that class remains a crucial factor in women's experiences. Whilst the success of middle-class, white women is often taken as indicative of wider progress in the industry, this paper will demonstrate that systemic inequalities persist within the sector and working-class women's experiences should be understood as distinct from their middle-class counterparts.

Dr Katie Hart recently completed her PhD at the University of Glasgow, where she also teaches Theatre Studies. Her work has previously been presented at TaPRA, Glasgow Theatre Seminar, PGRN Scotland and the CSSD/British Academy's Different Stages Showcase.