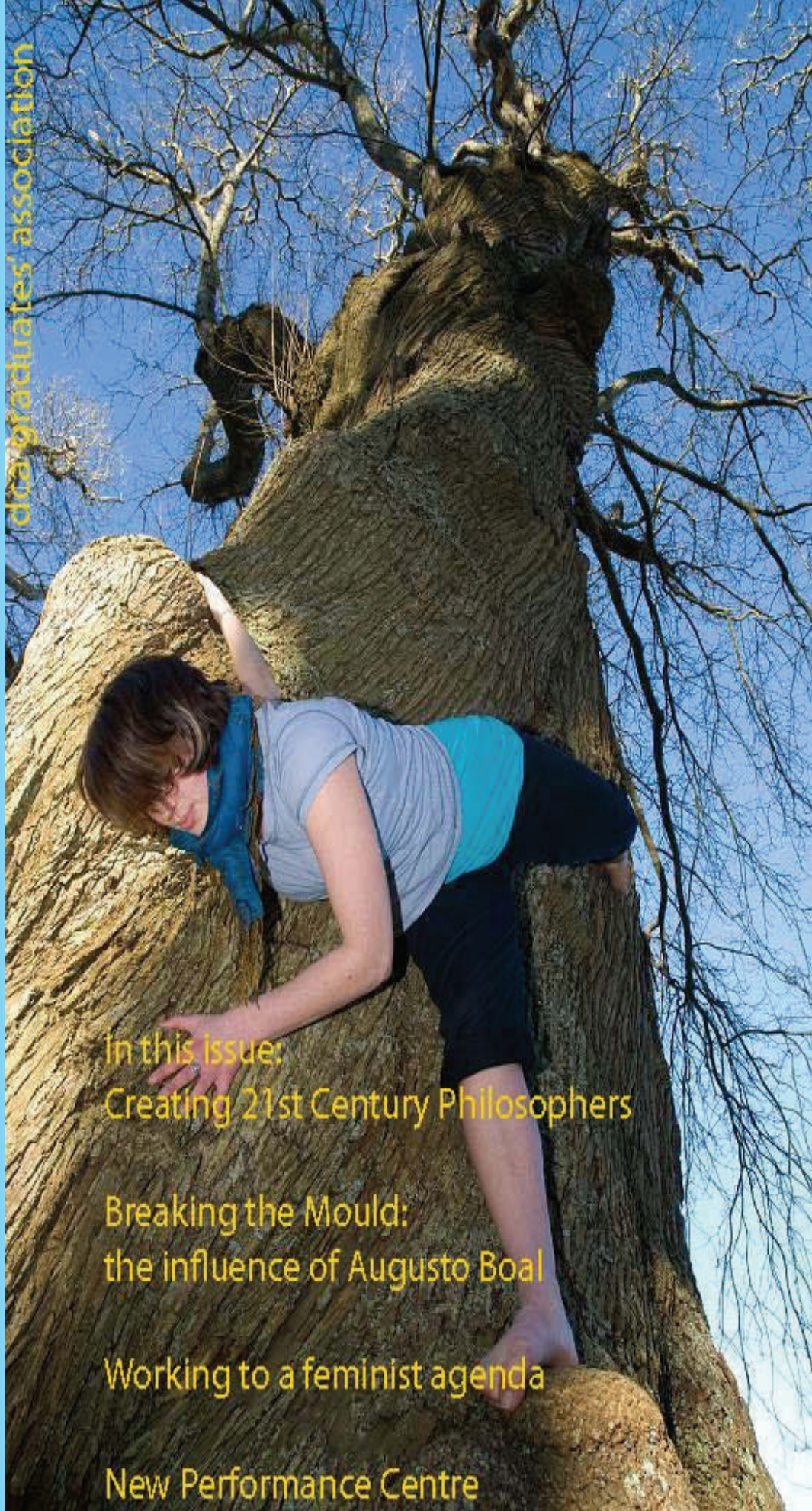


Dartalumni news #4

Autumn 2009

dca graduates' association



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*Ruth Cross, 2008 graduate, performing in a site-specific choreographic project.
Photo by Oliver Reed.*

21st Century Philosophers



Above: A 21st Century Philosopher

A Philosophy for 21st Century Education?

After leaving Dartington College of Arts in 1999, music graduate Mark Charman joined television production company Endemol to work on Channel 4 's first, ground-breaking, reality series of Big Brother. Following this and his subsequent involvement on shows such as 'The Brit Awards', 'The Simpsons' and 'GMTV', Mark became involved in making the BAFTA award winning children 's television series, 'Ripley and Scuff' which showcased creativity in primary schools across the UK. Mark was so impressed with one of the schools featured in the series that he asked them to train him to become a teacher.

Mark worked as a teacher for over five years at the school he had initially filmed in. His teaching practice has been featured on BBC Newsnight and was presented in the House of Lords as exemplary to all schools.

In more recent years, Mark founded '21st Century Philosophers', a youth organisation which supports young people in developing creative, analytical thinking skills. He explains "When I was a boy at primary school, we had lessons in Maths and English; and a six week module in pottery was seen as pushing the envelope. However, in many primary schools today, children as young as five upwards are receiving weekly lessons in Philosophy. It's a great concept as the teacher doesn't actually *teach* the session; it's student led. The teacher's role is to *facilitate* a philosophical enquiry. Philosophy in primary education is essentially about deep, critical self-reflection along a journey of discovery. I wanted to take the concept of philosophy for children to the next level and to explore the realm of possibilities and so, in 2008, I

founded 21st Century Philosophers. We currently cater to a group of gifted and talented young people in London who enjoy philosophy, but do not receive sessions in it at secondary school level."

A typical philosophical enquiry begins with a stimulus of some sort: maybe something topical or aesthetic for example. Participants can respond to the stimulus by forming their own philosophical questions. One of their questions is chosen by way of democratic vote and acts as a launch pad into deeper enquiry.

21st Century Philosophers moves beyond philosophy as it is practiced in primary schools, by bringing new experiences to young people and affording them greater space to dis-



21st Century Philosophers

cover. It also equips them with the tools to explore their ideas in ways that push out their boundaries. One way in which this is currently happening is through the forming of a sister group of philosophers in Ethiopia with whom the young people in London link up. "I began working with communities in Ethiopia a couple of years ago", Mark explains, "through my involvement with a small, grassroots charity called The Tesfa Foundation. Tesfa provide education for Ethiopian children living in extreme poverty. As a voluntary Educational Consultant for the charity, I visit Ethiopia twice a year to develop the school curriculums and have subsequently introduced philosophy into the schools there. The London based 21st Century Philosophers recently linked up with their Ethiopian counterparts for a [cross-continental enquiry](#) in which everything and anything was explored: from envy to fame to localised social action. It led to a comment made by one boy who said "A man can make the world scream when he says nothing." What we do with 21st Century Philosophers is varied and at its heart, it's about being open-minded and having optimum freedom to explore and create."

Mark speaks at conferences about his work in the field of philosophy and recently worked with a company to create universal youth services for young people which incorporate critical thinking as a core element. He explains that the legacy effects of learning to speak, listen and think via the tools of philosophical enquiry enable young people to make better informed choices.

"I have the good fortune of knowing a child in Ethiopia, Yigremachew. He is a graduate of the Tesfa schools. His parents abandoned him as a baby and so I sponsor his continued education. Yigremachew, now aged nine, has a great mind and has become a fine young philosopher. We find ways to philosophise as creatively and frequently as possible.

I remember a sunny November afternoon last year when Yigremachew and I were walking home from school and he whispered into my ear, "Mark! Shoes!" "Yes!" I said, "of course!" and so we searched for a pair of black shoes to buy. We couldn't find any shoes that fitted, although after a short while, Yigremachew whispered into my ear once more. "Mark! Bike!" he urged as we passed a stall with some old bicycles for sale. I asked Yigremachew if happiness could be gained from acquiring material possessions. With that, I offered him the choice to explore the

answer and gave him £5 to do so.

Following school the next day, Yigremachew led me towards an Ethiopian Meal Centre where hungry, homeless people eat; that is, if they have meal tickets. He had worked out that with his £5, he could buy enough tickets to feed 200 people. And so he spent all of his money in this way. As we walked around the corner with 200 tickets, we were shocked to see a swollen crowd of over 1000 hungry Ethiopians waiting for food. Yigremachew gave away the meal tickets he had bought. This caused some commotion and passers-by who saw what Yigremachew was doing followed his example and bought more and more tickets for him to hand out. Yigremachew dished out ticket after ticket until there were no more people to give tickets to.

I later asked Yigremachew if he'd arrived at a response to my question – if happiness could be gained from acquiring material possessions. Yigremachew said, "The happiness a new pair of shoes can bring lasts as long as the shoes; but the happiness that life can bring: this happiness lasts as long as life is lived."



Mark Charman with children in a Tesfa school.

Mark is currently working for the European Union to present a PSHCE campaign on a tour of schools throughout the UK and Ireland. He can be contacted through his website:

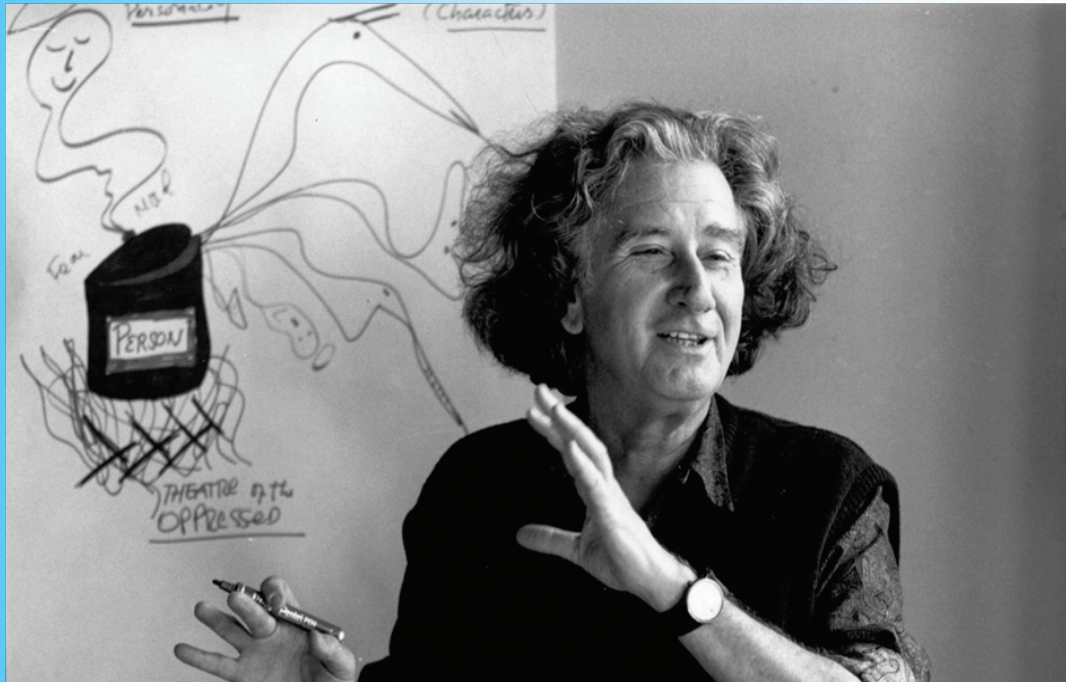
www.markcharman.com

To hear some of the astonishing insights of the 21st Century Philosophers, go to:

www.21stcenturyphilosophers.com

To learn more about the Ethiopian education charity, The Tesfa Foundation, or to find out how you can become involved, or to sponsor a child like Yigremachew, visit, www.tesfa-uk.org

Breaking the Mould



Above: Augusto Boal

*On the shores of another sea, another potter, in his twilight years, retires. His eyes are cloudy, his hands tremble—the time has come to say goodbye. And then the ceremony of initiation takes place: the old potter offers the young potter his finest piece. That is the tradition of the native peoples of the American Northwest: the artist who is leaving the craft presents his masterwork to the artist who is setting out. But the young potter does not keep that perfect vessel to contemplate and to admire; instead, he smashes it to the ground, breaks it into a thousand pieces, gathers up the shards, and kneads them into his own clay.**

In June 2009 Dartington theatre graduate Tim Wheeler, now Artistic Director of the company Mind the Gap, travelled to Rio de Janeiro to take part in an international gathering of practitioners and theorists, to celebrate the life and the impact of Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Tim reflects on the work of Boal, on his influence on their company and on theatre worldwide.

On 2nd May 2009, the Brazilian theatre director, Augusto Boal, theoretician and inspiration behind TO, sadly died. He left a great legacy; a re-orientation of the theatre-making process that helped re-define the value, purpose and availability of theatre. Whilst his work appears on theatre syllabi around the world, it is perhaps his influence outside formal learning that have been most profound.

Mind the Gap has had a long association with Boal. After finishing the theatre degree at Dartington in 1986, I went to study with him, in Brazil, France and the UK and later he came to work with us in Bradford. He ran training events for inclusive groups of disabled and non-disabled actors and we even made a piece of legislative theatre in the Council Chamber in Bradford.

**Eduardo Galeano quoted by Rosa Luisa Marquez, Professor of Theatre and Drama at the University of Puerto Rico, in her closing remarks at the International conference.*

Breaking the Mould

There is a concern that when someone dies their work moves beyond criticism. Of course no one likes to speak ill of the dead. But Boal would not have wanted silence around the work. Indeed he often spoke out against the 'critique of silence' that surrounds much politically charged theatre. He championed dialogue and in particular those dialogues that led to new insights and ways of working. It is perhaps the highest complement we can pay to someone that his or her work enters the critical debate.

In Rio I presented a paper on our experiences of using TO in theatre and mental health settings in the UK. For the past twenty years Mind the Gap has focused on work with learning disabled people and users and survivors of the mental health system. Others at the event spoke of their experience working with homeless people, or people in war zones, work with women, street children, people in political exile. Far from being depressing the tone was uplifting, critical and multi-faceted.

Of course there is a political dimension to any gathering. And I was initially concerned that the Rio meeting would be a bit like the dystopian vision of a world without its leader in Orwell's Animal Farm. It's true there was some tension and anxiety and some posturing but no coup. This was also time to mourn the passing of a dear friend; the loss of his voice, his humour, his humanity. Boal was present in each of our stories and also in a series of video presentations that he had made prior to his death. He still wanted to be part of the dialogue! This was both very moving and very funny.

And in the business of the event we discussed whether practitioners needed a license to practice TO to ensure consistency and quality. Or whether we needed to set up an international association to police the development of theory and practice. In the end most of us settled on the fact that it would be both unnecessary and impossible. Maybe in the future there might be a need, but not for now. Boal has been compared to people like Stanislavski and Brecht. Their influence is abiding and has taken root in many other practices and variations. Their country of origin becomes secondary to their global impact.

Undoubtedly there is a need to ensure that Boal's legacy lives on.

What emerged was a desire to create regional networking opportunities to support practice and move thinking on. Mind the Gap is hosting a Northern gathering on 4th December in Bradford. If you practice TO you are more than welcome to attend.*

For some Boal was a charismatic chancer, a magpie who stole and adapted ideas, techniques and approaches wholesale. For others he was a great mind who was able to see through the pretensions of our 'fragile' art and describe the basic building blocks, the DNA of theatre making. Undoubtedly he was both and many other things besides. He was real, not just in a book.

Coming back from Rio I am more convinced than ever that the future of theatre will not be born out of a re-hashing of the past but from a desire to embrace the future as it emerges. It's not just about variation or adaptation. There is a need to take the best ideas of the past, smash them to the ground, gather up the pieces and fashion them into something new. In his time Boal showed how this could be done. This is his greatest legacy.

Tim Wheeler, Mind the Gap

tim@mind-the-gap.org.uk
www.mind-the-gap.org.uk

****The network meeting, on Friday 4 December, is for practitioners and theorists based in the northern region (North West, Northern and Yorkshire Arts regions) interested in the development of TO within applied theatre practice. This gathering is free of charge, and includes lunch.***

If you are interested in attending, please telephone 01274 487390 , or email:

arts@mind-the-gap.org.uk

A Feminist Agenda

*Holly Combe, (pictured right)
1999 Performance Writing
graduate, writes for the
F-Word, an online feminist
publication, and is a member
of Feminists Against Censor-
ship. It was her determination
not to compromise, and to
continue to write according to
her politics, which has led to
an interesting work life, in
much more than writing.*



Following the advice I received during a careers interview - to look for campaigning and networking groups connected to my interests, which could potentially lead to writing outlets – I contacted Feminists Against Censorship (FAC). Their book “Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures” was a major influence on my thinking as a feminist. I wanted to write essays like the ones I had read in “Bad Girls”, so I joined the group in 2000 and have produced newsletters, contributed to the blog and done work towards the group’s next book (for which we’re currently seeking a publisher).

It was also thanks to FAC that I began my media work: taking part in a survey on sexual fantasies for a programme about Nancy Friday’s ‘My secret Garden’, appearing as a representative on Sky’s “50 Rules of Political Incorrectness”, contributing to the making of a programme by Firecracker films (about polyamory). In 2006 I also contributed as a FAC member to a Guardian article about the Extreme Pornography bill.

I found out about the F-Word in 2002, through an e-mail sent to the anarcho-feminist “Womenspeakout” e-group (a

group I discovered at the same time as Feminists Against Censorship). Much of my feminist activity at the time was focussed on critiquing popular culture and infiltrating the mainstream, but I lacked an appropriate outlet in which to express this interest, aside from the work I was already doing for FAC.

Looking at the F-Word site, I discovered it was full of articles on topics I had been burning to write about myself, such as women’s magazines, a critique of an agony aunt’s response that pretty much reflected what I had thought when I read it myself and the treatment of a so-called “virgin” on Big Brother. I immediately e-mailed the founder Catherine Redfern (who was also editor at the time) to respond to these articles and share ideas for some of my own. She liked my ideas and, within weeks, I had submitted my first piece. This was on the assumptions about male sexuality inherent in the lyrics to Freak Mode by the Reelists and led to me having more articles published on the site.

In 2004, I became a member of The F-Word Queries group, the site’s main point of contact for students and journalists and, in 2005, I was appointed as a permanent blog-

A Feminist Agenda

ger when this part of the site was introduced. I would not have gained the sense of direction I have now if it weren't for the F-word. Writing for free in spaces that would be accessed by the people to whom I wanted to communicate my ideas has given me the freedom I was always looking for as a writer. It has also led to other opportunities, ranging from giving a talk at Eton to being paid to write articles for *Scarlet*, after having written a review of that magazine, and contributing sex advice in response to a queries group request. In 2005, I took part in a Drag King workshop for an F-word article. I've recently been asked if I would consider contributing an erotic short story and am looking forward to getting back into writing creatively.

Shortly after joining FAC, I moved to the Bath and Bristol area and initially earned a living through a full-time job proof-reading and copy-right seeking for a teaching website at the Education faculty at the University of the West of England. However, when that contract ended, I decided to only work part-time from then on, which has enabled me to find time to write, learn and pursue my own interests. Much of the time I work as a Researcher or Research Assistant, which led me to complete an MA in Applied Social Research.

As part of the research for my dissertation, entitled "How's Work? Exploring Creative Workers' Experiences of Part-Time Employment", I interviewed creative workers (mainly visual artists) sourced from 3 creative spaces around Bristol: Bristol Studios, Spike Island and the Creative Arts faculty at the University of the West of England, concerning their experiences of balancing their arts practice with other work. I then focussed on qualitatively analysing interviews with those who were doing other work on either a part-time or casual, non-standard hours, basis, attempting to disentangle some of the specific problems the group of creative workers confronted in terms of identity and the unique space between resistance and conformity that I think part-time work seems to inhabit.

In a capitalist society I think it's very hard for artists not to be constrained to some extent unless they live in an alternative community and, realistically, most of us don't. Unfortunately, the need for some money is a constant for even the most individual, so one either has to compromise creative output so it fits with the agendas of the outlets which pay for the work, or find

some other way of earning money. This often means engaging with the benefits system (increasingly difficult and undesirable in the current political climate) busking, asking for donations for work or, if entrepreneurial customer-focussed approaches to one's main interests and activities pose too much of a threat to its authenticity, undertaking conventional forms of employment.

Artists, writers and musicians also have the problem of being viewed sceptically until they are able to make a living from their activities (i.e. achieve what is generally socially recognised as "success"). It seems they then become "exceptions to the rule" and I think this system works to discourage the majority of would-be rebels, making sure they are eventually forced to conform and get a "proper" job. I am interested in potential forms of resistance to this and how they might intersect with a rejection of the current norms surrounding working time.

Over the past year and a half, I have gained more broadcasting experience, doing regular paid pundit work as a guest on various Radio Five Live programmes as well as free slots for local BBC stations. Topics for discussions I have taken part in have included name change after marriage, gender stereotyping in advertising and division of labour in the home. I have also made a couple of appearances on News 24.

Having used video as the main medium in my Performance Writing work, I am comfortable in front of a camera and with being recorded. Having some training as a performer also means I'm less embarrassed about repetition and fine-tuning my thoughts and writing so my message can come across well in different contexts. This is something I have become better at as I've got older and become less precious about retaining some illusion of mystery as a performer.

For more of my writing visit the websites:

http://www.thefword.org.uk/blog/by/holly_combe/

<http://www.thefword.org.uk/general/contributors>

New Performance Centre

New Performance Centre for Tremough



Left: an artist's impression of the new Performance Centre

An exciting new era for Performance in Cornwall was marked on 22 May 2009, when Rector, Alan Livingston and Rob Bradley, Regional Director of Leadbitter, laid the foundation stone for University College Falmouth's new Performance Centre.

The Leadbitter Group, named Contractor of the Year in the 2009 Building Awards, is the main contractor for the design and build of the Performance Centre. Rob Bradley explained that the building has been designed to make the most of the natural environment, and that natural materials would be used, such as slate or timber, under terraces of green roof.

After considerable dialogue with award-winning industry consultants, Charcoal Blue (who have also worked on The Young Vic and the Royal Shakespeare Company's Courtyard Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon), Siobhan Davies Dance and the London Contemporary Dance School, the Performance Centre, into which current Dartington students will move, has been carefully designed to provide state-of-the-art facilities for music, choreography and theatre work.

Spaces licensed for public performance within the building will include:

- a large theatre performance studio with variable raked seating options;
- a large theatre and dance studio with a fully sprung Harlequin floor;
- a performance studio designed for acoustic music;

a performance studio designed for amplified music;

Other facilities will include:

- a further two large dance studios with fully sprung Harlequin floors;
- three studio theatres;
- a music recording studio;
- music practice rooms for bands and solo occupancy;

All studios will be equipped with contemporary production lighting and sound facilities.

Dartington College's long standing ethos of encouraging collaboration has also been a key consideration. "The Performance Centre will complement the existing facilities at Falmouth, providing opportunities for students from all courses to broaden their work into performance environments," explains Peter Hooper, the College's Head of Sound and Vision. "It will encourage collaborations between the three Schools to create exciting new performance, installation and exhibition projects." The centre's architect, Nicholas Burwell adds: "The project has an informal arrangement, encouraging chance meeting, activity and exchange amongst the users. It seeks to produce an architecture of open narratives."

For a fly-through virtual tour of the building visit:

<http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/138/the-college-8/campuses-and-facilities-31/performance-centre-tremough-2524.html>

Images from the past ...



Above: A timeless photo, actually taken in 1985 by Richard Berry, then a student on the Art & Social Context course.



Left: What did they get up to in the 1970s? Photo by Clive Riches, then a student on the Dance & Drama course.

Last chance....

In spring 2009, the final issue of Dartalumni news, the successor to Life After Dartington, will be published. If you have an amazing/amusing photo from your days at Dartington which you would like to share on this page, do email:

j.woodcock@dartington.ac.uk

Success for Performance

Writing graduates

Congratulations to **Simon Van Booy**, 1999 Performance Writing graduate, whose second collection of short stories, '*Love Begins in Winter*', won him the prestigious Frank O'Connor award, the world's largest short story prize. Simon visited University College Falmouth in early November for a lecture /seminar on his work and short story writing in general. More information on both Simon's short story collections from:

<http://www.simonvanbooy.com/>

Congratulations also to **Gerry King**, another 1999 Performance writing graduate, whose collection of stories '*Lubin Tales*' was published this autumn. For more information, or to order a copy, visit:

<http://www.zerolubin.org/news.html>

Free support network for community artists

Are you attempting to make a living as a community artist? Do you sometimes long for a tutor's advice? Or some professional training which doesn't cost the earth?

I am in the process of establishing a free support network for ex-Dartington students working with arts in communities. This would involve meeting two to three times a year to share ideas, games, exercises, discuss successful projects or troubleshoot less successful ventures. It may also be useful to share experiences of inspiring theatre / dance / art which could influence the way we work. Although the network would be available to anyone, it could be particularly useful for graduates who are planning to work, or who are currently working, in devising and leading workshops/arts projects with the public.

If this sounds like you, then please get in touch! I aim to organise a day of discussions, explorations, sharings, discoveries and ideas early on in the new year and it would be great to have you on board. If you have any questions, would like to join the network or simply want to know a little bit more then please contact me:

amietaylor@live.co.uk.

Archive your memories

Your College.

Your experiences.

Help keep us keep it alive.

While this may be the last year of the College on the Estate, the history and culture of DCA will be kept very much alive as part of the records held in the Dartington College Collection of University College Falmouth Archive Service. We are looking to the ex-students of Dartington for help in building this Collection to capture all aspects of life at the College.

Do you have any materials that document your time at Dartington that you would consider depositing with us for safe keeping? Perhaps you kept a diary while you were here, took photographs or held on to College memorabilia such as invitations, programmes or posters?

Would you perhaps consider writing a memoir of your time at Dartington for us? Be as frank and honest as you like: positive, negative or indifferent. Contributions can be made anonymous if required.

By developing a dynamic and robust Archive Collection we will ensure that DCA's legacy will endure. Forever. Please direct any queries to Sarah C Jane, Archivist, on 01326 254303 or

Dartington on the Plinth

Yes, there were a few Dartington graduates on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, making their contributions to Antony Gormley's 'One and Other'.

Those we know of include:

Dan Bullock, Liam Gifford, Marika Rauscher (who performed in Lawrence Reed's composition), someone known only as Katharine K. Another of our graduates, Hannah Standen, is a member of Artichoke, the company which organized the event. Congratulations to all!

For more alumni news, graduate profiles, links to graduate websites, and much more, **don't forget to check out the web site:**

<http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/580/alumni-and-supporters-24.html>