



Performing Oral History Symposium

Join our conversation with Theatre Practitioners, Oral Historians, Academics, Community Activists, and Archivists



April 2022
Book now

Monday 11th
Online Panels

Tuesday 12th
In-person Workshops, Performances and Exhibitions

Wednesday 13th
Online Presentations

Register here:
<https://performingoralhistory.eventbrite.co.uk>



In-person At Bathway Theatre

Bathway, Woolwich
London, SE18 6QX



Programme

April 2022

Monday 11th

Online Panels

12:00pm

Opening

Pam Schweitzer & David Hockham

15-20-minute talk per speaker followed by Q&A at the end of panel

12:15pm

Chair

Natasha Oxley

60 Miles By Road Or Rail

Andy Routledge

From The Ground Up

Siobhan O'Neill

Streaming Truth: Land-based Truth

Activations In The Digital Realm

Jill Carter

01:45pm

Chair

George Severs

Tribunal Theatre

Tom Cantrell

The Cancer Stories Project

Joseph Sobol

02:45pm

Chair

Harry Derbyshire

The Social Documentaries of Peter

Cheeseman

Rachel Walker

Archiving Reminiscence Theatre

Pam Schweitzer

The Reminiscence Theatre As A

Resource For Students

Natasha Oxley

04:15pm

Chair

Sarah Gudgin

What A Voice!

Martine Robertson and Hannah Wood

An Amazing Life: Performing Queer

Intergenerational Holocaust Testimony

Erika Hughes

Oral History And Scenography

David Hockham

05:40pm

Round-up

Tuesday 12th

Workshops, performances and exhibitions at Bathway Theatre

09:30am

Registration, Coffee & Open Exhibition Spaces

10:00am

TBC

Jane Harrington

Making Theatre From Memories

Pam Schweitzer

11:10am

Break & Exhibition

11:30am

Creating Verbatim Productions

David Thacker

01:00pm

Lunch & Exhibition

01:45pm

Rights Of Passage

Clare Summerskill

02:45pm

Chair

David Hockham

Conversations

Greenwich LGBTQ+ Staff Community, Bijou Stories, Caribbean Social Forum

03:45pm

Break & Exhibition

04:00pm

Positive In Prison

Janet Weston and Kate Valentine

04:45pm

Performing Oral History Workshop

Kate Saffin and Heather Wastie

05:45pm

Plenary & Round-up

Clare Summerskill, David Hockham, Pam Schweitzer



Wednesday 13th

Online Panels with European Reminiscence Network

09:45am

Opening

Pam Schweitzer

15-20-minute talk per speaker followed by Q&A at the end of panel

10:00am

Chair

Pam Schweitzer

The Netherlands

Annemarie Bolder

Germany

Ingrid Berzau

11:00am

Chair

Sue Heiser

UK

Caroline Baker and Marenka Gabeler

Czech Republic

Hana Janeckova and Blanka Jirkovska

12:00pm

Chair

Pam Schweitzer

Japan

Yasuko Murata and Michiko Lucy

Nakagawa

Singapore

Patricia Lee

12:45pm

Lunch

01:30pm

Chair

Sally Knocker

Ireland

Karen Meenan

Spain

Raul Vilar Heraz and Duna Hulsamer

02:30pm

Chair

Caroline Baker

Czech Republic

Hana Janeckova and Hana Cizkova

UK

Rose Pickering and Rosie Hollands

03:30pm

Chair

Sarah Gudgin

Finland

Leonie Hohenthal Antin and Varpu Vistala

Germany

Angelika Trilling and Pam Schweitzer

04:30pm

Looking To The Future For The European Reminiscence Network

Annemarie Bolder, Raul Vilar Heraz and Pam Schweitzer



Abstracts & Bios

Monday 11th

Panel 1

60 Miles by Road or Rail

Andy Routledge presents ‘60 Miles by Road or Rail’, a year-long community integration project exploring Northampton’s New Town stories through a range of intergenerational activities, including devising a theatre production, creating a verbatim audio poem and recording 25 oral history interviews. In his presentation, he will share his theatre-making process.

Andy Routledge is a Director and Dramaturg at the Royal and Derngate Theatre Northampton. He is interested in projects that explore complex subjects in dynamic and innovative ways, enabling a collaborative space for artists to create bold work whilst offering a good night out for audiences old and young. His main areas of interest are new writing, devised work and storytelling.

From The Ground Up

Siobhan speaks on the role of metaphor in interpretation of memories in an inter-generational co-devised performance, which enabled community participants to share lived experience of an urban common in north-east London. This paper will consider how participants generate meaning in the connections between their diverse memories, opening out possibilities to subtly challenge stable personal and collective narratives.

Dr Siobhan O’Neill is a Research Fellow in the school of Architecture at the University of Portsmouth. Siobhan locates her theatre-making at the interface of oral history and applied performance. Her doctoral research at Royal Holloway College considered shared ethical questions around who should have the authority to tell a community’s narrative.

Streaming Truth: Land-Based Truth Activations in the Digital Realm

Jill Carter will reflect work on the St George Campus of the University of Toronto by a collective of indigenous and non-indigenous artists and researchers. Using archival research and ‘land-based’ practices, Jill will explain the process and product of the resulting site-specific events and share the questions that have arisen as its devisors move forward with the process they have begun to develop.

Jill Carter is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Drama, Performance, Indigenous Studies. She is an Anishinaabe-Ashkenazi theatre-practitioner, researcher and educator. Her research and praxis base themselves in the mechanics of story creation, the processes of delivery, and the mechanics of Affect. In 2019, she co-devised and directed the first indigenous production in the century-long life of Hart House Theatre, Toronto.

Panel 2

Tribunal Theatre

Tom Cantrell on ‘The Tribunal Theatre of Richard Norton-Taylor and Nicholas Kent and Approaches to Listening’. Tom will consider the complexities of using the words of real people in ‘Scenes from the Grenfell Enquiry’.

He will ask thought-provoking questions about the relationship between the original testimony and the way in which it is crafted into live performance

Dr Tom Cantrell is a Reader in Theatre at the University of York. He has published four books on acting, recently focusing on how actors approach playing real living people. He is currently exploring research and development in contemporary British Theatre.

The Cancer Stories Project

Joseph Sobol will discuss ‘The Cancer Stories Project’: a template for performing illness narratives from cancer patients, family members and medical professionals. Joseph will share the process of conducting interviews and devising a performance piece designed to support instructional modules on empathic communication for medical students and residents.

Dr Joseph Sobol is Professor of Storytelling at the University of South Wales. From 2000-2017, he directed the Graduate Programme in Storytelling at East Tennessee State University, supported by the National Institute of Health.

Panel 3

The Social documentaries of Peter Cheeseman

Rachel Walker will talk about the process of archiving the significant body of Theatre work of Peter Cheeseman at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent. Peter developed a unique approach to creating social documentaries, drawing on and incorporating local people’s testimony. He has been a vital creative force in British theatre ever since. Rachel will talk about the development of this archive, based at the University of Staffordshire, as an on-going process, led by Romy Cheeseman, the Honorary archivist.

Rachel Walker is a theatre historian who has recently been awarded her PhD by the University of Sheffield. Her thesis examines the early work of Peter Cheeseman and the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent. Her research interests include regional theatre history, theatre-in-the-round, verbatim and community theatre.

Archiving Reminiscence Theatre

Pam Schweitzer will demonstrate how her many Reminiscence Theatre shows produced over 25 years are being archived. This includes digitising the recordings of interviews on which the productions are based, developing playscript from transcriptions of these interviews, through to the resulting touring productions. The creation of a website has made it possible to share both the process and the product, and provided students with inspirational material for their own creative work.

Pam Schweitzer is developing the archive and website of Reminiscence Theatre work in partnership with the University of Greenwich. She is also teaching about Reminiscence Theatre and leading the development of reminiscence in dementia care across Europe. She has been a member of the Oral History Society since 1982 and is a regional networker for the London area.

The Reminiscence Theatre as a resource for students

Natasha Oxley has been working with Pam Schweitzer to facilitate devised drama work created by undergraduate students using reminiscence theatre techniques. She will outline the ways in which students have used the Reminiscence Theatre Archive, interviews and memory boxes, highlighting selected examples from performances. She will also present her findings about the positive impact of this intergenerational work on undergraduate students.

Natasha lectures in Drama at the University of Greenwich. She leads modules on Theatre for Young Audiences, Acting, and Applied and Socially Engaged Drama, on which Pam has taught Reminiscence Theatre for several years. She also co-teaches on other modules including Staging New Writing, which draws on her interests in contemporary Polish playwriting.

Panel 4

What a Voice!

Martine Robertson and Hannah Wood present What a Voice!’ They will share their experience of converting interview material into a film and then into a live performance. ‘What a Voice!’ is a short film, featuring the recorded voices of three generations of women from the same family living in the shadow of the shipbuilding industry of Port Glasgow on the River Clyde.

Martine and Hanna of GaelGal Creative Productions, are currently researching Ethnology as Performance at the University of Edinburgh.

An Amazing Life: Performing Queer Intergenerational Holocaust Testimony

Erika Hughes presents a work of documentary theatre that stages excerpts from a series of oral history interviews between the lesbian Holocaust historian Anna Hájková and Margot Heuman, a survivor of Auschwitz, Theresenstadt, Neuengamme, and Bergen-Belsen. In this presentation, she will show excerpts of ‘The Amazing Life of Margot Heuman’, a deliberately interventionist queer performance that sought to fill a critical gap in Holocaust history.

Dr. Erika Hughes is Reader in Performance at the University of Portsmouth, where she also leads Performance area in the School of Art, Design and Performance. Her work as a director and deviser of performance has been seen on stages in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Israel, Canada, and Pakistan.

Oral History and Scenography

David Hockham begins to bring his work on practice research and practice learning, Oral Histories and scenography, in a paper called scenographic stories. This is a first attempt to bring together his work over the past five years working with communities, storytelling and his doctoral research on learning vocational practices.

David is theatre manager of the Bathway Theatre, the University of Greenwich’s dedicated drama facility at the University of Greenwich. He is co-director of international touring theatre company dead rabbits theatre who tell true stories through highly visual images and will have defended his PhD thesis at the beginning of 2022.

Abstracts & Bios

Tuesday 12th



Workshop 1

Making Theatre From Memories

Pam Schweitzer will give a practical demonstration of the processes involved in making a verbatim show from group and individual interviews. She will consider the impact of this work on the older audiences for whom they are performed and the actors who tour with the productions. She will also discuss the fascinating process by which older people become the performers of their own memories.

Pam Schweitzer is a writer, producer and director of ReminiscenceTheatre. As Artistic Director of Age Exchange Theatre and Reminiscence Centre from 1983 - 2005, Pam created thirty professional touring productions and later many shows performed by older people themselves. Pam is Honorary Research Fellow and Hon Doc Arts from the University of Greenwich, where she teaches Reminiscence Theatre. Pam founded and directs the European Reminiscence Network. She is also a Regional Networker (London) for the Oral History Society.

Workshop 2

Creating Verbatim Productions

David Thacker will reflect on his verbatim theatre productions 'The Rose Between Two Thorns' and 'The Enemies Within', supported by actors who worked on the productions. This will develop into a practical demonstration of his methodology in creating verbatim productions.

David Thacker is Professor of Theatre in the School of the Arts at the University of Bolton. He has been Artistic Director of Dukes Playhouse Lancaster, The Young Vic and the Octagon Theatre Bolton. He was Director-in-Residence at the RSC, directing nine productions. He has directed over 150 theatre productions in the UK and internationally and over 30 films and TV productions for BBC, ITV and Channel 4.

Workshop 3

Rights of Passage

Clare Summerskill is a writer, performer and oral historian who has developed verbatim theatre productions on a range of subjects: most significantly using the recorded memories and current experiences of older members of the LGBTQ population. She has also written about the experiences of patients on an NHS secure psychiatric ward. Clare Summerskill will speak about her play, 'Rights of Passage', based on interviews with LGBTQ asylum seekers in the UK, exploring ethical and practical concerns in the scripting of verbatim theatre.

Clare completed her PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London, on the experience of contributors in verbatim theatre processes. Her publications include 'Creating Verbatim Theatre from Oral Histories' (Routledge, 2020) and "Gateway To Heaven: Fifty Years of Lesbian and Gay Oral History" (Tollington Press, 2012). She has worked for several years with Pam Schweitzer on Reminiscence Theatre.

Workshop 4

Avant Gardening and the LGBTQ+ Staff Community

Researchers and artists will discuss the tensions and experiences of using creative methods to explore and disseminate traditional interview testimony. It will explore the beginnings of a co-design process between traditional researchers, the LGBTQ+ community and artists, which started in 2022 as an extension of the LGBTQ+ Culture research project at the University of Greenwich initiated in 2021.

Paul Green from Avant Gardening and Bijou Stories team, Panagiotis Pentaris, Associate Professor of Social Work and Thanatology and research lead of the LGBTQ+ Culture research project, Alan Dudley, research officer and David Hockham, Chair of the LGBTQ+ Staff community (Greenwich University) researcher and theatre manager.

Workshop 5

Positive in Prison

Janet Weston and Kate Valentine present their audio drama based on interviews on the HIV Aids unit in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. The 1980s HIV/AIDS crisis may be recent history, but the experiences of those who lived through it are rapidly disappearing from the public mind. Historian Janet Weston created an audio drama with partners Digital Drama, directed by Kate Valentine.

Dr Janet Weston is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for History in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She has researched and published on histories of forensic psychiatry, HIV/AIDS, mental health law, and the ethics of public health.

Kate Valentine is director of Digital Drama and has worked extensively as a director in theatre and at the BBC as a radio producer. She is currently undertaking a PhD by Creative Practice at the University of York.

Workshop 6

Performing Oral History

Kate Saffin and Heather Wastie of Alarum Productions will run a practical workshop on Performing Oral History celebrating UK waterways. They will explore the theoretical perspectives that underpin their work and demonstrate practically their specific methodology.

Kate is a boater, writer, storyteller and actor, who has lived on a narrow boat since 1999 telling stories of the waterways. Heather is a poet, singer-songwriter and accordion player working with oral history.

Abstracts & Bios

Wednesday 13th

Panel A

Netherlands

Annemarie Bolder: Amsterdam

An Amsterdam care home through Covid-19

Annemarie worked in a care home where, in March 2020, the Corona virus was spreading rapidly. Because of the lack of knowledge about this virus, it felt like we were fighting an unequal battle, a battle in which we lost lots of elderly people. But soon after, we turned our focus on to how we could support them and help them to keep in contact with their relatives.

Germany

Ingrid Berzau Freies Werkstatt Theater, Cologne

Shortly after the start of the Corona Pandemic, we tried to find a way to continue our work with the „Altentheater“. Being a large ensemble of about 20 older participants, it was a challenge to find ways to continue to bind the group as a group, which is one of the most important objectives of the 'Altentheater'. In my presentation, I shall explain how we did this throughout the pandemic.

Panel B

UK

Caroline Baker and Marenka Gabeler, London

RYCT Online

In London over the last 2 years Pam Schweitzer, Kath Gilfoy and I delivered 3 'Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today' (RYCT) online programmes via Zoom. This presentation looks at what we offered, successes and shortfalls, as well as visual examples demonstrating how we integrated a graduate apprentice artist into our online reminiscence sessions.

Czech Republic

Hana Janeckova and Blanka Jirkovská, Prague

Training of new reminiscence assistants.

The 5th cycle of the RYCTT (Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today Training) programme started with the two-day experiential course, just before the 2nd wave of Covid19 and a national emergency situation. After an informal on-line meeting of 6 apprentices, we decided to continue in our structured on-line training – teaching, inviting and hosting lecturers, exercising reminiscence techniques. Finally apprentices trained to prepare a reminiscence group session on a certain topic. In Autumn 2020 our complete RYCTT meetings have started with families caring for people with dementia. The cycle has been successfully completed just recently, after 8 reminiscence sessions.

Panel C

Japan

Yasuko Murata and Michiko Lucy Nakagawa from Tokyo

In autumn of 2019, our NPO invited Pam and Alex Schweitzer to deliver three hybrid lecture/workshops in Japan.

Some 150 people participated, learning the Remembering yesterday, varing Today RYCT) project first-hand. We shared handout materials and a DVD recording of RYCT sessions. These have been useful resources for people in Japan learning and practicing RYCT.

Singapore

Patricia Lee

The use of adaptive oral history methodology in reminiscence work amongst families living with dementia.

Recently, the Oral History Centre at the National Archives of Singapore, together with Dementia Singapore and the Singapore University of Social Sciences, embarked on a community project to document the life stories of these families. The one-to-one reminiscence through oral interviews proved to be a valuable continuity of the RYCT sessions, especially where families asked “What’s next?” after we complete the 12 RYCT sessions.

Panel D

Ireland

Karen Meenan, Dublin,

Karen is Senior Fellow for Equity at the Global Brain Health Institute.

Karen has twin passions—drama and dementia. She has creatively engaged with older people, through song with internationally acclaimed Forget-Me-Nots choir, through drama with intergenerational Making Hay Theatre and through radio with award-winning series 'Reminiscence on the Radio'.

Spain

Raul Vilar Heraz and Duna Hulsamer, Barcelona

Duna and Raül have been teaching and leading Reminiscence Projects since 2005 in Barcelona. Both have organized many RYCT projects and on this occasion, they will share how to use Reminiscence in everyday life using objects, sounds, music, and textures, and anything to hand. The goal will be to understand that with little you can do a lot.

Panel E

Czech Republic

Hana Janečková, Hana Čížková, Prague

Reminiscence work with people living with

dementia and their families during Covid 19.

Our work with families selected for our RYCT programme could not start due to the 2nd wave of Covid 19 and the state of emergency in our country. We offered a form of 'field reminiscence' to the families, walking outdoors with them and doing some individual reminiscence with them. In Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022 we decided to go ahead with the meetings under the strict safety measures but with the full programme – participative, creative, enjoyable. After 8 sessions with 3 – 4 families we can observe a small community, where people feel safe and happy, where the atmosphere is friendly and where the families are anxious to come.

UK

Rose Pickering and Rosie Hollands, London

We shall briefly describe the 'Sow & Grow' Project at Sydenham Garden, and how we created the 'Growing Together' group. This brought together the RYCT skills/knowledge and the 'Sow & Grow' framework. We shall mention evaluation of the two full 12-week groups we have run with some feedback from participating families. We shall also talk briefly about how we kept connected during the pandemic.

Panel F

Finland

Leonie Hohenthal Antin and Varpu Vistala, Kotka

From Finland we shall hear about the making of five films featuring the 3-dimensional Memory Boxes made by older members of the Memories House. The films do introduce the built memory boxes and their contents, but in addition to this you can also hear the memories behind the selection. Professional film-makers recorded the older people's commentary and reflections about their boxes and the 5 films have been published on YouTube. Furthermore, our project also had a special emphasis on intergenerational work with younger family members participating in the process. We hope to show an extract from one of our videos.

Germany Angelika Trilling and Pam Schweitzer

The 'Making Memories Matter' project involved seven partner countries in the European Reminiscence Network. Grenade boxes designed to transport munitions in WWII were recreated by artists and older people as 3-dimensional life story portraits. 6 of them toured Europe, inspiring many others to make their own Memory Boxes and to create pieces of theatre reflecting the stories contained in them.



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