



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland



Contemporary Performance Practice
Graduate Pathways

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The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is a place like nowhere else in the world. Located in the heart of Glasgow, it is renowned as a world top 10 destination for the performing arts* and we welcome artists from across the globe to study their craft with us.

We are the only conservatoire in Europe to teach across all of the performing and production arts. In practice, that means on campus you can expect to see opera singers working with filmmakers, actors creating new work with production artists and dancers choreographing pieces with musicians. Our students are driven to create original work, inspire one another and break new ground within the industry.

This collaborative conservatoire environment is the perfect place then for a programme such as the Contemporary Performance Practice degree to have grown and evolved. For 21 years now, artists have enrolled on the programme, each bringing their unique voices, aspirations and artistry which develop over the four years of study and continue to progress long after graduation.

The reach of the student output does not stop at the conservatoire walls; students have created work in various community settings, using their art to make a deep and meaningful impact within prisons, schools, nursing homes, hospices and youth groups.

This publication highlights some of the opportunities available to students who come to study Contemporary Performance Practice – and what they can aspire to achieve post-graduation. It also demonstrates the commitment we make to our graduates, as we support them from transitioning from undergraduate study to professional practice.

Our aim as a world-leading conservatoire is that all students leave us upon their graduation day, equipped with the skills, knowledge, experience and confidence to make their mark on the world. We hope this document showcases some of the many ways Contemporary Performance Practice graduates use their art to make a positive impact on society.

*QS World University Rankings 2020

Introduction



Craig McCorquodale, *Intervals*, Propel Festival 2020

Find out more: rcs.ac.uk/cpp



Welcome

We want to showcase the opportunities that this programme can offer; whether that is professional opportunities and residencies, doctoral study, our graduate teaching roles, or starter funding for creative projects through RCS initiatives.

You'll also find several graduate stories within this publication as we highlight the different pathways our students have taken over the years.

CPP students have made performances in swimming pools, allotments, nightclubs, beaches, woods, building sites, cars, theatres, hospices, schools and within many different communities. We have collaborated with young people, older adults, people with disabilities, and worked with prisoners within the Scottish justice system.

As we look back, there is a lot to celebrate, a lot of art-making in Scotland (and the world) that would not be happening without this programme, its approaches and its pedagogy.

The CPP Staff Team

The BA (Hons) Contemporary Performance Practice programme is an interdisciplinary performance-making degree focused on the generation of new and original performances that sit outside of traditional theatre.

Since its inception in 1999, the programme has aimed to develop socially-engaged artists who can make a contribution in the world as performance-makers, educators, advocates and active citizens.

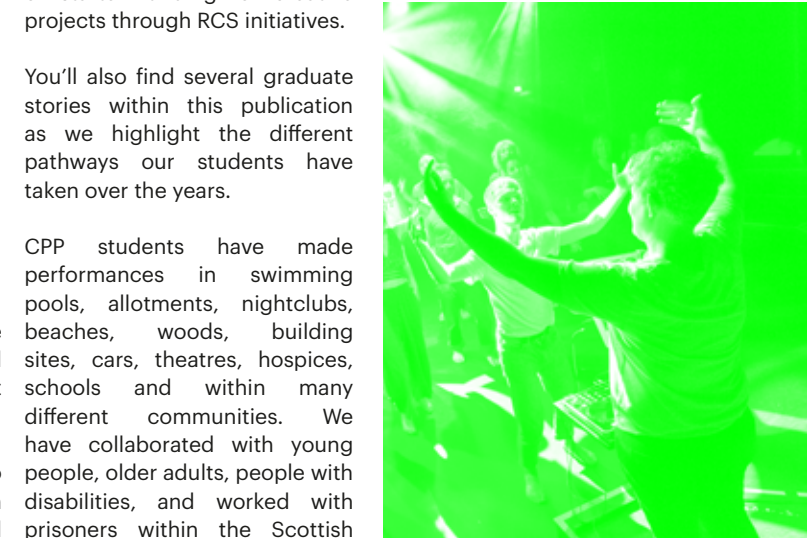
The programme is committed to exploring the ecological and social function of performance and how performance can be an "act of community."

While studying the four-year Contemporary Performance Practice (CPP) programme, students encounter a range of concepts including social practice, live art, performance art, postmodern and postdramatic performance, installation, performance research, site-specific and documentary practices.

The diversity of practices means that students are equipped with multiple skills, not only in performance-making, but also in facilitation, working in communities and collaboration.

2020 marked the 21st year of the programme and we wanted to create a publication celebrating the work and achievements of our alumni as well as outlining the various ways in which the Contemporary Performance Practice programme and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland continues to support student artists after graduation.

Before History We Danced



Dan Cox, *F333LL*, Into The New festival 2019Sharon Fraser, *Mother Courage*, Into The New Festival 2018

Studying Contemporary Performance Practice

Over the four year programme, students develop their artistry and unique practice to make a difference to the world, with the care and support of expert mentors.

First year begins with The Ego-centric Artist: Digging From Where You Stand. After beginning with devising autobiographical work, in second year students move out from the idea of the "self" and begin to work in communities and educational contexts framed as The Socio-centric Artist: Radical Pedagogy in Action.

Third year is The Researching Artist: An Ecology of Mind, where students undertake performance research projects and the final year of study is The Eco-centric Artist: Living a Sustainable Practice where final year students perform their degree show as part of the Into the New festival and also choose from a range of artist commissions including working in prisons, directing, undertaking a secondment or making site-specific work.

As the students progress through the programme, their learning becomes more autonomous and they begin to clearly define and situate their own arts practice within various contexts. Assignments range from making performance (solo and collaboratively), creating artist statements, writing a performance analysis, devising and undertaking a performance research project, making a professional portfolio, and many other things – every day is different.

A highlight of the programme is the community of practice which is fostered through site-specific trips, weekly coffee gatherings, the programme's Into the New and Propel festivals and our regular creative activities outdoors.

For more details on the curriculum
and for information on how to
apply to the programme please
visit the website: rca.ac.uk/cpp

This varied curriculum and the range of contexts in which students work means that, upon graduation, students are equipped with a range of different skills in collaboration, devising, facilitation, directing, writing, and documenting their work, as well as understanding the elements of professional practice necessary to have a successful career in the performing arts.

This range of transferable skills ensures CPP graduates are in high demand in the creative industries.

During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, all learning and teaching was delivered online during lockdown and the programme launched the first festival of digital performance, Propel. Our student artists were responsive, creative, curious and created new works over a range of platforms demonstrating how their creative practices could adapt and respond to the new context.

One Man Show, directed by Minnie Crook
Propel Festival 2020

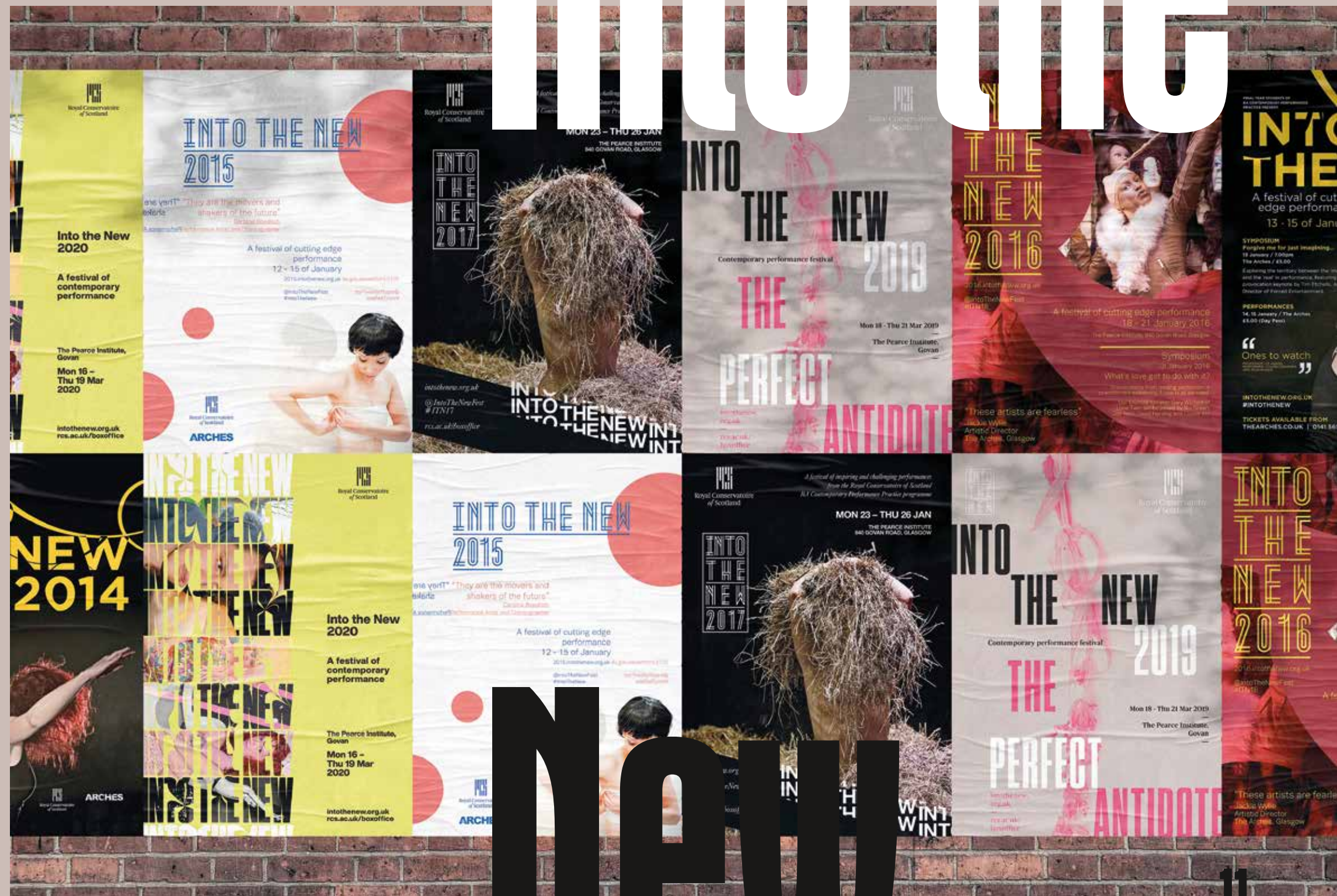
Into the New is the Contemporary Performance Practice programme's annual festival of final year student work. It has taken place in various locations including Tramway, the Arches and the Pearce Institute in Govan.

We invite producers and leaders within arts organisations to this exciting and cutting-edge festival of performance which showcases the students' development of their arts practice in their final year of study. The ReCollection Zine was launched in October 2020 to mark the 21st anniversary of the programme.

In March 2021, the *Into the New* festival will be taking place as both a live and digital festival for the first time ever. While the pandemic means the future for performance festivals is still not certain, we are planning the live *Into the New* to take place at Tramway, an international art-space on Glasgow's south-side, over two weekends in March followed by an exciting digital festival.

"Into the New is a highlight in my calendar. I find work that is fresh, transformative and very well-considered, as well as a generous community that thinks and creates together."

Professor Laura González
RCS Athenaeum Fellow



Into the

New

Festival

The *Propel Festival* showcases work from all levels of the Contemporary Performance Practice programme and is the culmination of all of the performance-making processes of the academic year.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Propel Festival was presented as a festival of digital performance and was performed over various online platforms including Zoom, a chatroom, YouTube live, a website, Instagram, and the telephone.

The definition of “contemporary” is “existing or happening now”, and, as a festival of contemporary performance, Propel interrogated the way in which we can continue to create new work whilst in quarantine. Propel questioned the impossibility of the live, the differently live, and the new demands of audiences and performers as we navigated lockdown through a series of exciting performances and artworks.

Students from all four year groups of the degree programme created original and innovative works during lockdown that included live digital adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* shared on a Zoom Webinar and an intergenerational choreographic work spread over 60 one-minute films, with dancers aged 60 and above. Propel also featured Artist Talks on Arts in Prisons, A Director’s Room and Site-Specific Practice where the artists discussed making performance in isolation, the internet as creative space and emerging into an uncertain landscape.

Lecturers on the Contemporary Performance Practice programme reflected on the Propel Festival and the move to online learning and teaching in an article “Training Artists in Times of Crisis” for the Performance Research journal (forthcoming 2021). Interim Head of Programme Dr Laura Bissell is co-editing a book *Performance in a Pandemic* with Dr Lucy Weir at the University of Edinburgh which will be published by Routledge next year.

Propel

Maddie Granlund, *Further Down the Beach*, Propel Festival 2020



Contemporary Performance Practice
Graduate Pathways

Professional opportunities and residencies

The Contemporary Performance Practice programme has built many excellent relationships and partnerships with external organisations to provide opportunities for graduating artists. For the last five years we have collaborated with Artsadmin and the Live Art Development Agency in London on the BANNER Award where students are mentored and supported in their first year after graduation.

We have developed our collaboration with Artsadmin to include opportunities and support for more than one artist, and to respond to the changing needs of graduate artists in this current context.



In 2021, for the first time, we are offering graduate residencies during the summer break in collaboration with Cove Park, a student residency at Jupiter Artland, a new partnership with Present Futures and a student residency within the RCS Archives and Collections.

We continue to develop graduate opportunities with partners and organisations. If you are a graduate of the programme, please visit our website for upcoming opportunities: rcs.ac.uk/cpp

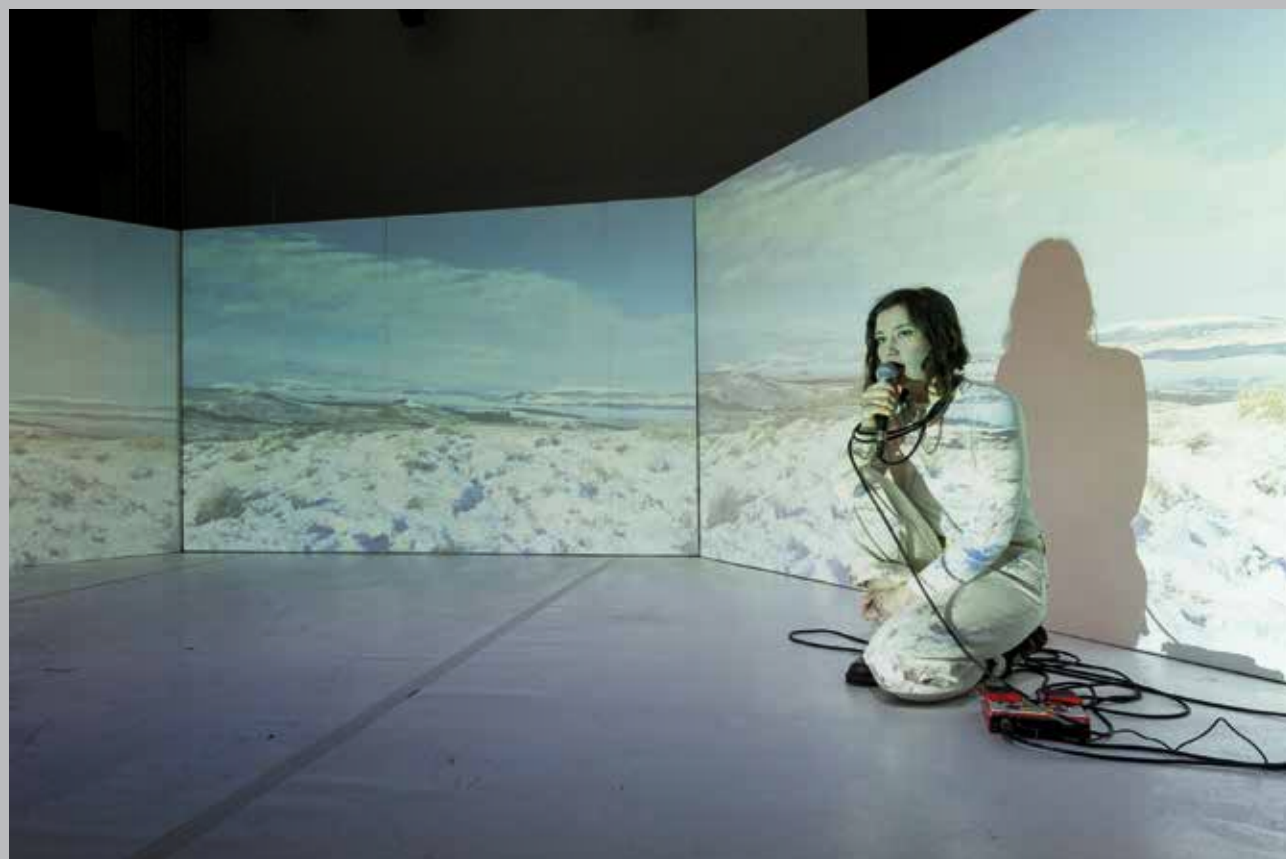
Artsadmin

Artsadmin is an organisation based in London at Toynbee Studios that works with artists to produce interdisciplinary work for local, national and international audiences. It provides support and advice for artists as well as space for the creation, rehearsal and presentation of new work.

Michael Norton, from Artsadmin, notes how important the CPP programme is. He writes, "CPP continues to support some of the most urgent and exciting makers and thinkers in the arts. The course's focus on the individual, environmental, and community is a nuanced model for building an artist's career, and challenges each artist to take accountability for the society they live within."

Sinead Hargan was the Artsadmin BANNER Award recipient in 2019/20 and used this opportunity to engage with a research residency at the Live Art Development Agency and a studio residency at Toynbee Studios.

Sinead Hargan, *I Just Go On and On and On,*
Into the New Festival 2019



Cove Park



In 2021, a new collaborative partnership between Cove Park and the Contemporary Performance Practice programme will be launched. Cove Park is an artist residency centre located on a rural site on Scotland's west coast. Their residencies support the development of new work by national and international artists, groups and organisations working in all art forms and this new partnership will provide graduating artists with an opportunity to access artist studios and accommodation, with a fee for the artist for the residency. Graduates will also receive mentorship from the CPP staff team, space and support to share any practice/research that might emerge from the residency and support with dissemination of the alumni artist's work through our networks.

Founded in 1999 by Peter and Eileen Jacobs, Cove Park is a charity funded by Creative Scotland, by trusts and foundations and by the generosity of individuals. Since 2000, Cove Park has hosted over 1,500 artists and former residents including Margaret Atwood, Ann Carson, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Mariana Castillo Deball, Alasdair Gray, Beca Lipscombe, Tom Morris, Ciara Phillips, Elizabeth Price, Charlotte Prodger, Simon Starling, Christos Tsiolkas, Louise Welsh and Jan Verwoert.

This residency is open to graduates to support the development of artists from a range of backgrounds to have the opportunity to develop their arts practice in a rural setting. The CPP team were keen to work with Cove Park due to their siting and the way in which a residency in this environment aligns with our curriculum focus on the development of a sustainable and eco-centric arts practice.

Jupiter Artland

Jupiter Artland is a contemporary sculpture garden located near Edinburgh. Founded in 2009 by philanthropist art collectors Robert and Nicky Wilson, Jupiter Artland is one of Scotland's most significant arts organisations and was nominated for ArtFund's Museum of the Year in 2016.

Set over 100 acres of meadow, woodland and five indoor gallery spaces, Jupiter Artland is home to 35 permanent site-specific sculptures from artists including Phyllida Barlow, Charles Jencks, Anish Kapoor, Cornelia Parker and Antony Gormley, as well as a seasonal programme of exhibitions and events.

The CPP staff team have been developing ways in which Contemporary Performance Practice students can work at Jupiter Artland and respond to the existing artworks on the site. In 2019, third year students were offered a summer residency opportunity to develop the work they created during the Performance Writing module and present it to a public audience.

The week-long residency was hosted by Jupiter Artland and offered a way to gain professional experience and support for students as emerging artists. Future plans include developing a similar residency model for graduating artists.

“Working at Jupiter Artland was an amazing opportunity during my third year on the Contemporary Performance Practice programme. It offered a space to work outwith the campus, and respond to an award-winning sculptural landscape. From this, I was offered an extended residency. This was invaluable to my learning and for creating industry relationships.”

Minnie Crook

Artist-in-Residence at Jupiter Artland 2019



Alec Finlay, *A Variety of Cultures*



Charles Jencks, *Cells of Life*

Present Futures Associateships



Present Futures is a multi-disciplinary art event curated by Colette Sadler and produced by Feral. In 2021, this event will be a festival exploring artistic and scientific enquiry into the field of human/non-human relations and entanglements.

Colette Sadler is an internationally-renowned performer, choreographer and curator. Her works have been presented around the world at dance and visual arts festivals and performances, and she is currently working on a robotics and movement research project at Kings College, London.

PRESENT
FUTURES

From 2020, two associateships will be available for Scottish-based artists to work on the Present Futures festival, with each receiving a research and development bursary, mentorship and the opportunity to present their work at the festival in February 2021.

The associateships are for those who are within five years of starting their professional practice and offer an exciting opportunity for graduates of the Contemporary Performance Practice.

This programme is supported by Creative Scotland, The Work Room, Centre for Contemporary Art and the Contemporary Performance Practice programme at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Leah Marojevic performing *Temporary Store Relic 1* by Colette Sadler at Goma as part of Present Futures 2019

Find out more: presentfutures.org

RCS Archives and Collections Residency



The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Archives and Collections are an unparalleled resource, rich in both the depth and diversity of their holdings. Since its foundation as the Glasgow Athenaeum in 1847, the Royal Conservatoire's archives have accrued many important collections of instruments, manuscripts, artworks, photographs, performance ephemera and memorabilia which are made available via our archives search room facility.

Students of the Contemporary Performance Practice programme have created performative responses to materials in the archives as part of the Aesthetics and Composition strand of the programme. From 2021, the programme, in association with the Keeper of Archives and Collections, Stuart A. Harris-Logan, is offering a residency for a CPP graduate to work within the collection. Much of the material remains uncatalogued and is there to be discovered – many unknown gems will await 'first eyes on them'. The graduate will be able to access the archives and collections, and receive mentorship and support from the CPP team as well as archive staff.

The Royal Conservatoire's Archives and Collections are located on level six of the Whisky Bond, 2 Dawson Road, Glasgow, G4 9SS, a short walk from Wallace Studios at Speirs Locks.

From



One graduate pathway which has developed over time is the journey from Contemporary Performance Practice at undergraduate level to undertaking postgraduate study at either Masters level or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

We interviewed graduates who have transitioned from CPP to PhD about their experiences and in what ways the programme equipped them for postgraduate study.



to

Can you describe what attracted you to the CPP programme?

I was attracted to the CPP programme due to its emphasis on socially-engaged critical practice.

What did you hope to get out of your time on the programme?

I have always been interested in the complex dynamics between form and content and CPP offered space to carefully consider both. Furthermore, my practice follows lines of interest distributed across a variety of media, materials, and tools. Thus, CPP was intriguing to me because it provided a conservatory-style education that focused heavily on conceptual and relational exploration, de-emphasising skill, craft, and technique in a pre-determined medium. I hoped CPP would expand my thinking and offer me the chance to participate in new experiences I would not have had access to otherwise.

Can you describe what you have done since graduation from CPP?

Since graduating from CPP, I completed an MA at New York University in Educational Theatre. I also completed my certification in Montessori education for children aged up to five. Then, I founded and directed a co-operative preschool and became the interim director of an outdoor summer camp.

I continued to make performance, predominantly directing collaboratively devised performances. In 2013, I decided to begin a PhD to refocus my artistic and educational interests on issues of environmental degradation and climate change. The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a foremost research institution in both Education and Environmental Studies. Thus, I moved to Madison, Wisconsin to begin a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. I took courses in environmental studies and, in 2015, proposed a joint PhD adding on Environment and Resources. Throughout this time, I have continued to create conceptual art and produce collaborative artistic projects. I am currently active in an art collective called Banana Time.

What made you decide to do a PhD?

I decided to pursue a PhD to synthesise my background with environmental issues, and to learn and reflect on how to respond to these anticipated discontinuities. This experience has enabled my practice to become increasingly broad, now encompassing arts programming, institutional design and critique, and a multitude of artist-driven transdisciplinary projects. I launched a city-wide environmental art series, Terra Incognita: Artists Exploring a New Ecological Epoch, which showcases artists who complicate the relationship between humans and the world we inhabit. My dissertation looks at how children are centered in climate activism, which has afforded me the opportunity to support and engage with climate activists transnationally.

I have also collaboratively produced several public programming series on topics ranging from decolonial perspectives on climate justice to abolition through the role of the county sheriff.

In what ways do you feel the CPP programme equipped you to undertake postgraduate study?

I have continued to be informed by the emphasis CPP had on critical thinking; putting ideas into practice; developing a purpose for performance outside of vocational and economic aims; and collaboration, with each other as well as with diverse communities. Also, gaining a practice-based background in performance contributed directly to my ability to maintain my own ever-evolving performance practice, and to engage with the theories in the field of performance studies that now animate my academic work.

Are there particular ways of learning on CPP that have informed your approaches as a researching artist? How would you define these?

One thing that I remember from CPP is the process of picking an object of focus and investigating it widely to generate material. That this starting place didn't have to remain legible throughout the process meant that generating material could be deeply exploratory and open-ended. Rather than predetermining many limiting and narrow bounds for a particular project, this approach makes room for the process and product to reciprocally and iteratively inform one another. I think it is important to encourage any type of artist or researcher to find a starting point or area of focus that they are drawn to. From here, I learned to trust that, if supported, this impulse will expand in multiple directions and lead to the creation of meaningful and complex work. This is a process I remain committed to as a teacher, mentor, artist and researcher.

What would you say to other CPP students or alumni considering undertaking a PhD?

If you have not already, I would suggest taking time after CPP before beginning a multi-year postgraduate programme. I would look closely at differences across programmes and institutions. Reach out to students as they will often give you honest answers. If you don't love writing, I would suggest finding more practice-oriented PhDs. Ask yourself as many questions as you can: Who are your people? Where do you want to live? How do you learn best? For example, I have realised that I thrive in settings where I am given space to follow my interests and impulses; external pressure is not a motivating force for me.

I suggest that you do a PhD because you are passionate about your purpose, your field, and your area of specialisation. I also believe it is important to enjoy the forms of engagement and styles of learning that are prominent in whatever programme you attend. Lastly, you can always leave. Check in with yourself regularly. If you are not thriving for whatever reason, determine if you want to stay. My MA adviser called this "the power of egress." There are so many stigmas attached to formal educational settings, and to the myth of 'sunk costs.' Yet, there is truly nothing wrong with leaving a programme and changing your plans if at any point it is not right for you.

Sasha

Alexandra (aka Sasha) Lakind
Studied CPP from: 2006-2009
Stage of PhD: Awarded
PHD Institution: University of Wisconsin-Madison

Derek

Sarah



Sarah Hopfinger
 Studied CPP from: **2006-2010**
 Stage of PhD: **Awarded**
 PhD Institution: **University of Glasgow**

Can you describe what attracted you to the CPP programme?

I wanted to make my own work in response to things in the world that I care about. I was drawn to the focus on creative process and experimentation with performance practice. I felt that my long standing interest in being a performer could meet with my ideas and perspectives on wider societal and political issues. I was attracted to the programme because I wanted to use and develop my experience and interest in dance and movement with theatre and performance, and to be able to explore what being interdisciplinary could mean. I was attracted to the self-reflection and reflexivity that CPP entailed.

What did you hope to get out of your time on the programme?

I hoped to develop skills in performance-making, and to develop my abilities to explore wider ideas/issues in creative and exciting ways.

Can you describe what you have done since graduation from CPP?

I graduated in 2010, and between 2010-2012 I devised two new solo performances, *Away Into The Night*, which was shown at Arches Live 2010, and *These Age-Old Present Moments* which was shown at the first Buzzcut Festival 2012. I moved to London to carry out an apprentice role I was awarded on a project called *A Little Patch of Ground* (April–November 2011), which was an intergenerational performance and permaculture growing community project with people from the local area. I was the performance apprentice on the project, and helped facilitate sessions and create a performance with the community group. I completed other community projects, such as a collaboration with Urban Roots in Glasgow. I also worked as a visiting director on CPP to direct the first years.

What made you decide to do a PhD?

I did not explicitly look for a PhD. The work I had done since CPP had focused on ecology and performance, and I was trying to find my way in creating performances and doing participatory projects, and I had become very interested in working intergenerationally since doing *A Little Patch of Ground*. I heard about a funded PhD at the University of Glasgow, and I applied because its focus was relevant to aspects of my practice – ecology, environmentalism, children, young people, performance. I decided to apply for the PhD because once I read about it, and began reading around the subject area and research methodologies, I became more and more sure it was the right context for me to develop as an artist.

In what ways do you feel the CPP programme equipped you to undertake postgraduate study?

It equipped me well. The third year was key. My dissertation directly informed the focus of my PhD – performance and ecology. If I had only created performances and not had that opportunity to research an area of performance I was interested in, I would not have been able to consider doing the PhD.

I learnt how to think and write critically whilst studying CPP but at the time, I perhaps did not quite realise that was what I was doing. In terms of practice-as-research, CPP equipped me well, again I did not realise this is what I was doing.

Knowing about other artistic practice and being able to locate my practice in relation to those is something CPP encourages, which informed my understanding of how to be critical.

Are there particular ways of learning on CPP that have informed your approaches as a researching artist? How would you define these?

I think the ways that CPP enabled and encouraged me to work independently and follow my own interests was great preparation for doing a PhD. Key to the CPP programme is students being able to discover, explore and develop their perspectives, ideas, and often unique practices, and these were aspects that I think were key to my ability and success in initially being awarded the PhD studentship and being able to complete it.

I think the skills in critical reflection that CPP entails informed my approach as a researching artist. The approach I took to devising, collaborating and directing during my practice-as-research PhD were informed by my experiences on CPP.

I also took my approach in another direction than the ones I had explored on CPP - I felt that when doing my PhD I was able to, as it were, 'let go' of always focusing on my autobiography. I was able to create work that was not necessarily directly related to my life, but which was equally important to me. CPP gave me the ability to do this, and to keep developing my practice in relevant new ways.

I was informed by the socially engaged work I had done in second year in terms of my approach to collaborating with children and adults. The ideas of collaborating and going on a creative process, without knowing what the performance will be. I think CPP developed my willingness and ability to work in the unknown, get lost, let go of my expectations, etc, which I realised during my PhD were key abilities/skills that a good research process requires.

What would you say to other CPP students or alumni considering undertaking a PhD?

Doing a PhD can make you a better artist. It is not necessarily about becoming an academic, it is about deepening, understanding and developing your artistic practice. Gaining a wider understanding of performance studies and other disciplines allows for more informed and relevant work to be created.

Writing can be a creative process, which allows you to engage more deeply with your own practice. Remember that your artistic practices – the specifics of how you create performance work – are or can be understood as research methods. And the ethics/ethos of your approach – for example, the approach you take to collaboration, to working with young people – can be developed into a research methodology. So you, as a practitioner, have a lot to contribute to academic and research contexts.



Aby Watson

Studied CPP from: **2009-2013**

Stage of PhD: **Currently in year 5 (part-time study)**

PhD Institution: **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland**

I am currently in the fifth year of my practice-based, part-time PhD titled 'Disordering Dance', and I have around two more years left. I'm lucky to have Dr. Laura Bissell and Laura Bradshaw as two of my supervisors, along with Dr. Kate Marsh from Coventry University.

My PhD is half practice, half writing – so, my thesis will be made of a body of original performance works as well as a written thesis of 40,000 words. Which isn't much when you consider a full written thesis is 80,000-100,000 words! It is possible to do a fully practice-led PhD, which would mean the emphasis is on creating new performance with a supporting written commentary of 10,000 words.

My PhD also takes an autoethnographic methodology – which means that I use my personal experience, knowledge and autobiographical story as a method in my research. By situating my neurodivergent lived experience at the centre of the research, I can say something about wider cultural, political, and social meaning. It's similar to how the CPP programme teaches autobiography to say something bigger about the world that we live in; autoethnography is a similar practice in research.

If someone had told me in the first year of CPP that I'd end up doing a PhD, I would've laughed – then after that information settled, I'd have probably got incredibly anxious and worried about it. I'd excelled at philosophy at sixth form, but when I came to study at the Royal Conservatoire I found Critical and Contextual Studies really challenging.

I found it difficult to follow the chain of group thought and keep up with the discussion, and sitting down for hours was exhausting, so I would drift off – with my own thoughts, but also sometimes with my body, into sleep. As I'd been out of the loop for a long time, it was then even harder to get back on track with the conversation and the level of understanding in the room. This made me question the level of my intelligence, and my ability to comprehend complex ideas. When actually, I was just neurodivergent in a rather neurotypical-centred environment.

I remained quite disinterested and frustrated, up to the point where I was able to follow my own research interests. It wasn't until my second year where we had to do a research project as part of the choreography module, and this was the first time that research clicked with me. I did my project on kinesthetic empathy in dance performance – kinesthetic empathy being the ability to experience physical empathy merely by observing the movements of other human beings. It's got a lot to do with mirror neurons; how watching someone else do an action fires the same neurons in your brain as the person who is doing the action. It's all complicated stuff, but I did what I could to sieve through it all to produce a presentation and an essay. Looking back, that was my first encounter with the practice of research – and I loved it.

I found that researching my own interests fed my natural curiosity, and excitement to learn about things that I was passionate about. It also felt very satisfying to share what I'd learnt with my classmates through the presentation. This time, not only was I on track with the level of understanding in the room, I was leading the understanding – and it was really empowering to feel knowledgeable, and confident about grappling with, and communicating, complex ideas.

During third year, I completed a placement with Scottish Dance Theatre, shadowing the brilliant Caroline Bowditch who was their Dance Agent for Change.

**I found that researching
my own interests fed
my natural curiosity,
and excitement to learn
about things that I was
passionate about.**

This led me to consider my own agency as an artist, specifically regarding myself as a dancer with dyslexia and dyspraxia. I continued with this enquiry with my dissertation topic, and I focused on dyslexia and performance. As I was already personally invested and knowledgeable in the subject, it was easy to throw myself into it and I was eager to learn more. I cared deeply about this subject, and was genuinely interested in what I could find out when I connect the dots between my experience and the knowledge of others. It was also very empowering to be a dyslexic person exercising my authorship to write about dyslexia.

My dissertation research introduced me to dyslexic academic Dr. Nim Folb and dyslexic artist Benedict Phillips. Following my dissertation, Nim and I would co-author and publish a paper on dyslexic authorship, and she would go on to publish my dissertation as an e-book through her publishing company, R-A-S-P, which stands for Rebelling Against Spelling Press. I have just this year completed a chapter which will be published in Benedict Phillips' latest book, the contents of which is heavily inspired by, and builds upon, my third-year dissertation. For me, my dissertation was much more than a module. It was a gateway to knowing the power of dyslexic authorship, to reclaiming smartness outside of neurotypical thinking and to the joys of research and academia.

After I graduated, I became more and more interested in dance. As all the dance environments I'd been in hadn't been inclusive to my neurodivergence, it became clear that I'd have to figure out how to do it for myself. Building on the affirmative philosophy I'd began during my dissertation, I asked: what would a dance practice that is inherently dyspraxic be like?

I put a proposal together for a PhD, and that was five years ago! And here I am. Note:- I don't have a Masters – it's possible to go straight to PhD if the situation is right.

CPP taught me about the importance of an 'enquiry'. When you identify an interest, something you're passionate about, something that burns for you, and you go on a journey to specifically interrogate that thing. It was how I, and I think you, have been taught to make performance. For me, it is the same thinking in research. My PhD research is tied together by an enquiry that has been burning, more or less, for my whole life. Dance and dyspraxic-ness are inextricably connected to who I am, and this makes me the ideal person for this research. It makes this research ideal for who I am. I'm wondering if there is a central enquiry, or central agency, underlining who you are and what you do. What research, or enquiry, would be ideal for you and that you would be ideal for it?

As you can tell, my research, my practice and my own sense of self are inherently entwined. I think this might be true for a lot of researchers, even those not working with autoethnography. To do a PhD, especially if it is unfunded, you have to really care about what you're researching. Basically, you're doing one self-led project for years – I'm predicting mine will be seven years in total – and there has to be something that drives you; an interest, a passion, a curiosity.

For me, research can connect to who you are and the learning that can happen, both personally and theoretically, can be huge. Then, you absorb that learning and have the opportunity to put it back into the world, translating it through your unique practice and writing. That is so exciting to me as an artist-researcher, making the sharing of knowledge creative, interesting and accessible to others.

Academia and theoretical understanding doesn't have to be complicated, alienating, inaccessible and detached from the real world. That's just how it's been done for a long time, because academia has been historically built on elitism and classism – but it doesn't have to be done that way – especially with practice research done by artist researchers. And I'd be so thrilled if more CPP students went on to do PhDs, because it is so close to what you're already doing on this programme, and from my own experience – research is really rewarding, interesting, and fun!

**For me, research can connect to who you
are and the learning that can happen, both
personally and theoretically, can be huge.**



Ben Dunn
Studied CPP from: **2006-2010**
Stage of PhD: **Awarded**
PHD Institution: **University of Manchester**

Can you describe what attracted you to the CPP programme?

At the time I applied I knew that I was interested in theatre but was unsure what kind of study was right for me. Having grown up in the north of Scotland, a considerable distance from the country's main cultural centres, I didn't have much experience to draw on to differentiate between contemporary performance and other performance disciplines, such as acting. I applied to both the Acting and Contemporary Performance programme at the Royal Conservatoire and auditioned for both on the same day.

The first thing that attracted me to the CPP programme was the audition. The concept and practice of collaborative performance was immediately apparent. We were asked to participate in a simple composition exercise and present a performative response to an image we had been sent in advance of the audition. What I remember, however, is the sensation of being seen as an artist, and the sense that the course was an opportunity to investigate my place in the world through my

arts practice. The critically-engaged response would be to say that I was drawn to the programme by the opportunity for studio-based learning with practicing artists; that I wanted to develop a career as an artist and that rigorous daily

training in performance practices, movement and voice seemed like the best foundation with which to pursue these ambitions. This is true, and I was attracted to the structure and demands of a conservatoire education. However, what I felt keenly on the day of the audition was a sense of opportunity – that the programme offered a rare permission to take art seriously as a way of being in and effecting the world.

Can you describe what you have done since graduation from CPP?

Since graduating in 2010 I worked as a director, facilitator and sound designer for a number of years before deciding to begin an MA in Applied Theatre at the University of Manchester.

What made you decide to do a PhD?

I chose to pursue a PhD in response to my experiences as a practitioner. Specifically, I had questions about the politics of work in social contexts that I felt I wasn't able to pursue through professional practice. A PhD provided an opportunity to develop relevant critical and contextual frameworks with which to understand the political context of performance and the cultural sector in more detail, and to address my concerns through long term studies of practicing artists engaging in this context through their work.

In what ways do you feel the CPP programme equipped you to undertake postgraduate study?

The CPP programme supported my postgraduate study in a number of ways. Most directly, it is as a result of contacts made through the course that I was introduced to the MA programme at the University of Manchester and, subsequently, decided to undertake my PhD.

The CPP programme supports close collaboration between students and practicing artists and, in many cases, these relationships can go on to support important professional opportunities beyond graduation. In my case, Simon Ruding, who taught on the Theatre in Prisons module in the final year of my degree, recommended the programme and department at the University of Manchester and supported my application to the course by acting as a referee. Additionally, one of the three case study examples I chose to focus on during my research was Albert Drive, a large-scale multidisciplinary art project delivered by Glas(s) Performance. We had the opportunity to work with Glas(s) Performance on a number of projects during our degree and relationships built with artistic directors Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore were a useful support for this research.

In broad terms, CPP provided a practical education in a range of performance disciplines and the various social, political and cultural concerns that might be associated with them. This understanding helped determine the subjects of my study, and provided a level of insight into what is at stake for practitioner and participants in various contexts that supported the development of trusting, professional relationships that were key to the quality of my findings.

Are there particular ways of learning on CPP that have informed your approaches as a researching artist? How would you define these?

CPP foregrounded the value of experiential and practice-based learning. Though these can be more challenging to articulate in an academic context, they continue to inform how I understand my relationship to research. Specifically, the artist-centred approach of the course invites undergraduates to position themselves - and to understand their arts practice - in relation to the social, political and environmental context of the world around them.

In broad terms, CPP provided a practical education in a range of performance disciplines and the various social, political and cultural concerns that might be associated with them.

In more practical terms, I regularly make use of skills in facilitation, workshop planning and group management that I first developed during CPP, and a broad ethics of collaborative participation and knowledge making continues to inform my practice as a researcher and relationship to the people I work with.

What would you say to other CPP students or alumni considering undertaking a PhD?

I would encourage anyone thinking about applying for a PhD to take a moment to consider the scale of the commitment. PhDs are often discussed as a three-year undertaking, but it is common for researchers to take a fourth 'writing up' year. It is also a significant financial undertaking. If you are fortunate enough to be awarded funding, it will most likely be for three years. Any extension to this timeline will almost certainly be self-funded. If a PhD is something you want to pursue, know that it will take up a significant portion of your life. Think about what would make this kind of project manageable and rewarding. Consider where you want to live. Think about the opportunities for travel, practice or other forms of personal or professional development afforded by the subject and focus of your research. Make sure that you are passionate about what you are researching. A university department will care about the academic value of your work – its contribution to knowledge. For the energy and focus needed to complete a PhD, however, your research needs to matter to you.

Lastly, however, I would say that a PhD can be a deeply rewarding experience. Just as CPP offers a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in practice, a PhD can provide you with the time, resources and focus to better understand the world in which you live. With the right supervisors, it is an opportunity to go into extraordinary depth on subjects that matter and to examine and construct ideas that can change how you understand your practice and the world. For me, it was an opportunity to investigate and resolve some of the issues that I found most troubling about contemporary performance in social contexts in an environment in which intellectual and philosophical inquiry was appreciated and supported. Just as I saw CPP as an opportunity to investigate my place in the world, this experience has changed how I understand my relationship to my practice and my sense of social and political responsibility.

Maria

Maria Brænder

Studied CPP from: 2013-2017

Stage of PhD: Second year (part-time)

PhD Institution: Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Maria Brænder, *Telling the Bees*,
Into the New Festival 2017



Can you describe what attracted you to the CPP programme?

I thought of CPP as a spawning ground for critical performance practitioners aiming to be trailblazers for inclusion and equality in a wide capacity - and I really wanted to become part of that.

As I was searching for a place to study I was also very eager to immerse myself in performance making as much as possible and I saw CPP as a unique opportunity to become better at developing and articulating ideas of researching and devising performances in an eco-centric setting.

The course especially attracted me as it seemed as (and turned out to be!) a kind of serious playground for experimentation where I could develop skills and become a better performer/director/artist in collaboration with a diverse community of passionate peers and teachers. The openness of the course really attracted me - openness in the sense that students are encouraged to find, explore and excel in their own ways in a supportive and inclusive yet challenging learning environment. I think that openness is not something that can be taken for granted.

Can you describe what you have done since graduation from CPP?

Since I graduated, I have collaborated with different artists and companies including Lea Porsager, Katrine Faber, Hello!Earth, Jenny Gräf, Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology and Hotel Pro Forma, to develop new works and learn more about interdisciplinary practices and methodologies.

One of my highlights was in 2017 where I worked as a dramaturg and sound artist with Hotel Pro Forma, an international laboratory of visual music performance and installations. In collaboration with HPF's Creative Team, I created a 10-channel sound installation called *Fragile Systems* which was presented at various sites in Denmark. *Fragile Systems* worked as a prelude to *NeoArctic* which is big scale opera about climate change.

Also, I have been very excited to work with Copenhagen-based research group *Sounding Bodies (SOBO)* exploring resonance in and between bodies, since 2018. The SOBO research project aims to reveal the capacity of sound as an artistic medium and draws from the fields of acoustic ecology, perceptual studies and practices in improvisation.

Finally, I have also staged my own works like *Telling the Bees* (a speculative music/theatre performance about how to care for the bond between humans and bees, that I originally developed for the *Into the New* festival) in collaboration with *Cryptic*, across Denmark and Scotland.

What made you decide to do a PhD?

I see the PhD as a way to continue the work I began developing as a CPP undergraduate. Through my CPP studies, I discovered that what matters most to me is to explore and manifest the ideas of radical environmental philosophy through multi-sensory experiences for audiences. Via this practice-as-research methodology I seek to challenge dichotomies of human/nature and self/world: to think (and attend to) that which is beyond the human.

Very importantly, it has been both humbling and motivating to be encouraged to be fiercely involved and responsive to the challenges of our time as a feminist/eco-queer practitioner, on the CPP programme at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. I think that the programme has worked as a stimulus for me to desire further development in order to make informed contributions to our hypercomplex and accelerating world. I simply needed more time and also some really qualified sparring opponents (which I have in my excellent supervisors) to make more sense of the tricky interdisciplinary areas and New Materialist theories (particularly related to Ecology and Resonance) that I am interested in working with.

You could say that I decided to do the PhD because I am keen to develop my practice further as an artist/director. I want to create playful, interdisciplinary performance artworks that interrogate and challenge the aforementioned dichotomies, and I hope that in doing so I will also inspire others to engage more with environmental matters.

Very importantly, it has been both humbling and motivating to be encouraged to be fiercely involved and responsive to the challenges of our time as a feminist/eco-queer practitioner, on the CPP programme.

In what ways do you feel the CPP programme equipped you to undertake postgraduate study?

Studying CPP has helped me to better situate and understand my practice in a wider context. I find that the course revolves around critical reflection and practice-based research.

I have felt encouraged to keep questioning, to become more informed, and more articulate about my own approach; in my mind this has been key in preparation for postgraduate studies. In particular, the research/practice work I undertook in my third and fourth years has informed my PhD proposal. In this context, my BA dissertation examined environmentalism in live art, and I created and presented numerous performances at RCS with a focus upon ecological awareness, thereby gaining methodological training in devising processes.

Furthermore, the trial and error (plan-do-review) culture of the programme, with its focus on constantly generating work and evaluating it has given me a vocational confidence to keep going.

Are there particular ways of learning on CPP that have informed your approaches as a researching artist? How would you define these?

It has been so helpful to be introduced to a wide variety of practices and methods in embodied ways as part of the CPP programme. Through the substantial mix of teaching styles/contextual studies/visiting artists and choice modules with very different approaches, I have gained a more deepened understanding of what works for me as a researching artist.

As I am Danish, I have been rather puzzled by the separation of disciplines in Denmark's drama schools. In Danish institutions, directing is one thing, performing another and dramaturgy a third. This idea of thinking in boxes does not appeal to me. I think it is important that (at least some) artists are able to break down the barriers between the different aspects of making performance/live art and work; to work with the fluidity and flow of interdisciplinary processes has the capacity for the creation of some quite dynamic and interesting works. It is definitely more challenging (and at times messy) to work and study this way, but also gives space for some really fruitful collaborations where ideas most often develop in unpredictable ways.

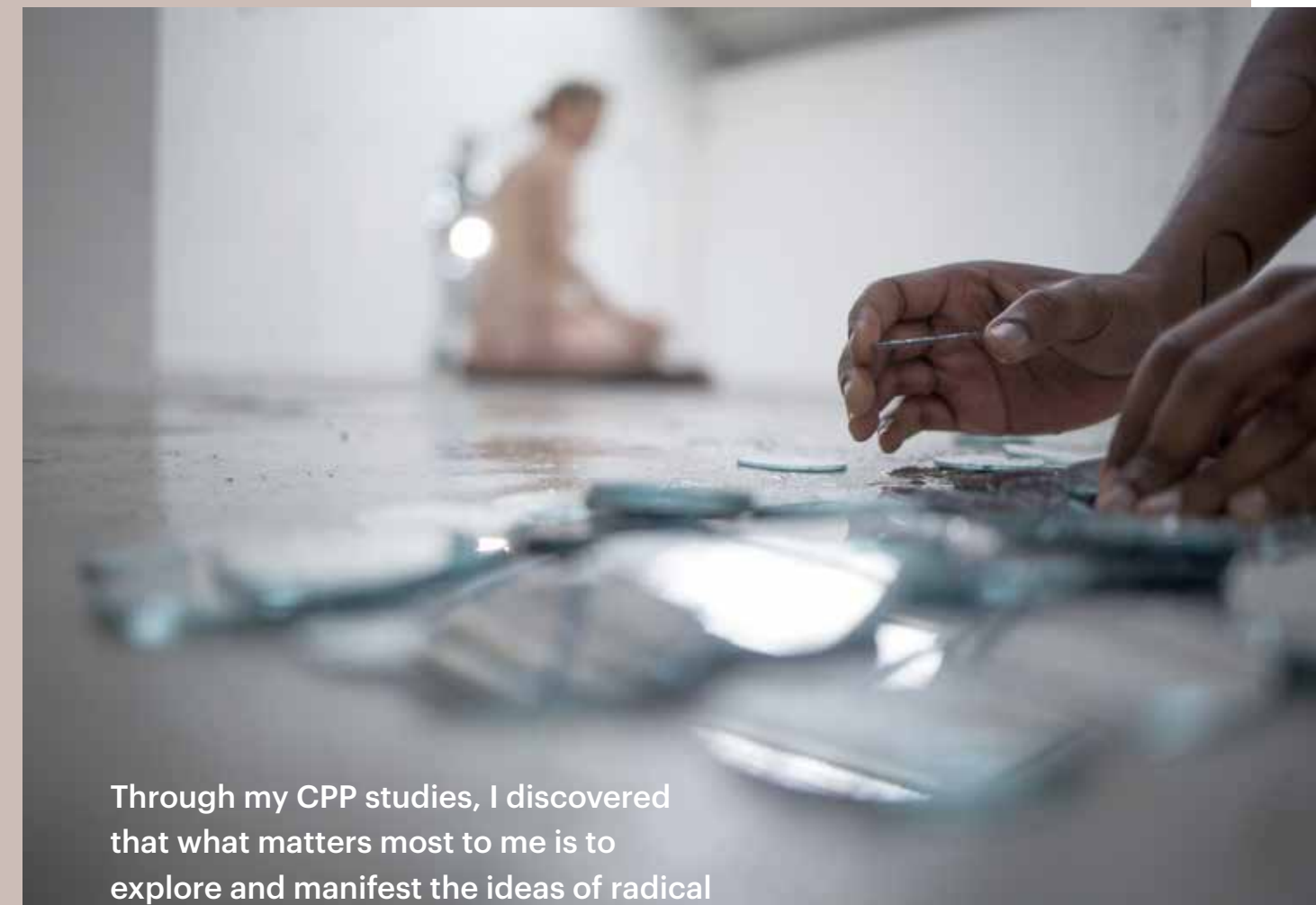
The learning of the programme focuses on exactly this type of interdisciplinary, eco-centric and tentacular thinking-out-of-the-box.

I find that learning in such an environment has taught me to respond to contemporary matters in more of an instant and has given me tools to let my practice be context-specific and in dialogue with what is happening with the world right now.

Additionally, CPP has encouraged actual collaborations with the 'real world' and this has allowed me (among many other things) to do a placement with performance artist Nic Green and a secondment with the performance group Radix in Vancouver. These collaborations have provided opportunities for me to mirror my own practice in very accomplished artists' work and gain an in-depth understanding of the importance of learning from and with others.

What would you say to other CPP students or alumni considering undertaking a PhD?

If you are passionate about something that you want to explore in depth, a PhD is a very inspiring way to work through challenging and complex territories. The potential is that you can scope for your own ideas through practice-based research and bring sounding/moving/singing/dancing/wording/'technofying'/etc. into play and have space and time to experiment with help from inspiring supervisors. In this context, you can work with perspectivals of your own thinking and practice in relation to other thought-provoking and radical theorists/practitioners and hereby potentially catapult yourself and your work to new places.



Through my CPP studies, I discovered that what matters most to me is to explore and manifest the ideas of radical environmental philosophy through multi-sensory experiences for audiences.

Maria Brænder and Thulani Rachia,
Mirror You - Mirror Me

Graduate

teaching opportunities

The CPP programme has pedagogy embedded within the curriculum, particularly in the second year of study framed as The Sociocentric Artist: Radical Pedagogy in Action. Many of our graduates go on to work in education, as drama teachers, or within further and higher education.

The CPP programme has developed graduate teaching opportunities for recent alumni to develop their teaching skills further by contributing to teaching on the programme, working with students of different levels of study with other members of the Contemporary Performance Practice staff team and visiting artists.



Encomium



Contemporary Performance Practice
Graduate Pathways

40 Gudrun Soley Sigurdardottir

Alumna Gudrun Soley Sigurdardottir reflects on her graduate teaching opportunity on the programme:

"I graduated in 2016 and was offered a graduate teaching opportunity within the CPP department in 2017, allowing me to teach first year students at higher education level for two years. This was an incredibly valuable experience that shaped my teaching practice, influenced my practice as a maker in socially engaged contexts and enabled me to find a new passion for teaching in higher education.

Since then, I have had multiple opportunities to teach on the programme and across the Royal Conservatoire and aim to pursue a career in teaching alongside my directing and performance practice. As a maker, I am continuously developing my practice and engaging in new opportunities and my teaching practice is very much part of that process. I have never seen the different strands of my practice as being separate, but interwoven and continuously influencing each other and developing.

This graduate teaching opportunity enabled me to learn first-hand how to work with students, evaluate their learning and work as part of a staff team. I gained an understanding of the structure of the programme, how to teach and support the students through multiple methods of working, as well as learning how to apply my skillsets and knowledge in a higher education setting.

Having been a student on the programme proved to be particularly important in my role; it allowed me to reflect on my own learning and understandings as a student to influence my teaching approach.

The transition from being a student to being a lecturer was a huge learning curve; I quickly adapted a professionalism around the students who had previously been my peers, which then allowed me to refine my approach to working with people in all contexts inside and outside of RCS.

When I first graduated, teaching in higher education was not something I set out to pursue, but this teaching opportunity shifted my perspective. I now consider teaching as an important part of my practice and my experiences have influenced my approach in my current lecturing work as well as in my work as a socially engaged director in multiple contexts and as a performance maker. I believe in the power of learning through doing, and this teaching opportunity was exactly that - an enriching hands-on experience of higher education."



Thulani Rachia

The CPP Graduate Teaching Assistant 2019-21 is Thulani Rachia.

Thulani Rachia's interdisciplinary arts practice integrates the fields of architecture, performing and visual arts. Growing up in South Africa and training in performance and architecture, his current inquiries stem from his interests in site and history and how these come together in the formation of identity, culture and memory. Thulani works internationally, with his most recent work taking him to Brazil. He is currently based between Scotland and South Africa.

Thulani is delivering teaching on the following modules: CPP1 Personal Archaeology in Performance, CPP1 Persona and Context, CPP3 Performance Writing and CPP4 Site-Specific Practice. Thulani is also developing work for Glasgow International in 2021.

Contemporary Performance Practice
Graduate Pathways

Graduate

There are a number of graduate opportunities within the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland that graduates can access. The Make it Happen Fund, Bruce Millar Award and SHIFT programme offer opportunities for seed funding, professional development and collaboration. These initiatives are available to all RCS graduating students and many CPP students have benefited from these opportunities upon completing their studies.

FK, Into The New Festival 2014

opportunities

Make It Happen Fund

The Make It Happen Fund is a micro-funding initiative which gives the most recent graduates of RCS access to a competitive pot of seed funding to support their career goals and ambitions. The initiative aims to create access to a source of funding that will support our graduates in a range of areas such as training, networking, testing ideas, starting up companies, staging pop-up events and forming new collaborations.

Projects supported cross a wide range of creative endeavours, including:

- The development of an audio-visual piece for performance at Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts
- The recording and production of an EP to showcase a new musical
- A week-long development lab to develop a new piece of theatre

In 2018/2019, CPP graduates Laura Fisher and Caitlin Fairlie, received funding to cover time-related costs towards their work together as POWERHAUS. The duo used the time to create a strategy for the immediate next steps of the collective, and for longer-term planning.

CPP graduate Will Stringer also received funding to purchase equipment suitable for filming and undertook mentorship with artist-documenter Hydar Dewachi in London, working towards his new project Communion in Blue. Will Stringer said:

"Since receiving funding through the Make It Happen Fund I have been able to focus on an area of my practice that was burgeoning but felt underdeveloped. I had been using video as a documentation tool, but my use of this felt less considered than other areas of my practice that I had worked on during my time studying at the Royal Conservatoire. I was deeply interested in video as a process to understand fragmented experience but had limited access to suitable equipment.

"Through the fund I purchased equipment suitable for filming and undertook mentorship with artist-documenter Hydar Dewachi in London. I completed the first stage of filming Communion in Blue, a project exploring home communion practice in my home of Northern Ireland. The way simple seed funding has allowed my practice to evolve has been incredible, allowing me to hop over the very real (and frustrating) barriers of financial access. By simply having the appropriate equipment and the chance to experiment with and be guided by an experienced mentor has provided incredible opportunities to learn and grow in confidence at using film.

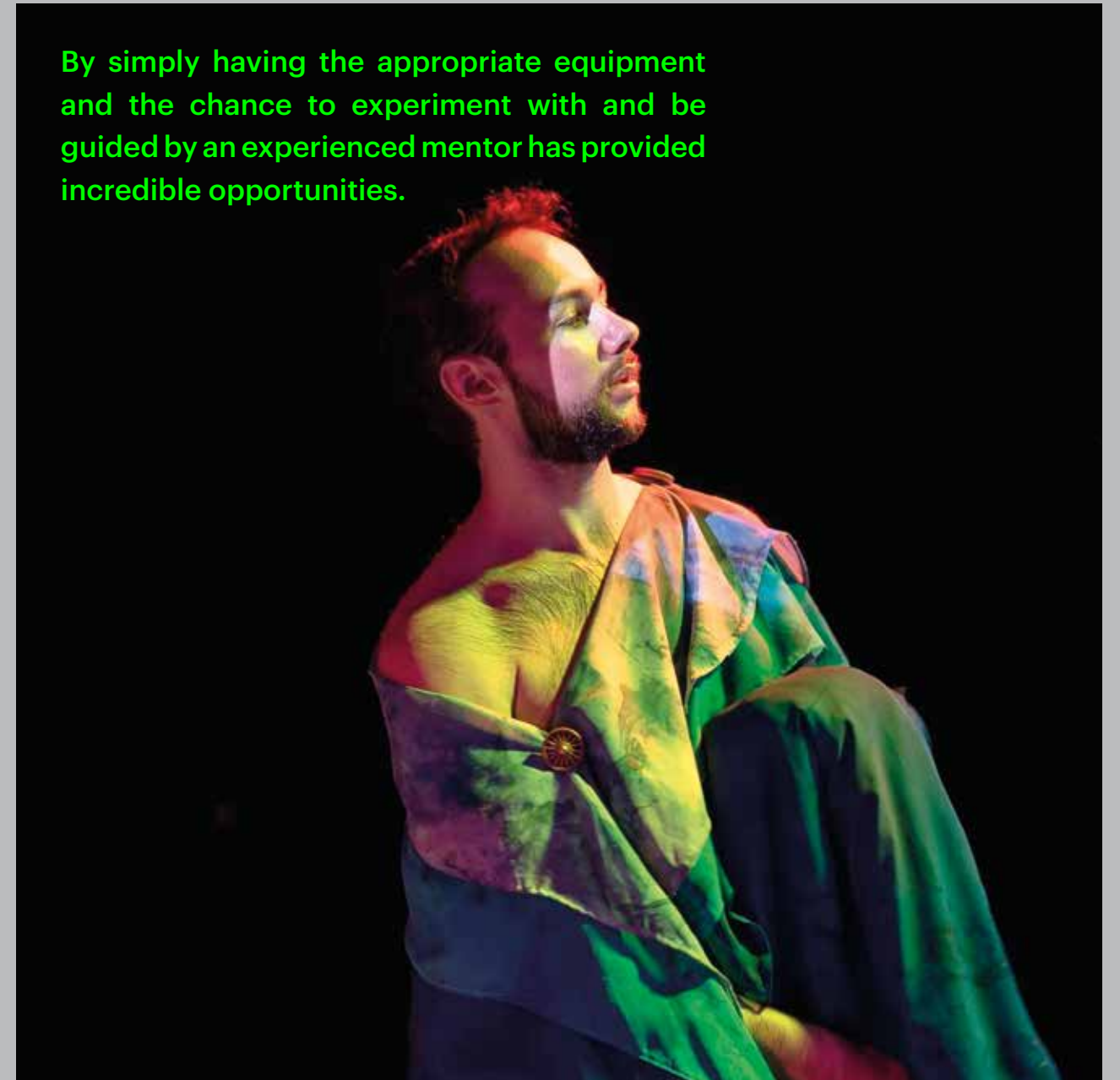
"The Communion in Blue project has grown alongside my confidence and understanding of this medium. From understanding release forms to conversations and experiences in inclusion into end of life care and religious rites. The project is still ongoing, and the relationship between Hydar and myself has been special in nurturing this, we keep in regular contact about my Communion in Blue project that will continue over the coming twelve months.

"A highlight for me has been the unforeseen experiences. The first, taking me and my camera along to home communion visits. Sitting down in people's homes and experiencing a communion through a lens, felt like a form of magic and monument-creation. It felt both challenging and deeply satisfying – having finally the tools and (developing!) confidence to make the work that felt so alive and subsequently so close to death. Secondly, having worked with Hydar, I knew practice was what I needed to grow my confidence. I am now involved in a project documenting training for youth workers across Europe on LGBTI+ issues.

"I am incredibly excited about the next chapter. Further recordings of communions and the distillation into a new art work, with the hope of successful funding submissions in the future."

Applications for the Make It Happen Fund open in January 2021.
For further details please visit:
rcs.ac.uk/makeithappen

By simply having the appropriate equipment and the chance to experiment with and be guided by an experienced mentor has provided incredible opportunities.



Will Stringer, *Sappho Blue*

The Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowship is an initiative for graduates of the School of Drama, Dance, Production and Film, which provides significant funding to take innovative single arts, creative industries or research and development projects forward.

One fellowship of £10,000 is available, for a graduating student, or group of students, or a recent graduate, or group of recent graduates, from the School of Drama, Dance, Production and Film (DDPF). This award is designed to help emerging artists achieve an 'exit velocity' into today's dynamic and fast-changing performing arts industries. There are many amazing opportunities out there but, as well as hard work, skill, imagination and, of course, luck, money can also be a crucial factor in enabling ambitious young artists to get a foothold on the ladder. Applicants receive support, mentoring and training ahead of their final pitch

In 2020, CPP graduates Sinead Hargan and Anya Bowcott (Class of 2019) were awarded the Bruce Millar Fellowship for their project SEEKING SPACES ERODED: An archive of performance research in tidal sites.

They say: "Deeply rooted in our collaborative practice is the desire to find an intuitive process-led approach to making work. As recent graduates, the transition into the art world feels like a significant jump. This project will act as a transition from studying CPP to the professional art world. Through our research, we will develop methods that reject traditional patriarchal ways of working, in order to find new ways to comprehend the ecological crisis from a feminist perspective. Donna Haraway argues that the human and non-human are inextricably linked and the only way we can make significant change is to reconfigure our relations to the earth and all its inhabitants. With this we begin."

Today a little more land may belong to the sea, tomorrow a little less. Always the edge of the sea remains an elusive and indefinable boundary.

Rachel Carson

"We are excited to undertake a one year collaborative research and development project in which we create an archive of performance research made at, and in response to, tidal sites. Tidal spaces hold importance as markers of time and change. We are in the midst of spiralling ecological devastation and believe artistic practice can be used as a mechanism to understand the climate crisis. This archive will be a collection of recordings of the shifting point between the land and sea, this eroding space. It will include books, articles, writings, stories, letters, sound recordings, conversations, feedback, engagement, collected objects, drawings, photographs, film, choreography, performative actions and performance scores. It will be an archive of performance research material that we will use as our central source for many future works."

Applications for the Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowship open in January 2021.

For further details, please visit:

rcs.ac.uk/bruce-millar-graduate-fellowship

Bruce Millar Graduate Fellowship

Shift

SHIFT is a unique collaborative training programme for students and recent graduates from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The Glasgow School of Art and Queen Margaret University Edinburgh, to equip them with the tools, the plans, the contacts, and the skills they need for a life working in the creative arts.

It is an intensive, week-long series of workshops, small breakout conversations, creative activities and one-to-one clinics, alongside a set of helpful resources for attendees to access whenever they need them.

SHIFT was set up to address the lack of specialised training available to creatives as they move from life in a full-time educational environment to life as a full-time professional practising artist. It is a huge leap to start working as freelancers and as portfolio artists, and SHIFT supports participants to take this leap into the unknown with as much confidence as possible, not only within their chosen practice but also in all of the areas that surround that practice and will make them successful – like money management, time management, taxes, marketing, business planning and pitching amongst other things.

The programme is set up to support graduates from creative education – and is designed specifically for those who think and learn differently, using our hands, collaborating, applying the lessons in visual ways.

SHIFT takes place at the end of each summer with a limited number of spaces reserved for students or recent graduates from RCS. Admission to the programme is by application. SHIFT 2021 will run from 6-10 September.

For more information please visit:
shiftintoyourfuture.com



Our graduates perform their degree work at the Into the New festival and at the Propel festival. After graduation many artists perform at Buzzcut (set up by CPP alumni Nick Anderson and Rosana Cade) and Take Me Somewhere (an international festival based in Glasgow). Further afield, graduates have performed work at Spill, Fierce, Live Collision and Steakhouse Live.

Many graduates start their own performance companies. Glas(s) Performance (who developed award-winning young company Junction 25), Superfan (current company in residence at the National Theatre of Scotland) and 21Common are just some of the companies created by CPP graduates. Some former students have gone on to roles as artistic directors of national companies or hold artist in residence positions. Other graduates have carved successful arts management or producing careers.

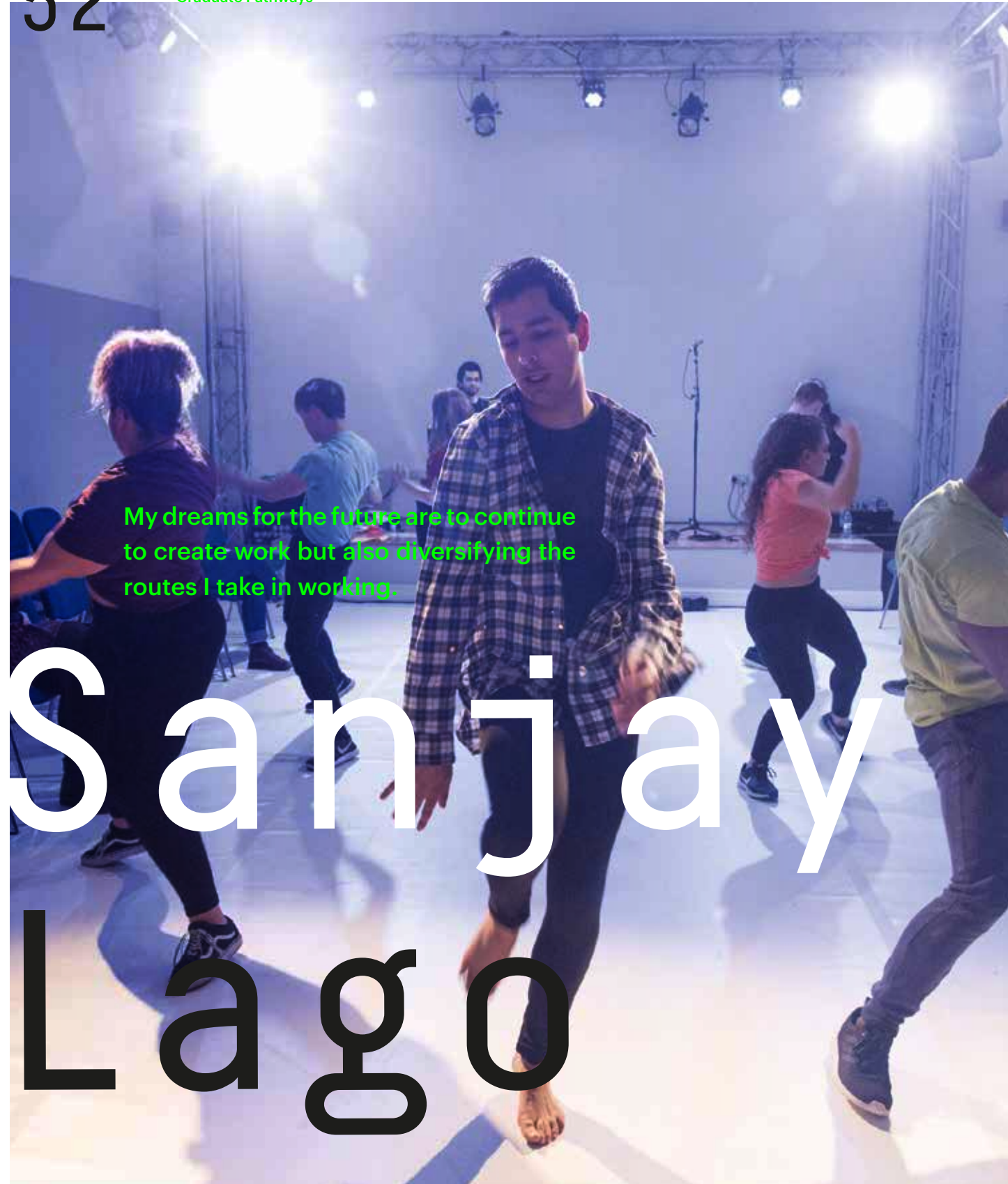
Many graduates are active in making work for young audiences, or have become drama teachers and youth theatre leaders all over the UK and the world. There is a real diversity in what students go on to do but most are working in the field of performing arts. It is impossible to list the hundreds of alumni who have graduated from the programme and are making a huge impact in the creative industries; here are just a few stories from some of our graduates.



Louise Doyle, *Living in the Dim Light*,
Into The New Festival 2015

Graduate

stories



My dreams for the future are to continue to create work but also diversifying the routes I take in working.

Sanjay Lago

I graduated from the CPP programme in 2019. My journey to RCS was different to many in my class. I started my journey first as an actor on the Introduction to Actor Training short course in 2013 through the RCS short courses department. I was then awarded the Drama for 60 Scholarship to undertake a year of CPP short courses, which included a masterclass weekend with artist Nic Green. I was recommended CPP short courses due to my love for devising and verbatim theatre. I enjoyed collaboration and different artforms even when acting.

The things I got out of CPP were a wider understanding of the areas of work on offer in the arts, such as devising and producing performance in schools, prisons, hospices, as well as professional placements. I gained a theoretical knowledge I didn't have before. I got the chance to work with the National Theatre of Scotland for a year as part of the Year of Young People celebrations thanks to my placement with Bijli Productions, who were the company in residence.

But the biggest thing I got from my time on the programme was being able to question, grow in confidence and to develop confidence in myself. I was given so much support when I was told I was dyslexic after it being detected in an essay I had written. I spent 22 years not knowing and it changed a lot and the next four years I found easier when it came to written work. I came out to my parents in my final year and again was supported strongly by the staff team on CPP and the wider RCS community. Overall, the programme gave me the strength and belief that the arts is the right place for a working class Gaysian Scottish Man.

Since graduating, I have continued to write and develop my degree show *Mein Kaun Hoo (Who Am I?)*. As well as developing my Bridge Week show, *Ask Me If I'm Okay*, which was my final show at RCS looking at the themes of male mental health and sexuality in the South Asian Community and supported by the Make It Happen Fund 2019-2020. And finally, supported by the RCS Equality and Diversity Fund 2020, I have in development the early stages of a show looking at dyslexia in the South Asian Community.

Since graduating I have gone on to create my own autobiographical work, looking at themes of masculinity, suicide, identity, race and dyslexia. I have an agent and returned to acting as well as writing plays again. I have worked as a theatre usher and also within the RCS Short Courses department while reconnecting with companies I worked with during my placement. I hosted events including the RCS Cultural Diversity showcase which I worked on for three years while I was a student, got a place on the Graduate Job scheme run by Edinburgh-based Embassy Gallery as well as being involved in the Glasgow Mela. I was elected for two years on the Equity National Scottish Committee, one of the first ever POC elected onto the committee and I represented them as the first ever delegate to the STUC Black Workers Conference and then the Scotland Representative for Equity's Independent Commission for Racial Equality.

In 2020, I also facilitated workshops with the Scottish BAME Writers Network and the Collective Creative Initiative on topics of writing, autobiography and selfcare. I was mentored by actor Anjali Mya Chadha, who scouted me on Twitter for a research project on Dyslexic South Asian Artists and has become a full time mentor on many pieces of my work, I was also a part of two films in a South Asian scratch night where I met many other South Asian artists. I was mentored by playwright Rikki Beadle Blair to write a new monologue that will be included in a book of monologues by POC actors/writers. I got a job with kids' theatre Licketyspit, where I put to work all the skills and learning during my second year of the Contemporary Performance Practice course. One of my greatest achievements since graduation is to have been chosen to be one of the final 48 applicants (from 900+ applications) to be a part of the SOHO Theatre Writer's Lab, where at the end of the process I will have my first full length play. It has been a real rollercoaster since graduating. I am very thankful to the course for giving me the confidence to be the person I am today.

My dreams for the future are to continue to create work but also diversifying the routes I take in my work and my journey. I am truly thankful to RCS, the Short Courses department and the CPP staff team for all the support they have given to me as a student and now as an artist.

We met in 2000 as first year students on the Contemporary Theatre Practice programme (now CPP) at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formally RSAMD) in 2000. It was a degree course making critical work that had something to say about living in the world now and, over four years, it introduced us to many different ways of thinking about theatre and making performance. We were inspired by new ideas and alternative perspectives and were given many opportunities to experiment with style and form as we tried to find what it was that we wanted to express.

Although we were both a little sceptical of each other at first, it was not long before we realised that we had a lot in common. We both loved people, community and sharing stories of human experiences and we both wanted to find a way to make a kind of theatre that brought these things together. We talked a lot about our own first experiences of theatre and the fact that neither of us had ever actually had a 'main' part in a play. In the school productions we had been involved in, we both had often been cast as a 'villager' or a 'local prostitute' (*The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht) and while it had been fun to be involved, these parts had left us feeling a little frustrated and creatively unfulfilled.

At this time we found ourselves preoccupied with whose stories we were seeing represented in theatre and the kinds that felt missing from mainstream programming. It felt politically important to us that the ideas, experiences and perspectives of non-performers and communities be valued and given a platform to be heard and understood. We wanted to try and challenge some of the pre-conceived notions of the place of 'community theatre' or 'creative learning' in venues where sometimes it could feel like an added extra or side-dish to the main arts programme and almost always featured at the very back of the brochure. We wanted to put 'real people' on the main stage. To work towards getting an audience for their work that was not coming to the theatre because they were related to the cast or for a charitable reason but instead were coming because they wanted to see good art.

In 2004 we set up our company Glass Performance. We made new work through identifying questions we had about the world we were living in and inviting people with expertise in that question to collaborate with us in exploring them. We wanted to start with personal stories in order to examine something universal about the human experience. Highlights include:

Jess Thorpe and Tashi Gore

Life Long (2010) a couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary, *Hand Me Down* (2011) with ten women from the same family, *ALBERT DRIVE* (2013) with a street full of neighbours and *Old Boy* (2018) with grandfathers and grandsons.

Alongside our work with Glass Performance we were also interested in the place of young people in contemporary performance and, in 2005, we launched a new company called Junction 25 at Tramway in Glasgow. The vision was for it to be a creative space for young people to make original performance work informed by their own experiences and ideas about the world around them. It was hoped that it could be a place for voices to be heard, stories to be told and questions to be asked. It was built on the core idea that no one would ever have a 'main part' but that the group would work as an ensemble and, in doing so, celebrate the importance of being an individual alongside the feeling of belonging to a collective.

Since its inception, Junction 25 produced over twenty pieces of original work. We toured to festivals and venues across Scotland, the UK and internationally. In 2011 we presented *I Hope My Heart Goes First* at the Edinburgh Fringe as part of the Made in Scotland programme where we received a Herald Angel Award and were named number 27 in the List Magazine's Hot 100 of Scottish Creative Talent. In 2013

we presented *ANOESIS* to sell-out audiences at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. *ANOESIS* went on to be included as part of the Conexoes Festival in 2015 through the British Council and was performed by groups of young people across Brazil. In 2015 Junction 25 was awarded the prestigious CATS Whiskers Award in Scotland for "an outstanding achievement in pioneering and high-quality work by young people."

In 2019, we took the process we had developed with Junction 25 and launched Scotland's first ever youth theatre in a Scottish prison. Polmont Youth Theatre works with young people aged between 16-21 in custody and is a project we are very proud of. It has just received Cashback for Communities funding from the Scottish government for three years of delivery and is currently delivered by CPP graduates Gudrun Soley Sigudardottir and Ricky Williamson.

In September 2019 we published our first book *A Beginners Guide to Devising Theatre* with Bloomsbury and in April 2020 we began a brand new journey as Associate Directors of Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre. We feel excited to see what the next chapter will hold.

We were inspired by new ideas and alternative perspectives and were given many opportunities to experiment with style and form as we tried to find what it was that we wanted to express.



Starting Out

This publication focuses on the support that is offered post-graduation, but it is important to highlight the various pathways which lead to studying on the undergraduate Contemporary Performance Practice programme.

Transitions

For people aged 15+

Transitions is an award-winning performing arts initiative, which began in 2013. We believe that everyone with talent and potential should have access to training at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland regardless of their background.

Transitions aims to support students towards a positive destination. This usually means a degree course at a conservatoire or university, but for some students, a positive destination may be a job, or a place at college. Transitions is designed to give you the knowledge and confidence you need to take the next step towards a career and life in the creative industries.

Who is Transitions for?

You are eligible for Transitions if you are at least one of the following:

- a Scottish resident living at a postcode within the top 20% on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) list
- care experienced
- estranged

Applicants attend an audition and interview for a place. You can check whether you are in one of the eligible areas on the SIMD website (simd.scot).

If you have any questions about your eligibility please get in touch with the Transitions team: transitions@rcs.ac.uk

What does Transitions involve?

Transitions is more than a funded training opportunity. Each year, Transitions students:

- attend an enrolment day, where you can learn about the initiative and meet fellow students
- receive a fully-funded learning package, providing you with a high-quality plan of tuition and learning experiences, via RCS Junior Conservatoire, RCS Short Courses and other bespoke learning experiences
- develop personal growth and development with the support of a personal coach
- receive support with other costs - such as equipment, tickets to performances and travel via a financial support scheme
- have opportunities to talk, reflect, collaborate and perform
- have opportunities to enhance and develop skills for learning, work and life

You can find out more about how to apply for Transitions here:
rcs.ac.uk/transitions

Young Theatre Company

For young people aged 13-21

The Young Theatre Company is a pathway for undergraduate study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Key skills we aim students to learn and develop are:

- working as an ensemble in small scale performance settings
- creating and developing work from stimulus and social issues
- exploration of multimedia platforms
- working within an interdisciplinary environment

The Young Theatre Company prepares students to become performance makers and explore all types of performance. We encourage students from all art form backgrounds to participate in our young companies so they have a range of skills to bring to the table.

We now have two companies:

- Origins – 13-16 years
- Main Company – 17-21 years

Find full details of the Young Theatre Companies here:
rcs.ac.uk/short-courses/young-theatre-company/

s knew within myself that
d to say my own words
n't want to say anyone
ords."

"I always knew within myself that
I wanted to say my own words
and didn't want to say anyone
else's words."

Holly
CPP3

"I walked in and immediately I felt
good about being here. And I think
just being able to open up to people
and put your ideas across was a big
thing for me."

Connor
CPP1

Immediately I felt
here. And I think
open up to people
across was a big



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland

The Contemporary Performance Practice Team includes:

Josh Armstrong

Dr Laura Bissell

Laura Bradshaw

Gary Gardiner

Ashanti Harris

Dr Sarah Hopfinger

Rachel O'Neill

Thulani Rachia

rca.ac.uk/cpp

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All details correct at the time of publication and published in good faith; all information is subject to alteration.

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