

Windsor Debates

Film, Television and Audio Visual: Thames Valley – the UK's Creative Heart
Friday 18th March 2022



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I came to Royal Holloway in 2000 from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, where I lectured in drama on the BA and PGCE courses. My research is now focused on contemporary theatre and applied performance, which means that I have worked in many different and sometimes rather unglamorous places – in schools, in care homes for the elderly, in day centres for people with head injuries, in prisons, in hostels for the homeless, in orphanages in Africa. My research raises fundamental questions, relevant to all forms of theatre, about how far innovative theatre and performance practices are compatible with learning, community engagement and civic participation. It investigates the performative pedagogies of theatre-makers who work in the current political climate in which the arts are charged with healing social division, and where the creative industries are a major source of employment and urban regeneration. My book, *Theatre, Education and Performance: The Map and the Story* was awarded the Distinguished Book Award by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education in 2012, and my edited collection with Anna Harpin, *Performance and Participation*, was shortlisted for the TaPRA editing prize in 2018.

My research into theatre in non-metropolitan spaces and community performance has led to an interest in amateur theatre. This research, undertaken collaboratively with Professor Nadine Holdsworth (Warwick) and Professor Jane Milling (Exeter), was funded under the AHRC Connected Communities Scheme. It investigated the social and cultural significance of amateur theatre as a craft, as creative practice, as entertainment and as heritage.



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We are honoured that our book, *The Ecologies of Amateur Theatre* (Palgrave, 2018), was awarded the David Bradby Prize for outstanding research in 2019 by TaPRA.

My current research project, with Professor Jenny Hughes (Manchester) and Dr Louise Ashley investigates the civic role of theatre in towns. Funded by the AHRC, the research to explore the value of theatre to towns and its townspeople. Towns have been overlooked; cities are widely regarded as creative centres in the global economy, dominating public arts agendas, defining cultural tastes, accounting for uneven distribution of employment opportunities, and taking greater advantage of public funding. Our research partners are The National Theatre, Manchester Royal Exchange and The Little Theatre Guild, with activist company Tribe Arts as collaborators.

I have also led research projects on arts practices in residential care homes for older adults, many of whom live with dementia. I am interested in the contribution made by artists to the emotional geographies of older adults, and what 'home' means to those living in residential care.

I was co-editor of the leading international journal in applied theatre and drama education, *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, published by Routledge (www.informaworld.com/crde) from 2004-2018. I remain particularly interested in encouraging publication of research from underserved academics and early career researchers.

My interest in the role of the university in contributing to social justice informed my work as Vice Principal for Research Impact and Interdisciplinarity (2017-2021), where encouraging partnerships within and beyond the academy. I am a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Associate Fellow of Homerton College, University of Cambridge and Visiting Professor at the University of Stockholm.

