

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Leeds Beckett University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Third Angel: inspiring and informing devised theatre, narrative design and approaches to programming		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Dr Alexander Kelly	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Reader in Performance Practice	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2006-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2010-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)  Kelly's innovative work has influenced theatre-makers in the UK and Portugal, including Daniel Bye, Kate Craddock, Raquel Castro, Pedro Gil, and Paula Diogo. Bye identifies Kelly's work as a key reference for six productions performed over 450 times in the UK and internationally, winning two Fringe First Awards and an award from the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts. Castro appropriated Kelly's devising approach in <i>Class of '76</i> to create the award-winning play 'Turma de '95'. Kelly's work informed five years of programming of Gateshead International Festival of Theatre (GIFT), and Hannah Nicklin's narrative for <i>Mutazione</i>, a \$3.5million budget videogame for Playstation, PC and Apple Arcade.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)  Kelly is co-artistic director of Third Angel, a National Portfolio Organisation, touring theatre, mentoring and participation throughout the UK and internationally. Both Kelly's research and consequent impact is cumulative, achieved through his exploratory devising methodology, mentoring of emerging and established artists, and his creation of new mechanisms for active audience engagement and contribution in productions. These mechanisms have been devised through a sustained practice-led enquiry addressing the questions: <i>What is the mechanism by which you enable people to tell you a story? A story which they probably haven't thought about in months? A story they are happy to give to you, having told it?</i></p> <p>Kelly's practice explores how staging, context and participatory mechanisms for theatre and storytelling might prompt audience reflection on contemporary social structures and notions of place. Kelly has developed a form of theatrical storytelling combining personal narratives, news events and reportage, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Through this method for devising narrative, Kelly has worked with experts such as Professor Simon Goodwin, an astrophysicist (3.1), in tandem with what Kelly terms "auto/biography" for theatre. Kelly's work presents the performer's personal histories in a format that encourages an exchange of stories between performer and audience. This form of storytelling results in productions such as <i>Cape Wrath</i> (3.1) and <i>600 People</i> (3.2) which position small personal stories within larger historical and contemporary narrative arcs. Consequently, Kelly's narratives encourage audiences to actively reflect on the conditions of life today: his work recognises and validates small, personal stories alongside the big – an inclusive approach to narrative design still rare.</p> <p>A key mechanism developed by Kelly for devising theatre from reportage and 'Auto/Biography' is the use of a prompt, usually a prop and/or a place, e.g. for <i>Class of '76</i> a school photograph was used as a personal artefact, prop and prompt for devising multiple iterations of the performance over a ten-year period. In <i>The Desire Paths</i> performance locations provided the prompt through which narratives were devised, taking the process of devising theatre into and onto the surface of the street itself in each of the locations where the work was commissioned.</p> <p>Kelly's practice-as-research has produced:</p>		

- a body of widely toured performances, (3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5)
- theatrical forms and devices suitable for appropriation and reinterpretation
- new mechanisms for devising theatre that facilitate the contribution and incorporation of the audiences' own stories into each performance
- published research outputs including journal articles and a book chapter (3.6), unpacking the processes and mechanisms used for the productions *Cape Wrath and The Lad Lit Project* (2005 – 2016) as Acts of Remembrance.

Kelly has also been invited to present his research methods to the Royal Exchange Manchester, the TaPRA Working Group on Performer Training, Hull City of Culture, and the University of Lincoln. He also co-convoked the symposium *Where From Here: 21 Years of Third Angel*. These talks and lectures incorporated mechanisms from the performances themselves, demonstrating the effect of rigorously applied, often deliberately restrictive, mechanisms for devising and exploring the practices of performance and pedagogy.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

#### Performance works

##### 3.1. *CAPE WRATH* – writer and performer. 2013 – present.

A 60-minute solo performance, presented in a minibus. Funded by ARC Stockton, Leeds Beckett University, Northern Stage and a private donor. Tour funded by fees from 34 venues, festivals and touring schemes. Premiered at Northern Stage at St Stephens, Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2013. Extensive UK touring (and Germany) from 2013 to present, including Sheffield Theatres, Oxford Playhouse, Plymouth Theatre Royal and rural touring schemes in England and Scotland. 132 performances to date. Audience c.1300.

Video of performance, Sheffield 2014: <https://vimeo.com/141390303> password: Wrath

##### 3.2. *600 PEOPLE* – writer and performer. 30-minute version 2013/15. Full length version (65-minute performance/lecture for studio theatre spaces, festivals, rural touring venues), 2015 - present. Originally commissioned for Northern Elements, a development programme funded by Arts Council England with £1000. Full version funded by Arts Council England through the NPO scheme. Tour paid for by fees from 49 venues, festivals and conferences. Full version premiered at Northern Stage, Newcastle. UK tour plus Dublin (2014), Porto (2015) and Beirut (2016). 72 performances to date, Audience c. 5200.

Video of performance, Edinburgh 2016: <https://vimeo.com/181596409> (password: 600edinburgh).

##### 3.3. *THE DESIRE PATHS* – lead artist and performer. 2016 – present.

A durational public realm performance. Performed in Tudor Square, Sheffield for one 8-hour day, 2016; at Northern Stage, Newcastle, for nine 8-hour days, 2018; HOME, Slough (three 6-hour days), August 2019.

Combined audience c. 4000.

Documentation (photographs and short film) of all three iterations here:

<http://thirdangel.co.uk/shows-projects/the-desire-paths>

Commissioned as part of Making Ways, a Sheffield Culture Consortium project supported through Arts Council England with a grant of £7000. Also commissioned by Northern Stage and The Great Exhibition of the North for Self-Build Utopias with a grant of £9000. *The Desire Paths: Slough* commissioned by Farnham Maltings through their 'New Popular' scheme with a grant of £7200 and HOME Slough with a grant of £1000.

##### 3.4. *INSPIRATION EXCHANGE* – lead artist and performer. 2010 – present.

A durational public realm performance. Commissioned by Café Scientifique & Sheffield Art-Science Encounters (2010). Tour funded by venue fees. 9 public performances, 2013-20, 225 participants, audience c. 500: SITE Aberystwyth Arts Centre (2014); No Boundaries Conference York (2014); Live Collision Dublin (2014); Greenbelt Festival (2014); Wrought Festival Sheffield (2016); Hillsborough Library (2016); Humber Street Gallery Hull (2017); Departure Lounge, Derby (2019, with S.H.E.D); InDialogue Nottingham Contemporary (2019, with S.H.E.D).

**3.5. CLASS OF '76** – writer and performer. 2000 – 2005 and 2008 – 2010.

A 65-minute solo performance for studio theatre spaces, festivals, rural touring venues. Originally created 2000 and toured through to 2005. Presented at Fundação de Serralves, Porto, 2006. Re-worked and toured in the UK 2008 – 2010 (22 performances in 13 venues). Revival funded by The Public (£1600). Tour paid for by fees from 13 venues, plus core RFO funding from Arts Council England.

**Publications**

**3.6.** Kelly, A. (2018) 'CHEERS GRANDAD! Third Angel's *Cape Wrath* and *The Lad Lit Project* as Acts of Remembrance' in Pinchbeck, M. and Westerside, A. (eds.) *Staging Loss: Performance as Commemoration*. London: Palgrave, pp. 129-144.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Through touring original performances, collaboration, facilitation and mentoring, Kelly's work has informed and inspired the creative output of solo-performers and theatre companies in the UK and Portugal. It has shaped Dr Craddock's programmes at Gateshead International Festival of Theatre and how Hannah Nicklin, Studio Lead and CEO of *Die Gute Fabrik* approaches writing videogames.

**Inspiring and supporting devised theatre in the UK and Portugal**

Kelly's productions *Inspiration Exchange* and *What I Heard About the World* heavily influenced and provided a "constant reference point" to Bye and his collaborators on *How to Occupy an Oil Rig* (2013/14, UK tour, 85 performances; Award from the *Centre for Sustainable Practice*). Bye explains that Kelly's work and support gave him the confidence to create the production using a rigorous and restrictive formal device, structuring the entire production as a series of 'how to' instructions (5.1; 5.2).

Castro, Diogo and Gil all describe how Kelly's work introduced Portuguese theatre-makers to the "thrilling world of possibilities" of devised theatre using rigorous methods of co-creation previously unknown (5.3). Inspired by how Kelly devised *Class of '76* and his use of auto/biography and reportage, Castro approached Kelly for permission to appropriate the play to create *Class of '95* (translating to *Turma de '95*, toured in Portugal, nominated for Best Play and Best Show of 2019 by the *Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores*) (5.4). Diogo also cites Kelly as inspiring and supporting the productions: *Learning to Swim* (2010, toured Portugal and Belgium), *L-O-V-E* (2015/19, toured Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Portugal), and *Terra Nullius* (2020) (5.5; 5.6).

**Inspiring autobiographical and participatory processes for solo-performance**

Kelly's use of auto/biography to oscillate between micro and macro narratives is repeatedly cited as a significant inspiration for solo-performance by Melanie Ashbrook, Bye, Sean Burn, Castro, Craddock, Holly Gallagher, and Gil (5.7). Having seen *600 People* and *Cape Wrath* whilst developing *The GB Project* (2013, UK tour), Craddock recalls how Kelly's work "gave me license" to use autobiography as a conceit to address a grander narrative. The audience-performer dynamic engendered by Kelly to include audience narratives was identified by Craddock as something to "emulate" in all her subsequent work. Likewise, Bye describes Kelly's audience-performer dynamic as a "key reference point" for his solo-performances since 2014: *Going Viral*, (100 performances across three continents, Fringe First Award 2015); *The Price of Everything* (130 performances); *Story Hunt* (commissioned for seven UK towns); *Instructions for Border Crossing* (85 performances); *Arthur* (50 performances, Fringe First Award 2019).

**Influencing how GIFT is programmed**

As Director of GIFT, Dr Craddock acknowledges Kelly as influencing her decisions to approach GIFT's programming as artist-led, education focused, and to embrace unconventional spaces and productions. For example, *Inspiration Exchange* gave Craddock the confidence to programme more small scale works for larger settings, and durational works which Craddock had not previously thought suitable for GIFT: e.g. *Present Tense* by Gillian Jane Lees and Adam York Gregory, BALTIC (2018) (5.7).

### Informing narrative design for videogames

Nicklin cites “*the precision of Alex’s practice*”, plus Kelly’s form-led approach, as instrumental to her solo-performance practice and writing for videogames. Nicklin’s nationally toured productions *A Conversation with my Father* (2012/13), *Songs for Breaking Britain*, and *Equations for a Moving Body* (2015/16) were all influenced by Kelly’s approach to detail and rigorous application of formal devices (these also informed her early games writing including games commissioned by the Wellcome Collection and the V&A. Reflecting on Kelly’s approach to devising theatre (a process introduced to Nicklin by Kelly) informed her narrative writing for *Mutazione*, a \$3.5million budget videogame available on Playstation, PC and Apple Arcade, Nicklin recalled how Kelly’s “*form-based thinking really helped me very quickly articulate what the people giving me a brief weren’t able to ... he remains part of my practice as a voice and a presence in my head and my mind as I continue to work on things*” (5.8; 5.9).

### Supporting new artistic production

Many artists’ works have been informed by Kelly’s approaches to devised theatre through mentoring and collaboration including: Michael Pinchbeck, RashDash and Unfolding Theatre, Emergency Chorus, Natalie Wong, Yolanda Mercy, Paper Smokers, Chella Quint, Luca Rutherford, Vandal Factory, and Jake Bowen. The following artists also raised funding to employ Kelly as mentor/collaborator on specific shows: gobscore/sean burn (*Provoked to Madness by the Brutality of Wealth*, 2019/21; *Ships of Fool*, 2020); Irna Qureshi (2019); Chloe Bezer (*The Slow Songs Make Me Sad*, 2018/19). Kelly has also been invited to give workshops at The American University of Beirut (2016), Cena Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 2014), Sidewalks Festival (Beirut, 2014), and GIFT Festival (2013).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

**5.1** Interview transcript: Bye, D. (2020) Interview with Daniel Bye, independent writer, director and performer. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 16 December.

**5.2** Productions Archive: Bye, D. (2020) *Daniel Bye: Shows*. Available at: <http://www.danielbye.co.uk/shows.html>

**5.3** Interview transcript: Castro, R. (2020) Interview with Raquel Castro, Actor and Director. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 12 October.

**5.4** Festival Programme: Festival de Almada (2020) *37º Festival de Almada*. [Online] Available at: [https://festival.ctalmada.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Programa\\_37festival-de-almada-site-1.pdf](https://festival.ctalmada.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Programa_37festival-de-almada-site-1.pdf)

**5.5** Interview transcript: Diogo, P. (2021) Interview with Paula Diogo, Co-Director of Má-Criação. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 7 January.

**5.6** Productions Archive: Má-Criação (2020) *Má-Criação: Creations*. Available at: <http://ma-criacao.com/?lang=en>

**5.7** Interview transcript: Craddock, K. (2020) Interview with Dr Kate Craddock, founder and Festival Director of GIFT: Gateshead International Festival of Theatre. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 27 October.

**5.8** Interview transcript: Nicklin, H. (2020) Interview with Hannah Nicklin, Studio Lead and CEO of Die Gute Fabrik. Interviewed by Z. Worth for Leeds Beckett University, 3 November.

**5.9** Book: Nicklin, H. (2016) *Hannah Nicklin: Collected Works for Performance*. London: Oberon Books.