

Institution: Aberystwyth University		
Unit of Assessment: 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: <i>ILIAD</i> (2015): Informing and enriching located and intermedial theatre practices		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006–2015		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Mike Brookes	Research Fellow	1 May 2007–present
Professor Mike Pearson	Professor; Emeritus Professor	1 September 1999–31 December 2014; 1 January 2015–present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015–2018		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p><i>ILIAD</i>, a large-scale, internationally acknowledged theatre production commissioned and produced by National Theatre Wales (NTW) created a verbatim intermedial staging of the entirety of Christopher Logue’s epic poem ‘War Music’. The production was the first time Logue’s text had been staged in full, and expanded the ways epic narrative poetry might resonate with, and be performed in, the contemporary cultural context.</p> <p><i>ILIAD</i> offered an immersive and durational theatre experience within a modern theatre auditorium and informed creative, technical and administrative procedures for located theatre practices. In so doing, the work had an impact upon:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cultural life – in enriching public appreciation, understanding and imagination by generating new forms of artistic expression and in enhancing the status of NTW; 2) Professional practice – in informing programming and in generating new ways of thinking that influence production practices. 		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Conceptual and creative work on <i>ILIAD</i> [3.1] was underpinned by Brookes and Pearson’s long-term scholarly and practice-based research on site-specific performance and located performance making. The work included their reflections on practical methodologies for, and critical and theoretical approaches to, context-specific performance and location. The research manifest through <i>ILIAD</i> specifically marked a turning point in this long-term trajectory, by engaging these approaches in the development of new forms and practices within ‘traditional’ theatre auditoria staging and production processes. This further expanded the authors’ inquiry into located and site-specific theatre practices by addressing the specificity of theatre as a site itself; and in particular the new and developing Ffwrnes theatre auditorium in Llanelli in South Wales, and its possible spatial configurations and uses, as well as its potential functions as a cultural center in context.</p> <p>This inquiry led to new approaches to the intermedial staging of poetic text. This development necessitated the collaborative facilitation of project-specific cinematographic and video production practices; the development of spatially active audio architectures; vocal techniques appropriate for the complex mediated environment of the work; and brought together a select team of expert and emerging practitioners, including local and international collaborators, in its realisation and presentation. It was supported by Brookes and Pearson’s extensive experience of professional production, nationally and internationally, acquired both as independent artists and researchers, and through their collaboration as Pearson / Brookes (2000–2017). It was</p>		

informed by Brookes' extensive practice-based research within intermedial, located live and public art work, which has been widely commissioned and presented across Europe, Asia, Australasia, South America, and USA. This on-going research has included related investigations within context-specific, task-based, situational and interventional performance practices supported by a series of notable and internationally realised public outputs [3.2–3.5]. It was further advanced by Brookes' additional research and design collaborations within the industry, including his on-going collaborative work (2009–present) with Stewart Laing and Glasgow-based company Untitled Projects; and his enduring collaborations (2002–present) with Manchester-based theatre company Quarantine and departmental colleague Simon Banham, who is a founding member of that company.

Brookes and Pearson, along with Banham, have played a leading role in the development of practice-based research in the Department, through their individual and collaborative research and outputs, and through Brookes and Banham's involvement with the *Scenography, Performance and the Everyday* departmental research cluster. Their practical investigations as solo artists and in collaboration are attested in scholarly literature in the field and beyond. The collaboration with NTW is further contextualised and informed by Brookes' longstanding explorations into intermedial performance practices and can be seen to draw directly on his doctoral research into processes of mediation within the formal and dramaturgical structuring of located performance work, successfully completed in 2015 [3.6]. Research that, in turn, expands on approaches and understandings of site and context-oriented practice that have proved key to the collaboration, and which have been extensively detailed within Pearson's scholarly research on site-specific performance [3.7, 3.8].

The collaboration with NTW has greatly enhanced and privileged this practice-based research, undertaken in the public sphere: in developing new forms of mediated performance; in combining traditions of textual and physical theatre; in devising complex occupations and scenographic investigations of the spatial and social context; and expanding approaches to intermedial and located performance practices for audiences within a modern theatre auditorium.

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

3.1 Mike Brookes and Mike Pearson, *ILIAD* (2015) [Submitted to REF2]

The overall production costs – to cover conceptualisation, development, preparation and staging – from grant-aid and public sources via NTW was approximately GBP 200,000

3.2 Mike Brookes and Rosa Casado, *What if everything we know is wrong?* (2015) [Submitted to REF2]

3.3 Mike Brookes and Rosa Casado, *The perfect human (and the things we do)* (2013)

3.4 Mike Brookes and Rosa Casado, *Something happening* (2010)

3.5 Mike Brookes and Rosa Casado, *Some things happen all at once* (2009)

3.6 Mike Brookes, *On a clear day you can see for ever: mediation as form and dramaturgy in located performance*, PhD thesis (Aberystwyth University, 2015)

3.7 Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Palgrave, 2010)

3.8 Mike Pearson, *'In Comes I': Performance, Memory and Landscape* (University of Exeter Press, 2007)

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

'The work made by Brookes and Pearson ... has helped support and grow the Welsh theatre ecology and has significantly encouraged a younger generation of artists to be more ambitious with their ideas and approaches' – Former Artistic Director, NTW (2019)

The research enhanced cultural discourse by bringing to the public's attention the aesthetic and presentational possibilities of the hybridisation of live art, dramatic stage practices and media. It offered original artistic experiences to contemporary audiences and expanded creative, technical and administrative procedures for located and context-specific creation and production practices.

Within this general perspective, the impact of this research has been twofold:

On cultural life (in enriching public appreciation and imagination by generating new forms of artistic expression and in enhancing the status of NTW)

Public and industry recognition of the achievements embodied by *ILIAD* demonstrate a key acknowledgement: that research-driven, innovative theatre and located public art practices - often confined to the realm of the theatrical fringe - can have significant critical and popular appeal when enacted within the context of national theatre. Both full marathon performances of the four-part work in its entirety - the first of which took place throughout the day of 26 September 2015, and the second over the night of 3 October 2015 - sold out; though audiences were inevitably limited by the nature of the production and venue (capacity 250 spectators). The production was enthusiastically reviewed, both in the Welsh and UK press, including a five-star review in *The Guardian* (September 2015), which noted '*Iliad is certainly the theatrical event of the year. It may be the theatrical event of the decade*' [5.1]. The production was included amongst the body of Greek theatre adaptations collectively listed within *The Independent's* 'Top 10 cultural events of the year' [5.2].

Individual public comments and reactions to the work's full marathon performances, which included those of industry professionals who attended as audience members, attest to the impact on public appreciation: '*Mike Brookes and Pearson reinvent theatre - thrilling overwhelming exhausting inspiring ILIAD*'; '*Iliad marathon - envelope pushing theatre - brilliant cast, sound and scenography - PHENOMENAL*' [5.3]; '*... hundreds of plastic garden chairs were thrown into a pile against a rear wall, my heart was racing until I thought it might burst. It felt extraordinarily thrilling and immense and terrible and extraordinary. It's the best thing I saw this year. It might just be the best thing I've seen in a theatre*' [5.4].

The work has also had an important impact on the cultural life of the nation, and in particular the continued development of the nation's English language national theatre company, National Theatre Wales (NTW), into an internationally recognised cultural organization. *ILIAD* both consolidated and greatly expanded the contributions of previous work by the authors to the company's goals, further demonstrating the potential and feasibility of context-specific work within NTW's portfolio of presentational practices, as a means to address diverse audiences with challenging, innovative and participatory forms of theatre. It embodied intermedial approaches pioneered by the authors and developed new aural and audiovisual elements and interactions. This further expanded the performative conventions and possibilities of the work, to include both durational and task-based physical performance with dramatic vocal text delivery, as well as combining live and pre-recorded performers; and applying expertise in site-specific and located art practices to large-scale stage work within the social context, locale and conventions of a new mainstream theatre building. The NTW's former Artistic Director attests the production's influence on the company's development, noting how it had been:

'[A] seminal and significant work in the cannon of National Theatre Wales' artistic output. The contribution to and the development of new approaches to theatre making or the fusing of different technologies with more formal theatre forms to create challenging and thrilling theatrical experiences have been important strands of our work as a national company. [ILIAD] successfully pushed the boundaries of the art-form' [5.5].

The production concluded the authors' five-year working relationship with NTW's founding Artistic Director and provided the cornerstone for a propositional new phase of development under the company's second and incoming Artistic Director. Brookes was invited to enter into a further three-year period as Artistic Associate to the company and also invited to develop and present an exploratory series of new public works (initially in collaboration with Pearson) under the working title *The Storm Cycle*, further enhancing NTW's aims and ability to mount work of international standard and bring in '*new collaborators and audiences*'. [5.5]

On professional practice (in informing programming and in generating new ways of thinking that influence production practices)

The range and levels of expertise brought together within the realisation and performance of *ILIAD* was unprecedented for many of the Wales-based theatre professionals engaged within its production. The work brought together a select team of exceptional and award-winning professional practitioners in technical, creative and performance roles. It also integrated, within the practices and processes facilitated by that team, an equally diverse range of young and emerging professionals: including technical and production assistants, recent creative graduates, as well as local teenage performers. The expert support and skills exchange amongst these professionals facilitated consistently high and uncompromised production values, as well as the realisation of innovative, complex and technically sophisticated media architectures and aesthetics. These collaborations and exchanges inform subsequent practices and possibilities, not only for NTW, but for the individual collaborating professionals and emerging practitioners themselves – through the rigorous and expanded approaches necessitated by the production, through the resulting contacts and skills development amongst collaborating colleagues, and through their public visibility within acknowledgements of the wider achievements of the work as a whole. NTW's Head of Production notes how *ILIAD* was a 'key opportunity and achievement' for the company, and one which significantly advanced its practice and technical ambition:

'The approaches and intentions of ILIAD provoked a production environment within which people had room to do what they do best, in ways that both stretched and supported them. [It provided] them with the clarity of intention, resources and time needed to push their expertise into new territory' [5.6].

One section of the cast, for example, subsequently continued to work together as a separate performance collective – attracting public funding and public commissions for their continued collaboration within professional contexts in both Wales and Spain. And a then recent graduate of the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (RWCMD) engaged within the sound work of the production, for whom *ILIAD* was the first major production experience, has subsequently gone on to work extensively with the multi BAFTA award winning compositional studio John Hardy Music, as well as further collaborations with NTW. As the Director of John Hardy Music states, in relation to the studio's involvement with the project:

'One of the more enduring practical legacies of the production, beyond the many notable approaches and proposals of the work itself, has perhaps been the extent to which its working practices and production environment were able to include and encourage outstanding contributions from a number of young and emerging professionals. I was, for example, able to place two recent graduates joining my studio in key roles within the development and performance of our work for ILIAD. One of whom has since become a valued member of the creative team. The experiences and understandings gained from ILIAD have continued to provide an invaluable platform for their ongoing achievements' [5.7].

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

- 5.1 *The Guardian*, 28 September 2015 (<http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/sep/28/iliad-review-homer-ffwrnes-national-theatre-wales>)
- 5.2 *The Independent*, 20 December 2015 (<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-top-10-cultural-moments-of-2015-57-include-kanye-at-glastonbury-and-saul-at-glyndebourne-a6778681.html>)
- 5.3 Primary public twitter feed, #ntwiliad (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23ntwiliad&src=typd>)
- 5.4 'Theatre review of the year: 2015', Dan Rebellato, 24 December 2015 (<http://www.danrebellato.co.uk/spilledink/2015/12/17/theatre-review-of-the-year-2015?rq=iliad>)
- 5.5 Letter of corroboration from former Artistic Director of NTW, 4 November 2019
- 5.6 Letter of corroboration from Head of Production, NTW, 18 October 2019

5.7 Email from Composer / Director of the multi BAFTA award winning studio John Hardy Music and Head of Contemporary Music, Composition and Creative Music Technology at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, 11 February 2020