

Impact case study (REF3)

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| Institution: Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies | | |
| Title of case study: Embedding Actor-Musicianship in training programmes and performance practices worldwide | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001 - 2016 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): Jeremy Harrison | Role(s) (e.g. job title): Postgraduate Programme Director | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2001 – present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact | | |
| <p>Since 2001, Jeremy Harrison has pioneered a distinctive and unique approach that focusses on the integration and interrelationship between acting and music making. His research, exemplified through his monograph <i>Actor-Musicianship</i> [3.1], has played a significant role in defining and shaping this area of international theatre practice. Harrison's work has underpinned new developments in training and teaching in Europe, North America and Australia, and created a shared lexicon for actor-musicians, teachers, directors and artists. His research has helped actor-musicians to demonstrate the validity of the field, which has resulted in increased support from key industry stakeholders (such as producers, unions and funding bodies), and the development of new workshops, training and educational programmes. Altogether this has supported the development of new works, companies and working methods for actor-musicians internationally.</p> | | |
| 2. Underpinning research | | |
| <p>Since joining the staff of Rose Bruford College in 2001, Harrison has been engaged in a multi-faceted research inquiry on actor training. Through a series of work demonstrations [3.3, 3.4], symposia [3.5], and scholarly publications [3.1, 3.2], he has created a unique approach and framing for the training and development of actor-musicians and their practice. His research culminated in the monograph <i>Actor-Musicianship</i> [3.1], which outlines both a history and definition of actor-musicianship as a movement, as well as a distinct training methodology and ethos. A review in the journal <i>Theatre Topics</i> identified it as providing 'a much-needed text to serve the rapidly growing need for the training of these kinds of performers' (Howard, 2018).</p> <p><i>Actor-Musicianship</i> [3.1] establishes a distinct field of practice with roots in the UK populist theatre movement of the late 1950s and 60s. It articulates the development of actor-musicianship in the UK and America, and challenges what Harrison identifies as a 'culture of specialism' within the conservatoire movement and more broadly within mainstream Western theatre culture [3.1]. Through an examination of the training approaches of the Polish avant-garde theatre companies Gardzienice and Teatr Piesn Kozla, Harrison identified the potential for a fluid training and devising model that enabled synergies between body, voice, text and music, in contrast to the siloed approaches that characterise Western conservatoire practice [3.3, 3.4].</p> | | |

He has applied these approaches to processes driven by the text-based, psychological-realist tendencies that underpin mainstream conservatoire training in the UK and US [3.1]. The resulting model fully integrates music-making processes into the training of the actor-musician, and frames musical instruments as essential parts of the performance that contribute to both characterisations and storytelling. Harrison has developed this into a unique pedagogic approach called Musicality [3.1, 3.2]. For Harrison, Musicality, is a foundational notion that underpins and contains his teaching practice and research, offering students and practitioners alike a space and methodology to unlock and promote interconnection between actor and instrument, music and dramatic narrative. In doing so, it extends the understanding of music as a sonic phenomenon into territory that includes inner space, place and processes of theatre-making [3.1].

3. References to the research

[3.1] Harrison, Jeremy. *Actor-Musicianship*. London: Methuen Drama, 2016.

[3.2] Harrison, Jeremy. "Making Musgrave Dance: Actor-Musicianship in Process." In *Music on Stage*, edited by Fiona Jane Schopf, Chapter 14. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

[3.3] Harrison, Jeremy. "Musicality & the Process of Acting", work demonstration at Theatre and Performance Research Association (TAPRA) annual conference, 2007.

[3.4] Harrison, Jeremy, Voice and Music Direction, *Ninrealne Miasro [Unreal City]*, Grotowski Institute, Wroclaw. Live Performance, 2009.

[3.5] Harrison, Jeremy. "Jack & Master: Towards A Definition of Actor-Musicianship" Defining Actor-Musicianship Symposium. Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, 2003.

3.4 was funded by Arts Council England from 2007-2009 for a total of £9000.

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

Harrison's research has informed an ethos and conceptual framing for actor-musicianship that has influenced international developments in both training and theatre making processes. When Harrison began his research there were no actor-musician training programmes outside Rose Bruford College, Equity did not have actor-musician contracts, and generally the field was not recognised as a distinct form of training.

As Harrison's editing commissioner at Bloomsbury has noted, there is not

a book [that] has been published that rivals [Harrison's] in comprehensively covering the area of actor-musicianship [...] I can confidently say that it was with Jeremy Harrison – and indeed at Rose Bruford – that it all began' [5.7]

Since 2014, and particularly since the publication of *Actor-Musicianship* in 2016, his research has increased international recognition of the field, and supported the development of training programmes, modules and workshops, as well as new performance practices and companies. Overall, this has resulted in an increased focus on, and support for, actor-musicianship at major theatres and training programmes worldwide.

Changing International Teaching Curricula

Since 2013 a number of specialist actor-musicianship courses have emerged within the UK and internationally as a result of Harrison's research. Additionally, specialist modules and training provision have been embedded into performance courses at institutions internationally.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, Harrison's pioneering work has led to 'many other drama schools following suit and developing their own actor-musicianship courses' [5.4]. These include **Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts** and **Leeds Conservatoire**, where one teacher has 'implemented much of Jeremy's influence and language' [5.5], as well as **Guildford School of Acting**, **University of Hull**, and **London College of Music**. The module Music Theatre at **Solent University** uses Harrison's book 'as a key text' that 'has been a real "go-to" in [their] classes' [5.8]. All these courses include Harrison's work in their bibliography and are taught and led by staff who have been taught by him or are influenced by his work.

The United States

The Director of **Actor-Musicianship USA (AM USA)** embedded Harrison's work in his module "Theatre 410: Actor-Musicianship" at Virginia Commonwealth University (2016). The module 'was the first of its kind in the USA' and 'use[d] several of [Harrison's] exercises as a vital part of the class'. He testified that Harrison's 'suggestions for exploring musicality and text were revelations' and that the course was 'fruitful, thanks to the book, Rose Bruford, and Jeremy Harrison'. This led the AM USA to further engage with Harrison's research in the development of their programmes and activities [5.1].

After attending the Rose Bruford Summer Intensive course on Actor-Musicianship (2017) the AM USA Director initiated the **Actor-Musicians USA Workshop** in New York City. The inaugural workshop 'was wildly successful', and Harrison's presentation generated 'considerable feedback [...] and a call for him to return'. The annual workshop has been 'maxed out every year – oversold', with a high percentage of repeat students [5.1], which demonstrates the strong demand for the research in New York City. In 2020 the workshops grew to include a session in Chicago. One workshop participant in Chicago stated that: 'Those two days completely transformed and reinvigorated my understanding of what is possible with my art form, my career and with other people' [5.1].

According to the Director of AM USA, Harrison's work has been essential in establishing the 'validity' of the needs of actor-musicians to 'the union and producers' in the United States:

The existence of a program, a book, and a leader constitutes foundational proof of our existence and the validity of our needs. [5.1]

Overall, this has resulted in the first concentrated set of workshops for actor-musicians in the United States, as well as increased training for practitioners, and increased recognition by industry stakeholders.

Australia

The Course Coordinator of the Diploma of Musical Theatre at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) acknowledged Harrison's influence on her practice. She identified Harrison as an 'innovative music theatre educator who (is) not only implementing, but also actually creating effective contemporary acting practices that embrace a unified skill approach' [5.9]. She has integrated his work into the department's training programme.

Finland

Harrison's actor-musician workshops in Helsinki (January 2019) led teachers at the Sibelius Academy at the University of the Arts to change their teaching practices. One teacher noted,

'The workshop was eye- and ear-opening in many ways for my work as an artist and teacher. I have already been able to put in practice some of the ideas in my pedagogical work at the Sibelius Academy at the University of the Arts, Helsinki'. [5.3]

Supporting new performance practices and the development of new work

Harrison's research has directly impacted upon over 900 artists from countries including Norway, Finland, Italy, Brazil, Canada, the USA and UK through its position as the foundational work in the field, and its subsequent uptake by actor-training programmes. This has led directly to new work, working practices, and the establishment of new actor-musician companies throughout the world.

United Kingdom

The Artistic Director of London's **Dumbwise Theatre** has testified that Harrison's research was essential to his practice and the development of the theatre:

'My own work and career is a superb illustration of Jeremy's work reaching out beyond the walls of Rose Bruford. Since my own training, I have had the opportunity to observe, support and collaborate with Jeremy. These experiences inspired me to establish and develop an award winning, national touring actor musician company whose work appeals to young, family and adult audiences'. [5.4]

Likewise, the Artistic Director of **The Bohemians Theatre Company** in London testified to the overall impact of Harrison's research on actors in the field:

'Having now worked in the theatre industry for just over ten years I can cite lots of examples of experiences of working... where there is a common, shared language in the room, an almost unspoken connection due to having trained' [using Harrison's methods]. [5.6]

Harrison's research has also influenced their work directly:

'When creating our adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Wild Swans* we used many of the exercises we learned from musicality classes with Jeremy... This idea of a two-way relationship (where music is both *affecting* and *affected by* text and/or other actors) is another fundamental practice we employ regularly throughout a rehearsal process and performance.' [5.6]

These leading UK companies' use of Harrison's methods demonstrates how deeply embedded it is in the training and practices of actor-musicians in the UK. It has established a common language for practice that has helped to move forward and develop the field.

Finland

The Vice-Chair of **HIT Helsinki** a professional theatre collective in Helsinki, Finland, testified that Harrison's workshops in 2019 established a collaborative partnership 'with three other participants from the workshop', which resulted in the creation of a summer theatre show [5.3]. Harrison's research established 'a common language' for the collaborators and provided tools and exercises to encourage 'deeper listening skills through the ensemble work, improvised composing and music making and how to make the musical instrument part of a character's life' [5.3]. The research has continued to benefit other productions as well, with actors incorporating Harrison's lexicon into their work, which has strengthened actor-musician working methods in Helsinki.

North America

A number of artist-led organisations have emerged in North America over the REF period in direct response to Harrison's research. With a combined membership of over 1200 industry and educational practitioners, Actor-Musicians USA and Actor-Musicians Canada have applied the research to the development of their approach to training practices, professional development and industry engagement. The Impact of AM USA has been discussed above.

In 2019, the Director of AM USA produced *Godspell* at Vermont's St Michael's Playhouse. This was the first US production of this piece to use an all actor-musician cast and drew directly from Harrison's work. The director noted that Harrison's research has given rise to new 'methods for the actor-musician' and changed the way he directed the show: 'the instrument is no longer merely accompaniment, it is a scene partner, a memory, a ghost, a prop' [5.1].

The author, co-composer and director of the original actor-musician show *Get Lost In It* (USA, 2019-21) has stated that Harrison's workshop in New York City 'was the reason [she] began writing [her] first actor-musician musical' [5.2]. Harrison's research helped her identify how to use 'instruments as yet another powerful avenue in which to tell our stories' and that 'the instrument is no longer an obstruction to overcome'. This enabled 'a deeper connection between the instrument and the character' and was instrumental to the development of her production. Harrison further empowered her as a writer through her attendance at an invited workshop of the production at Rose Bruford College in London. The author stated that 'in a field where female voices and stories are lacking', Harrison 'gave [her] permission to command the space and find [her] own voice. [5.2]. Despite being developed during a pandemic, *Get Lost In It* received a virtual performance in April 2020.

Overall, Harrison's research has been embedded into a variety of educational and training programmes for actor-musicians worldwide, which has led to a shared language for professional practitioners working in the field. This has strengthened the field of actor-musicianship and allowed practitioners to demonstrate its validity, which has resulted in increased support from key industry stakeholders (such as producers, unions and funding bodies), and the production of new companies, works and working methods for actor-musicians.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Testimonial, Founder of Actor-Musicianship USA.

[5.2] Testimonial, writer, director, actor-musician and composer – co-writer of *Get Lost In It*.

[5.3] Testimonial, Vice-Chair of HIT Helsinki, Finland.

[5.4] Testimonial, Artistic Director of Dumbwise Theatre, London; Tutor at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and Tutor at Leeds Conservatoire.

[5.5] Testimonial, Musical Director and tutor at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts actor-musicianship course.

[5.6] Testimonial, Artistic Director of Bohemians Theatre Co., London.

[5.7] Testimonial, Commissioning Editor Bloomsbury.

[5.8] Testimonial, Senior Lecturer, Solent University.

[5.9] Stinton, Nicole. "Monologuing the music: A new actor training practice for new times." *Fusion Journal*, no. 15, 2019, pp. 97-107. www.fusion-journal.com/monologuing-the-music-a-new-actor-training-practice-for-new-times/