

Ages and Stages:

The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing (2009-2012)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Prof Miriam Bernard (PI; Professor of Social Gerontology) Dr Lucy Munro (Co-I, Senior Lecturer in English)
Prof David Amigoni (Co-I, Professor of Victorian Literature) Prof Mike Murray (Co-I, Prof of Social and Health Psychology)
Ms Jill Rezzano (Co-I, Head of Education at the New Vic Theatre)
Dr Michelle Rickett (Research Associate) Ms Ruth Basten (linked PhD student)
Ms Tracey Harrison (Project Administrator)

THE SCENE: The Potteries, North Staffordshire – an area with a long industrial history.

PROLOGUE

A collaborative, interdisciplinary mixed method project which aims to explore: how age and ageing has been constructed, represented and understood in the New Victoria Theatre's social documentaries from the 1960s to the present day; what part the theatre has played in constructing individual and community identities and in creating and preserving community memory; what the relationship is between older people's involvement in the theatre and continuing social engagement in later life; and what the practical and policy implications are.

ACT ONE: STRAND 1

Historical Representations of Ageing

In which we undertake detailed literary and cultural analyses of the materials in the New Victoria Theatre Archive at Staffordshire University. These include a remarkable collection of interviews with local people on which some of the most famous 'social documentaries' such as: *The Knotty* (1966), *Fight for Shelton Bar!* (1974), *The Dirty Hill* (1990) and *Nice Girls* (1994) were based.

ACT ONE: STRAND 2

Recollections and Contemporary Representations of Ageing

In which we conduct a series of individual and group interviews with four groups of people who are now old but were: (i) sources for the Vic's ground-breaking social documentaries; (ii) volunteers with the theatre; (iii) audience members throughout their lives; (iv) actors and others who made their lives in the area and continue to be part of the local community.

ACT TWO: STRAND 3

Performing and Re-presenting Ageing

In which material from Strands 1 and 2 is used to work with an intergenerational group of 'actors'. Together, we will create and chart the evolution of a 'new' social documentary performance, an exhibition and a range of associated materials before taking them out into local schools and centres for older people.

EPILOGUE: Outputs

A new social documentary performance and associated exhibition; materials and workshops for arts practitioners, teachers and other individuals and organisations; policy guidance/policy briefs and policy workshops; an international, interdisciplinary conference on *'Theatre, Ageing and Community Memory'*; contributions to knowledge, theory and methodology; the training of postgraduate and postdoctoral scholars in interdisciplinary and collaborative ageing research.

Further information:

Miriam Bernard, Centre for Social Gerontology, Keele University, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG. Tel: 01782 734067. Email: m.bernard@keele.ac.uk RES-356-25-0005