



# Abstracts

**Friday, April 6th**

**09:15**

**Session 1: Opening Plenary Panel – The Theatre**

**Dr Joanna Gilar (University of Chichester)**

**Storytelling as Xenia: The Art of Making Welcome**

While xenia, the art of sacred hospitality, is an ancient Greek notion, wonder tales the world over narrate the art of hospitality as a key to living life well. From Scotland to the Caribbean, France to South America, we hear stories in which the giving of shelter to the traveller, as well as food to the hungry, company to the lonely and care to the bereft are the only possible routes to health, wealth and happiness.

This paper will explore whether it is possible to use wonder tales to help us negotiate our 21st century relationship with the stranger, whether that stranger be of alien race or other species. Can the telling of hospitality tales - our own and those of other cultures - inspire us to develop the art of interconnectedness? What can we learn from shapeshifting fairy tales in which welcome to the traveller is also welcome to the potentiality of life, luck and wonder?

Furthermore, can the telling of a tale be considered an act of xenia in itself? Storytelling (much like hospitality) depends for its success on the maintenance of an invisible contract between teller and hearer, and offers the listener a few moments of refuge at the imaginative hearth of the speaker. In what ways does the art of storytelling school us in the ability to open our doors to the unknown and provide refuge to the infinitely unfathomable stranger?

**Dr Cath Heinemeyer (York St John University, UK) and Dr Michalis Kakos, (Leeds Beckett University, UK, in absentia)**

**Multi-artform storytelling and migration: a refuge from the limelight**

In Michalis Kakos' research into the experience of refugee children arriving in Leeds schools, children often 'silenced themselves' - either to protect themselves from being pigeonholed as refugee children, or indeed to protect their classmates from hearing realities no child should have to deal with. Refugee children's stories may often be simply too all-consuming to tell.

They are also under pressure to tell them, to the authorities as a form of what Alison Jeffers (2016) calls 'bureaucratic performance', or to teachers who wish them to 'open up' for therapeutic or educational reasons. As with all storytelling, we need to pay attention to the context for performance, and how it positions the storytellers and their stories. Refugee children may wish to share their perspectives and experiences, and society certainly needs to hear them, but rather than placing them forcibly in the centre of



the cultural gaze, we need to find ways for children to participate in exploration of the refugee experience on their own terms.

Our current practice research in two Leeds secondary schools draws on an approach developed at the International Centre for Arts and Narrative (see Reason and Heinemeyer 2016), using myth and folktale as containers for oblique multi-artform dialogue. In first exploring and then retelling flood myths, pupils (both refugee and non-refugee) have the opportunity to add their own layers of experiential knowledge of universal human issues of conflict, rejection, refuge and hospitality. The myth is thus both a vehicle for communicating personal experience, and a refuge from having to do so. The project will also involve trainee teachers, our longer-term aim being to support teachers to develop narrative approaches to classroom dialogue on sensitive global issues affecting their pupils.

### **Dr Gauri Raje (Silent Sounds)**

#### **The Homecoming Road of Storytelling: Reflections on storytelling with refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in UK**

In the past few years, the awareness of refugees and migrants arriving to the UK has grown exponentially. With that have come various artistic projects, including storytelling. 'Raising awareness' and 'giving voice' to refugee experiences have led to a growing number of empathetic storytellers working with emancipatory potentials of storytelling.

I would like to present this paper critically reflecting on my own experience as a migrant, a storyteller and my concurrent work with asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants in my storytelling projects since 2012. In the paper, I would like to critically look at the issues in facilitating traditional and true life storytelling sessions with migrants, and the ways in which storytelling can/ cannot offer sanctuary to those seeking shelter in a new country. I will be focusing on the concepts of 'home', 'witnessing', 'voice' and the impact of stories on the body of the migrants and the storyteller, to create a shared community through story-work.

10:45

## **Session 2: Parallel Workshop Session,**

### **WORKSHOP 1 – Room CAB414**

**Christine Cooper and Max Bremer, (Story Sharing Universum, Universum Theatre, Helsinki)**

#### **Storytelling for Refuge – 1 hour workshop proposal**

Story Sharing Universum is a multicultural team of 20 people based at Universum Theatre, Helsinki. We host regular Story Sharing Cafés in venues across the city of Helsinki and Finland. A Story Sharing Café is a fun event where asylum seekers, immigrants and Finns meet and share stories of their everyday lives over coffee. Using a simple game structure, we bring different cultures and nationalities together. When we meet



as equals around coffee tables, no-one is objectified; we all become subjects. There is no them and us; there is only we.

Story Sharing Universum began in 2014, with two parts to the project: workshops with asylum seekers in reception centres, and Story Sharing Café events. In 2017 we were hired to deliver events for the integration program of the City of Helsinki. We held 14 events with nearly 1000 participants, and the project was awarded Theatre Action of the Year 2017 by the Theatre Centre of Finland. Our team currently has members from 11 countries, and includes storytelling and theatre professionals, integration professionals, asylum seekers, immigrants, and Finns. Between us, we speak English, Finnish, Swedish, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Pashtu, French, Russian, and more.

In this workshop, we propose to hold a demo version of a Story Sharing Café. This should be in a setting where people can gather around tables with coffee and tea, ideally 4-6 people per table. The number of tables is not limited (except by space). We will ask one person at each table to act as a host for the story sharing game. Before the game we will give a short presentation about the past and future of Story Sharing Universum, and afterwards, there will be a moment for reflections from the participants.

## WORKSHOP 2 – The Zen Room

**Chance Marshall and Theodoros Kostidakis (RCSSD, UK)**

**“Through our dreams and [...] myths we can learn to know and come to terms with the greater horizon of our deeper and wiser, inward self.**

– Joseph Campbell

Drawing from our experience of having worked therapeutically with refugees and migrants, this experiential workshop explores dramatherapy’s capacity to utilise storytelling, story-making and enactment as means of creating an awareness of refugee and migrant issues; of working directly and therapeutically with refugees and migrants, as well as its ability to provide ‘moments of refuge in the midst of chaotic events’.

We explore how relationships between people and place can be strengthened through storytelling in dramatherapy. As a theme, the notion of displacement is at the core of this workshop. We employ the fairy tale of ‘Prince Ring’; a story we have previously used with refugee and migrant groups in order for them to explore and process emotions around displacement. In this workshop, the story functions as a way of inviting participants to embody images of displacement as a way of understanding and reflecting upon the refugee/migrant experience.

We use the Sesame structure as a ritual process that provides wider containment for the exploration of archetypal themes and experiences of the participants. As co-facilitators, we guide participants through a succession of different phases. In these phases, participants move into the imaginative and archetypal realm, before returning to everyday reality with potentially new insights and perspectives into experience of displacement.



Through this process, we investigate storytelling's position within dramatherapy, and raise questions of how might its use facilitate a sense of belonging; ameliorate feelings of dislocation, reconnect to lost homes; offer insights into the formation of identity; and promote inner resiliencies such as empathy, compassion and interconnectedness within and between people."

13:00

## Session 3: Parallel Paper Session,

### PANEL A – The Theatre

David Ongenaert (Ghent University, Belgium)

#### **Displaced people for sale. A multi-methodological research project on international refugee organizations' public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African displacement crises (2011-2018).**

While forced displacement has increased sharply recently (UNHCR, 2017), several countries have implemented restrictive refugee policies (Betts, Loescher & Milner, 2012). Consequently, public communication – as a tool for informing, storytelling, sensitization and agenda-setting (Atkin & Rice, 2013) – is crucial for refugee organizations' operations (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005). We will present the objectives, research design and literature review of a recently started multi-method project on refugee organizations' public communication strategies. Although international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, and Norwegian Refugee Council significantly contribute to the public perception of displaced people and crises (Chouliaraki, 2012), few studies have examined how such organizations attempt to influence media agendas and public opinions in terms of "*what to think*" ("*second-level agenda setting*") (Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152, original italics).

Therefore, our research project's general objective is to investigate if and how the textual, production and reception dimensions involved in these international refugee organizations' public communication strategies towards the recent Syrian and Central African crises interact with each other. First, we will examine the storytelling strategies of representing refugees, by applying a critical discourse analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012) and quantitative content analysis (Riff, Lacy & Fico, 2014) on the selected organizations' press releases, news stories, videos and photos of 2011 till 2018. Second, we will analyze the production practices by conducting 18 expert interviews with the organizations' communications managers. Finally, we will examine this communication's reception by conducting focus group and in-depth interviews with citizens, refugees and journalists, living in Flanders. Apart from its topical nature and relevance to better understand the political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions involved in international refugee organizations' public communication strategies, this project will contribute significantly to key debates in the research fields of non-profit and international communication.



## **Professor Alex Kendall & Mary-Rose Puttick (Birmingham City University, UK)**

### **Open School Doors: supporting schools and refugee parents**

In this paper we share our work in progress on the Open School Doors project, a two-year, Erasmus funded, collaboration involving four EU countries (UK, Germany, Greece, and Austria), which aims to support education outcomes for young people by supporting schools and teachers to build positive and effective relationships with parents/carers of refugee and migrant children. In the UK we have been working with primary and secondary schools in Birmingham with 'Schools of Sanctuary' status; a strand of the City of Sanctuary movement. Schools of Sanctuary carry out diverse creative projects to raise awareness of the challenges faced by newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers, and other newly arrived migrant families, many of which involve local community groups in order to build a network of hospitality and welcome to families. Our particular focus for this paper is the narratives teachers tell about practical challenges inside and outside the classroom for both the families and the teachers themselves, including the complex intergenerational identity negotiations as both child, parent and the wider family adapt to a new context. We focus on both digital and artefact-based storytelling to present these inspiring stories, as well as sharing examples from across the wider EU context.

## **Dr Sue Lyle and Bill Hamblett (Small World Theatre)**

### **'Diogel/Safe?'**

Based in Cardigan, Small World Theatre has been working in the field of refugees and education in Wales for over 25 years. Their work has included sharing stories and creating performances within refugee camps in Africa and Asia as well as with refugee groups and host communities in Wales.

This presentation will argue that narrative portrayal of refugee situations in live performance engenders positive attitudes and behaviour in audiences and host communities. Drawing on one of our many projects to illustrate our approach, 'Diogel/Safe?' exemplifies our partnership work with refugee mentors, children in schools, and local communities to develop empathy for the plight of refugees. Our approach incorporates puppetry, participatory drama workshops and the Community of Enquiry to create a sophisticated inclusive experience. Our work is informed by socio-cultural theory and has been extensively researched and evaluated by Dr Sue Lyle from UWTSD. Key findings support the argument that narrative understanding is the primary meaning making tool and that participatory drama engages children's imagination as they explore complex issues through a story. We argue that reason and emotion are not separate but entwined and both are necessary to promote the critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking needed to engage with the complex issues the arrival of refugees raise.

The presentation will end with a short animated film Noddfa. Created in 2017 in collaboration with refugees from the Oasis Centre in Cardiff and Winding Snake Productions (a media education company) as an accessible way to communicate their side of the story widely through social media and in cinemas at film festivals. Aiming to balance current powerful negative stereotyping of immigrants and refugees in the media.



## PANEL B – The Zen Room

**Dr Michael Adeoye (Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria)**

### **Stage and Social Activism in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel: The Story as Refuge***

Postcolonial Nigerian playwrights are social activists because their imaginative dramatic texts tell stories that portray them so. These texts rely on the theatre stage, and its attendant aesthetics, to contribute to the postcolonial crusade of decolonising the nation from the grips of cultural imperialism. They are also confronted with local political, ethnic, religious and economic uproars as themes. This study examines Wole Soyinka's text, *The Lion and the Jewel*, as a case study, with the objective of illustrating that the playwright uses the story, *The Lion and the Jewel*, as a safe refuge, under which he criticises the Nigerian government for unfair treatment of the masses. The roles of the characters; Baroka, Lakunle and Sidi could be interpreted as representing, respectively, the government, the social activist and the masses. The story shows that Baroka (the government) rapes Sidi (the masses) by deceiving her and disrespecting Lakunle (the activist), whose advice is also ignored by Sidi. Given the volatility of the Nigerian environment, especially under the military, Soyinka has hidden in the refuge of the story to satirise the government. Case study and Key Informant Interviews were used to collect data while qualitative data analysis was also applied, to conclude that the Nigerian artist uses the story, with attendant stage aesthetics, to criticise the government thereby attempting to correct the ills of the society.

**Prof Casey Hayward (Bentley University, Massachusetts, USA)**

### **“(No) Refuge for the Refugee”**

I spent four years in [a refugee camp in] Jordan and I haven't seen a mouse. A mouse! Imagine 8 mice in one day...Sedra would start screaming, "mama there is mouse," Jabr is the same. Anas wouldn't sleep and Iman too. We brought the kids here for safety. This is America?

- Heba Alloh

The Alloh family fled the civil war in Syria where they had endured daily attacks and were eventually placed by a refugee agency in Lowell Massachusetts, U.S.A. The Allohs, who had considered returning to Syria to escape the unsanitary conditions in Zadari refugee camp were shocked to find the living conditions provided in America to be so deplorable.

Their story, a vivid depiction of life crumbling around them and an aid organization powerless to help, became a rallying cry for local activists and social media groups. In this paper, I examine the appropriation of refugee narratives by activist and other groups to frame the current global refugee crisis. As a documentary filmmaker I am fascinated by the telling, retelling, and honing of this particular story as a motivator for action—including prompting my own documentary about the family. Reflecting on my work, I noticed that not only was it the pathos of the story but the irony as well that makes it such a useful rhetorical tool.





Drawing on material from the documentary as well as new insights from various stakeholders, I trace the transformation of this story. What began as an anecdote told by the Alloh family to encapsulate their hopelessness, ultimately evolved into a call to action, filmic device and polished public relations narrative for a new non-profit organization.

This paper explores the intersections of story, activism, filmmaking and philanthropy and how those relationships take advantage of and repurpose refugee narratives in particular.

### **Prof Chris Morris (Falmouth University)**

#### **“I’m glad I shared my shit with you”: Story as refuge and mirror**

This paper concerns Lucy (not her real name) a student currently studying in Wales. Lucy is studying law. She is also a sex worker.

Her story as an escort featured in *‘Fog of Sex: stories from the frontline of student sex work’*, (USW 2015) a 60-minute drama documentary about student sex workers that I made as part of the lottery funded ‘Student Sex Work Project’ in collaboration with academics at Swansea University. The film won, Best Film for Young People at the 2016 Celtic Media Festival.

When Lucy was first interviewed in 2014, the story was one of secrecy, stigma, marginalisation and physical violence, but it was the mental strain – the continual need for secrecy which she says was *‘driving her crazy’*.

Lucy took an active role in the filmmaking/storytelling process – as a side project to the main film, Lucy kept a video diary of her life as a sex worker – taking the camera with her to work and confiding to it after seeing clients. The film she shot, was then recreated using actors. This short film has never been screened publicly. I will show clips in my talk.

Lucy’s life at this time was confused and chaotic and this paper will explore the impact that seeing her life and her words re-rendered, reordered and reimaged on screen, had on her attitude to herself, her sex work and her future. The act of storytelling (shooting footage) became a refuge in a time of upheaval and when she watched the finished film, the story acted as a mirror on her life, informing her and empowering her to move forward positively – she later summed up her thoughts succinctly to me in an email: *“I am really glad and privileged that I shared my shit with you”*.

## **PANEL C – Room CAB414**

### **Dr Helen Taylor (Stories & Supper)**

#### **‘Whose story is it anyway? Storytelling at a refugee supper club in East London.’**

Recent forced migrations have led to unprecedented levels of media attention, resulting in powerful storytelling through documentaries and cultural production featuring the voices of refugees. However, there



has also been a proliferation of reports which dehumanise refugees by subsuming individual stories into a grand narrative of mass migration, or sensationalise the devastating consequences of forced migration.

At the same time, refugees are compelled to produce stories of persecution in order to gain asylum – stories which must satisfy the requirements of the asylum system, as well as being judged to be true. Such stories are often met with suspicion due to a culture of scepticism within the immigration offices of receiving countries. However, for refugees, stories can also be a way of keeping the lost home alive and passing on memories to subsequent generations, as well as testifying to past injustices and challenging life experiences.

This paper will explore the storytelling aspect of the Stories & Supper refugee supper club project in East London. For the past 12 months, the project has been staging supper club events with refugee and local volunteers, inviting paying guests to eat food cooked by refugee chefs while listening to stories and poems about migration from refugees and migrants living in London.

The project asks: How do you provide refugees with a safe space in which to explore their stories and a platform from which to share those stories? How do you offer local residents the opportunity to hear stories of migration directly from the people making the journeys? How can you counter negative migration narratives perpetuated by media and political discourses? It suggests that the telling of refugee stories within the supper club context challenges prevailing discourses and breaks down barriers, while allowing the storyteller to assert their agency and be the author of their own narrative.

### **George Gumisiriza (The Gap Wales Newport)**

#### **Song of a Potted Plant: Exploring migrant experience from inside by George Gumisiriza**

“I have kept this tree in the pot for as long as I can remember, passed down to the family over the decades,” says the plant owner.

Evidently, the branches are trimmed back, the flowers and fruits are restricted according to the size, shape and location of the pot to the desire of the pot owner. Plants in pots live in a world of conformity and oppression, a situation of standing choked, feeling trapped and only living in part. This is the song of a potted plant. My story, my song!

Culture, religion, educational and political systems are all forms of pots in which people find themselves. Pots forced upon people. Like plants in pots, they are shifted to concrete or metallic pots and sometimes completely uprooted and banished to maintain the dominance. Do all migrants share the song of a plant in a pot?

Uganda my homeland has just amended the National Constitution to remove the term limit to presidency. The incumbent has ruled the country for 32 awful years. I’ve seen culture override reason, religion conflict with culture and education manipulated to create more confusion than correction. Politics exploits culture and religion to maintain the status quo.

When I chose to speak against social injustice, I was rejected, persecuted and told I was vile. Pondering the loss upon leaving my home country...the label “refugee” best describes me, a status most migrants love to hate with fading celebration after being granted.





Migrants endeavour to recover their loss in various ways. Starting from a fresh ending requires accepting one's current status quo as the starting point. How easy is it for a refugee to accept freedom after lifelong oppression?

A song of a plant in the open space where bridges prevail – the song for refuge!

14:00

## Session 4: Parallel Paper Session

### PANEL A – Room CAB414

**Aqeel Abdulla (University of Exeter)**

#### **ACTA theatre – React**

ACTA theatre has been an essential partner in an EU-funded 2 year project called React, which responds to the issue of theatre made by refugee in Europe. The project is in partnership with two other theatre companies: Rotterdams Wijktheater (Holland) and Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolce (Sicily, Italy). This project culminates in a festival for theatre made by refugees hosted by ACTA in Bristol between 26-29 March 2018. The festival will include plays (premiers and returning plays), workshops, talks, and seminars by performers and practitioners from ACTA, the European partners, and other British community theatre companies.

This paper will attempt to offer an evaluation of the festival, and the React project as a whole, from my perspective as a member of ACTA, a drama worker who's working with a group of refugees on a play that will premier in the festival, and, most importantly, as a refugee myself. I have been involved in theatre as a researcher for a long time, but now as a practitioner who is a refugee and working with groups that are predominantly made up of refugees I am very self-conscious of every step of the process, because as a researcher I am for the first time the subject of my own research; I am constantly asking myself is what I'm doing with these men and women helping them, is it helping me? Or are we all taking part in a practice of numbing the pain as much as possible?

These are the questions I will be reflecting on as I assess my work and that of others in this festival, and will present my thoughts on that in an academic paper, hoping for an open and frank discussion to follow.

**Kate Duffy and Syed Najibi, (Phosphorous Theatre)**

**'In my chicken shop people look at me like I am nothing, but these people pay to hear my story'.**

In this paper, Kate Duffy and Syed Nabjibi discuss the social role Theatre with refugee actors has in disrupting passive readings of 'Refugee'. Phosphoros Theatre's radical Applied Theatre was born out of the suggestions of residents in a Supported Housing Project for Unaccompanied Minors in North London, who thought they had stories to tell. Their 2016 show *Dear Home Office* was nominated for an Amnesty Freedom of Expression



Award, and their 2017 show *Dear Home Office: Still Pending* continued to share the stories of UASC in the UK on mainstream stages. With barriers to rehearsals including destitution, mental health issues, ongoing asylum claims and exploitative labour, they position the work as *theatre against the odds*; a unique example of storytelling as refuge. From her perspective as one of the directors Kate will analyse the impact of young adults sharing stories onstage, and the artistic decisions made to ensure ethical responsibility. Syed explores how performance has impacted his relationship to his own forced migration experience, contrasting the confidence he has onstage to the hostile environment of asylum hearings, where *telling my story* holds a different power. Reflecting on performing a speech in *Dear Home Office* about his own harrowing experience he explains why he wants to go even further in bringing invisible stories to light, and the responsibility he feels as an asylum seeker to do so. This paper argues that Applied Theatre has radical potential as a space where refugees can take centre stage, playing a vital role in shaping their own representation. Kate Duffy is one of the founders of Phosphoros Theatre and also works in senior management of a London refugee charity. Syed Najibi joined Phosphoros Theatre in 2016 as a performer and currently assists with drama workshops for the company. He is training to be an electrician.

## PANEL B – The Zen Room

**Becky Finlay Hall and Sam Berkson, (Olive Branch Arts)**

### **HOLDING ON BY A THREAD: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE REFUGEE LABYRINTH**

Olive Branch Arts has been engaging creatively with the Saharawi Refugee Community in South West Algeria since 2010. As we continue to be present, witness, experience and share the Saharawi story we also look to the future in hope of building relationships that celebrate the Strength of Exile everywhere.

In this interactive presentation we will be using elements from the myth of Theseus & the Minotaur, drama, poetry, music & art to explore the Saharawi Refugee journey and its place in the global Labyrinth of Exile. Sharing our feelings, questions and thoughts we aim to investigate the freedoms and limitations of creatively engaging amid the freeze and chaos of forgotten & remembered stories.

How do we build and sustain relationships with refugee communities? Can holding the thread as they journey provide a sense of connection, humanity & hope? Does a creative language offer a deeper, therapeutic experience that transcends our differences and unite our similarities? How do we exchange art forms and use them as tools for resistance? How are our own experiences of exile, recent or ancestral, impacted, used and honoured? Can we find refuge inside and outside the Labyrinth?

A Collective Search. A way for all of us to find our way back home again to the Heartland.

Olive Branch delivers annual creative arts training programmes, work creatively and therapeutically with elders in the Land Mine Centre and offer training and support to staff in the Special Needs Schools on the Saharawi Refugee camps. Part of our focus is promoting and nurturing artists both here in the UK & on the camps to raise awareness of the Saharawi plight through their chosen art form

**Cath Little (Storyteller)**

What's the point of telling traditional tales? Wouldn't it be better to tell true stories about things that really happened? What's the point of Once upon a Time?



I work as a storyteller and English Language Teacher at Oasis Cardiff. I share traditional stories from Wales and the wide world and through them help people to learn English. Oasis Cardiff provides a warm Welsh welcome to refugees and asylum seekers. Oasis takes the long term view, aiming to help Refugees and Asylum Seekers to integrate into their local community.

In my lessons I tell folk tales and wisdom tales, local legends and fragments of myth. Because traditional stories share common human themes, everyone either knows them already or recognises their truth when they hear them. This shared understanding connects us with one another and makes us feel at home together. And this human connection brings peace.

Traditional stories are like dreams. They reveal truth through metaphor and archetype. The act of simply telling a story, “eye to eye, mind to mind, heart to heart” can create a profound connection, an understanding that can reach deeper than words.

This is what one man said to me after listening to a traditional story from Wales:

“I can’t believe you come from here and not from my country. I understand your story and I understand you.”

When we tell traditional stories and when we listen to traditional stories, our country is the world and we are at home.

### **Sue Mach (Clackamas Community College, Oregon, USA)**

#### **Water as Refuge: Willamette Falls Digital Storytelling Project**

The Willamette Falls is one of the most important landmarks in the state of Oregon. For over eight thousand years it has provided the native Clackamas and surrounding tribes with salmon and lamprey. In the early nineteenth century, it was a destination for settlers migrating across the Oregon Trail. In 1829, the first lumber mill was created and the east and west banks of the Falls have been the site of a number of lumber, paper, and woolen mills up until this past summer when the West Linn Paper Mill finally went bankrupt after 128 years of operation. This followed a 2011 bankruptcy of The Blue Heron Mill in Oregon City, which left all its workers not only unemployed, but also bereft of retirement benefits. The Blue Heron Mill was purchased by a private developer, and the municipality of Oregon City is attempting to work with him to convert the mill area to a public park and mixed-use area that would include restaurants and living spaces. The city is also working to restore habitat damaged by years of pollutants in the river. At present, there is a conflict over easements between the current owner of the property and the city. Because I teach a digital storytelling class at the nearby Clackamas Community College, [I was asked to conduct two separate weekend digital storytelling workshops](#) involving former mill workers, tribe members, and others in the community who have a relationship with The Falls. The goal of the workshop is to provide connection through storytelling among the various interested parties and factions involved in the redevelopment of this incredible area, in hope that the restoration can continue. At the time of the conference, I will have completed one workshop and will be preparing for the next. I would like to do a presentation about how the project began; I will further show some of the digital stories of the workshop participants.



Finally, I will seek feedback from other storytelling practitioners about what is working and what I can do to improve the workshop process.

## PANEL C – The Theatre

### The Loughborough University Storytelling Research Panel

Dr Lyndsey Bakewell will talk about the work done with refugees as part of HE ESRC-funded Loneliness in the Digital Age (LiDA) project and also about one of our new EU-funded projects, Digital Integrated Storytelling (DIST), which looks at using storytelling as a tool of integration for refugee/migrant and host communities.

Dr Antonia Liguori will at the time be on an AHRC International Placement at the Smithsonian, so will Skype in to the panel and talk about both DIST and the work she will be doing at the Smithsonian which will have a refugee dimension.

Terrie Howie will talk about her work on storytelling as a way of building identity in a 'new town' and the way that incoming community stories interact with existing narratives. She'll be looking at the notion of the new town as a refuge.

Kristina Gavran will be looking at true life storytelling and will talk about the place of migrant/refugee stories within the 'true life story' repertoire.

15:15

## Session 5: George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling Presentation, The Theatre

### Dr Emily Underwood-Lee & Catrin James (George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling, USW)

#### Forty Voices, Forty Years

'Forty Voices, Forty Years' is an HLF funded collaboration between Welsh Women's Aid and the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of South Wales running from February 2018 for 15 months. 'Forty Voices, Forty Years' will gather information, memories, successes, and materials across the 40 years of the Welsh Women's Aid movement, from its beginnings as a collection of grassroots women's organisations created out of the Women's Liberation Movement of the early 1970s, to the present day. In this presentation Dr Emily Underwood-Lee and Catrin James will introduce the project.



16:00

## Keynote Speech – The Theatre

### Patience Agbabi

Patience Agbabi is a poet much celebrated for paying equal homage to literature and performance. Born in London to Nigerian parents and fostered in a white English family in North Wales, her work moves fluidly and nimbly between cultures, dialects, voices; between page and stage. After reading English at Pembroke College, Oxford, she completed an MA in Creative Writing at Sussex University. Prominent on the London spoken word circuit since the early nineties, she has toured extensively in the UK and abroad with the British Council. From 2002 to 2005 Agbabi lectured in Creative Writing at Greenwich, Cardiff and Kent Universities and for 20 years has facilitated writing workshops in comprehensive and public schools. In 2004 she was selected as one of the UK's Next Generation Poets, and is currently a creative writing fellow at Oxford Brookes.

Her work is musical in every sense, attuned as much to the punning and political immediacy of the rhythms of rap and dub, as it is to traditional forms like the sonnet, sestina and Chaucer's rime royale. A self-proclaimed 'poetical activist', Agbabi says she wrote her first largely autobiographical book, *R.A.W.*, to right the wrongs of the world. Steeped in the plights of Thatcherite Britain, frenetic, furious and formally adventurous, the book won the 1997 Excellence literary award. Her second book, *Transformatix*, was centred more on acts of ventriloquism; Agbabi said she 'wanted to see what happened if I let the characters speak for themselves rather than edit them'. It contained her first retelling of Chaucer, the Wife of Bath as the Nigerian 'Mrs Alice Ebi Bafa', who 'went down a storm in performance'.

A review of her third collection, *Bloodshot Monochrome* in *The List* said Agbabi is 'honest, darkly funny and endlessly creative, she takes the sonnet, chats it up, tattoos it, gives it some motherly advice and then sends it away again'. This poetic street-wisdom might be 'bold [and] brassy' (*Independent*) in tone, but it is dextrous and formally wrought. 'Josephine Baker finds herself' (selected here) sees a 'twenty-something, short black wavy-bobbed diva' become the 'twenties chic' club idol she worships, in a mirrored poem which inverts perspective with a stanza break, as the viewpoint is switched; the text rewriting itself with the same words.

Agbabi began working on *Telling Tales* during her time as Canterbury poet laureate in 2009. The book appeared in April 2014, and sees *The Canterbury Tales* transposed to twenty-first century Britain, in all its multicultural fervour and hubbub. Characters talk in dialect, via the song titles of soul records, with experimental typography, blank verse and from a dog's point of view; their pilgrimage that of a London Routemaster bus. The book embodies Agbabi's passion for 'a sense of range, both in the forms and the actual tensions of the language, whether it's slang, standard English, street language, or text language'.

Her longer featured poem, 'The Doll's House', was commissioned by the Ilkley Literature Festival, and shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem in 2014. The poem is haunted by the fact that Harewood House in Yorkshire – a symbol of opulence, magnitude and splendour – was a demonstration of wealth amassed from the transatlantic slave trade, and seeks to carve out a fresh perspective to examine this distressing legacy. 'The Doll's House' stands for both the set of deftly constructed stanzas – or rooms – made of rime royale, and the replica model of Harewood made by the house-chef's daughter, Angelica, its detail described with all the meticulous 'rich design' of the saccharine 'haute cuisine'. And as with Harewood's legacy, the more we listen to Angelica recall how she would 'gorge / on bubbling syrup, mouth



its language; learned / the temperature at which burnt sugar burnt', the more the taste turns bitter, it starts to 'blacken your sweet tooth'.

Her readings for the Poetry Archive are as lively and exuberant as the stories they tell (or re-tell); each character monologue arrives punchy and emphatic from the start, full of verve but carefully paced. Each one is testament to her ars poetica, that 'the written must be spoken. The chasm between page and stage must be healed'.

18:30

## #STORYREFUGE Performance Festival – The Theatre

**A separate programme detailing the performances abstract will be available for the festival on the evening.**

Live and film performance from artists and storytellers such as **Ava Hunt, Elva Makins, Joanna Gilar, Casey Hayward, Gauri Raje, Sam Berkson, and Kristina Gavran** and, **The Oasis Women Singers**





## Saturday, April 7th

10:15

### Provocation 1

**Dr Jodie Allinson & Dr Jesse Schwenk (University of South Wales) – The Theatre**

In this provocation I will tell stories about my experience of recovering from a stroke, about the dislocation I felt from my body and the ways in which I sought refuge and safety during this time. I discuss how being able to voice my experience was in itself an act of refuge. For me, 'voicing' is both an individual act and one facilitated by the community I am part of, and I have worked together with my friend and colleague Jesse Schwenk to find a way to tell these stories today.

11:15

### Session 6: Parallel Workshop Session

#### WORKSHOP 1 – Room CAB414

**Kate Duffy & Syed Najibi (Phosphoros Theatre)**

Phosphoros Theatre are an Applied Theatre company based in London who work entirely with young men aged 18-24 who came to the UK as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Their shows *Dear Home Office* and *Dear Home Office: Still Pending* have been performed over 40 times across the UK in 2016 and 2017 and have attracted unusually high numbers of refugee and BAME youth audience members. Their work is currently funded by Arts Council England. Their outreach commitment includes leading drama workshops on the theme of forced migration, with the intention to inspire, educate and raise consciousness about the experience of Unaccompanied Minors. The intention of this workshops is not to give strategies for best practice, but to result in deeper empathy for the experience of forced migration, and provide an alternative perspective to dominant representations. The workshop will be led by Kate Duffy, an experienced Applied Theatre practitioner who also has spent the past 5 years working with Unaccompanied Minors in London in Supported Housing and casework, and Syed Najibi and Tewodros Aregaw, two of Phosphoros Theatre's performers, who bring their own expertise of navigating both the care system and immigration system as Unaccompanied Minors from Afghanistan and Eritrea respectively. The workshop uses role play, creative writing and play and offers music, oral testimony and found objects as stimuli for the drama. Participants are invited to imagine how they may feel if faced with the decision making of youth-on-the-move, with added context from Syed and Tewodros' input. The workshop will conclude with an exploration of how displaced youth may use storytelling to protect themselves and their families from the hostility and isolation they are experiencing in the UK, and the impact this could have on their sense of self.



## WORKSHOP 2 – The Zen Room

**Sophia Ansari (psychotherapeutic counsellor & Integrative movement therapist)**

### **Everybody tells a story**

#### **A somatic, trauma informed approach to story- telling.**

Painful stories of the past are carried onwards in inter-generational transmission, where the body as the site and receptor of oppression and trauma will remember patterns of distress (Van der Kolk, 2014) . We live in a social context where structures based on differences of race, sex, gender, income and class marginalise large numbers of people (Robin Di Angelo, 2012). Refugees or UK born children of immigrants are amongst those people whose bodies will hold a story of facing enduring micro- aggressions, prejudice and exclusion as well as inter-generational pain from violence and dispossession (Kevin I Nadal, 2018).

Telling a story or making meaning through the body becomes the way to empower individuals to find solace and a ground of belonging. When bodies can choose to tell a story rather than re -enact a trauma or a social narrative imposed upon them, individuals can restore their resilience, agency and dignity.

The objective of this proposed workshop is to demonstrate a somatic, trauma informed method of story -telling that can be used in therapeutic or educational work. Participants will become involved in an experiential process utilising movement, stretches, breath, embodied imagination and voice to diminish symptoms of distress and actualise a story with and through the body. This method draws upon an axiology of story -telling intrinsic to many marginalised- BAME and refugee communities where story telling is phenomenological (as opposed to performance based) and therapeutic and connects individuals to soul myth, ancestral & personal wisdom and collective wellbeing.

13:30

## Provocation 2

### **Eirwen Malin (Storyteller)**

Eirwen worked for many years in the third sector in Wales and harnessed the power of storytelling in a variety of areas. Currently she is chair of the Board of Trustees of Beyond the Border International Storytelling Festival and using her own storytelling to stimulate discussion around diagnoses of life changing health conditions.

Eirwen will be presenting her ideas under the theme of Storytelling as refuge. Based on her own performance piece *Sorting the Sock Drawer*, she will be considering how story can help to identify and nurture positive identity capital at challenging times.



14:30

## Provocation 3

**Prof Bambo Soyinka & Ella Simpson (Bath Spa University, UK)**

15:45

## Session 7: Respondent Panel

**Dr Emily Underwood-Lee (University of South Wales), Kate Duffy (Phosphorus Theatre), Syed Najibi (Phosphorus Theatre), and Dr Cath Heinemeyer (York St John University)**

Emily Underwood-Lee chairs a discussion of the panel's reflections, thoughts, and impressions of this year's symposium.

**CLOSE**