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Case Study
Philip Butterworth
6th February 2004

Tape 1

01:40

AP

It's the sixth of February, 2004 and we're here at Bretton Hall Campus talking with Dr. Phillip Butterworth about his practice as research. So thank you very much for agreeing to take some out to speak with us. In terms of the formality of the set-up, as we've discussed before, it's a very straightforward, formal interview process and we just progress through questions and I'll say "Thank you very much" when you appear to have answered them and move on to the next question. I have tended to start out these discussions by actually referencing the key words that you've given in the headings that you've given as well, and you've given us the key words of: "medieval", "prompting" "XXX" "ordinary" "XXXX" "experiment" and the headings for the questions are under: purpose, process, performance, analysis and realization of purpose. So we'll just take it through and... we'll start with the first question which is: how and where are your research impulses located?

2:49

PB

In medieval theatre. I'm one of the few people, I think, in the country that conducts research into medieval theatre... through practice as well as conventional research. I've always been interested in... medieval theatre and the conventions by which it operates and one of my interests is... in recent years... in prompting. And... prompting is not something I would have thought about were it not for the fact that there is an account written by Sir Richard Carew in his book *The Survey of Cornwall* written in 1602 and Richard Carew charts what's happening in Cornwall at that time across all aspects of life, including entertainments and sports and he does a one-page reference to the fact that the Guary miracles, as they were called in Cornwall, were performed using a prompter and he also includes an anecdote about that prompter where an actor decided to send up the prompter and repeat everything that the prompter said. This got the prompter irate, angry and the actor consequently repeated the prompter's anger. So that's the context. And in this account, by Richard Carew, it says that the prompter prompted the actors. Well, nothing unusual in that, perhaps, other than the fact that it doesn't say in the account to what extent the prompter prompted the actors. And if we take contemporary understanding of prompting, we think of the prompter prompting actors who forget their lines. I had wondered whether the prompter prompted more than this and whether the

prompter prompted all the lines of the actor. The account doesn't tell us this, but certainly that's what interested me and excited me about the potential of this work, particularly as practice as research. Does that... answer your question?

5:38

AP

Yes, certainly. And what were your... what were the questions that arose from that background context... what were your research questions?

5:48

PB

Well this was work that was supported by the AHRB and it received a small grant, that's the under five-thousand grant, and all the questions referred to "how". I've written fairly extensively on the prompter... since I first encountered this... evidence and what's more, I've since, that interest began, seen a performance in Spain which was prompted by a prompter prompting all the lines. This is an outdoor performance, and it is a version of the "Moros y Cristianos" plays, part of the folk drama of Spain and that's a battle between the Moors and the Christians, and these plays go on all over Spain. But this particular one that I heard about was in a village called Trevelez, in the Sierra Nevada, it's the highest inhabited village in Spain and it goes on every June. And I had heard that this work, this presentation, a representation, was prompted throughout. The actors didn't know any lines. So I went to see it. I filmed it, I recorded it and to my amazement, not only did the prompter prompt all the lines, but in fact there were four prompters, not just the one. The one prompter was called the maestro, and there were three other prompters, two who prompted comic sequences, one at the beginning and one at the end of the piece, and they read from sheets of paper... the maestro remembered the lines, he knew all the lines. And there was a fourth prompter who stood underneath the platform because a number of the actors came into the arena on horseback, so he prompted the characters who were on horseback. So I knew by that stage that it could be done. I had seen it. And so the questions that I wanted to ask were all about how this operated and to what effect it operated. How did it condition the nature of the drama that was going on. So my questions, as I say, were all "how" questions, so I was concerned with how does prompting, in full view of the audience, affect performance and its communication, I was concerned with how does prompting performers with all their lines affect performance and communication, how are performance conditions and resulting dynamics affected when the prompter follows closely behind each moving speaker, and fourthly, how does prompting in full view of the audience affect performance and communication of, one: long speeches, two: dialogue between characters and three: periods of apparent inactivity. Those were my central questions.

9:16

AP

And how did you... devise those, 'cause clearly... we'll get on to the subject of funding context and the role of the AHRB perhaps a little bit later but how... how did you devise those particular questions?

9:30

PB

The AHRB requires... a very straightforward series of criteria through the aim, objectives, research questions, methodology... and... it seemed to me that those were really quite appropriate. They are basic considerations, it seems to me. And so it was not difficult to establish an aim, objectives, research questions and methodology... so... devising the questions had to relate to those four areas, in terms of aim, objectives and so on. So... that wasn't difficult, that was straightforward. The aim of the piece that I wrote for the AHRB said "The aim of this scheme of research is to examine and understand what happens to the nature of outdoor theatre and its presentation when actors are prompted by a prompter who operates in full view of the audience and provides all their lines. That was the aim. The objectives, therefore, were ways of amplifying that. So the first of the objectives was to examine available European medieval evidence concerning prompting in full view of the audience in order to produce a lecture demonstration stroke workshop. The second one was to establish and rehearse particular scenes from medieval plays in which prompting may be seen as key to their delivery, and these scenes were to form the content of the lecture/demonstration workshop. The third one was to perform the prompted scenes outdoors within the context of a lecture/demonstration workshop to international scholars at the tenth tri-annual colloquium... of the International Society for Theatre Research into Medieval Theatre, and that was in Groningham, in the Netherlands. And that was in order to establish a dialogue and a further examination of the issues. And the fourth objective was to publish the findings in an international journal. As it happens, that was *Medieval English Theatre*, which is published from Lancaster. The research questions... well, I think I've dealt with those, but certainly those were the aims... the aim and the objectives, but those had to be in place in order to devise the questions, the questions couldn't come first.

12:15

AP

Right. And how appropriate do you feel this institutional demand for research questions is in the context specifically of your own work, and you might want to say something about practice as research more generally if you feel that's appropriate.

12:31

PB

I think it's crucial. Absolutely crucial. I mean when the AHRB ask for details concerning aim, objectives, research questions and methodology, they've got it right. So, depending on the particular character of the research that you're

involved in, you can make use of those criteria all the time. But I think it's crucial because it seems to me that in research that is conducted through practice, that you need some anchors. You need to be able to know about relevance, you need to be able to know about significance, and... unless you've got those anchors in place, you can wander all over without the ability to give your work and your questions the required authority, and... so these questions, required by the AHRB, for me, were not an imposition, they were a stimulus. And, I think they are absolutely necessary.

13:45

AP

Which is interesting, because that takes us really to the next question about research epistemologies and how your practice engages with those, because there has been a lot of discussion about practice as research problematising established traditional research epistemologies. As you're finding that that's actually a creative impetus to put your practice within that framework, I wondered if you had anything to say generally about how your practice engages with that sense of epistemology within the Academy.

14:14

PB

Yes... I don't think there's a great... relationship here other than the adherence to aim, objectives, research questions and methodology. It seems to me that the necessary rigour that's essential in the practice can be dealt with by those criteria. If they're made more complex than that, it seems to me that it's not possible to control the actual nature of the research itself through performance. If it gets too complex, then I think you're able to lose sight of the significance of the work and how you might affect that significance. So... relatively straightforward in terms of epistemology, I think... yea?

15:08

AP

So it's fitting in within... it's reaffirming the role and the importance and the status of research within the academy through those means.

PB

Yes, yes... very much so.

15:20

AP

I wanted to talk... move on perhaps to the issue of professionalism, because we've... with these three questions, we talked about research then professionalism and then pedagogy and obviously the other side of the coin with practice as research is how you deal with the notion of professionalism and performance within a university setting... so if you wanted to speak specifically about how your project worked with those issues.

15:49

PB

Yes... I think the work presupposes... professionalism... I have seen a lot of work in recent years in my field with regard to medieval theatre that doesn't pay a great deal of attention to professionalism. If anything it celebrates amateurism. And... it seems to me that professionalism is not just about whether you are a professional in the sense that you earn your money by it, or you're an amateur by virtue of the fact that you don't do that... it's really about a number of criteria which are to do with quality, essentially. It seems to me that all the people involved in practice as research need to share a sense of the purpose of that research, so there's a common basis there. There needs to be a professional attitude to the work, involving enthusiasm and commitment from everyone concerned... and I think, perhaps, as important as anything else, a concern for quality... at all levels, and that includes an openness to experiment and modify practice and understanding. Quality is very important... because if you haven't got quality in all respects, then you really don't have the authority to be able to derive the insights that you would want to in respect of practice as research. You might as well go about it in a conventional research way. So if there is to be some value about conducting research through practice, then it seems to me that, just as professionalism... is something that you need to take for granted, you need to take quality for granted as well, so that there... you can have some real authority to the insights that you come up with.

18:08

AP

This might actually be a good area... point to talk about issues of definition, because how are you... because everyone has a different definition, obviously, of what the professional means, of what quality means, and how are you conceiving of professionalism and quality within those terms, 'cause you talked about professionalism in terms of the attitude with which all the participants approach the project, so how... how are you defining professionalism?

18:40

PB

Well it's really cr-... about creating the conditions whereby quality can exist. That's the relationship between professionalism, and that partially defines professionalism, but it doesn't do it completely. So where your concern with theatre and quality, the skill, the practical skills to enable quality to arise, right from conception, through to directing skills, acting skills... they're all necessary prerequisites in producing that quality and thus professionalism.

19:29

AP

So are you seeing in terms of a level of skills, and skills attainment and having... having a particular level of skills enables one to be professional and therefore to create quality?

19:41

PB

If it is that professionalism is important to the purpose of the research, and I'm really rather assuming that it is... when I say that. Yes, those skills are important because... suppose you undertake the same research, with the same purpose and you DON'T have those skills... the kinds of insights that then follow, perhaps don't even arise... because they haven't been allowed to be nurtured or fostered or even exercised... through the practice itself. It seems to be that... that the practice is not any less of a research tool as is any other aspect of research. Practice needs to be able to have... a significance and an importance that enables it to exist alongside other research criteria, and thus the importance of professionalism in the... quest for quality.

20:50

AP

Right. OK. We can move, I think, now on to the issue of pedagogy and how your practice as research has engaged with some of those questions around teaching... how does it interface with teaching?

21:10

PB

Well, in the sense that... I understand good teaching, quality teaching, professional teaching to take place, that that, too... requires clarity when it comes to the identification of aims, objectives, questions, the means by which you go about it... they are similar criteria. I've not... in my own experience, worked outside that remit, but I don't find very much difficulty in switching between teaching and performance in terms of the criteria that bring either about... I think they're LARgely the same criteria. And if you like, clarity, is the thing that drives the criteria... to be clear about what you're trying to do and to be clear about the way you assess what you HAVE done, seems to me to be absolutely vital, critical.

22:20

AP

And what about the role of your prior teaching experiences, philosophy, as it were... in theatrical prompting project and then how the work that you've done on that has fed back into your understandings of teaching.

22:40

PB

I think it's probably worked the other way around. I think I probably have a teaching background and a teaching experience in which the insistence on these criteria... have affected the ease with which I've gone into the AHRB criteria to produce this work. For me it's worked that way around.

23:03

AP

OK. So in what context... I think we can move on to the question of the various contexts in which your practice as research has been devised, and by context we see there is the context of being in higher education, there is the context of being a researcher into... medieval theatre, there are teaching contexts, there are wider, broader, institutional contexts...

23:32

PB

Yes... My work in medieval theatre is part of the... program within the school and the school's rationale in terms of its... its research output, so it fits into that quite normally. The way in which it... fitted into, on this occasion, was that I simply recognized the need for the research, I applied for an AHRB grant to do it and it was all done in-house, it was... this is all part and parcel of the work that we do, some of it not as high profile as this, but nevertheless it's... quite a normal part of our work.

24:26

AP

And is it facilitated in that way by the institution, what about... balancing teaching research priorities, 'cause I know in some institutions the priorities are different, so that researchers may have to organize their research practices in different ways to people in other institutions.

24:46

PB

Yes. This was done outside of conventional timetabling as far as students were concerned and as far as I was concerned... it was done towards the end of the term when the second years, who were used as actors in this, had finished most of their programmes and we could find the space for them to work over a three-week period in which to put the thing together, and me too, for that matter... so... yes, it wasn't part of the on-going research activity of the school, but it nevertheless it fitted in and was allowed to fit in. Yea.

25:26

AP

Right. And it's interesting because you do use student actors within the production. Is that within their assessed coursework, or is that something extra?

25:37

PB

On this occasion it was extra, and... interestingly enough, when I knew I wanted to do this, I put out an advertisement to the effect and I only needed six performers; forty-eight wanted to do it. So, they were in groups of six and... this particular group that I chose just happened to be the keenest... so they did it. So I didn't vet them in terms of their skill, but I think the skill was fairly representative of who they were in the second years. They... I could've chosen another group of people, perhaps, and they would have been equally skillful. I think also, given the concentrated nature of research, it was possible to rehearse in such a way that... that quality was brought out. Yes?

26:38

AP

Because that's quite interesting because... obviously this is where it feeds back into those issues of pedagogy because with such a keen student body, they are clearly perceiving that as somehow the experience as being important in their overall learning experience, so it is feeding back into those issues of pedagogy, But also interestingly, this is a two-part question, I suppose, that issue of professionalism because you are using student actors and how... how those two are balanced.

27:09

PB

I think it must be said there's a fairly healthy attitude from students here, and I wasn't surprised to receive offers from forty-eight students... the difficulty is the fact that when you've got to choose but yes, they... they responded to this because it was a bit different, they liked the proposal, they liked what was being researched, because I think they too didn't know the answers... and I think they were intrigued by it: "What can we do that will enable these research questions to be followed through?" So that excited them, I think and it followed all the way through rehearsals and... because we were responding in rehearsal to... new... responses that were coming up, and we would tackle those, we wouldn't let them go. We would be prepared to be open to the responses in such a way that said "Well let's go down that avenue and see where it takes us" and that was very much happening throughout the rehearsal period. So, in a sense, their initial engagement was actually... respected. They felt it was worth their commitment and their concern about the work... and that went all the way through, really. So from that point of view, yes they thought it was a worthwhile exercise to get involved with even though it was extra-curricular and... "Why can't we do more of this?" (chuckles) they said to me afterwards, you know!

28:49

AP

Which is where we come back to the resource context, I suppose!

PB

Yes. And also, I think, that comes down to... individual staff and what they're interested in in research terms. I'm the only person in the school that is... is got this kind of interest... other colleagues, you know, are involved in other aspects... but, I would love it if more of my colleagues were doing this... yea, sure.

29:21

AP

You talked fairly generally about the support that you've had XXXXX institutionally in terms of it being facilitated. I wonder if you could speak more specifically about the kinds of roles that were provided, the... because I think the community of practitioner research has experienced different levels of this across institutions and this operational information I think is... is quite a useful aspect of this case study process.

29:48

PB

Yes... As it happens, the requirements that this work made of the school and the institution were negligible, absolutely negligible... we rehearsed outdoors, in the summer, we had no space requirements, we had no equipment requirements. The only thing we required of the school was to provide the costumes, which we would take to Holland, in a van, and that was all. The rest... we didn't even need a budget for. I can't think of anything we needed to pay for out of our own pockets... in that respect. The AHRB grant we got went exclusively on travel and hotel. So... actual facilities within the school to enable the work to go ahead were non-existent, effectively, but I can quite see how... it is an issue in a lot of other work, but, again, it wouldn't be a problem here in the sense that we've got very good facilities and we've got technical staff to be able to... help to make it happen. But on THIS occasion, we didn't need it.

31:16

AP

And how have you felt... despite, or I should say accepting that the project was resource-light in that way, how do you feel the resourcing context has affected the actuation, or the devising in the actuation of your research.

31:36

PB

Uhm... on this particular exercise, not at all. But I can quite easily envisage where it might do. And there's a sense in which, I don't think you would want to take on such a project if you couldn't... if you couldn't require those facilities, or indeed... rely on them. You wouldn't bother in the first place, I don't think, 'cause that all starts to come back to the issue of quality. In other words, if you haven't got those facilities, then you can't rely on the business of quality, you can't

produce it, yea? So I don't think you'd do it in the first place. Or you'd be advised not to!

32:28

AP

OK. I suppose this is moving on to another strand of the questions, which is really how the prompting project related to your own past research both conventional written research and practice as research and how it's feeding into your future, or current and future, work.

32:52

PB

I had done a production of the York crucifixion on a farm wagon as part of a series of five plays put on in the streets of York in 1992... and that particular production had had a research question. I was concerned about the nature of direct address... and the way in which medieval texts, and particularly the York plays, are written so as to relate directly to an audience. It's quite clear that they're not required to operate in a bubble, which the audience are privileged voyeurs... these texts do demand a contact with an audience, so I had wanted to find out what the nature of that relationship was... with a modern audience... in order that we might extrapolate what might've gone on with a medieval audience. So the production wasn't a reconstruction, but it DID have this research purpose of what KIND of contact is going on. So we considered ways of... talking AT an audience, talking WITH an audience, talking TO an audience, talking THROUGH an audience. So, the production was directed in such a way as to examine those kinds of issues... and... the actors did not remove eye contact at any stage from the audience. Eye contact was established all the way through. And... through that project I had been excited by the opportunities then of what this kind of production could do as research. It so happened that I was quite critical of the production... in my own terms, but nevertheless I think a lot came out of it that... kind of... excited me about doing other projects, similar projects, of which the prompting exercise was one: But even... having said that, it relates back to the pedagogy issue in terms of... how one teaches, and I had taught through these kinds of criteria before I even did the crucifixion production, so that wasn't a big step either. But actually, and I think where the... where the critical factors come in are probably... AFTER you've established the quality, what do you make of it? (chuckles) In other words, the analysis... then that becomes critical. And with the crucifixion production I think... I was critical of the ways I conducted the analysis. I thought that could be stronger... and in fact some of the ways in which I thought about that were then incorporated into the prompting research, as well.

36:28

AP

What specific areas?

PB

Well... it seemed to me that... if you were dealing with the kinds of conventions that might exist between performer and audience, you could have some... responses which were to do with an observation of wha-... how the audience reacted. But it was likely to be quite general... and... it seemed to me that, if you were having an audience... their responses, from individuals were therefore going to be important. So in the prompting exercise... I asked a number of people in the audience if they would write up their responses... and I... care-... I DID guide them as to what was required, but not sufficiently so that it kind of determined what their responses were... so that the guidance for their responses came in the form of: How did you see this working? How WAS it working? What WAS happening to determine how it was working? And so on. So I prompted them in... sorry, no pun... I... I steered them in terms of, very much, the "how" which is what my... research questions were about anyway. How is this working? And, what makes it work in this way... so, in the end, there were twelve people from around the world who contributed to the final written publication that I did and... between them, those twelve, five-hundred word statements, covered a lot of the responses that had gone on with the colloquium members in a discussion the day after of the performance. So there were two stages there. All the people who were present at the performance were asked what they... thought about it in terms of how it worked... and then some more reflected comments were made in these five-hundred word statements... and that... that way of operating came about because I thought "Well, you just can't generalise about an audience." But what you CAN do is you can take statements from them, which is what I did.

39:12

AP

Right. And how is... your most recent practice as research feeding into current or possible future projects... where are you going to take the prompting work now?

PB

Well... the... one of the comments that a lot of people made, and it's involved in the five-hundred word statements that they contributed, was this lovely ambiguity that exists in the role of the prompter in relation to the audience. The audience are able to see... exactly... what the prompter is doing. The prompter prompts openly. So they can concentrate on that if they want to. But they needn't... they can concentrate entirely on the actors, and forget the prompter. There's a choice that's possible. They can do both! And most often most people do do both, and there's a kind of sophistication from an audience that enables them to concentrate on the prompter AND on the action AND or both, and not to the detriment of the concentration on what's going on. So here's... many of the comments saying, what was fascinating was the way in which the prompter was both inside and outside the action... at the same time, and isn't that fascinating... Yes it is! Wonderfully fascinating! Since doing that project, it's occurred to me in terms of medieval theatre, that there are MORE functionaries who operate in

similar ways. Where there is a narrator... figure, the narrator figure often works both inside and outside the narrative. And there's yet a more interesting figure in medieval theatre, known as the expositor. The expositor occurs in plays in this country and all over Europe... who is a figure standing outside the action, but telling the audience what it is they're going to see and quite often... how they should behave!... in relation to the play. Sometimes the expositor is a character in the play... but nevertheless is both inside and outside the... central action. So these figures, the prompter, the narrator and the expositor are three functionaries who all operate inside and outside the action and condition the nature of the presented play. That's where I want to go next! (laughs) That's what I want to do... I want to do some practical research into the expositor, in particular... 'cause I think the expositor is a very interesting figure, and particularly to... formulate a research purpose that deals with this inside and outside activity. And, again, as perceived by an audience... how does it affect... a) (says letter) the nature of the play and then what an audience makes of it.

43:06

AP

And also raises interesting questions about the very terming them functionaries to begin with.

PB

Yes. Yes. Absolutely... absolutely... yea... yea

43:16

AP

I want to... move on the question about you devising an actuation process and we have talked a little bit about that in general terms, but perhaps if you wanted to... talk about how you came to decide on a particular text... how you worked with the students, and how it actually worked in performance through, or through to performance.

43:41

PB

Yes, I think these decisions are essentially practical ones in practice as research. They need to be. In THIS instance... the play that was selected needed to be one in which the aim and the objectives and the research questions could be focused. The play needed to have sufficient different qualities about it that would enable those, or permit those questions to be asked. So for instance when we're looking at... the research question that was concerned with... the length of scenes, periods of apparent inactivity, long speeches or dialogue... I wanted something that could exercise those concerns. So there needed to be a play that did have all those things, it had dialogue at one level, it had long speeches at another and it had periods of apparent inactivity. And the second thing that... chose the play that we... that enABled the choice of play that we eventually selected, was that it needed to be something that the audience knew so that they

could actually concentrate on what was being done with it, rather than just the... trying to understand a play that they hadn't come across before. So we selected the second shepherd's play from the Wakefield plays... that's the one with Mac the sheep stealer, which everybody knows. But that was the reason for selecting it, so that we could actually concentrate on those different kinds of... scenes within the play. Having done that, it was then a question of engaging the actors... and... these things I think... yes, they were done chronologically... and then to actually rehearse those scenes in order to concentrate on modified roles of the prompter. It was quite clear that, if we were concerned with how the prompter prompted, and the effect that would have, that we needed to exercise a range of possibilities, and what we did was to chose two scenes from the play, again with different requirements, and we then chose to present them five times. Five... other scenes, if you like. So the first two were concerned with... and we didn't know this at this stage, this is how rehearsals developed, this choice, but the first two were played fairly straight in the sense of... each of the two scenes but with the prompter just following behind the actor, and just saying the lines. But in both those cases, the prompter was dressed as a shepherd like the actors were. The third scene was... we took the first scene of the play again, and the prompter was dressed in modern dress, T-shirt and jeans. The fourth one... was to take the first scene again, and on this occasion, we exaggerated the role of the prompter, so that the prompter just didn't follow the actor, but the prompter started to point... where to go, when to do it, and the manner in which it should be done. So the prompter took on a more exaggerated role where he was almost demonstrating to the actor how the actor should do it. And it was quite exaggerated. So that happened to the fourth and fifth sequence that we devised. And... it was choreographic at once sense, certainly directorial... but it was almost the... as if the actor was then being encouraged to copy everything that the prompter did, in terms of the way they acted. So that was the extent of the scale that we devised, and we thought that was important, rather than just assume that the prompter followed the actor at a... set distance. So that was the next thing... to decide how we were going to work on those two scenes. We tried them out and we tried them out here, at Bretton, with an audience, as a means of trying to see whether we'd got the questions right, whether the responses we'd made to the questions were actually being transmitted in performance to an audience and so we performed here, we talked with the audience -- very supportive... audience -- and we took on suggestions that could then modify the work for the performance in Holland. So that was the way we went about it.

49:40

AP

OK. That sounds like a good... Is this a good point to... switch the tape?

CR

Yea. We've got twelve minutes left of the tape.

AP

Oh, we've still got twelve... I thought it was about five... I'll get in another question.

CR

OK, good.

49:48

AP

...because this really follows on from that question of devising in performance... is the question really around evaluation strategies and what kind of evaluation assessment strategies did you set up and how... did they work at the end of the day.

50:17

PB

Well... part of the assessment... came through the audience response here at Bretton, part of it came through the colloquium audience response at Groningen in Holland, part of it came through the five-hundred word statements that were... formalised by colloquium members at Groningen and part of it then through a discussion of all those responses by me in terms of the eventual published journal article. So... the five-hundred word statements formed a body of responses which I then discussed and analysed and because certain kinds of priorities started to emerge from the people writing the five-hundred word statements, that steered ME in terms of the kind of analysis I could then do myself. I refer to it as a discussion. It was an analysis. But using the content, if you like, that the audience had provided.

51:32

Right. OK. ... and although this question, I suppose, comes up a little bit later... it seems appropriate to ask it now... you focusing on the journal article as being in some ways a final outcome from that... have there been further stages based on feedback and assessment of... that... assessment in its loosest terms... that sense of peer response.

52:00

PB

No there haven't. Not in terms of the journal article, certainly not formally. It was always conceived that that would be the entity, if you like... the mechanism by which the research questions were going to be answered. It could do... I mean it could... we could reformulate some more questions and another research purpose that would actually guide some responses. I mean I could pose some very specific questions to people who were in the audience and say "OK. How did what we did relate to these questions?" and I could take it further in that respect. But it seemed to me that the particular aim and objectives that had been established were satisfied by the way in which that was ultimately published... and it was, I think it was in four sections, the piece, one was -- the written piece --

a contextual... section... which dealt with what had already been said and written about prompting in full view of the audience... and that involved all the historical material... then another process was about... another section was about the rehearsal process and how we went about that, and why we went about it in the way that we did, and the third one was the responses in terms of these five-hundred word statements, and the fourth section was my discussion analysis of what they had said, what the rehearsal process had been, and, if you like, an evaluation on the whole project.

53:49

AP

OK. I suppose a short question, really, is the question of... identifying who the maker of the work is, and this is really about the question of the... ethics of collaboration and how we acknowledge authorship of collaborative practices within the single authorship environment of the academy.

54:15

PB

Yes. I think... it had always been known, and I had made it clear right from the outset, that this was my research. I was determining what it was, what it was about, and why it needed to exist. So the students who performed in it knew that right from the start. It was very important to me that the students: a) (says letter) could accept that, but having accepted that that they could be involved in decisions about the way we went about it. And they were. That was partly to involve their own motivation... their own willingness to be involved in this. I said earlier on it was very important that all those people taking part in the research needed to share... their understanding and value of the research purpose. So I went to some length to encourage that from the students. And they did. They did engage in it, in ways that they'd contributed not just a performance but they contributed a whole atmosphere in which that rehearsal and performance took place. It was very positive, and it was professional in the way that they went about it. And it's interesting, you talked about professionalism earlier... it's one of those things in concentrating on those kind of values that I think people in the audience talked about its professionalism after the event. I don't think we talked about professionalism when we did it, although the criteria were in place, by which it could be fostered. Yea. It's... it's one of those things where you... if you often concentrate on the effect, you don't achieve it... if you concentrate on the means by which the thing can come together, you may well achieve it and audience members then talking about professionalism... you know, I think could be viewed in that light, really.

56:50

AP

OK. Before we go on to the next question, which is a longer and involved one, it's probably a good time to switch the tape.

Tape 2

1:13

AP

Right. This is Tape 2 of sixth of February 2004 with Philip Butterworth. Before we... when we were on the first tape we... come to a sort of natural end, and we're really wanting... I'm really wanting to start off this second part of the interview with a discussion around documentation and what you feel the place of documentation is and how it relates to process performance and the notion of multiple outcomes.

1:44

PB

It clearly is important because in performance we're dealing with... an ephemeral... notion that exists while it exists and then it doesn't exist. And in research terms, one of the things about conventional research is that whatever is written, and it is by and large, concerned with the written word, it can exist on the library shelf somewhere and can be consulted twenty years down the line. With the ephemeral performance, it can't, by its very nature. It can't. So the means by which you can make the ephemeral more tangible, is critical and there are different ways of doing that... the video helps up to a point, but even the video isn't the same as the performance, nor is it concerned with the relationship with an audience. So I think documentation is critical, and it IS important that practice as research is able to stand up to that concern... well, how do you make value of this work twenty years down the line? It's critical that practice as research is able to do that. Now, depending on the research imperative, why you're doing what you're doing, how that recording, that documentation, goes on will vary. And there are clearly some more important ways of doing it than there are with others. I could've documented this work with video. I chose not to because I thought it might be more accurate if I took the written word from people in the audience than actually just filming their responses. That wouldn't've told me an awful lot. I could've had a camera on the action. I could've had a camera on the wider action. I could've had a camera on individual actors' responses and the same with the audience. But it seemed to me that that wasn't going to help me realize my intentions. So it was important to work with the written word, and the five-hundred word statements were such that, I thought, that was a length that would give people enough opportunity to actually say what they wanted to say and at the same time not be too long as to be unfocussed, so that within that space, they would be able to say what they thought was important to them and their responses. We did, as it happen, video the performance, but that wasn't part of the purpose. That was just simply because... we recorded it as an event and... that acted as an aide mémoire when it came to writing up, but it wasn't... it's function wasn't any more than that. We also made a sound recording of the discussion at the colloquium the day after, but again, that was only as a record,

as an aide mémoire, it wasn't con-... the research prupose wasn't conceived to have those... take place. So... in this instance, that seemed to be the most appropriate form of documentation, and to be able to actually just bring the disparate aspects of this together. A journal article -- a lengthy one, as it happens -- seems to have been the most appropriate way to do it, although I can conceive of actually... filming... as a way of documenting what happens.

6:24

AP

And how has... what has your relationship been with those various documents, in terms of it touching on the next question about what are the artifacts of... the project and how... where are they located or where are they TO be located and for what purposes, 'cause you've talked about aide mémoire for some things, but is there a sense of locating this range of material outputs?

6:50

PB

In my estimation it was always envisaged that the end point of this work would be a journal article, and that's in *Medieval English Theatre* and that came out in Volume 23 in 2001. It's a journal which is in most university libraries.

7:11

AP

And is there any sense of making any of the video or audio recordings that you made, or any of... particularly, I suppose, of the colloquium... available to other researchers in any way or are you... have you envisaged the journal article to encompass the, I suppose, the meaningful research content of those documents.

7:38

PB

No, I wouldn't use the audio recording OR the video recording simply because I don't think... as... records of the event, they're fine and they're, as it were, working tools for me. I don't think if I use them they... I would be able to exercise the concern for quality that I spoke of earlier, but I wouldn't... that's not an issue because they weren't conceived as being part of the original way of realising the research intention, but no, I wouldn't use them because it's not a particularly good recording and the quality of the audio... for the colloquium... feedback was not that good. I could make out all the questions and the answers and the discussion, but I certainly wouldn't present that... as an item of quality to... realise the research.

8:46

AP

And... I want to move on to the question of contributions to knowledge, because there are clear pathways, I suppose, in terms of the relationship between journal

articles and contributions to knowledge. But I want to consider the prompting project as a totality, in some way, and how you envision the contributions to knowledge of that process as... in addition to the journal article.

9:17

PB

Perhaps a little (sighs)... context is useful here. When I started work on the prompter, I did so in an atmosphere in which this particular evidence that I was working from, Carew's evidence, was very much denigrated by scholars. It was poo-pooed, it was considered that Carew didn't know what he was talking about, AND it was even posed that he'd never seen the thing in action anyway. So all sorts of suppositions were being posited and there was a very negative response from scholars to this evidence. It had always seemed to me that there was some opportunity here, that in fact there could be such a convention. And when I'd seen the... Moros y Cristianos in Trevelez in Spain and seen it actually working, I was even more convinced that it could work and the Carew statement could be perfectly true. So... with that kind of background... it seemed to me that one had a way... I should say also that I'd written quite a bit about... I'd written a number of articles about this, including bringing in the Spanish example and demonstrating that it could work, because it does work, it is used today and, not only in this production I saw in Spain but there are examples of it over South America... again Spanish influence... it happens in South American soaps... where you have a prompter, unseen in this instance, but actors in... soaps in Mexico have ear pieces, they don't learn their lines, they're fed their lines through the earpiece from a stage manager figure in the control room and they have a facility, they've learned how to respond to the prompter's... statements, not in terms of... not MERELY in terms of dialogue, but also in terms of where they move, when they move and how they should express themselves. That happens in South American soaps. So... I thought that I'd taken it as far as I could take it in terms of writing about this and arguing the case for it, and I thought: "Well, if there's such a lot of skeptics out there... then really what might be quite important is if we can DO it and DEMONSTRATE that it works, and what's more be concerned with HOW it works... then... we might be able to take this... discussion on further than just having written about it." So that context was very important... as a way of actually taking the discussion forward, and as practice as research, it produced insights that I hadn't dealt with before in my... my articles. These were things that came up through the practice AND they were things that people actually responded to and witnessed. For instance, the thing I mentioned earlier about being outside and inside at the same time... that wasn't something I'd written about. I don't think that would've come up as an issue had it not been demonstrated in front of people and they responding to it. So... again, that was part of the motivation as to why it was necessary to eg-... FURTHER examine this issue through practice as research, as I said, because I think I'd taken it far... as far as I could take it than just writing about it. Does that deal with the point?

13:42

AP

Yes, yes, yes it does. And moving on from that is the question about dissemination and there are... again there are clear pathways for dissemination with the journal article, but I'm quite interested in your whole process of... of discussion that this... iterative process with audience members and people who are willing to present much more considered... responses in writing to you and how... obviously you wrote those up... analysed them and wrote them up in a journal article, but what about the dissemination that goes on within and amongst and beyond those... that community of audience members.

14:24

PB

Well, I suppose in a sense this was a kind of captured audience. They were there for that purpose at the colloquium to be discussing issues concerning medieval theatre. They were from all over the world and this... this conference, this colloquium happens every three years. So, they were a captive audience from that point of view and they could therefore be encouraged to actually make a contribution because the assessment of that contribution and its value in further discussing the issues concerning... involved in prompting in full view of the audience... would get further dissemination through publication. So... this was a journal that everyone would know about. Probably everyone would read... and, in a SENSE, it's there for all those people but it... because it's in university libraries, the dissemination is wider than that, and... it occupies the same position that any other written material in university libraries occupies.

15:46

AP

But do you have... are you interested in the area of dissemination in non-written, as it were, dissemination... how the knowledges that you're creating around prompting in full view of the audience are disseminated through the performance itself and through those discussions afterwards. How do you see that form of dissemination, I suppose, marrying with more tangible, written... documentary, as it were, dissemination.

16:16

PB

I don't know... If it comes down to the method of expression and the analysis that goes on in relation to the method of expression, that method is... relates to the research aim... so... according to the research aim... determines a) (says letter) the method of expression and then b) (says letter) the method of analysis. It seems to me there's a kind of -- I don't want to use the word "linear" -- development here, because that's not necessarily appropriate, but there is a kind of... there is a natural sequence that can take place once you've discerned... determined the aim and the objectives and the research questions and I think one needs to respond to those, therefore, in the way that the analysis then takes

place and the evaluation takes place. I sent a reminder to all those people who that had agreed to write five-hundred word statements... after the production, a few weeks after, and I said... and I reiterated the aims of the research again and said "Look, folks, this is what this research was concerned with so when you write your five-hundred word statements, write them in the knowledge that this is what we were trying to do in the first place" and, without actually saying it "Don't write about your own hobbyhorses, write about your responses to what we were trying to do.... please".

18:05

AP

And so what have you seen as, I suppose this... in a way it's related to this question of contributions to knowledge but is perhaps more specific and practical XXX use that word... what have you seen as the positive benefits to the practice as research communities... I suppose that could be seen to be specifically within medieval theatre practices, but also beyond to theatre practitioners generally... but also the practice-as -research communities across the subject areas.

18:40

PB

Yes, that's interesting...

AP

What might they gain from...

PB

Yes. I indicated earlier, I think, that I'm the only person I know working in this way in terms of medieval theatre... there aren't many people working in this way in other forms of theatre, either. It always interests me that the nature of the production, and doing research through a production, has such a bad name, and I think that's partly because... the research aim, the objectives, the research questions and methodology aren't rigorously followed. There's no reason why any production can't be dealt with in those terms, providing you are rigorous, providing you are concerned with professionalism, providing you are concerned with quality. Any production can be done. I think probably why it has a bad name is because necessarily those concerns aren't seen to be in operation. But I would encourage my colleagues doing any productions: "OK. Determine your aim, determine your objectives, determine your research questions and your methodology, go and do the production and determine how you're going to assess its relevance... afterwards." I don't see any problem with that whatsoever, providing there is rigour in the way that people go about it... AND... you know... THAT'S what would enable the production to move out of... that area which is just a production as a production. You don't have to have a research purpose behind a production... we've managed without it for... centuries, so... why should we have one now? Well, unless you have a research purpose, you don't need all these things to be in place, but I think it's still possible

to have all these things in place and still do... achieve INsights about any given... play or production. Now... I would... when I set out to do this work, I wasn't interested in... shall we say... doing this for the benefit of the practice-as-research research community. That wasn't in my mind. And, interestingly, even NOW it wouldn't be... because I think one has to concentrate on the very things that you're trying to do, and THEN letting the effect of what you do actually come about as a result of that. It's what I was saying earlier, that if you go for the effect, you probably won't achieve it, or at least it won't be worth anything. But if you go for the inner concerns in your research, then the impact and the effect of the work may have something to offer... now you can't bludgeon people with that, they have to come to it, just as they have to come to it with... conventional research... If I'm conducting conventional research, I want to know who's thought about what I'm working on, or who's done it in analogous terms, and I want to see that in terms of now or historically... and... but I go to IT... IT doesn't come to me, except within the limited terms of reference by which a piece of research like this has been done... yea?... for that audience at Groningen and through the responses from individuals in that audience. Yea? It still exists now as research that people will go to.

22:59

AP

Mm. And of course your participation in these case studies forms... forms another, sort of, set of knowledges for that community to... to look at.

PB

HOPEfully. Yes.

AP

23:12

So... the questions about... What were the problems you encountered and the things you might do differently... were you able to.

23:24

PB

Well (sighs)... there were two possibilities that occurred to me. One was that I might have involved more people than I did, in terms of those five-hundred word statements. There were only twelve who were published... in the journal. But then... reflecting on that again, I wondered whether any more of those twelve might have been superfluous because the range of issues that came up seemed to cover what was being attempted. And the other thing that occurred to me was that I might've pinned down the criteria by which the members of the audience contributed their statements. The difficulty with that is that in pinning it down further, it might have been that I pre-conditioned their responses in a way that I was trying not to when guiding them as to the nature of their contributions as responses to the event, and I wouldn't want to do that. So whilst those are two

things I, sort of, you know, play with, I'm not sure that they would be necessarily things I would change. ...I think it might've been possible to involve other people in the analysis rather than just myself creating the analysis, but that then becomes a piece of action research in the terms that I understand action research, which is that you're dealing with an on-going form in which it doesn't have an end, but is spiral or cyclical in some way and... creates a... an ev-... a continuous evolution of research, I wasn't concerned with action as research, I was concerned with practice as research. But, that's a possibility. You know, you could conduct something like that as a piece of action research, but it might be limited if you were to take it in that way, I think.

25:57

AP

OK. And... sort of winding towards the end of these questions, really, is what has been your experience of having to represent this within the institutional framework of the AHRB, I mean we did discuss this a little bit at the beginning and how you felt about structuring, and I think this has been a theme throughout our conversation, really, is that relationship, but I wondered if you had anything else that you wanted to say about that.

26:27

PB

I think the AHRB criteria are spot on. I think they're well-defined, I think they're potentially rigorous and can create rigour... so much so that I would like to see the AHRB criteria much more up-front in the RAE criteria, so that when we GET the new RAE criteria, I would like to see something which is more sympathetic to the way the arts actually operate. And I think the AHRB criteria ARE sympathetic, they're empathetic. They really do understand something of the way in which artistic processes operate. Now if we could see those in the RAE, that would be great.

27:26

AP

And what specifically do you think about... to do with the AHRB and how it relates to those arts processes, because earlier of course you said that if one were staging a production without a research imperative we wouldn't have to talk about aims, objectives, context methods, so how then does the AHRB's focus on those areas facilitate that and actually link in to other kinds of art practices.

27:54

PB

Well yes it might be that you don't need those criteria in order to do a conventional production, but boy it's not going to kill what you do, it's going to support and encourage and define and clarify what you're trying to do as a production, and I would encourage THAT. It seems to me that these criteria... are there to bring about some rigour in what happens. They're there to bring

about some order, or ordering of what happens. You're dealing with something perhaps which is essentially anarchic, at one end. It's random, potentially random, because you're involving a lot of people in a production, a lot of contributions, you can lose your way, quite easily, and we've all seen productions which have lost their WAY, we've seen individuals that've lost their way. It seems to me... if there's ANYthing about these AHRB criteria it IS that they're there to determine and bring about rigour. And I think ANYthing that brings about rigour is going to help to bring about quality, particularly in the arts. So, yea, I'm... a fan of the AHRB criteria, I really do think they're well-positioned. And whether they were thought up in two minutes flat by somebody, I don't know, or whether they were arrived at through long discussions, I don't know, it almost doesn't matter, the important thing is that those criteria seem to me to be so fundamental to something which is UNorganised, in which you are trying to organize. And all productions are about organizing, in some way or other, to a purpose, and those criteria help you define that purpose.

30:03

AP

And I wonder if you might, because we've talked a bit about how you conceive of the term "professionalism" and how you conceive of the word "quality" but another one of those thorny terms is that term "rigour" which I think means very differently to different XXXXX people.

30:21

PB

We all think we know what rigour means in scholarly terms and conventional rigour in research where we're actually talking about... professionalism MIGHT be involved... we're talking about an intellectual ability to... actually... organize, analyse, evaluate... something. I think we have the same concern through production and so the criteria are those which you take on in research terms. There may be other criteria which are about the nature of theatre that can be brought to bear, but then... by whom? By the people who are doing the research? Or by an audience? An audience may be more or less informed in terms of such criteria, but that's infinitely variable. Rigour in performance is about achieving that which you set out to achieve. I think that's the first thing. So, in order to achieve that, you must know what you are trying to achieve. We come back to the AHRB criteria. But it can't... rigour can't be determined in performance... outside that realization of your intention. You HAVE to do that first and foremost. If you DON'T do that, you haven't got rigour, you're not likely to produce quality, or professionalism. And so rigour is a means of achieving, it seems to me, quality... and therefore, come back to some of the OTHER things we talked about, quality through skill, skills, skills of actors, skills of directors... skills of organizing the environment in which the activity takes place so that they all conspire to realize... the purpose.

32:53

AP

OK. And I suppose the final, official, question, we've talked about how appropriate you feel the AHRB institutional framework is for discussing... your project and your practice as research... and how appropriate do you feel this particular kind of interview context, i.e. the questions I've been putting to you, are in terms of discussing your practice as research beyond your other material outputs.

33:25

PB

Well (sighs)... I think I... it's one thing just to converse about these issues and that's fine. I would be concerned in conversing about it that I got all the points in that I would want to get in... I might do that better if I write it down... because then I would make all the connections that I would want to make in terms of the questions you've put to me. So... if the written word, which is a bit more thought about, can exist side by side with the interview context, I'd be quite happy about that. I think that would be appropriate. But it may be that you're not necessarily getting the things answered that you want answered through... just simply through an interview of this kind.

34:27

AP

What do you think we haven't touched on. This is... this is the sort of... this is an additional or... question, really... or a side-... a sideways approach to that final question about the appropriateness of this context in discussing these issues, what haven't... what haven't we covered that is central to your practice as research.

34:54

PB

I don't think we have missed anything in the sense that... I don't think this is too difficult. I think there may be a lot of discussion which loses sight of why practice as research might be valuable. Understand that. That's necessary perhaps. But it's not difficult if a) (says letter) you're used to practice and you're not threatened by practical criteria and what you may draw from practice and applying the appropriate criteria to that practice. This isn't difficult. I think people... a lot of people are not very CONFIDENT about it... and that's maybe something that... that the development of this work could be concerned with: how do we help people to become confident in dealing with practice as research that brings about rigour, that brings about quality. I think THAT could be something that could be further developed because, in some ways I think there's no point in DOING practice as research if in fact you're not needing to do the practice in order to find OUT something. If you can find out about it through conventional research, then DO that. You don't need practice as research. If on the other hand you DO need to do the practice in order to find something out which you wouldn't otherwise know, then you've got to do the practice, but you've also got to be confident about the

fact that the PRACTice is CAPable of producing the results that you want produced. Now anything that could be done in THAT respect I think would be a great service to the research community.

37:13

AP

Well this is the big question, how to talk about the practice, how to draft and think about criteria that speak meaningfully about quality, because there's a lot of talk around "we need to talk about value" but very little specific discussion around what that actually means.

37:33

PB

Well one of the things I would suggest that might be done is... these issues might be dealt with practically, so that, I don't know, for example some workshops might be devised whereby the purpose of the workshop was to just take some material, an issue, a concern... which you then test against the criteria that the AHRB require and say "C'mon, right, how are we going to do this?" "What are we going to do?" and then within the restricted terms of the material that you've selected, you DO it, in the workshop. Why do you do it that way and not that way? Well, that's all discussable, isn't it, in the workshop, but I would've thought that that's possible. It would have to be something quite tight and... and small in content so that you could really expand the problems in a workshop, but I would've thought that might be... quite useful, better than writing about it because there's a sense in which if you WANT practice as research to be valued, then, c'mon, put your money where your mouth is: do it, and perhaps a workshop, something of that kind, would be a useful, practical way of encouraging people to have the confidence about taking on those criteria, without any mystification or, at least, possibly, attempting to demystify through the process.

39:29

AP

Because there still remains that sense of "we can recognize good work, but how do we actually make that transparent?"

39:36

PB

Yes. Yes. And I think workshops would do it. And if some people could be carefully selected to run those workshops then I think, yea, I think that would be extremely valuable, and may itself be written up, you know, and then disseminated further.

40:00

AP

Well, that's the end of our questions, so it's the end of the formal interview, so I wanted thank you very much for participating and again for spending so much time with us.