Dancing with inter-disciplinarity: strategies and practices in higher education Dance, Drama and Music

Paul Carr, Rea Dennis, Richard Hand

October 2014

Contents

List of figures and acknowledgements

Authors

Paul Carr is Reader in popular Music Analysis at the University of South Wales' ATRiuM campus in Cardiff. Prior to moving into academia full time he was an established musician, recording with artists such as James Taylor Quartet (Get Organised 1989), The Jazz Renegades (Freedom Samba 1990) and legendary American Jazz saxophonist Bob Berg (A Certain Kind Of Freedom 1990). His research interests are varied, with subject areas ranging from the impact of electric guitarists on the jazz canon (Cambridge University Press 2008), pedagogical frameworks for work based learning (Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education 2010), Welsh National Identity in music (Popular Music History, 2010) and the Welsh Music Industry (Higher Education Academy (2012). Much of his recent work has focused on Frank Zappa, with publications ranging from Zappa's interface with Musical Theatre (Studies in Musical Theatre 2007), musical gesture (Popular Music Online 2008), tribute artists (Contemporary Theatre Review 2011) and Sex (Beitraege zur opularmusikforschung 2010). His most recent publication is an edited collection for Ashgate publishers – Frank Zappa and the And (2013). He also occasionally works as a forensic musicologist for major record companies and is currently working on a monograph on Sting (Reaktion, 2015).

Richard J. Hand is Professor of Theatre and Media Drama at the University of South Wales (Cardiff). He is the founding co-editor of the Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance, an international peer-reviewed journal which features "traditional" academic articles as well as explorations of creative practice and pedagogy. In addition to adaptation and translation studies, his interests include interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinarity in performance media (with a particular interest in historical forms of popular culture) using critical and practical research methodologies. He is the co-author of two books on Grand-Guignol theatre (Exeter University Press, 2002 and 2007), three books on radio drama (McFarland 2006, Continuum 2011 and Manchester University Press 2014), two books on Joseph Conrad (Palgrave 2005 and Rodopi 2009) and has published translations of plays by Victor Hugo (Methuen 2004) and Octave Mirbeau (Intellect 2012). He has co-edited academic volumes on Conrad, Horror Film and Radio. As a practitioner he has directed radio and stage plays in the UK and US.

Rea Dennis is an artist-scholar with specialisms in Contemporary Performance Practices, Improvisation and Interdisciplinarity, and Ensemble/Performer Training. She holds a PhD from Griffith University and lectures in Drama and Performance within the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University, Melbourne. A theatre maker and performer, Rea is co-artistic director of Lembrança Theatre Company. Her work has toured to New York, Taiwan, Germany, Brazil and Japan. She is an Australian and has lived aboard spending significant periods of time working in the UK and in Brazil. Her research papers on performance writing, improvisation, and refugee performances have appeared in a range of peer-reviewed journals. She is co-editor of a special issues on Telematics and Performance for e-journal Liminalities and is on the Editorial Board of Arts in the Community.

Introduction

Often responding to government agendas, it is not uncommon for university research strategies to include inter-disciplinarity by default, by supporting multidisciplinary collaborations across the institution, nationally and internationally – industry and business being a particular focus.

In order to provide some initial context, the objectives of this project were to:

1. Summarise what the current situation is re inter-disciplinary strategies and practices in relation to HE Dance, Drama and Music
2. Identify institutional/enablers and inhibitors
3. Function as a guide to successful strategies and practices for the sector
4. Provide recommendations about measures institutions might take in order to prepare for and implement these practices

In the context of academia, the concept of a *discipline* implies the rigors and specialist knowledge appertaining to a specific field of study. In addition, the alternative connotation of discipline – that of 'adhering to the rules' – has a certain resonance in this context. A Biblical phrase, "the ivory tower", may have been first used with a sense of noble purity, but it eventually became a byword for the concept of academic endeavour sequestered away from the distractions and irrelevancies of the wider world. It has been a small step for the ivory tower to become the most damning image of academia: scholars of the same discipline talking to each other and thereby preaching to the converted. In other words, adherence to the rules becomes a pedantic *over-adherence* to the rules. In this light, the inmates of the ivory tower are closeted away and too much enamoured with their discipline in a scholastic commitment which proves nothing other than the absurd irrelevancy of their inquiry and discovery to the 'real' world. In our contemporary context, there seems to be increasingly little tolerance for what is perceived as a 'silo mentality' and the parochial.

As a case in point, the introduction of the impact criteria in the Research Excellence Framework has compelled scholars to consider and evidence how their academic work has a *tangible* effect on the world beyond higher education. Increasingly, the development of *inter-disciplinary* approaches is one example of a dynamic solution to the perceived problem: scholars working together more actively and learning from each other and thereby permitting more potential for impact and outreach.

At this point it is helpful to consider the complexity of terminology. The word 'inter-disciplinary' has become something of a catch-all for a number of academic practices. These include:

Multi-disciplinary: where students/staff from more than one discipline engage in a common learning, teaching or assessment activity;

Cross-disciplinary: where aspects of one discipline can be explained in terms of another;

Trans-disciplinary: where students/staff study in a way that blurs or even ignores traditional discipline boundaries to adopt a more holistic approach to learning/research;

Collaborative mode: where students/staff work together but adhere to their disciplines;

Integrated mode: where practitioners work together and sample each other's discipline;

Intra-disciplinary: where collaboration takes place within a discipline.

In the terms of this report on inter-disciplinarity, our understanding of the key term is:

Inter-disciplinary: where students/staff from more than one discipline learn with, from and about one another through a common activity, usually in the context of practice.

The rise of inter-disciplinarity has not occurred without debate and controversy. It is a topic that is aired fairly regularly in forums such as the *Times Higher Education*. For example, in his article 'Crossing borders can lead to gold - but so can digging deep' (18 June 2009), Robert A. Segal states that inter-disciplinarity has become 'touted as the intellectual equivalent of penicillin' in its ability to advance knowledge. Segal goes on to challenge the idea that it is only inter-disciplinarity that can offer academic progress:

> Specialisation is not always pedantry, and comparativism is not always profundity. Specialisation can enlist subtlety and refinement, and comparisons can be superficial. (…) Those who do not leave their home disciplines are not ostriches. (Segal, 2009)

In contrast, Michael Worton's essay for *Times Higher Education*, 'Big picture from all angles' (21 February 2013), takes an opposing position in arguing that humanities-based inter-disciplinarity has a key role to play in the crises of the 21st century which encompass problems ranging from 'the financial crisis to conflict, climate change and poverty':

> Solutions are most likely to come from inter-disciplinary thinking. People approach problems from different historical, geographical and cultural perspectives. Academics also approach problems from what can be different methodological backgrounds, which influences the ways they see problems and propose solutions. (Worton, 2013)

The knowledge and discipline-specific expertise that one scholar brings to a forum of others can harmonise with the alternative expertise; elucidate wider issues and even solve problems that some disciplines (and even society in general) have long struggled with. In the light of this, Worton highlights what he regards as the regrettable undermining of the humanities:

> Given the range and complexity of global challenges, the marginalisation of the humanities in educational systems seems perverse. After all, the humanities are devoted to the study of the human condition and the ways in which individual and collective subjectivities contribute to shaping and improving it. For centuries the humanities were at the heart of education, and the study of art, history, languages and literature played determining roles in shaping concepts of national identity. Yet in recent decades governments have shifted focus away from the humanities, slashing funding and, more importantly, diminishing their influence. (Worton, 2013)

In essence, Worton sees an inter-disciplinary approach within the arts and humanities and its application more widely to be not simply advantageous, but an urgent necessity.

Despite the impassioned nature of the debate, which finds scholars from a range of areas contesting terminology and perceived implications, it is important to stress that inter-disciplinarity is nothing new. In some fields of academia such as Statistics, inter-disciplinarity has always been the subject's *raison d'être* and its advances in knowledge have impacted upon, and been applied to, the widest range of 'other' disciplines imaginable. Indeed, sometimes advancement in knowledge can be assessed by its impact and uptake in fields other than its own. In the area of the arts and humanities, the development of an individual's skill base can be seen to straddle, infiltrate and echo through a range of disciplines. In some higher education Drama courses, students encounter disciplinarian expertise in performing, writing (both creative and academic), directing, technology and scenography. Likewise, Music students often seamlessly integrate the generic skills of composition, performance and technology. Does this create Jacks of all trades? We would rather suggest that the richest of work and the roundest of individuals can frequently emerge from these processes. Furthermore, the exploration of key terms shared by different disciplines can be enlightening. For example, words such as 'performance', 'improvisation' and 'ensemble' are core concepts within each of the areas of Dance, Drama and Music, although the precise usage can vary. The negotiation of terminology in inter-disciplinary contexts has proved central to some practical pedagogical experiments (Carr and Hand, 2013).

Methodology

A short review of relevant literature surrounding issues of inter-disciplinarity was initially undertaken in order to establish an understanding of terminology as well as to gain a sense of traditional and contemporary perspectives on the field.

This was followed by conducting a review of current UK courses with an Inter-Disciplinary focus on Dance, Drama and Music, in addition to implementing an online questionnaire – in which a range of stakeholders in the UK and, to a lesser extent, the international higher education sector were asked to participate. The intention of the questionnaire was to obtain an initial broad understanding of the key issues surrounding the four objectives highlighted above.

After the data from the questionnaire was assimilated, a number of individual interviews were arranged, in order to provide samples of individual case studies of inter-disciplinary practitioners.

Brief review of literature

An emphasis on inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary collaboration has been driven by global research agendas in recent years. Emerging out of shifting public funding demands and in response to global knowledge-economy agenda, disciplines such as health are working more closely with humanities, law with social work, education with IT, and arts with science for example, in a climate in which creativity and innovation have become the norm. Julie Thompson Klein (1990 cited in McCoy and Gardner 2012) situates the momentum toward inter-disciplinarity in the way it aids in responses to compelling global problems. McCoy and Gardner (2012) extend this, suggesting that the pressure on research and teaching to be more inter-disciplinary is driven more by the strategic demand of "capitalizing on scarce resources and procuring more in the future" (np).

Regardless of impetus, the UK research agenda generally has embraced inter-disciplinarity with AHRC funding guidelines pushing this emphasis in both the 2008 and upcoming 2014 research assessment activity (Llewellyn 2013). The rise of inter-disciplinarity further confronts academics in a climate where expectations of involvement in inter-disciplinary research or with inter-disciplinary approaches are stitched into the metrics for promotion and tenure. Universities are similarly searching for innovative ways to build similar agendas into learning and assessment opportunities for students.

The main focus of this study is on undergraduate education, in particular Music, Dance and Drama. This literature review does not seek to duplicate recent work on the nature and scope of the concept of inter-disciplinarity, such as the 2007 study commissioned by The Higher

Education Academy and undertaken by Angelique Chettiparamb (2007) at the University of Southampton. Whilst being informed by such work, the purpose herein is to consider the way in which universities are integrating opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration into curriculum. We are calling it inter-disciplinary[2]; does it matter? Mostly what we mean is – students who are studying in one specific degree stream who get the chance to work with students studying in another. Virginia Sapiro (2004) reports that it is the research-extensive universities that have taken the lead on embedding inter-disciplinary "principle-based structures and opportunities" in undergraduate curriculum (3). The performing arts have a long history of inter-disciplinary practice born out of necessity as artists work within the ebb and flow of public policy decisions and resultant resource priorities and allocations; where the political climate directs the necessity for artists to seek partners and sponsors, and the results contributing to the emergence of new in a range of practices, and so on. This report seeks to explore intra-arts collaborations where the diversity arises from within the differing art practices of Drama, Music and Dance.

Establishing genuine learning experiences for undergraduates to engage in such collaborations varies from context to context. There can be complications within the current climate where "students face a proliferation of inter-disciplinary courses" (Sapiro 2004: 28). Jerry A Jacobs (2014) identifies this as a major concern stating that teams must be set-up to succeed. Commenting predominantly on the North American situation, Jacobs states that the factors that converge when seeking to optimise the success of inter-disciplinary project team must be seen as evidence for the academy to re-embrace disciplinary silos. This way, he claims, students will first come to know their disciplinary boundaries. Jacobs (2014: 35) usefully explains that in addition to devoting significant attention to solving problems, disciplines also attempt to systematise knowledge without having to focus on immediate vocational or practical concerns. He clarifies that the discipline is preoccupied with the "intrinsic value of knowledge" and that differentiates it from applied fields more "oriented to immediate utility." Thus the inter-disciplinary project for the undergraduate engages the student in a process of applying their disciplinary knowledge to an immediate problem or event.

Lyall, Bruce, Tait and Meagher (2011: np) reinforce this framework. In their consideration of inter-disciplinarity in research teams, they highlight the value of mixed discipline experiences as a way to broaden knowledge and understanding of content, form and methodology. They promote

---

[2] In her substantial review of literature Interdisciplinarity: A Literature Review for the Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Group within Britain's Higher Education Academy, Angelique Chettiaramb (2007) undertook an exhaustive consideration of the term Interdisciplinary.

the "benefits of learning in some depth about the content and approaches to problem-solving of at least two or three quiet different subjects", claiming that inter-disciplinary experiences provide undergraduates with opportunities to "synthesize and connect what you learn in many different departments". Given the potential richness of such an experience, it is essential to acknowledge that genuine inter-disciplinarity requires time. Recognising and experiencing the time it takes to establish the conceptual playing field so that the collaborators can communicate is part of the required learning for the undergraduate. Ensuring a successful and sustainable experience of inter-disciplinary learning requires commitment from the teachers.

Finding and establishing a useful conceptual framework that will sustain students as they go about working through the process dilemmas within set time constraints presents challenges for the teaching team. Sapiro emphases the importance of team-teaching so that students have the opportunity to witness discipline-specific colleagues negotiating across their discipline language, methods and approaches. This way, the students observe the way in which the team members invest time in carving out the *new* ground of the collaboration. Sapiro also outlines the various challenges that confront the artist-teacher. "Fashioning great inter-disciplinary teaching and learning, as its practitioners have found, is very hard work."(34) The commitment from teachers is tangible:

> Becoming inter-disciplinary, becoming a collaborative partner in inter-disciplinary teaching or research, requires both hard scholarly work on the part of scholar/teachers who participate and extended and sometimes difficult communication, interaction, negotiation, and compromise among collaborative partners … sought means to create the physical, intellectual, and time spaces for engaging in the many different tasks involved with becoming inter-disciplinary. (Sapiro, 2004: 19)

It is expected that the student will aspire to match the investment of time by the tutor if they are to be effective. The ever-shrinking trimester length serves to further inhibit the scope of the possible projects that students might deliver; and therefore will inhibit the degree of inter-disciplinarity that projects can expect to show. In his critique of best practice within British HE institutions, David M Shultz (forthcoming) expresses frustration at the way in which administrative and accounting procedures have priority, leading to significant road blocking of innovative curriculum. He argues that anything that requires creative approaches to space and time resources, such as an integrated timetable, shared spaces, flexible resources and responsive timelines comes down to the individual teacher commitment. He also identifies the compression of Bachelor courses from what would be four years in USA (with 15= week semesters) to a three-year (11-week) term structure in the UK stating:

> With such a short time to obtain a degree, however, programmes necessarily are more rigid, offering fewer electives and fewer courses in total than in the US. Furthermore,

UK students take more of their courses within a single academic programme, rarely exploring courses outside their intended degree. For example, science students needing differential equations or statistics may be taught these courses within their own department rather than by an instructor within the Mathematics department. (Shultz, forthcoming, not yet paginated)

The teachers' approach is fundamental in the success of students achieving learning outcomes in relationship to inter-disciplinarity. According to Stephen Lehman (2009), ideally, the teaching artist will model the inter-disciplinary approach. In his study investigating the potential for Architecture students, Lehman emphasises the need for the inter-disciplinary approaches to equip students with supporting principles for the process; referring Lattuca, Voight & Fath's (2004 cited in Lehman 2000: 2) useful paradigm –'Conceptual Inter-disciplinarity':

> Conceptual inter-disciplinary includes disciplinary perspective; it has no compelling disciplinary focus. Conceptual inter-disciplinarity also accommodates poststructuralist, postmodern, and feminist forms of inquiry, which explicitly critique the disciplines and may contend that all questions require inter-disciplinary answers.

Lehman (2009: 5) also discusses the value of student-artists working alongside emerging and established artists so that they come to better understand the rigours of working conceptually. He states urges students to embrace the contemporary premise that "art is increasingly activity-based, rather than object-based" and that inter-disciplinary practice is inherently collaborative and facilitates innovation "changing art practice through participatory processes" which brings means that students are enabled to shift into an inquiry based learning model. Sapiro (2004) warns that inconsistencies in teaching approaches and lack of clarification in project purposes sabotage student experience. She reports: "The problem many students have with multidisciplinary team teaching is that the instructors often do not model the behavior to which they want the students to aspire." (Sapiro, 2004: 28)

Further, inter-disciplinarity poses many challenges and teaching teams might also encounter resistance amongst undergraduates. Drawing on Lattuca, McCoy and Gardner (2012) suggest that this arises from negative previous experience, from team composition and issues of compatibility and suitability, and lack of role definition. McCoy and Gardner (2012, np) report

> Certain experiences, dispositions, and characteristics also predict greater success at and satisfaction with inter-disciplinary collaboration. For example, we found that faculty and doctoral students with undergraduate degrees from liberal arts colleges tended to be most comfortable with inter-disciplinarity and expressed the least amount of concern about working with scholars from different disciplines. (McCoy and Gardner, 2012, np)

Many inter-disciplinary successes arise when there is a problem to solve. A problem-centred practice can support learners to find common ground early as each team member sorts out their own disciplinary relationship to the problem. Success can also rely on strategic guiding by teachers so that there is adequate diversity in the group; and also, that the group is composed of the *right* disciplines.

Despite the focus here on undergraduate learning experiences, a worthwhile final area to mention is that surrounding issues of ownership and authorship. These issues can arise when designing criteria and then subsequently negotiating the rigours of assessment. Alix Dobson, and Wilsmore (2010) suggest that learning is mapped to assessment criteria and that criteria are explicit in the way that the process of collaboration forms part of the assessment alongside the tangible practical outcomes of the inter-disciplinary project. Learning can further be explored through structures that support the reflexive elements of collaboration (see Romm (1998), cited in Chettiaramb 2007). The dilemmas surrounding separating out individual credit becomes another area in which students will encounter some of the grey areas of the industry. Toronto-based inter-disciplinary digital arts collaborators Lindsay MacDonald, John Brosz, David Ledo, Sheelagh Carpendale and Miguel A. Nacenta (2013, np) have recently published a series of co-authored papers about this fraught area. The authored works speak about a range of issues they encountered in conceiving the artworks, making the art works, and then writing about the project. They state:

> Art/Science collaborations are increasing every day. Yet despite their growth and acknowledgement, there is still little documentation of the practice. As the frequency of these collaborations increases, one might think that the discussions around how these collaborations work would resolve. In contrast, it is our experience that the issues in these collaborations continue to be in intense debate. As a group we have actively taken part in these collaborations over the last two years and we have in various groups and sub-groups contributed two interactive installations, and six papers. In our experience authorship remains an ongoing discussion.

Thus, the discussion surrounding the scope and value of inter-disciplinarity brings with it the same sense of shifting ground that appears to be inherent in inter-disciplinary practice. All creative practice is synonymous with doing and making, and as Ingold (2013) argues, the thinking is implicit in the doing. Does this then mean that doing *together* is indicative of thinking together? The notion of collaboration is not fully elaborated within this report, however it is necessary to state that in the context of this study, inter-disciplinarity is premised on collaborative practice/s and thus is characterised by a multi-lingual technical environment that may, in most cases, be underpinned by a specific kind of communication in which collaborators tell by showing, and talk by making, and work out ways to communicate within their diverse intuitive approaches.

Meanwhile, academics continue to work toward creating learning environments in which students might access genuine opportunities to engage with inter-disciplinary intention.

A snapshot of current UK courses with an inter-disciplinary focus on Dance, Drama and Music

This chapter provides a snapshot of indicative undergraduate and postgraduate courses which facilitate Drama, Dance and Music students to *directly participate* in practices in one or more sister disciplines on an 'integrated' basis – where practitioners may not only *work together*, but actually sample cogent disciplines. It is important to point out that these practices are distinct from courses which enable inter-disciplinary practice to take place either on an extracurricular basis – or via what can be described as a 'collaborative mode' – for example where Drama, Dance and Music students simply work on joint ventures with each other – but only practice their own disciplines. This type of practice will however be examined via the case studies interviews later in this report. Much of the detail of first part of this chapter was ascertained from analysing the UCAS website with the following keywords

'Music Drama'
'Music Dance'
'Drama Dance'
'Music Drama Dance'

The resultant table below is not intended as a definitive list of current undergraduate provision, but more a snapshot of some of the Joint/Major/Minor awards that are currently taking place in the UK. The headings within the table are not intended to highlight what the awards exclusively focus upon – but are more indicative of major focuses, according to details on course websites.

Performing Arts

Before providing an analysis of undergraduate courses that provide the opportunity for Dance/Drama/Music students to actually engage directly with each others' disciplines, it is important to note that Performing Arts awards are not included on the aforementioned spreadsheet due to the sheer number of awards available, in addition to the potential vagueness of what the terminology means. For example, while an award such as the Anglia Ruskin University Performing Arts degree has a specific and overt Music and Drama focus (allowing the student 'the

opportunity to explore their connections and the creative potential of both disciplines')[3], the award at Buckingham New University appears to be more related to TV and Stage, while the Creative and Performing Arts degree at Liverpool Hope University aims to facilitate study across Dance, Drama and Music. After scrutinising the UCAS website, it is apparent that there is a common tendency for many Performing Arts awards to be delivered on college campuses, either independently or via franchise agreements. It is also common to see specific focuses/pathways in subject areas such as theatre, Dance, Music Theatre and Music, in addition to joint awards with related subject areas such as Events Planning. It is also important to highlight that in the majority of Performing Arts Awards – 'music' is often equated to 'singing', which is understandable considering the vocational nature and lack of formal musical training required to enter many of these awards. Similarly, when theatre is discussed within the context of Performing Arts schemes, it can be equated with Music Theatre or, more precisely, Musical theatre in the sense of 'musicals'.

Major/Minor/Joint Awards

As this report is not intended as a critique of individual institutions, the narrative focuses on general trends, in addition to the occasional more detailed discussion of practices that are of specific interest. Unsurprisingly, when searching for more than one subject area (i.e. Music Dance), the majority of awards highlighted via the UCAS search were of 'joint' or 'major/minor' construction.[4] One of the most noticeable factors when examining institution websites is that a large proportion of institutions advertise their joint awards by simply describing how both subject areas function *independently* – with little or no discussion of how they work *collectively*, or more importantly *collaboratively*. This tendency often includes independent course descriptions, student reflections, module guides, course handbooks, etc. It was also noticeable how a small number of joint awards exist via UCAS, but are not substantiated with any detail on university websites. This indicates on the surface at least that the awards are available *in theory*, possibly as part of a wider university policy – but are not necessarily put into practice. One fascinating tendency is the emergence of joint awards which embrace the science-art continuum being encouraged by funding bodies such as the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA). For example, the University of Derby offers a merger of Popular Music Production and Theatre Studies, Kingston University offers unions of Creative Music Technology and Dance, in addition to Creative Music Technology and Drama. Although the merging of popular music with subject areas such as Biology and Mathematics at the University of Derby

---

[3] See
http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/prospectus/ugft/w491.html?utm_source=performingarts&utm_medium=url&utm_campaign=ugftprospectus&utm_content=performingarts.marketing.jun10
[4] Some awards use the term 'and' to equate to a joint award (for example 'music and dance'), and 'with' to indicate a major-minor relationship (for example music with dance).

might indicate that the arts – science continuum is being strategically explored, the addition of subjects such as Marketing, Creative Writing and American Studies as part of their portfolio indicate the likelihood that these unions may be part of a wider university policy, although this does not negate the opportunity it affords students.

As with Performing Arts awards, many Musical Theatre-based courses also tend to equate 'music' more or less exclusively to 'singing'. As vocal technique is the prime skill a Music Theatre practitioner will require, this relationship is again understandable. An interesting exception to this tendency is the BA in Music Theatre at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, which states that it offers its students "conservatoire level tuition in acting, singing, Dance, and Music (on [a]chosen instrument)".[5] The award includes a 'cross conservatoire' module with a specific focus of developing "practical collaborative skills",[6] facilitating potential opportunities for cross-disciplinary interaction – were students can understand their specialist creative practices through the lens of another discipline. What is particularly interesting about this award is the capacity for Dance and Drama students to study a subject area normally associated with single honours Music courses – songwriting. Additionally, all students get the opportunity to examine self-employment, public performance and artist development – with the emphasis being on the 'holistic' artist – as opposed to the more common subject specific career paths.

To conclude this section, it is apparent from this simple UCAS search, that Dance/Drama/Music undergraduate courses in the UK have a pervasive, although fairly select practice, of enabling students to directly participate in each other's disciplines – often through major/minor/joint, or performing arts based routes. Although this will be specifically explored later in the report, on the surface at least (i.e. as indicated on award websites), the majority of institutions have a tendency to describe how subjects work independently – as opposed to collectively. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that this is a direct result of the ways institutions often develop their major/minor/joint provision – i.e. independently as opposed to collectively. A relatively small number of undergraduate awards have begun the process of overtly exploring areas such as the performing arts – science continuum, and the ways in which knowledge gained in one discipline can be applied in another – factors that once again will be explored later in the report.

---

[5] See http://www.rcs.ac.uk/undergraduate/mt/
[6] See http://www.rcs.ac.uk/undergraduate/mt/outline.html

Table of undergraduate joint/major/minor provision in the UK

Course Title	Institution/School	Notes
Drama-Music		
Drama Studies/Music	Bath Spa University/ School of Music and Performing Arts	Joint award
Creative Studies and Music	Bangor University	
Drama and Music	The University of Birmingham/Schools of Drama and Theatre Arts and Language, Cultures, Art History and Music	Joint award
Applied Drama and Music and Applied Drama with Music	Bishop Grosseteste University/School of Culture and Creative Arts	Joint/Major-Minor
Drama and Music	The University of Hull/ School of Drama Music and Screen	Joint award. Course description includes a broad mix of Drama in Music – ranging from theatre history to musicology.
Popular Music Production and Theatre Studies	University of Derby/Electronics and Sound Subject Group and School of Humanities	Joint award
Drama Performance and Musical Theatre	University of Cumbria	Joint award. Musical Emphasis

Performance/Performance Subject Area		on singing
Creative Music Technologies and Drama	Kingston University	Joint award
Music and Drama	Kingston University	Joint award
Drama and Music/Popular Music. Dept of Contemporary Arts	Manchester Metropolitan University	Joint awards
Drama/Popular Music	The University of Northampton	Joint award
Drama/Music/School of Arts	Oxford Brookes University	Joint award
Drama and Music	Royal Holloway, University of London	Joint award
Dance and Movement Studies and Popular Music Production	University of Derby	Joint award
Music Theatre	Edge Hill University	Overtly states that it focuses on Drama and Music (not Dance)
Drama Dance Music		
Musical Theatre	Blackpool and Fylde College	Validated by Lancaster University.
FDA Musical Theatre and BA (hons) Musical Theatre	Amersham and Wycombe College	Validated by Buckinghamshire New University One year 'top-up' open to all eligible students
Musical Theatre	The Manchester College	Course aims to produce actors who can sing and dance

Music Theatre	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	Includes more 'musical' based tuition such as songwriting. Overtly collaborative
Musical Theatre	University of the West of Scotland/School of Creative and Cultural Industries	Two year course with direct Entry in to year three
Musical Theatre	University of West London/London College of Music	No details on how it is constructed
Music Theatre	Falmouth University/Academy of Music and Theatre Arts	
Musical Theatre; Music and Musical Theatre; Music With Musical Theatre	University of Chichester/Department of Music	Single, Joint and Major/Minor. Single award mixes dance, Drama and singing.
Dance Performance and Musical Theatre Performance/Performance Subject Area	University of Cumbria	Joint award. Musical Emphasis on singing
Professional Dance and Musical Theatre	University of East London	Music input is singing only
Professional Dance and Musical Theatre	University of Greenwich	Music input is singing only
Drama with Music and Music with Drama	The University of Ulster	Major/Minor awards
Music- Dance		
Creative Music Technologies and Dance	Kingston University	Joint award

Dance/Music	Bath Spa University	Joint award
Music and Dance	Kingston University	Joint award
Dance and/with Music, Music with Dance	Canterbury Christ Church University	Joint/major/minor awards

Music Theatre (Dance)	University of Chichester	Offers mix of Dance, Acting and Singing
Dance with Music and Music with Dance	The University of Ulster	Joint/Major/Minor awards
Drama Dance		
Dance and Movement Studies and Theatre Studies	University of Derby	Joint award
Dance/Drama Studies	Bath Spa University	Joint award
Dance and Drama	Edge Hill University	Joint/major/minor awards
Dance and Theatre	Lancaster University	Joint award
Dance and Drama & Theatre Studies	Liverpool Hope University	Joint/major/minor awards
Drama and Dance	University of Northampton	Joint
Royal Holloway	Drama and Dance	No details available
University of Sunderland	Dance and/with Drama	Joint/major/minor awards
The University of Ulster	Dance and/with Drama	Joint/major/minor awards
The University of Winchester	Choreography & Dance and Drama	Joint/major/minor awards
University of Wolverhampton	Dance and Drama	Joint/major/minor awards

Indicative postgraduate provision

It was decided not to produce a spreadsheet of postgraduate provision, so what follows is a short indicative snapshot of representative awards that are currently available, which have a Dance/Drama/Music inter-disciplinary focus The keywords incorporated in the search were the same as those used in the UCAS undergraduate search, but this time using the UKPASS search engine.

According to its website, the MA Popular Performances at the University of Winchester enables students to engage in the advanced study of popular performances, ranging from pantomime to X Factor. As indicated in the title, the award specifically focuses on notions of the popular, examining the multiple relationships between production and reception, in addition to outwardly engaging in student practice. The ontological spaces between production and reception are of course an excellent conduit for inter-disciplinary work and this award appears to facilitate this by "identifying how methods of enquiry used in one instance might apply to a greater range of materials".[7] Students have the option to either "explore several genres before identifying a topic for Independent Study",[8] or alternatively to focus exclusively on one genre. The institution also runs a Devised Performance MA.

Like the MA Popular Performances award, the MA and MRes in Performance and Creative Research at the University of Roehampton aims to position "performance as an inter-disciplinary and connective practice, spanning the fields of subject areas such as live art, theatre, Dance, lens-based and digital media".[9] Although Music was not mentioned by name, the entry requirements are targeted toward students from any humanities background – so it seems technically possible. Overtly engaging in cross disciplinary creative practice, the pedagogical philosophy of the award includes a mixture of practice based workshops, individual tutorials and whole class sessions. Students also have the option of engaging more specifically on practice via the MA route, or research via an MRes.

The MA in Performance Practices at De Montfort University aims to assist students to engage with generic subject areas such as the "body in performance; audiences; spaces; narrative; memory; digital technologies and collaboration":[10] all of which are addressed from an inter-disciplinary perspective. Like some of the other practices outlined above, the course investigates the gap between theory and practice – and also has an overt work-based vocational perspective.

---

[7] See http://www.winchester.ac.uk/Studyhere/Pages/ma-popular-performances.aspx
[8] Ibid.
[9] See http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses/performance-and-creative-research/index.html
[10] See. http://dmu.ac.uk/study/courses/postgraduate-courses/performance-practices/performance-practices-ma.aspx

Once again, the award is not overtly subject specific, but encourages practitioners who are interested in multiple roles (i.e. Music and Dance) and collaboration.

The MA in contemporary Arts and Music at Oxford Brookes[11] is another instance of an overtly inter-disciplinary award – having 'open' entrance criteria, and focusing on generic multi-disciplinary modules and themes such as location, context and audience. Interestingly, the award also has a number of organised exchange programmes with organisations such as the Bauhaus University, the Piet Zwart Institute and the Vilnius Art Academy.

Institutions such as the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Royal Academy of Music offer MAs in Music Theatre. However, like their undergraduate counterparts, the Music component of these awards tends to be focused solely on singing. They also offer students the opportunity to work toward a final event and are vocational in nature.

Although all of the postgraduate qualifications discussed in this chapter have the capacity to prepare students for PhD study, they also have individual focuses such as popular based performance, cross disciplinary creative practice, vocationalism, space and place and institutional exchange, in addition to facilitating the examination of a range of ontological relationships such as theory – practice, process – product and production – reception. As expected, postgraduate provision appears to be more collaborative in its construction than undergraduate, examining generic themes that are pertinent to Dance, Drama, Music practitioners.

---

[11] See http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying-at-brookes/courses/postgraduate/2014/contemporary-arts-and-music/

Analysis of online questionnaire

An online questionnaire, aimed at teacher/practitioners in HE Dance, Drama and Music in the UK, was distributed via both HEA networks and targeted listservers such as the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), The Standing Committee of Drama Departments (SCUDD), The Theatre and Performance Research Association (TAPRA), Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP) and the Media Studies and Cultural Association (MECCSA). Although the number of participants completing the questionnaire was relatively small (24), the results do provide an indicative snapshot of the views of practitioners working within higher education, across Dance, Drama and Music disciplines.

As outlined in Figure 1, the split between the three subject disciplines was fairly even, with those colleagues describing their main discipline as 'other', having interests in areas such as Creative Writing, Film, Fine Art, Human-computer interaction, Musicology, Music and Moving Image, Performance Studies, Philosophy and Theatre. Upon examination of individual 'other' responses, rationales were largely based on some participants not considering themselves part of a single discipline: this included a Music specialist who was self-taught in Drama, Dance and other areas and had 'evolved' into teaching it; a participant teaching on cross-curricular modules (music and sexuality); a dance practitioner who also had a strong interest and engagement with philosophy, and inherently inter-disciplinary roles such as a Professor of Musicology and Film, and a Reader in Performance Studies. There was also an instance of a 'fine art/film' colleague whose institution did not offer Dance, Drama or Music disciplines, but had "worked with Drama students to create a sculpture with video elements and performance elements, [in addition to working] with Music students to make [a] film-based installation".

Figure 1: Split between subject disciplines

1. What is your main discipline area? Tick as many boxes as necessary.		
Dance:	n/a	7
Music:	n/a	10
Drama:	n/a	8
Performing Arts:	n/a	8
Other (please specify below):	n/a	4
Other (please specify):	n/a	8

Specific roles of participants ranged from lecturing in and across all three disciplines, research (with subject areas including the impact of technology on creative industries, music hermeneutics, the philosophical interrogation of dance and identity, BDSM practices and their socio-cultural contexts, and contemporary theatre making practices), award leadership, practitioner-based activity (such as composing, film making and field recording), in addition to

school/department management. 70.8% of participants confirmed that their institution had discrete undergraduate programmes in Dance, Drama **and** Music, a factor which is arguably not a unsurprising statistic considering the nature of the questionnaire. As indicated in Figure 2, the disciplines were considered broadly equal in terms of how established they were in individual institutions, with the slight emphasis on Music reflecting the respondents' subject areas outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 2: How established are the undergraduate programmes

3. Does your institution have discrete undergraduate programmes in Dance, Drama **and** Music?			
Yes:		70.8%	17
No:		29.2%	7

4. If you answered 'yes' to the above, which (if any) are the most established programmes?			
Music, Dance and Drama:		35.3%	6
Dance:		5.9%	1
Music:		23.5%	4
Drama:		11.8%	2
Dance and Music:		0.0%	0
Dance and Drama:		11.8%	2
Music and Drama:		11.8%	2

It is important to note that many participants were involved in a wide range of inter-disciplinary activity. This included projects which involved sister disciplines on an extra-curricular basis (such as a technological student projects with creative input from other disciplines), the formulation of modular-based awards, adapting methodologies one discipline and incorporating in another, to undertaking roles that are inherently inter-disciplinary.

Examples of the nature of inter-disciplinary roles included a professor whose subject areas crossed two distinct disciplines (musicology and film), who commented upon their role including "constant inter-disciplinary activities", including strategic activities such as being a board member of the Faculty of Arts. This cross-disciplinary nature of research was also outlined by a Reader, who was involved as an editor in what they described as a "multi-disciplinary journal". In terms of teaching practice, a participant outlined how "issues of overlaps, hybridity, boundaries and messy borders are inherent in the study and practice [of their discipline]", while another, although not specifically discussing the inter-relationship of Dance, Drama and Music, stated the following

> I have drawn upon approaches from History, Literature and Art History in my research and have had to learn foreign languages. I see myself as a cultural historian in a Music department.

At this point it is important to highlight that it is plain from reading the participant responses, that many colleagues interested in inter-disciplinary work, do not restrict themselves to the interaction of Dance, Drama and Music, but engage with areas such as Ethnography, Cultural

Studies, Philosophy, Film, TV Production and Literature. While accepting this fact, the discussion of this section will continue to focus specifically on Dance, Drama, and Music interaction.

A number of Music lecturers discussed how they mainly work within what one described as the "collaborative mode" of working, which ranged from areas such as Music Theatre to opera, with two respondents describing Musicology and Popular Music studies as being "inherently inter-disciplinary". This was substantiated by a Drama/Performing Arts lecturer who commented "In the Humanities to a greater or lesser degree all effective teaching has to be inter or even multi-disciplinary, [regarding] teaching knowledge or skills without context [to be] pointless and self-defeating".

The means through which students can engage in inter-disciplinary activity included the formulation of modular schemes which facilitate "combined" students to engage across disciplines, to "taking methodologies or practices from one art form or disciplinary area and using them in another (for example the idea of performativity could be used within musicology)", to using other disciplines to increase knowledge of [a] primary discipline" – essentially the sharing of expertise, experience and ideas. Unsurprisingly, engaging students in 'common projects', where they don't learn the skills of sister disciplines, but focus on how to integrate their discipline with cogent ones was a common thread – mainly via Music Theatre-related activities. It was also deemed important by one Drama-based academic for students to be able to work "through issues as they arise, strategically enabling them to tackle performance 'problems' in a way that doesn't depend only on one discipline". Understanding the 'dependency' on other disciplines, while simultaneously testing the boundaries of your own is arguably, according to one participant, a way of breaking down what they considered the false demarcation lines academics place around their subject areas. According to another participant, inter-disciplinary practice should "enable students and academics [to] explore and discover something new, that would not be possible without the meeting – this might be a new methodology, new insight, new product etc."

There were few comments associated with issues associated with the practicalities of inter-disciplinary work, although one academic commented:

> The problem where I work is that the groupings are all political and basically because people in admissions think students want a particular degree title. Once we get them to us we could do so much more by combining experiences, but we have ended up with a massive Drama degree and other tiny degree programmes. Students on some of those smaller programmes miss out.

Related to the above, when asked if their institution had any global modules through which all disciplines partake in, the overwhelming answer was negative, with 91% of the respondents highlighting this response. This may be a result of infrastructural issues such as timetabling which are outlined later in this report.

Figure 3: Institutions with global modules

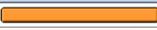| 9. Do you have any 'global' modules which all disciplines partake in?			
Yes:		8.3%	2
No:		91.7%	22

Regarding inter-disciplinary activity taking place on an extracurricular level, the division was broadly even, with slightly more respondents indicating that it takes place during timetabled hours – although (as indicated in Figure 3) not via global modules.

Figure 4: Inter-disciplinary activity taking place on an extracurricular basis

10. Does the interdisciplinary activity tend to take place on an extracurricular basis?			
Yes:		45.5%	10
No:		54.5%	12

When asked if their institution had a collaboration agenda, the responses were once again broadly even, with slightly more participants giving positive responses (54%).

Figure 5: Collaboration Agenda of Institutions

13. Does your department/school have an overt collaboration agenda?			
Yes:		54.2%	13
No:		45.8%	11

Potential issues ranged from what one participant described as "timetabling issues and inertia", to courses that "used to be more collaborative", but are no longer able due to the emergence of increased accountability at course and module level, to departments that simply "don't understand", to Dance, Drama and Music not being in the same faculty. One participant's response that "day-to-day complexities of course structures/timetabling and the differences in pedagogical practice between courses" arguably summarises the frustration of some staff. Positive responses included inter-disciplinarity as a way of obtaining "funds", to a School simply responding to a university's 'creativity agenda'. A number of participants outlined how as opposed to being part of an overt "agenda", inter-disciplinary work tended to be linked to colleagues' motivations and philosophical positions, with "many students [seen to be] involved in cross-disciplinary collaboration as a result of the research interests of the staff". One particular participant summarised this perspective when stating "although there is no inter-disciplinary teaching agenda – there is one for research". This "bottom-up" position regarding the impetus of

inter-disciplinary work was highlighted in a later question in the online questionnaire, with 73.9 of respondents believing that staff are the motivational factor.

Figure 6: The impetus of inter-disciplinary work

15. Does collaboration tend to be top down (From Management) or bottom up (From Staff)?		
Top Down:	26.1%	6
Bottom Up:	73.9%	17

When asked specifically if they engaged in any inter-disciplinary activity with outside institutions, 58.3% of respondents provided a positive response. Generic reasons given included community engagement, professional practice, consultancy and inter-disciplinary research activity. Although specifically related to Welsh language provision, one respondent provided an interesting example of a pan-Wales multi-subject project:

> *Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol* is a pan-Wales structure and includes every HEI in Wales. It is governed by a form of Directorate and has its own Academic Board, which is composed of staff reps from each institution. It represents all subject areas in HEIs. There was much discussion of subject groupings that went into the formation of subject panels. Each subject panel (which has reps for the subject from each HEI) has worked on a specific pan-Wales academic plan for the subject area, which is implemented in large part through collaboration. This is often inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary depending on the nature of the project.

Figure 7: Staff involvement in inter-disciplinary work

16. Have you been involved in any interdisciplinary activity with outside institutions (universities or otherwise)?		
Yes:	58.3%	14
No:	41.7%	10

When asked what the main institutional facilitators were regarding the encouragement of inter-disciplinary work, answers were generally brief, but included factors such as the flexibility of programme specs, flexibility of timetabling (including academics having control of it, blocks of time being allocated where all subjects can work together), institutional 'value' being attributed to inter-disciplinary work for both staff and students, and the need for ongoing staff training. Issues associated with institutional inhibitors included faculty structure, territorialism, lack of time, perceived risk, problems with cross subject assessment criteria, problems with agreeing assessment deadlines, lack of understanding of other disciplines and space restrictions. By far the most pervasive answer was related to timetabling, with the tension between the need for flexible modules often conflicting with the managerial pressure of "ease of timetabling". One respondent also considered Dance to be "situated separately from all the other creative & performing arts,

[making] collaboration near impossible". Coincidentally, an alternative position was provided by a Drama colleague, who commented:

> Staff on the smaller programmes - Dance, Contemporary Performance etc don't like the large student groups that Drama deliver to, and the multiple deliveries herding about students. We only have these because the smaller programmes retain cosy small groups and Drama is the 'cash cow'.

When contributors were asked how working with sister disciplines has informed their personal practice, some considered this to be an area that could be expanded on, with responses such as: "I would need several days and much more space than is here" and "I could write a lot here as this has been intrinsic to my own practice for many years" being indicative of the perceived importance of inter-disciplinary approaches. The following quotes from the questionnaire substantiate this perspective:

> I came from musicology via English/Cultural History to Drama and Performing Arts. The contemporary philosophical approaches from the emerging discipline of performance studies in the 1990s and beyond completely revolutionised my thinking about issues such as meaning, interpretation, spectatorship, creativity all of which are side-lined in musicology.

> I have transferred methodologies from one discipline to another. Technical innovations in one discipline can often provide unexpected results when transferred to another.

> Clearer knowledge of other possible research methodologies other to my own - has helped define my own more clearly.

> Some of the most interesting and stimulating work has arisen through working with other disciplines, but I view Dance as having a number of 'sister' disciplines, not limited to those within performing arts.

> I don't consider myself to have a discipline.

It is important to point out however that a small number of respondents believed inter-disciplinarity to be "a hurdle rarely worth overcoming". Although no reason was given, it is proposed that some of the logistical issues highlighted above are responsible.

When asked if inter-disciplinary work challenged the traditional teacher-pupil hierarchical order, responses were broadly even, with 56.5% believed it did not.

Figure 8: Does an inter-disciplinary approach challenge traditional academic relationships?

22. Do you think an interdisciplinary approach challenges the traditional hierarchical teacher-pupil relationship?		
Yes:	43.5%	10
No:	56.5%	13

When asked why this challenge is apparent, responses ranged from the importance of academics and students "learning from each other", to staff realising that in an inter-disciplinary context, the traditional hierarchical position is often broken down, as staff are often involved in subject areas where they are not necessarily considered 'expert'. One respondent indicated that "if you are stuck in a didactic power base then anything collaborative would I am sure feel threatening" – although the notion of the 'teacher' always been present as 'assessor' was also highlighted.

In terms of inter-disciplinary assessment, procedures such as the blending of reflective practice, peer review, group and self assessment were pervasive responses – with the teacher assessing student reflective practices also being considered an important contributory factor. It was pointed out by one respondent that there are potential issues with the generic independent learning outcomes that are so important to inter-disciplinary work, as they have the potential to "compromise the students' ability to learn about the discipline". It was also stated by another respondent that issues associated with the perceived 'fairness of group/individual grades' is an ongoing concern that has been refined and grappled with over many years.

Case study interviews

The use of questionnaires in research can be useful, despite the sample size limitations, for the indicative statistical information it reveals as well as snapshots it can provide within its responses. Different modes – such as the open interview format – can provide a more 'in depth' exploration of a focal topic. In this section, we draw on six case study interviews that the team conducted with 'inter-disciplinarians' in current HE.

Dr. Rupert Till – University of Huddersfield

Dr Lisa Lewis – University of South Wales

Dr. Jondi Keane - Deakin University

Dr. Joe Bennett – Bath Spa University

Dr. Sarah O'Brien – Teeside University

Professor Mary Oliver – Manchester Metropolitan University

Dr Rupert Till is Senior Lecturer in Music Technology at the University of Huddersfield, having previously worked at Bretton Hall University College and the University of Derby. He studied composition with minimalist Gavin Bryars, Scratch Orchestra founder member Christopher Hobbs, sound artist Katharine Norman, and with George Nicholson. His scholarly, research and pedagogic interests span fields such as Popular Music, Postmodern Composition and Performance, Archaeoacoustics, Music Archaeology and Sound Archaeology.

Can you say something about your own pedagogical and research practices and the concept of inter-disciplinarity?

I first studied a degree in Performing Arts in 1986-89. Although I specialised in Music, every term we had a block of between two to four weeks where Music worked in collaboration with Drama, Dance and Administration students. So I began my academic career assuming that inter-disciplinarity was typical and that there would always be lots of interaction between disciplines. When I started teaching in further and higher education at Barnsley College, I led students in Music to write for theatre performances and taught Music to Performing Arts (by which I mean Theatre and Dance) students. At Bretton Hall, we ran inter-disciplinary projects. Although mainly involving Music students, the projects were able to include Dance, Theatre and technical elements along with Administration and Music industry aspects too. For example, we might have

a project on Popular Music and Politics or the star system which would encompass work in Cultural Studies as well as practical theatre considerations such as costume and design. When I first moved to Huddersfield, I found things far more separated: in a larger institution, it can be more difficult to work with inter-disciplinarity due to simply pragmatic reasons such as timetabling and issues of location (when subject areas are housed in different buildings).

As a researcher, I wrote music for contemporary dance and for theatre for many years and so I have always been involved in inter-disciplinarity. Interestingly, in recent years I have worked less with Dance and Theatre than with Digital Media (a development also reflected in my teaching which is less within Performing Arts than Music Technology at Huddersfield). Popular Music often crosses the boundaries into the areas of cultural studies and media studies; Music technology can mean working in engineering and computer science and so on. My current research project is completely inter-disciplinary: I am working on ancient music and this has meant I have worked with cultural geographers, archaeologists, acoustic experts as well as experts in digital games, graphic design, computer modelling, and 3D design.

Can you talk a little about the place of inter-disciplinarity in your subject area?

I think the traditional study of Music in HE has focused on Western European art music and hasn't involved much inter-disciplinarity at all. While Ethnomusicology, Popular Music Studies or Music Technology – and even film music and jazz – are all areas which are, by their very nature, inter-disciplinary. However, things are opening up: New Musicology has a central interest in cultural contexts. In the area of research funding, the AHRC has emphasised the importance of inter-disciplinarity as it recognises that the most interesting work can often occur at the boundaries between disciplines, even if the structures and subjective-assessment procedures of the AHRC and other funding bodies do not make it easy to be successful when bidding for inter-disciplinary support.

At GCSE and A-level Music, the analysis of popular music, world music and jazz as well as classical music is developing a different kind of student with wider skills and interests for degree programmes. Music Theatre is, in particular, a major growth area – probably stimulated by *X Factor* and similar shows – in particular in newer institutions. I get the impression that older, more research intensive institutions can take a long time to change. The hope for this kind of inter-disciplinary work probably lies in newer institutions and older universities will have to catch up or they won't have students who want to study there.

Finally, what are the challenges confronting the notion of inter-disciplinarity in current HE?

I have already mentioned how simple pragmatic reasons such as timetabling can prevent inter-disciplinarity. For example, in teaching popular music students a project on 'recording', I wanted them to compose songs in a composition module, perform them in a performance module, and record them in a recording module, to have some synergy between the three. The thing that has prevented this happening is simply an administrative issue: the co-ordination of groups and timetables. The curriculum becomes controlled by timetabling and this seems to be a reality of large institutions. It can also be inhibited by financial reasons: the fact that costs are designated to particular subject areas can complicate any inter-disciplinary work because it compromises income and limits sustainability.

At Huddersfield, a number of departments worked on a major collaborative production of *Cabaret* which worked across disciplines extremely well and was very successful. If there is a will to do it, it can happen but it needs the active support of course leaders, heads of department, deans and so on as their backing guarantees administrative support and facilitation.
There should be much more interaction between disciplines than there currently is. In many ways, there is less and less inter-disciplinarity at the moment. It is such a shame that there seems to be less happening than in the art college model in the 1960s and in performing arts institutions in the 1980s onwards. Of course, a lot comes down to the desire of undergraduates to want to study degrees which are inter-disciplinary. There is also, perhaps, scope at MA level to undertake collaborative courses – that might be a way forward for inter-disciplinary work too.

Dr Lisa Lewis is Reader in Drama at the University of South Wales (USW) and was, until recently, Head of the Division of Drama. She teaches in Welsh and English (USW offers degree programmes in both languages) and her particular fields of pedagogical and research interest include heritage and performance; performance, culture and identity; site specific theatre; museums and heritage sites as performance; performative writing; performance and everyday life; and autobiographical performance.

Can you say something about your own pedagogical and research practices and the concept of inter-disciplinarity?

In a way, my own role can be 'multiple' and changes according to context. For example, when I am working as a director my role is immediately inter-disciplinary because that is inherent to the role of a director: you need to work with actors, designers, costumiers, administrators, technicians and so on. They are all individuals who are approaching a collaborative project with a variety of disciplinary interests, experiences and expertise.

Similarly, when I am undertaking a museum project, my role requires me to liaise with museum on practical issues of health and safety while facilitating and overseeing the students' learning experience and outcomes by which they are becoming directors, facilitators and performers in a way that is appropriate for a museum context.

When I am in a more 'conventional' educational context, such as – by way of example – a seminar on Performance Studies, I always endeavour to draw together the process of learning, facilitating the students' identification of traditions in a range of philosophies and practices. In this regard, it is a process that can assimilate a range of disciplines and knowledge in ways that can be enlightening and surprising for everyone in the classroom (including the tutor). Indeed, I would argue that the lecture is the only educational mode of delivery which can suggest: "The lecturer is the expert."

Can you tell me about a specific project you have been involved with that is characterised by inter-disciplinarity?

I have a central role in organising the annual undergraduate Theatre & Drama conference for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (the 'national Welsh college', HEFCW-funded federal body that supports Welsh-medium provision in Welsh HEIs) that is attended students and delivered by academics. Whilst the focus is on Theatre and Drama, the conference is attended by students studying a wide range of subjects in Welsh, so may include student of Welsh, History and Politics, for instance. The range of disciplines represented mean that we are compelled to find a thematic link. In this process, not one door but *many* doors open and all participants are obliged to get a dialogue going. I remember one year we had 'Drama and Politics' as our theme: delegates from museums, history and media could talk from the perspectives of their own disciplines and the Theatre Studies and Performance Studies students in attendance could respond to it in a way they might never have expected. The framing and thematic links are as exciting as they are essential.

Can you talk a little about the place of inter-disciplinarity in your subject area?

There is a debate to be had as to whether Theatre Studies is a single discipline at all. Historically, the theatre has always been one of the most inter-disciplinary art forms. Subsequently, the inherent and intense inter-disciplinarity in theatre itself is bound to infuse the subject area named after it.

Similarly, Performance Studies is perhaps not a discipline at all – and it delights in this. It draws its influence and philosophy from communication theory, anthropology and a wealth of other areas. The contentious nature of the discipline of Performance Studies is one of the things that make it so exciting to teach. In teaching it, one has to acknowledge its consistent use of *other* disciplines, creating – in a space – an inter-disciplinary context. This can be an enormous challenge. For example, when we ask students to be self-reflexive, Performance Studies is so eclectically inter-disciplinary, students are obliged to interrogate the nature of *disciplines* (in the plural) and a range of methodologies. To this end, we have to remind students embarking on work in Performance Studies that 'we are looking at a discursive field'.

Despite the challenges, inter-disciplinarity can create a chemistry that you can neither pre-empt nor anticipate. It can enrich the students' sense of the multi-dimensional aspect of work and the relevance of it.

Are there other examples of inter-disciplinarity in the HE sector you would like to mention?

Peter Lord's work at Swansea University on the visual culture of Wales succeeds in creating an impressive mixture of Humanities disciplines. I can also think of how some collaborative events such as the theatre writing workshops organised at Aberystwyth University have succeeded in bringing together reviewers, scriptwriters and theatre makers in a fruitful mixture of *angles* which has inspired participating students and lecturers.

Finally, what are the challenges confronting the notion of inter-disciplinarity in current HE?

Inter-disciplinarity is an imperative. The boundaries between subjects and disciplines blur and create new fields of activity. In a way, we must acknowledge that all disciplines are frayed around the edges. Osmosis is inevitable and should not be denied or resisted. But things can be done to facilitate it actively. The strictures of – and perceived need for – 'timetabling' can do much to inhibit effective crossover in current HE. We have to find ways to permit project-based work in

appropriate spaces with adequate periods of time. We have to find ways to make this work. What inter-disciplinarity can open up and what it can reflect on a specific discipline can be invaluable and transformative. The active context of exploring other disciplines can open up an enlightening awareness and appreciation of our 'own' subject areas.

Dr Jondi Keane is an arts practitioner, critical thinker, Senior Lecturer and Associate Head of School (Technology and Environments) at Deakin University. Over the last three decades he has exhibited, performed and published in the USA, UK, Europe and Australia. His research interests include contemporary art practices, particularly performance-installation and collaboration as well as contemporary art and cultural theory, theories of cognition and the philosophy of perception, experimental architecture, and the way in which the creative practices can contribute to inter-disciplinary inquiries and collective concerns.

Jondi has made inter-disciplinarity a central tenet of his teaching activities with undergraduates for the past ten years. Having worked within the UK and the US university system he currently teaches creative practice at Deakin University in Australia. Jondi's approach to engaging students is to ensure that the assessment processes within units makes demands on students to work inter-disciplinary. One example arises from a mass entry first year unit in which he and two colleagues facilitated an intensive learning day for Visual Art, Creative Writing, and Performance students.

Sudden Day[12] engaged students from each of the three discipline areas. "All of our students would get involved and help set up the day and come together around this idea that you are solving problems; you are setting up tasks, you are drawing on your discipline knowledge and interacting with other ways of thinking and other systems of engagement and you are coming up with creative expressions in response to these problems."

Sudden Day occurred at the end of first semester in first year: "You had them all in the same starting place and we would make students perform in self-selected sites across the campus in groups that weren't based on interest or friends and they would produce these series of tasks

---

[12] Sudden Day occurred in the first year through the collaborative efforts of the teachers concerned: Nigel Krauth (creative writing), Mike Foster (drama), and Jondi Keane (Creative Arts), with support from Pat Wise (Cultural Studies). It was a one-day event at the end of first semester, aimed to support students to work with peers from the other disciplines on a time- and resource-managed project. Structured around the available spaces/informal spaces that became stations, students were required to work through task-based activities toward a collaborative interdisciplinary outcome.

and we would go around and look at each one. It was this sort of lovely full-on day where we'd give them some material and they had to go off and solve these tasks."

It was challenging for teachers: "You always have to be aware that you are not just talking to the cohort that were image makers, or movers or writers, and you are very aware of this kind of mixing the way in which knowledge is acquired and the way in which one goes about processes. For me, that's for me the core of inter-disciplinary thinking and pedagogy. It's where we're setting up and interacting with other processes and then it becomes kind of exciting.
"There were challenging moments when people become kind of guarded or become threaten by things that they don't know or they can't move that way, or they don't understand or they don't know how to then put on the table the things that they want to work on. We had to 'debunk' all that.

"It is necessary to get past the '*that's crap*' reaction to the '*oh, I see what you are talking about*! *You are trying to do this, but I was more thinking in this way because I am interested in this and this*' – to get to the discussion to go there seems to be the first part of the dismantling of brick walls. Then we get on with the actual work and the projects become what are we are wanting to look into; what might be the best avenue for inquiring into this problem? How might our disciplinary understandings or ways of working inform how we work together?"

At the end of Sudden Day the first years choose where they would like to major: "It is a moment of making a commitment to a discipline area, or two.

"The day is set up throughout the semester with a range of themes such as story, image, space, setting, and the assessment requires them to cross over and open up and explore the work inter-discipline. The structure starts with exercises from all the disciplinary areas aimed to open them. Then there were lotteries: you drew out themes and you drew out the objects, and then you went around and you identify the space that you were going to work on, than you have a couple of hours and then people would come around and view the thing, so you know, one building that was up on pylons and had like a two-metre under-croft space with gravel someone would think, this is the great place to do this and another people, you know here and there. It is very practical:

"*Where are you going to do this?*
"*How does that support …… ?*
"*How do your talents?*

"So you do kind of a talent audit; who's driving and how the processes work, all that sort of stuff. So the solutions were coming back to these really basic elements of rhythm-movement-image content through voice or position, engagement with the way the surroundings became its own image; this idea of how a work integrates with its environment, so notions of installation rather than a simple production of artefacts, yeah, it ended up going those ways.

"It has to have a critique culture from the beginning. They are doing their own thing and you are engaging and you are critiquing it and you are drawing out kind of tone values, sensitivities that they're working on, that's underpinning the work, in course makes it harder cause the tasks are set up for a particular themes, but still there could be a culture of critique that gets at this level of how you are engaging and that seems to me to be the thing that comes back up when they are asked to do their own work and then if they are able to critique themselves, their own work and then their discipline and other work that's the engine that drives the ability to collaborate."
"The subject of the collaboration is the integration of two knowledge systems and you put those on the table and then you allow them to interact and to fuel each other and you come up with the work that *is* about the collaboration."

"Then we would give them feedback afterwards and talk about it in class and the students loved it. And it did have nice sort of ramifications or implications back into their other solutions, for their work later in the degree."

Dr Joe Bennett is Dean of the School of Music & Performing Arts at Bath Spa University in the UK. He is a songwriting specialist, founder and organiser of the UK Songwriting Festival, and teaching songwriting at MA level. He has published worldwide, including guitar tuition books, songwriting articles and creative compositions. In 2004, Joe received a National Teaching Fellowship recognising his work as a teacher of popular music. He is an expert witness musicologist, advising music lawyers, publishers, artists and songwriters on matters of plagiarism and musical similarity. His academic research concerns the creative practice and psychology of collaborative songwriters. www.joebennett.net

Working with his own teaching specialism of songwriting in higher education, Joe positions his work specifically as: "helping adult learners to develop broader creative skillsets to help them to write better songs".

"People might think of my work as a sub-discipline of Music, it is in fact inherently inter-disciplinary, combining as it does the pedagogies of Creative Writing, Analytical Musicology and Music Composition.

Music education generally always needs an element of mono-disciplinarity simply because of the kind of prior learning needed to study Music in higher education takes such a long time. A student entering UK higher education to study a Bachelors degree in Music will most likely have been playing an instrument for more than 10 years. Across the world, the higher education tradition of the conservatoire - where Music students focus entirely on a single subject, usually in order to develop advanced performance composition skills – is seen by many Music educators as the gold standard of Music education. But this is not to say that inter-disciplinarity does not have a place in Music higher education. It simply requires that the student has achieved the requisite (mono-disciplinary) prior learning prior to entry. Put simply, you can't have inter-disciplinarity without disciplines!

Taking the lead in establishing the world's first Masters degree in songwriting at his home university, Bath Spa in 2007 (which was later offered in distance mode in 2010), these principles of inter-disciplinarity were central: "I very quickly realised that the type of learner we were dealing with need to have a multi-disciplinary background. They need musical performance and composition skills, of course, but they also need to be able to write lyrics. Song lyrics are a very particular art form – they are very different from poetry, but they share some of poetry's technical tools, in that they use imagery, metaphor, scansion, rhyme and so on.

"A great songwriter need not necessarily play a musical instrument to classical concert performance standard, and may not need an academic or practitioner background in creative writing – but they need to be able to work within a broad base of skills to write effective songs on entry. The stronger applicants we got for the course had both a mono disciplinary background (typically having listened to, analysed and performed a great many existing songs in the past) but also an inter-disciplinary one, in that they had an interest in the arts generally, and in Literature, Media and Technology."

"Also, vocationally, a songwriter's main source of income is through publishing royalties. That means any vocational songwriting curriculum must teach an understanding of copyright and intellectual property. This brings in another discipline – Law."
Dr Bennett acknowledges that there is a groundswell of support for inter-disciplinarity with HE generally in the UK currently, suggesting that while some courses of study embrace it more

readily than others: "Highly creative subjects – Music and Art being the best examples – are sometimes resistant to the idea of losing artistic focus with concern about how a lack of attention to developing the skills of craft. My own view is that inter-disciplinarity becomes more important when the graduate's goal is to develop their intellectual knowledge, and mono-disciplinarity becomes more important when the goal is to become an expert practitioner. That's a generalisation of course, but certainly these are both stereotypes I recognise in my own students.

"There are very strong pedagogical arguments for and against inter-disciplinarity in higher education. The world's universities have been very effective historically at helping to create intellectual, scientific and artistic experts through ever-increasing specialisation – otherwise known as research. After all, the pinnacle of university learning is a Ph.D., which implicitly facilitates research student and supervisor in generating and curating new human knowledge in a detailed and highly specified area of an individual discipline. In my own field, it is pedagogically self-evident that students must undertake a massive amount of iterative learning over a very long period of time to be able to achieve musical excellence, and educators in many demanding disciplines will take the view that inter-disciplinarity can be a dilution of the intense learning required to excel in their particular field."

"Understanding new disciplines inevitably sheds greater light on one's own. Indeed, in the creative arts there is a considerable body of theory that suggests creativity itself to be a combinatory act. I am thinking about Arthur Koestler's 1960s concept of bisociation that has recently been nuanced by cognitive linguists such as Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner as 'conceptual blending'. If one takes a cultural Darwinist or memetic view of creativity then, in 21st-century parlance, everything is a mash-up. The problem, then, is that all learning is good, and each of us only has three score years and ten. My view is that we need both types of curriculum, and both types of learner. Some students will benefit more from a broad-based education and implicitly compromise their opportunities to become fully immersed in a field, whilst others will choose a deeper one, but at the expense of wider contextual knowledge and skills."

Dr Sarah O'Brien is Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Performance for Live and Recorded Media at Teesside University, UK. This degree includes acting and presenting for the camera, radio and live performance. Sarah has taught acting and performance studies in various higher educational institutions across the UK for over 12 years and has been the external examiner for the BA Acting and BA Musical Theatre Northumbria University since 2010. Sarah graduated with

a first class degree in Performing Arts from the University of Hertfordshire in 1999, MA (Distinction) in Contemporary Theatre Practice, Lancaster University. Her PhD was in contemporary experimental and multimedia theatre. She has recently published on practice-as-research and methodology (2013) and continues to research through her own performance practice.

In many respects, Sarah characterises her teaching and research as inter-disciplinary. "Following my PhD (Theatre Studies) by practice, my research has largely been through practice – producing live performance. In my current research I am working with a conceptual jeweller, a creative writing academic and a fashion designer academic; we are exploring Georges Perec's 'endotic' space through performative exploration. It is early days in the research working group but so far it has been surprising how much shared knowledge we have when discussing this work. What is also refreshing is the opportunity to get another perspective on the work you produce from those outside of your discipline. I have also found that viewing and discussing the work of others from very different disciplines feels more like an undergraduate learning experience at times, more so than any learning experienced through post-doc research."

"In 2010 I worked on a joint research project with sociologists at Teesside University that explored ideas around undergraduate identity and the Performing Arts. The process for Sociology was to interview the group of level four Performing Arts undergraduates and ask them about their reasons for choosing a Performing Arts degree. My process was to offer Drama workshops (as part of a module) that would ask the same thing but demand different creative outputs on the part of the student (that explored his/her identity) that would eventually lead to a live performance (that would be assessed). Following the performance, the sociologists led a focus group with the students and went on to create academic papers."

Sarah's relationship to inter-disciplinary approaches arises from the subject areas informing her work. "The subject areas of Live Art, Performance and Theatre have never been considered single 'authentic' disciplines: each grew from inter-disciplinary thought and practice. Theatre and Drama studies at undergraduate level in the UK was originally a branch of Literature, and although it moved away to become an independent study in the late 70s early 80s, it took along with it the theories and texts central to a lot of Literature studies. In my own experience as a learner I have always read across genres – Cultural Theory, Media Studies, Psychoanalysis, Postcolonial Studies, Gender and Queer Theory, to name just a few. Furthermore, today's live art and performance could be said to be a development from the Fine Art practices of the 60s and 70s that challenged the borders of any discipline. The idea of the theatrical is that it could be

said to inherently challenge the notion of autonomy and authenticity – essential to what could be termed a 'discipline' (see Michael Fried)."

"As for the 'place' of this information in the undergraduate syllabus: our performance students have a final year module that specifically looks at the idea of inter-disciplinary research. The syllabus covers the history I referred to earlier, but it also covers practices that can be understood as cross-disciplinary, as well as the politics of inter-disciplinary practice in the arts. From the module assessment students are expected to review the epistemological qualities of creative work (of their choice); work that they deem to be inter-disciplinary."

"The module is framed within an ethos that recommends students to actively collaborate with others from very different areas of study. Historically, our students have worked with staff and students from Animation, Psychology, Social Science, Law, and Police Safety Training. These circumstances have arisen through and for different reasons and have been outside of curriculum activities. However, I would like to think that work with such bodies is put into context within this module."

"In the last 15 years the advent of (funded) practice-as-research in the creative and performing arts has, I believe, also explored the limitations of inter-disciplinary research, sparking many debates on quality and epistemology. The fact that a PhD candidate can now submit a performance, or a poem, or a painting as a contribution to knowledge has challenged the very idea of knowledge in the academy. For me, inter-disciplinarity is all about challenging the idea of the current 'order' of knowledge."

"For those managing the accounts in a university I'm sure the term has a very different meaning to my own. Putting classes together in the name of 'inter-disciplinary learning' can obviously save on resources. I think there is a danger here. In the short term, this might leave students 'short changed' and staff thinly spread, and, in the long term, it could mean that the word 'inter-disciplinary' becomes synonymous with poor quality education."

Mary Oliver is Professor of New Media Performance and Head of the Media Department at Manchester School of Art. Prior to this she was Reader in Digital Performance and Head of the Performance Research Centre at the University of Salford where she took the lead on developing teaching areas with a specialist focus in multimedia and digital performance. She writes and delivers modules and in 2011 successfully led the validation of a new Masters in Digital Performance course. Currently her pedagogic research is focused on the use of mobile communication systems to aid the teaching of contemporary performance.

Mary's approach to teaching and learning has been driven by three intersecting themes over her 25 years in higher education; training for the workplace, practice as research-driven teaching, and technical innovation. During this time she has worked concurrently as a professional performance artist and her practice has always informed her teaching. As a researcher, Mary positions her expertise within the field of digital performance; a conflation of theatre, cinematic form and computation.

"As a hybrid digital performance artist who combines Fine Art, Theatre, Filmmaking, and Technological methodologies within my practice, inter-disciplinarity is always a conscious way of working. I work across disciplines in order to execute a particular idea. This means that collaborating with those with other specialist skills has become a necessary part of my process. These collaborations develop in response to the ideas that I am trying to communicate through the work."

"An inter-disciplinary approach to teaching at undergraduate level is a bit of an oxymoron. Can one work in an inter-disciplinary way if one does not yet have command of a discipline? This becomes particularly problematic at the point of critical reflection. Traditionally in the arts we teach using distinct canons of knowledge and this impacts on the way in which the history and theoretical context of 'the' subject is delivered. We need to study a single subject in order to understand what it is, have command of it, in order to then bring it into contact with other disciplines. Although I am aware that in practice I work in an inter-disciplinary fashion, this working method has been developed by first acquiring a distinct skill set."

Mary attributes the way in which the digital revolution has blurred the fine edges of distinct disciplines as a catalyst to creating practitioners who can apply a broader repertoire of skills gathered from a range of disciplines. "These practitioners are then identified by the context in which they are working. Since digital performance is an inter-disciplinary field, I have often found myself teaching across the full spectrum of creative arts where they intersect with technology. My PhD students have come from every area of arts practice and recently I found myself teaching students from every directorate in the school of Arts and Media at the University of Salford, which was made up of Performance, Filmmaking, Music and Arts. In each of the research projects the common factor was Performance in relation to digital technologies."

"I now work in a department that has programmes in Acting, Filmmaking, Photography, Animation and New Media Design. As a digital performer, I can see the possibility for synergies

between all of these subject areas, and across the Art School each year students get to work on an inter-disciplinary project (Unit X). This has seen some unusual collaborations. A recent example is an interesting project between Creative Multimedia and Interior Design. This resulted in an interactive installation presented as part of the Future Everything festival. It was project managed by students from the Film and Media Studies programme and each of these students and staff members (who facilitated the collaboration), brought pre-existing technical skills but when working together, developed new skills in problem-solving, pitching, finding a shared language through knowledge sharing. Again the unifying factor was the use of digital tools in the creation of a multi-modal work."

"If we don't recognise the *inter* within the process of combining disciplines what we create is something new."

Yet there is a context of skill, process, and inquiry that leads the work. Mary suggests that, "practitioners need to develop their questioning methods and listening as part of their communication skills - confidence, language and different pedagogical methods".

 "In the Media Department that I now preside over, our newest programme of study, the Creative Multimedia programme (CMM), shares some of its units with the School of Computing, Maths and Digital Technology (CM&DT). The collaboration is still at an early stage and students from CMM have been generally dissatisfied with the systematic methods of teaching in CM&DT, complaining that they would like to work at a faster pace, that they would like to collaborate more and generally become disengaged with the teaching style of this different disciplinary field. These same students have applied themselves totally in the creation of an interactive artwork that required inter-disciplinary expertise."

Conclusions

So, how do we find ways of negating the 'ivory tower complex' outlined in the introduction of this study? In a world where widening participation and community engagement is considered so important to engage with participants outside of academia, the notion of working in our discipline based silos is arguably becoming less realistic: both in terms of preparing students for the world of work – where they often have to integrate with other disciplines, or indeed in our research – where understanding problems beyond the facade of our discipline is becoming so important to funding councils. This inter-disciplinary advocacy is not without its critics (see Segal, 2009), but generally speaking it is considered an essential area of development and improvement – in particular in the arts and humanities (see Worton, 2013).

This report has not intended to challenge or refine the details of current terminology, but to provide an indicative snapshot of current practices: how are universities integrating opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration into the curriculum? As outlined in our brief review of literature, if students are encouraged to understand their own discipline through the lens of another, or comprehend how their discipline can participate in a 'solution' to a group problem – it requires a factor most modern universities don't have – TIME. In a day when awards and indeed specific modules are often individually costed for financial viability, alongside the demands for increased productivity from academics – time is difficult to find: often only being achieved via extracurricular activities, which are sometimes not officially work loaded. Ironically, this lack of time can often understandably lead to academics 'sticking to what they know', resulting in modules not changing year after year, becoming outdated, with the challenge of developing multi-disciplinary activities, learning outcomes, skill bases and assessment criteria simply not perceived as been practicable.

As indicated in our snapshot of current provision, those courses that actually facilitate students to directly participate in practices in one or more sister disciplines on an 'integrated' basis are fairly select. In Performing Arts courses (which are often delivered as part of partner college collaborations and have very broad remits in terms of what they deliver) and Music Theatre courses, the activity 'music' often means singing, often not facilitating students with a more holistic musical experience. Although a number of institutions offer major/minor/joint routes in their portfolios, a large proportion advertise these awards by simply describing how both subject areas function independently – with little or no discussion of how they work collectively, or more importantly collaboratively. It was also noticeable how a small number of joint awards exist via UCAS, but are not substantiated with any detail on university websites. This indicates on the surface at least that the awards are available 'in theory', possibly as part of a wider university policy – but are not necessarily put into practice. These phenomena are possibly the result of the time restrictions outlined above, or indeed the internal logistics of timetabling - which were outlined as been a potential 'prohibitor' to inter-disciplinary practice in our online questionnaire. Although not the main focus of this report, postgraduate provision, on the surface at least, offers students more opportunity to engage in inter-disciplinary practice, through studying on awards such as Popular Performances, Creative Arts and Performance Practice. Some of these courses offer opportunities to examine the ontological spaces between production and reception, and attempt to facilitate a critical understanding of the relationship between theory and practice – from an inter-disciplinary perspective. Most importantly, they also offer more flexible entry

requirements in terms of the students' undergraduate background - therefore giving inter-disciplinarity an excellent starting point.

Regarding the online questionnaire, although the response rate was relatively low and cannot and should not be considered a representative sample, the results did provide some useful data in terms of the phenomena of colleagues 'evolving' into specific inter-disciplinary roles at all levels of the profession – some describing their jobs as "inherently inter-disciplinary" from both a teaching and research perspective. The questionnaire also highlighted a number of ways in which students can engage in inter-disciplinary activity – broadly by understanding their 'dependency' on other disciplines while simultaneously testing the boundaries of their own. Factors such as the flexibility of programme specs, flexibility of timetabling, institutional 'value' being attributed to inter-disciplinary work by employers, and the need for ongoing staff training were considered as key ingredients that individual academics and universities must engage in if the inter-disciplinarity agenda is to be accentuated. The breaking down of the traditional hierarchical teacher-student model is also key if academics are to be freed to engage with a broader range of subject matters, some of which they may not be considered 'expert'.

The case studies draw on interviews with different experts from the areas of Dance, Drama and Music, but have highlighted certain significant points: e.g. inter-disciplinarity is nothing new, but has been around for decades and is even at the very heart of certain disciplines such as Drama. It seems clear that there is a passion for inter-disciplinarity in contemporary HE. Inter-disciplinarity can broaden horizons by blurring the boundaries; and by venturing into one discipline we can learn so much about another including our 'own'. Other common themes emerging from the case studies indicate that:

Teachers champion inter-disciplinary opportunities for the perceived benefits to their own practice, research and teaching.

Inter-disciplinary project based learning tasks organically nurture project management skills
The naturally occurring tension and contention within inter-disciplinary collaboration breeds spaces for learning about how 'my discipline thinks and talks', and about the range of variations to thinking and talking that are active in creative practice.

Inter-disciplinary project based learning places a problem to solve as the central organising dynamic from which the different disciplinary collaborators can begin to create bridges in communication, approach, and conceptual framing.

Part of the inter-disciplinary learning experience demands students engage in working out how they will work together, as well as what they will "make" together, or what problem they will solve together.

The rigours of working inter-disciplinarity can help students to value their disciplinary knowledge, can enhance student's capacity to articulate their technical embodied knowledge, and can stimulate students to enable others' understandings/ comprehension of the different discipline. However, such benefits should not outweigh the concerns about the implementation of inter-disciplinary approaches in HE that are driven purely by resource shrinkage – interviewees cautioned that it is necessary to guard against the appropriation of inter-disciplinarity for saving money.

Inter-disciplinarity creates distinctive examples of education as it can be exploratory and critical to the utmost degree, developing highly skilled students. In short, we need more of it, not less. However, this is not to undermine the importance of 'deep' learning within a focal subject. The contemporary university should be universal, with a range of approaches as wide as its menu of degree programmes. What is clear is that for some teachers in current HE, the "tail must not wag the dog": inter-disciplinarity is imperative but structural and managerial issues such as timetabling and spatial constraints need to be resolved to allow the exciting imperative of inter-disciplinary teaching and learning to happen.

In conclusion, this study in fundamentally an exercise in inter-disciplinarity in Dance, Drama and Music – with the three contributors basing the careers principally in one of these disciplines. However, it is important to highlight that inter-disciplinary work does not restrict itself to the interaction of Dance, Drama and Music alone, but, according to this study engage with areas such as Ethnography, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Film, TV Production, Literature, etc. Although these subject areas are the focus of this study, care must be taken to ensure that the interaction of Dance, Drama and Music themselves are not prone to the 'single subject silo effect' highlighted above.

Bibliography

Alix Christopher, Dobson, Elizabeth & Wilsmore, Robert (2010). *Mapping and Developing Pedagogical Models*. Project report, Palatine Dance Drama and Music, HEA

Carr, Paul and Richard J. Hand (2013). 'Ensemble/Improvisation; Drama/Music: An Experiment in Inter-disciplinarity' in John Britton (ed.) *Encountering Ensemble*. Bloomsbury.

Chettiaramb Angelique (2007). *Inter-disciplinarity: A Literature Review*, Report for the Inter-disciplinary Teaching and Learning Group, Higher Education Academy.

Ingold, Tim (2013). Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture. Routledge: London.

Jacobs Jerry A. (2014). *In Defense of Disciplines: Interdisciplinarity and Specialization in the Research University*. University of Chicago Press

Lehmann, S. (2009). Interdisciplinary models for collaboration between artists and architects: Empowering community, inspiring urban renewal. *UNESCO Observatory, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne Refereed e- journal* 1(4). Accessed 04/05/2014 http://web.education.unimelb.edu.au/UNESCO/pdfs/ejournals/lehmann.pdf

Llewellyn, Mark (2012). *Challenges of Interdisciplinarity, Here and There*. Report to the *Arts and Humanities Research Council* . *Accessed 29/04/2014* http://www.ukro.ac.uk/aboutukro/conference/Documents/130614_llewellyn_interdisciplinary_approach.pdf

Lyall, C., Bruce, A., Tait, J. and Meagher, L. (2011). *Interdisciplinary Research Journeys: Practical Strategies for capturing creativity*. London: Bloomsbury. Accessed 06/05/2014 url: http://books.google.com.au/books?id=tDLnqfsKixcC&pg=PT161&lpg=PT161&dq=ahrc+interdisciplinary&source=bl&ots=q2RWruU4d5&sig=VKpdAslLU5RZlo1V6GikJoRWJI0&hl=en&sa=X&ei=0pZxU7HnDMq5kAWp74DIBA&ved=0CC8Q6AEwATgU#v=onepage&q=ahrc%20interdisciplinary&f=false

MacDonald, Lindsay, Brosz, John, Ledo, David, Carpendale, Sheelagh, and Nacenta, Miguel A. (2013). Austorship in Art/Science: Collaboration is Tricky Paper presented at *CHI2013: Changing Perspectives*. 31st Annual CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. 27 April-2 May 2013 Palais des Congrès Conference Center. Paris. Accessed 8 May 2014 http://innovis.cpsc.ucalgary.ca/innovis/uploads/Publications/Publications/MacDonald_Authorship.pdf

McCoy, Shannon K. and Gardner, Susan K. (2012). Interdisciplinary Collaboration on Campus: Five Questions, *Change: the magazine of higher learning.* Accessed 24/03/2014 http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2012/November-December%202012/interdisciplinary-collaboration-full.html

Sapiro, Virginia (2004) *Interdisciplinary and Collaborative Teaching at the UW-Madison: Overcoming barriers to vitality in teaching and learning*. University of West Madison. Accessed 22/03/2014
http://www.ls.wisc.edu/curriculum/Sapiro-Interdisciplinary.pdf

Segal, Robert A. (2009) 'Crossing borders can lead to gold – but so can digging deep', *Times Higher Education* (18 June)

Shultz, David, S. (forthcoming). Constraints on Innovative Teaching in British Universities: An American Perspective. In Vijay Pabbathi and Leon Williams (Eds.). *Innovative and Effective Teaching Methods in Higher Education.*

Worton, Michael (2013) 'Big picture from all angles' *Times Higher Education*, **(**21 February)

Contact us

The Higher Education Academy
Innovation Way
York Science Park
Heslington
York
YO10 5BR

+44 (0)1904 717500
enquiries@heacademy.ac.uk

ISBN: 978-1-907207-86-0

© The Higher Education Academy, 2014

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is a national body for learning and teaching in higher education. We work with universities and other higher education providers to bring about change in learning and teaching. We do this to improve the experience that students have while they are studying, and to support and develop those who teach them. Our activities focus on rewarding and recognising excellence in teaching, bringing together people and resources to research and share best practice, and by helping to influence, shape and implement policy - locally, nationally, and internationally.

The HEA supports staff in higher education throughout their careers, from those who are new to teaching through to senior management. We offer services at a generic learning and teaching level as well as in 28 different disciplines. Through our partnership managers we work directly with HE providers to understand individual circumstances and priorities, and bring together resources to meet them.

The HEA has knowledge, experience and expertise in higher education. Our service and product range is broader than any other competitor.

www.heacademy.ac.uk | www.twitter.com/heacademy