



# ***Ages and Stages: bringing the generations together***

**Miriam Bernard, Keele University.**

**'Generations Working Together' National Conference:  
Edinburgh**

**Wednesday 13 March 2013.**

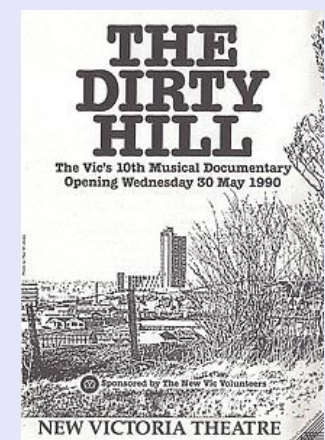
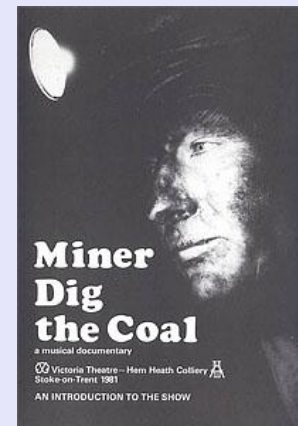
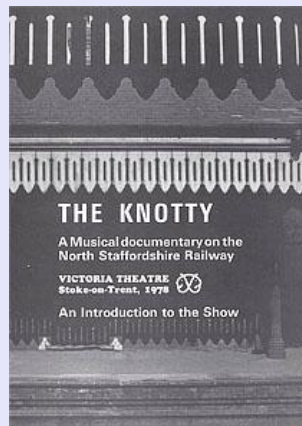
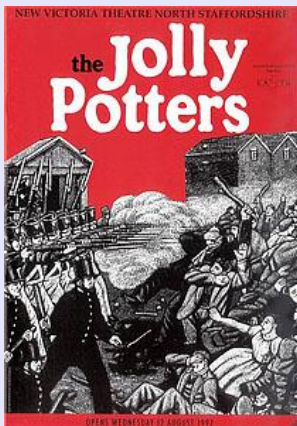




# Research Programme

## ■ Strand 1: Historical Representations

- Archival research in the Victoria Theatre Collection.
- Representations of ageing/intergenerational relationships in the documentaries. Detailed analysis of particular documentaries: 'The Knotty'; 'Fight for Shelton Bar!' and 'Nice Girls'.



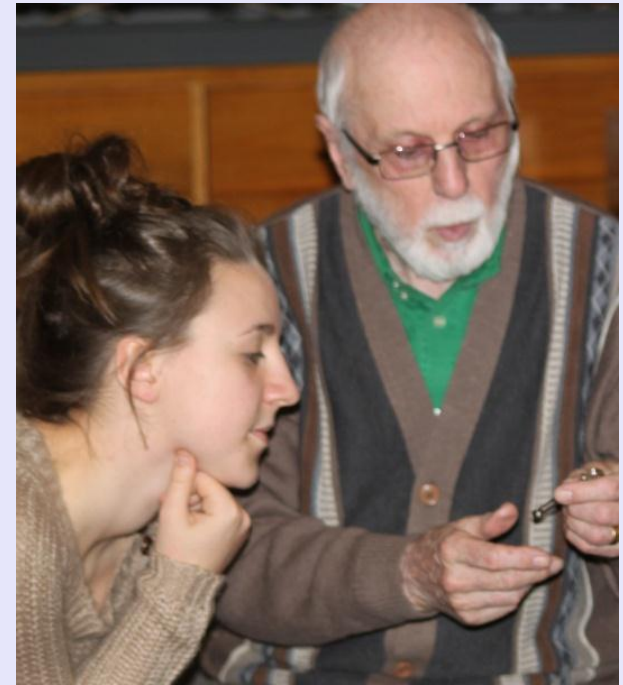
## ■ Strand 2: Recollections and Contemporary Representations

- Individual/couple interviews: n=79 (@1.5 hrs) - 95 people in total.
- Group interviews: n=10; further discussion of theatre in relation to ageing, intergenerational relationships and sense of place.
- Ethnography: participant observation with New Vic volunteers.



# Strand 3: Performance

Intergenerational workshops: Sept 2011 - May 2012



# Strand 3: Performance

Ages and Stages Exhibition: 25<sup>th</sup> June – 21<sup>st</sup> July 2012





# Strand 3: Performance

*Our Age, Our Stage: rehearsals and tour, June - July 2012*














# What participants and performers say






***I felt stretched  
and really  
encouraged every  
step of the way.***  
(Volunteer)

***When I started this project, I  
had preconceptions I didn't  
realise about age, ability,  
whatever – but once I got rid of  
that, I got to know everybody,  
and they're amazing!***  
(Youth Theatre member)

***I think it was the likenesses rather than  
the differences (between generations)  
that surprised me... I thought we'd be  
poles apart, but in many ways that's not  
true.***  
(Audience member)





***I feel as though I've learnt such a lot from things that people said, to the craft – the acting – I've learnt such a lot, it's wonderful.***

**(Audio-describer)**

***Anyone, regardless of age, can contribute to theatre. Acting, creating, I'm sure everyone in this room has it in them. I don't think it ever leaves you.***

**(Youth Theatre member)**

***Having the chance to work with people from both generations, I have been able to build strong relationships and make valuable friendships that I hope will last. There are different personalities and interests within the group; however, we all share one common passion, for theatre and the all-important connection with the New Vic***

**(Youth Theatre member)**

# Where next?



- **Follow-on-Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)- (01.08.12 – 31.07.13)**
  - Establish an intergenerational theatre company at the New Vic.
  - Develop and evaluate new performance pieces/two week tour.
  - Develop, deliver and evaluate an inter-professional training course.
  - Scope out, with a range of partners, the potential for a 'Creative Age Festival' in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire.





## The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing

Ages and Stages is a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, running from October 2009 to July 2012. We are exploring how age and ageing have been constructed, represented and understood in the Victoria/New Vic Theatre's social documentaries from the 1960s to the 1990s; what part the theatre has played in constructing individual and community identities and creating and preserving community memory; the relationship between older people's involvement in the theatre and continuing social engagement in later life; the practical and policy implications of our research findings. This project is funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) cross-council research programme.



### Research Programme and Methods

**Strand 1** explores historical representations of ageing through literary and cultural analyses of materials relating to the Victoria Theatre's social documentaries, held in the Victoria Theatre Archive.

**Strand 2** focuses on recollections and contemporary representations of ageing through 80 individual qualitative interviews and a series of group interviews with older people who were/are (i) sources for the Vic's social documentaries; (ii) theatre volunteers; (iii) audience members throughout their lives; (iv) actors and theatre employees who continue to live in the Potteries. In addition, participant observation is being carried out at the theatre, with volunteers and older people participating in educational and social events and activities.

In **Strand 3**, materials drawn from Strands 1 and 2 are being used to work with the New Vic Youth Theatre and older people to create a new social documentary performance. The performance, together with an exhibition and a range of associated educational materials, will be taken out into, and evaluated in, a variety of community settings.

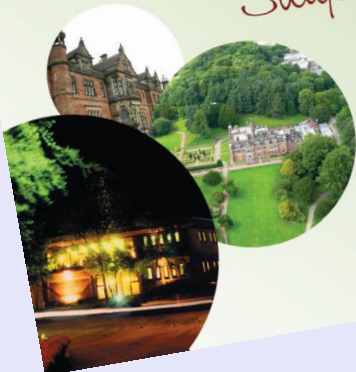
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**Advisory Group** – Anne Basting, Joanna Barnard, Ronny Cheeseman, Janet Fatt, Susan Feldman, Moll Hatzkyrydis, Ray Johnson, Nick Jones, James Knowles, Louise Middleton, Gordon Ramsay, Pam Schweitzer, Mary Carter, Teresa Carter, Elizabeth Slater

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/agesandstages/>



Ages and Stages



### Ages and Stages: Policy Brief

Compiled by: Jackie Reynolds, Consultant;

Michelle Rickett, Research Associate; Miriam Bernard, Principal Investigator.

This policy brief is an outcome of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) funded research project entitled *Ages and Stages: the place of theatre in representations and recollections of ageing*. The project (2009-12) was a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. Combining literary, cultural and historical analyses with qualitative interview work and research-led practice, *Ages and Stages* provided both theoretical and practical understandings of the role that theatre plays in the lives of older people and in the wider community. The research was drawn together to create a new documentary drama *Our Age, Our Stage* and the associated *Ages and Stages* Exhibition. *Our Age, Our Stage* toured schools, colleges, retirement communities and local councils and was performed to a capacity audience of 500 people at the New Vic Theatre on July 11<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Our research findings have policy implications that may be viewed in the context of what is often referred to as 'active ageing', as well as a growing interest in older people's arts engagement. This briefing identifies key policy developments relating to older people; reviews their implications and those of our research findings; and makes a series of recommendations for policy makers who might be interested in developing and including intergenerational theatre/drama in their policies and (inter-professional) practices.

#### Key Recommendations:

- Policies need to reflect the fact that participation in creative activities can be an important aspect of 'ageing well'.
- It is necessary to join up policy agendas on 'arts, health and well-being' with those addressing the needs of 'an ageing society'.
- Policies to promote social cohesion should recognise the potential of intergenerational theatre and drama as a medium for the inclusion of older and younger people.
- Opportunities for intergenerational groups to work creatively together should be included as part of Age Friendly Cities and Communities initiatives, and should contribute to planning processes.
- Better and more widespread information and publicity is needed to encourage the participation of older and younger people in creative activities.



new dynamics of ageing  
a cross-council research programme

### Ages and Stages: the place of theatre in representations and recollections of ageing

Guest holders: Miriam Bernard (PI), Professor of Social Gerontology; David Amigot, Professor of Victorian Literature; Lucy Munro, Senior Lecturer in English; Michael Murray, Professor of Social and Health Psychology – all Keele University; Jill Rezano, Head of Education, New Vic Theatre; Research Associate: Michelle Rickett; PhD student: Ruth Basten; Administration: Tracey Harrison



*Ages and Stages* is a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme. Between October 2009 and July 2012, we explored historical representations of ageing within the Vic's social documentaries and interviewed 95 older people who have been involved with the theatre as volunteers, actors and employees, audience members and sources for the documentaries. The research was drawn together to create a new piece of documentary drama called *Our Age, Our Stage* and the associated *Ages and Stages* Exhibition.

#### Our research demonstrates:

- The importance of challenging stereotypes that creativity declines/ceases in old age.
- Connections between identity, belonging, well-being, self-esteem and self-confidence, and how they can be enhanced through theatre and drama.
- The role that theatre and drama can play as a medium for the inclusion of older and younger people.
- Positive health outcomes and a sense of well-being for both older and younger participants, with practical and policy implications for community cohesion.
- The necessity of joining up policy agendas on arts, health and well-being with those of an ageing society.



Our Age Our Stage  
The Ages and Stages Company  
2012

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Our Age, Our Stage

New Victoria Theatre  
Performance - July 11th 2012  
Plus: The Ages & Stages Exhibition  
June 25th - July 21st 2012



# For more information



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