**Ridiculusmus Trilogy Research Project Summary**

**Dialogue as the Embodiment of Love: a Practice-Research Investigation into a Trilogy of Socially Engaged Work by Ridiculusmus**

Richard Talbot University of Salford

This portfolio documents the process of creating the trilogy of plays *Dialogue as the Embodiment of Love* (2014-2019), by Ridiculusmus. The project examines an interdisciplinary practice-as-research dialogue between clinical therapeutic approaches to three mental health conditions and performance-making. The conditions are psychosis, PTSD, and ‘complicated grief’, defined in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual DSM-5 (2013) as ‘disorders’; and the process of creating, performing and disseminating a performance response to each condition is analysed through a discussion of each play in turn.

*1) The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* (2014) – investigated the impact of psychosis in family settings and the efficacy of Open Dialogue in Western Lapland as a set of principles for clinical therapy.

*2) Give Me Your Love* (2016) – investigated PTSD amongst service veterans and clinical trials into the prescription of doses of MDMA (Ecstasy) to accompany talking therapies.

*3) Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!* (2018) – investigated ‘complicated grief’ and social and psychological factors surrounding the ‘disorder’.

My role as a devising collaborator with Ridiculusmus, prior to the Trilogy is analysed in notes on documentation in Talbot, RJ 2014, 'Devising Ridiculusmus’ total football: A schematic reading of performance process.' Studies in Theatre and Performance, 34 (2), pp. 140-159. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2013.877662>

I characterise the role of practitioner-researcher as ‘embedded’, in the sense that this provides a sustained and privileged insight into devising processes and methods while also disseminating the work in academic writing.

The methodology is claimed as practice-as-research because the process involves an understanding of theatre-making options and choices that could not be accessed in other modes. The methodology is structured around the development of three plays: a period of devising during which I organised residencies, panels of specialists and client groups as well as students from the University of Salford. These fed into conference or complimentary writing outputs, and documents of interviews with David Woods and Jon Haynes, followed by touring performance and public engagements that consolidated insights for peer-reviewed outputs. At each stage the focus of the investigation shifts but the insights come from an analysis of the interaction between the experience of a condition, and the performance of in each play respectively, 1) delusion 2) intoxication and 3) disorder. The project should be understood as practice-as-research in the way that written outputs in the form of articles and chapters emerge from the embedded, practical experience and work, and this in turn provides a basis for chairing or curating public engagement elements.

A **Project Timeline** with hyperlinks to the documents, indicates the key my contributions and provides links to the following documents, these are summarised below:

1) *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* (2014)

I performed the role ‘Rupert’ in Australia and the UK. The treatment of characters through an Open Dialogue principles is discussed in <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/37504/>, and **in the Figshare collection**, the video clips and images referenced in the Conference Paper are also provided

in Talbot, RJ Evidence of healing in the eradication of schizophrenia in Western Lapland, in: Theatre & Performance Research Association; Performance & The Body Working Group: Bodies of Evidence, 8-10 September 2015, University of Worcester. (Unpublished)

An interview with Woods and Haynes interrogates the transposition of Open Dialogue method to our performance making methods in this play. See **Talbot, RJ 2019, 'Reflections on The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland: a conversation between David Woods and Jon Haynes of Ridiculusmus with commentary by Richard Talbot’, in: Performing Psychologies: Imagination, Creativity and Dramas of the Mind, Bloomsbury, London, pp. 167-187.** [**http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/48580/**](http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/48580/)

The context of my association with Ridiculusmus is important here, as it is not announced in the chapter. Further evidence of my approaches and dialogues with scientific collaborators is represented by an audio recording of a Chaired Panel following the performance of the trilogy at BAC, London that reveals the connections between Open Dialogue therapy and performance methods.

2) *Give Me Your Love* (2016)

For this production, I contributed to collaborative devising, viewing and feeding back on work in progress, reading versions of the script and facilitated panels and student participations as discussed above.

The preface to the play script, **Woods, DW, Haynes, J and Talbot, RJ 2016, 'Give me your love (introduction)', in: Give Me Your Love, Oberon Books, London.** [**http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/37509/**](http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/37509/) provides a brief personal and political context for the play and is offered as an example of public engagement, which also took the form of post-show panels, that I curated and chaired with psychologists Professor Peter Kinderman and Dr Ben Sessa.

This discussion in the preface is extended in **Talbot, RJ 2017, ''It blows my mind’: intoxicated performances by Ridiculusmus’, Performance Research Journal, 22 (6), pp. 83-92. D.o.i. 10.1080/13528165.2017.1412654**

3)*Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!* (2018)

The methodological cycle of the previous two productions was repeated in this production. I saw scratch performances and performed in one and hosted a residency in the same format, inviting panelists from the School of Health at the University of Salford.

In May 2020, I curated the **online seminar series** about the trilogy ‘Dialogue As The Embodiment of Love’ via the online conference platform Teams.

a) Watch Session 3 Die! Die! Die! Old People Die! <https://vimeo.com/428154211/e11adf3392>

b) Watch the clips via a YouTube playlist archived by The New Adelphi Theatre, here: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLu26zjyowg4N5lcvL1iL57XGi2JYntDev>)

This featured a live online ‘directors’ commentary’, of each of the productions in the trilogy, alongside a screening of extracts on Youtube with David Woods in Melbourne and Jon Haynes in London. As well as being a rich document in itself, of videos of performance and reflections by the company and collaborators across the whole trilogy, and it forms the basis for Complementary Writing, as preparation for a monograph post REF and post Covid-19: **A Ridiculusmus Virtual Trilogy: Grief, Laughter and Performance in *Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!***

I discuss the physical comedy and performance techniques in the production and consider the outcomes of trilogy as a whole reporting on the transition in the work, away from disseminating the nature and experience of a medical condition to investigating theatre as a space and forum for the audience to articulation their own mental health, rather than it being defined predominantly through diagnosis.