

2019 SARBICA International Symposium

Presenter:

Pam Schweitzer, Honorary Research Fellow and Hons Doc Arts, University of Greenwich UK, Department of Humanities

Title:

Creative development of Oral History Archives into theatre and visual arts

Abstract:

This presentation will demonstrate how archived oral history interviews can be a source of inspiration for students and professionals in the fields of theatre and visual arts. The Reminiscence Theatre Archive, based at the University of Greenwich, contains digitised recordings and transcripts gathered over 30+ years in connection with professional and amateur theatre projects initiated and directed by Pam Schweitzer. Scripts for these productions use the interview material verbatim, weaving stories together into a new construct of dialogue, plot, character, action, music, dance, image and design. Live performances, especially those for older people, help to trigger further memories and give rise to further inter-generational reminiscence work.

Today's students and professionals are now drawing on the original interviews as a source of inspiration for new work. This creative exploration and development of new work based on the material in the archive reflects their world view and personal experience and preferences. They can then compare their use of this source to make theatre and visual art with what previous interpreters have created in the 1980s and 90s as all relevant productions are also available on the archive.

Students of history, drama and sociology are now assisting through work placements in the development of the archive and its related website, learning about the digitisation process and website development in the process.

www.reminiscencetheatrearchive.org.uk

Bio:

Pam Schweitzer has spent the last 30 years developing reminiscence arts work, especially original reminiscence theatre productions and exhibitions, and creating the first Reminiscence Centre in London. She has produced 30 books of edited and illustrated reminiscences centred on key themes in social history of the twentieth century. In 1993, she set up an international network of reminiscence arts workers and organisations, the European Reminiscence Network, co-ordinating international festivals of reminiscence theatre and initiating collaborative action research projects in reminiscence across 16 countries in Europe.

She is now working as a consultant and freelance practitioner in the fields of arts and older people, communication in dementia care and international co-operation on creative projects. Her recent books “Reminiscence Theatre: making theatre from memories” (2007) and “Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today: reminiscence in dementia care” (2008), both published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, has won much acclaim as a record of an important area of theatre work and as a tool for others to use in developing new programmes.

She is currently based at the University of Greenwich, where she teaches today’s drama, history and sociology students about reminiscence theatre, reminiscence in dementia care and archiving oral history recordings and the theatrical productions resulting there-from. She continues her international work as Director of the European Reminiscence Network, organising conferences and workshops across the world.