Death, Dinner and Performance Project: A Study of the Efficacy of Performance to Enhance Conversations Around Death and Dying

The Death, Dinner and Performance Practice as Research project took place in the Autumn of 2018 at the University of Salford. The performances on the 31st of October and 7th and 14th of November brought together commensal practices and autobiographical performance to explore a performance/participation method developed to encouraged reflection and dialogue around the difficult and somewhat taboo subjects of death and dying.

The project sits within the contexts of palliative care, commensal practice and autobiographical performance and developed from earlier research on ageing and creative applied practice that culminated in the publication of my monologue *Applied Theatre: Creative Ageing* (Bloomsbury, 2017). The PaR research project was also informed by my previous professional experience as a Registered General Nurse working in palliative and end of life care.

The PaR project used commensal practice and autobiographical performance strategies collaboratively to interrogated how established methodologies for discussions around death (death dinners and death cafes for example) might better serve their originally purpose when invested with dramaturgical and theatrical qualities. It investigated the outcome of using such qualities to further stimulate personal reflective conversations around the subjects of death, dying and grief. Thus, the PaR research examined the potential for commensal practice and performance to work together in such a way as to enhance communal engagement and conversation on the subjects of death and dying while simultaneously exploring the efficacy of autobiographical performance strategies to act as stimuli for such conversations.

The material in portfolio (particularly the Supplementary Material: Exposition of Research document) evidences the research process and practices undertaken. It provides insights gleamed from the Practice as Research found both through the practice itself and the participant’s post dinner responses.