



UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER
30th August 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing with reference to Anna-Helena McLean's application for a Creative Development Grant. I have known McLean in a professional capacity since 2009, both as a collaborating artist and as a researcher of her creative and training work, and I am delighted to support McLean's application to ACE.

McLean trained at the world-class Music and Drama programme at Royal Holloway University of London and was a leading performer for renowned theatre company Gardzienice (Poland) for 7 years. Since her return to the UK in 2009/10, she has pursued a truly interdisciplinary career as a solo actor-musician, a director of highly physical ensemble work and a pedagogue of newly-devised actor training methodologies ('Actor-Chorus-Text'). The high quality and international reach of her work are evidenced by her regular touring and residencies across the UK and abroad (most recently in India, Scotland, and Italy).

A Creative Development Grant would provide McLean with the period necessary for further honing and articulating her training, disseminating related activities to wider audiences, and cultivating deep collaborative exchange towards the development of performance work in new and unexpected ways. The latter will include creative partnership with Jonathan Stancato in co-leading a workshop and with Jason Singh on integrating advanced sonic technology in McLean's live performances, both geared towards exploring the cutting edge of musico-theatrical performance. On an individual level, this R&D period will offer McLean the time and resources to develop new skills (Ableton mentoring), expand her repertoire by learning new songs recorded through extensive in situ expeditions, and fully cultivate her practice as a director-vocalist through the composition of new material.

The proposed CDG is designed to help McLean take a further step in structuring, archiving and sharing her significant training output. I recently commissioned McLean to write a research essay for a special issue of the world-leading *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* journal (Routledge) on new voice training, accompanied by appropriate audio-visual documentation of sessions. This will be the first time McLean's influential pedagogy will be circulated in such a systematic way. This opportunity may lead to further publications and public sharings, including a manual with Digital Theatre and an event co-curated by RADA and the Theatre & Performance Research Association (both currently in discussion with interested parties). McLean's training is truly participatory and establishes bridges between indigenous musical forms and urban audiences, and, in a lineage of practices conventionally centred around male trainers (Grotowski, Staniewski, Bral), McLean's committed work proposes a ground-breaking alternative.

It is for the above reasons that I wholeheartedly recommend supporting McLean's further professional development, acquisition of new skills, and generation of collaborative experimental work through ACE funding.

Regards,

Dr Konstantinos Thomaidis
Artistic Director, Adrift Performance Makers
Lecturer in Drama, Theatre & Performance, University of Exeter
Editor, Special Issue 'What is New in Voice Training?', *Theatre, Dance & Performance Training*