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Subject: Candidacy of Anna Helena McLean

**From:** Bonenfant, Yvon  
**Sent:** Sunday 10 February 2019 03:02  
**Subject:** Candidacy of Anna Helena McLean

Dear Postgraduate Admissions,

I write in order to heartily recommend Ms Anna-Helena McLean for admission to PhD study as part of Guildhall's Doctoral Community.

I have known of Ms McLean and her work since 2012. While I am currently Head of the Theatre Department at University College Cork, Ireland, I was formerly Professor of Artistic Process, Voice and Extended Practices at the University of Winchester, where I maintain a Visiting Professor position. Ms McLean came to Winchester as a visiting lecturer, focusing on the teaching of extended voice practice and ensemble practice within the Vocal and Choral Studies programme.

Over the years since, I have followed Ms McLean's career with much interest. Her background, first of all, is exceptional. She is an alma mater of the 'Gardzienice' Theatre Company in Poland. This company has truly global renown as being a researching, exploring, rigorous environment, and very few people have worked with and in it for extended periods. The Theatre's physical and vocal work is extremely demanding and immersively compelling and requires incredibly sophisticated engagement and learning. Subsequently, Ms McLean worked in Sweden, the UK, and in many prestigious international environments as a refined performer, workshop leader, and teacher. From these experiences, Ms McLean gained an exceptional command of an incredible array of technical skills that she brought into her teaching practice with our students. While McLean does not hold a Masters' degree, this kind of experience in and of itself easily extends beyond the knowledge and practice that performers might gain even in one of the American three-year-long MFA programmes. McLean critically articulates the value of this work in the language of research.

More importantly, from this experience, McLean has developed a genuinely informed, intellectually engaged researching practice as a teacher and workshop leader. Her proposal to come to you to examine her carefully developed, rigorous and useful ACT programme in light of the need to contextualise female leadership in the field puts her at the forefront of the next generation of psycho-physical acting investigations, and of embodied research more widely. Much of the existing scholarship in this area ignores both the contribution of women to, and the female experience of, being involved in the post-Grotowskian theatre ecology – an ecology which has influenced Western theatre as a whole – and it is critical that we now enhance and update the core knowledge about what voice, sound and music-theatre practice can become, extending the voice and vocal theory beyond white, able, western or perfect pitching and standard models of aesthetic beauty.

Thus, the proposal McLean has made to you seems appropriate, and she is more than able to commit the interest, energy, and incisive intellectual acuity to the PhD process that it demands. Her discipline, knowledge base and ability to braid together theory and practice are exceptional. The likelihood she will succeed and develop an excellent thesis is unusually high.

What's more, Guildhall is an exceptional place for her to undertake her study. McLean will only make your programme shine and gain further renown, while contributing significantly to your internal research culture.

While there is sometimes contention about understanding how important the contribution of practice-inclusive research can be in the performing arts; take it from me, a scholar who has attracted more than £400 000 of funding to his various research/practice initiatives in the last 15 years, and who publishes widely, yet who still distributes artwork and performance in professional contexts; that McLean is likely to become a scholar who is highly successful in all regards and who will enhance Guildhall's already stellar reputation, and add to the Drama specific Doctorate immeasurably. Her determination, flexibility, commitment, project management skills, knowledge base, and her ability to hold leadership and mentorship roles for undergraduate and MA-level students is practically unequalled, and the excellence of her track record and the esteem in which her work is held without equal for her age and experience.

I recommend her to you with no hesitation whatsoever.  
Please contact me should you desire further information.

With regards,

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