

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

PROJECT TITLE

To the Streets: effective interventions in the community arts ecology of the West Midlands.

LEAD INSTITUTION

Name of HEI institution	University of Birmingham			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>

PARTNER ORGANISATION

Name of organisation	China Plate
URL for organisation website	https://chinaplatetheatre.com/

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Working with leading theatre producers China Plate, this PhD project will investigate how new modes of practice enable creative communities to work together to make positive change. The research will be rooted in tracking the development and results of forthcoming major projects, *To The Streets*, *Please Do Not Touch* and *Trash*, as well as China Plate's Training programmes.

Project

As part of an opportunity to research a range of new projects, *To The Streets* explores the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott. Following its early development as part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival (part of the Commonwealth Games), this ambitious project will be developed by China Plate from a community-focused process into a 'number 1' commercial tour. The research project offers unprecedented access to professionally led theatre activity: other potential case studies in which the researcher can be involved, and which will be developed at various stages by China Plate over the course of the PhD timeline, include *Please Do Not Touch*, a new piece for the theatre and heritage sectors about the legacy of colonialism, and *Trash*, a grime musical about 'sugar' relationships, as well as China Plate's training programmes *The Optimists* and *People-Focused Producing*.

The research will be supervised jointly by the University of Birmingham and the University of Warwick, which offers expertise in performance practice, applied theatre research, and socio-political dimensions of community narratives. It will especially be attractive to those interested in rehearsal and performance processes and making work in applied and community contexts. By drawing on their existing and developing skills, the researcher will also have opportunities to feed into the development of projects, especially through engagement activities and by disseminating findings to a wide range of local and regional stakeholders.

Process

The PhD offers a spectrum of research opportunities in terms of looking at the discovery and development of ideas, their realisation, and community impacts. Over the PhD timeline, China Plate will offer unique access to its work: this includes meetings, rehearsal, and production phases. This is a generous and rare opportunity for a researcher, who will benefit from opportunities for fieldwork, undertaken through several distinct methods (observation of artists' work, interviews with stakeholders, and qualitative and quantitative assessment methods to determine and assess user engagement and impact). The PhD will thus capture and

critically articulate new modes of originating co-created artistic work, generating new knowledge for scholars of arts ecologies and, in terms of impact, practitioners themselves. The research will also benefit China Plate as it assesses its own KPIs, which include the development of new work that:

- has built creative communities around ideas
- has created extraordinary theatre experiences
- has fired the imagination
- has affected positive change
- is open to all

These will be evaluated using ACE Impact and Insights Toolkit (<https://impactandinsight.co.uk/>), in which the candidate will be offered training, providing another research framework (see also training section), and enabling China Plate also to improve upon its KPIs.

Place

The research will mainly be located in around Birmingham and the West Midlands region. The candidate will be supported by Ed Collier, the co-artistic director of China Plate, and academic supervisors Adam Ledger (University of Birmingham) and Bobby Smith (University of Warwick), with project support from Shahnaz Akhter (University of Warwick). As well as academic development, the candidate will benefit from China Plate's training programmes, including 'The Optimists' (annual ten week training programme), 'People Focused Producing' (year round training events) and 'Young Producers' (co-curated training programme with young people at Warwick Arts Centre). The candidate will be able to take part in and potentially develop public engagement opportunities.

Person

The ideal candidate will have experience of practice-led research in the areas of theatre making and be interested in applied and community context. They will be open to participant-observer methods and demonstrate communication and interpersonal skills, and be enthusiastic to undertake further training. We are especially keen to hear from those from currently underrepresented communities in academic research, and that the candidate's identity should better represent the communities the theatre work serves, and shared lived experience.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE. Please email the lead university supervisor if you want to find out more about this CDA project.

Lead HEI Supervisor:	Dr Adam Ledger
Lead HEI Supervisor Email:	a.j.ledger@bham.ac.uk