

ROYAL CENTRAL

SCHOOL OF SPEECH & DRAMA

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

**PROF. GILLI BUSH-
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Job title

Professor Emerita in Women's Performance History

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PROFILE

I am honoured to be Professor Emerita at Central and to be able to continue my connection with the vibrant research culture that Central offers to students and colleagues working in creative industries.

My first career as an actress began when I was twelve years old. I trained at Arts Educational (London) but left school at fifteen to make the televised film series *Here Come the Double Deckers* (1970) going on to more acting work in television and then theatre. My academic training, therefore, started rather later as a mature student at Kingston University (BA English) where I returned as a part-time lecturer to work with a team founding a new drama degree programme (2000). My postgraduate degrees were undertaken in the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London (MA in Research, 1997; PhD, 2000), where I then took up my first full-time lectureship (2001). I taught theatre and performance history, creating undergraduate courses in Restoration Theatre, West End and Commercial Theatre, Melodrama, and Comedy, that revived and revised the stories of women and performance practice from 1660 right up to contemporary stand-up performance. I was Director of Graduate Studies for four years and Head of Department for a further three years, during which I took a leading role in delivering the department's landmark Caryl Churchill Theatre.

My research and publication work is interested in looking at the histories of theatre in terms of archeologies of performance: uncovering the methods and forms in which we frame stories about past theatre and performance events and suggesting new ways to seeing those findings. I am particularly interested in the way we tell stories about women as performance practitioners and how such stories are made and told by today's practitioners. My work as a child actress on British TV is the subject of a chapter in *Entertaining Children*. The chapter in *Women and Comedy* and the collection of monologues included in *Plays and Performance Texts by Women 1880-1930* further my ongoing research in the cultural politics of women's performance work on stage and screen. In 2018 a chapter on the work of writer and comedienne Mabel Constanduros, an early pioneer of comedy broadcasting by B.B.C. Radio, will be published in *Stage Women: Female Theatre Workers, Professional Practice and Agency in the Twentieth Century – 1900-1950s*, taking my work on women's performance histories into the twentieth century.

I am the outgoing Chair of the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA); honorary life member of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD); a member of the peer review college for the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and a member of Equity.

My work at Central over the past four years has enabled me to share the value of theatre histories and performance research directly with theatre industry partners. I have been Principal Investigator with a Central research team working in collaboration with Tonic Theatre's gender equality project, *Advance* and you can see more about the start of that work in 2014 and our work as academic partners with the 2016 cohort of organisations .

In 2017 I was historical dramaturg for two 'forgotten' plays by women given staged readings at Northern Stage, Newcastle; one directed by RSC's Erica Whyman, the other by Rebecca Frecknall. You can see a short interview with Rebecca Frecknall which followed a staged reading of Jane Scott's 1814 melodrama *Whackham and Windham the Wrangling Lawyers*.

This year I have spent time with the RSC's cast for *The Fantastic Follies of Mrs Rich* (RSC Swan, March-June 2018) talking about the playwright Mary Pix and the actresses she wrote for in this wonderful comedy from 1700.

I am currently researching a one-woman show created by London actress Emma Stanley in 1856 and which she toured to North America, Australasia and India.

RESEARCH AREAS

Feminist theatre histories, commercial theatre and popular performance

Women and professional theatre practice over 400 years

The one-woman show from the 19th century theatre to contemporary screens

PHD SUPERVISION

I am no longer undertaking supervision of research students but I am happy to respond to email enquiries on any aspect of my research work.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

2018 (forthcoming). 'Mabel Constanduros: Different Voices, Voicing Difference', in *Stage Women: Female Theatre Workers, Professional Practice and Agency in the Twentieth Century – 1900-1950s*, edited by Maggie B. Gale and Katherine Dorney (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

2014. 'Shifting Scenes: The Child Performer and Her Audience Revisited in the Digital Age', in *Entertaining Children* edited by Gillian Arrighi and Victor Emeljanow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 111-127

2013, 'The Gerbini Letters; or a Tale of Two Mothers', in *Stage Mothers*, edited by Laura Engel and Elaine McGirr (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press), pp. 233-249

2013. 'Biting the Hand that Feeds Her', *Women and Comedy*, edited by Peter Dickinson et.al. (Madison, Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press), pp. 133-144

2012. 'Re: Enactment', in the *Cambridge Companion to Theatre History* edited by David Wiles and Chris Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 281-298

2012. 'Women Like Us' (special edition) *Comedy Studies*, 3.2. pp. 151-159

2012. *Plays and Performance Texts by British and American Women from the Modernist Period 1880-1930*, edited by Maggie B. Gale and Gilli Bush-Bailey (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

2011. *Performing Herself: AutoBiography & Fanny Kelly's Dramatic Recollections*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

2006. *Treading the Bawds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

PRACTICE

I have established ways of working with and beyond text in recovering women's performance work. I have led practice research workshops on nineteenth-century melodrama in Boulder Colorado, London Ontario, Santa Cruz and more recently at King's College London in collaboration with Warwick's 'Melodramatic Moment' project. My book about actress/manager Frances Maria Kelly includes a previously unpublished text of her 1832 one-woman show *Dramatic Recollections*. I have given auto/biographical performance lectures in Cardiff, Utrecht, Manchester, Vancouver and Chawton House Library. A film of my most recent performed lecture juxtaposing Kelly's reminiscences with my own re-membered experiences of being a child performer on television in the 1960s and early '70s will soon be available here.

REGISTER OF INTEREST

Nothing to declare.