



**School: Bath School of Music and Performing Arts**

**Researcher: Dr Helena Enright**

**Project Title: The River Shannon Project**

**UOA: 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies**

## 300-Word Statement

*The River* researches through testimonial performance how people engage with the landscape, physicality and presence of the River Shannon as it flows through the city of Limerick. It explores the transfer of authentic lived experience from multiple personal memories to the theatrical space, through the voice and body of the solo performer. It also explores what dramaturgical frameworks might facilitate a deeper understanding of how places can be seen as 'nodes' in networks of meaning through which people link the meaningful places of their past and present lives.

Developed over a two-year period, it builds on Enright's previous practice-based research into the transformative and epistemological potential of personal testimony as performance material, and its ability to deepen our understanding of the world. Grounded in the philosophy of testimony (Coady 1992, Lackey 2008), oral history/life story studies (Portelli 1994, Sangster 2006), sociology (Shaffer & Smith 2004) and geography (Massey, 1994), Enright uses intimate performative storytelling as a way to explore issues of memory, identity, social change, justice, community and belonging. The performance aesthetic foregrounds the political potential of the personal story and is grounded in the theatre practice of Emily Mann, Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen, Anna Deavere Smith, Moises Kaufman and Brecht.

*The River* was staged on an 80ft Dutch Barge on the River Shannon and funded by Limerick City of Culture. It had 31 performances (13th Aug -1st Sept 2014) one of which was streamed live to Coogan's Irish Bar in New York during the run. A screening also took place at the Curragower Boat Club, Limerick as part of the Elemental Arts and Culture Festival in September 2014. The research content has been presented at conferences and events focusing on beyond the boundaries of performance; the artist as citizen and the use of audio & sound in performance.