**TaPRA 2014:Never Flying Solo: The Collaborative, Ordinary Heroes**

Kat Low (RCSSD) & Sue Mayo (Goldsmiths)

“I wanted to do something worthwhile. I wanted to marry the two worlds of drama and working with people – and thought I had invented the job as I had encountered nothing like it myself.” (Survey Respondent for *Reasons to be Cheerful*).

Bringing together both their interests in exploring the intentions and aims of the applied theatre practitioner, Kat and Sue will consider the possibility of an ordinary hero. Kat is interested in examining further the notions of emotional labour and the care which are sometimes described in applied theatre practice and has argued that this consideration of the work as labour (the idea we have worked hard and cared deeply) has always carried a strain of heroic martyrdom. She believes that such a view ignores the dialogical aspect of the work between facilitator and participant, the sometimes mutual benefit for both, and is interested in the celebration (not the patronisation) of more ordinary heroes. Similarly, Sue has conducted research into why people continue to do socially applied theatre, when the world stubbornly refuses to become peaceful and opportunities remain inaccessible to all. Called ‘Reasons to be cheerful’, Sue surveyed practitioners in order to examine what are the drivers for our continued optimism, creativity and well-being? For our presentation, we propose engaging in another, more specific survey specifically examining the notion of reward and will present our findings at TaPRA. In particular we are interested in examining how people describe doing their practice and why they do their practice. We anticipate exploring how transparent are we as practitioners, and can we be, about what we are doing this work for, and whether it is ok to be doing it for ourselves? We will argue towards the celebration of an ordinary hero who collaborates with other ordinary heroes, takes risks and finds a way to synthesise their art and their social engagement.