

Boyd M. Branch

Assistant Professor
School of Media and Performing Arts
Coventry University

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Website: improvmedialab.com

Education

- 2023 **PhD**, Digital Arts, University of Kent
Thesis Title: *Tele-Immersion for the Training and Performance of Live Theatre*
Supervisors: Christos Efstratiou, Paul Allain
- 2013 **MFA**, Interdisciplinary Digital Media & Performance, Arizona State University
Applied Project: *Neuro: A Chemical Romance*
Supervisors: Jake Pinholster, Todd Ingalls
- 2007 **MA**, Theatre Studies, University of Utrecht
Thesis: *Adolescence Invites Rebellion: American Culture in Dutch Theatre for Youth*
Supervisors: Chiel Kattenbelt, Maaïke Bleeker, Wil Hildebrand
- 2005 **BA**, Theatre Arts, Arizona State University

Academic Appointments

- 2023–Present **ASPiRE Research Fellow**, C-DaRE, Coventry University
- 2022–Present **Course Director**, Masters in Virtual & Augmented Reality, Coventry University
- 2022–Present **Assistant Professor**, Media & Performing Arts, Coventry University
- 2021–2022 **Lecturer**, Media & Performing Arts, Coventry University
- 2020–2021 **Associate Lecturer**, Engineering & Digital Arts, University of Kent
- 2013–2017 **Visiting Assistant Professor**, Film, Dance & Theatre, Arizona State University
- 2009–2012 **Adjunct Faculty**, Department of Theatre, Scottsdale Community College
- 2008–2009 **Adjunct Faculty**, Department of Theatre, Paradise Valley Community College

Fellowships and Affiliations

- 2019–2021 **Fellow**, Institute of Culture & Creativity, University of Kent
- 2017–2020 **Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow**, University of Kent
- 2015–2017 **Teaching Exchange Fellow**, Kinnaird College, Lahore, Pakistan
Supported by ASU Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict and the US State Department Exchange Program
- 2012–2017 **Research Fellow**, Center for Science and the Imagination, Arizona State University

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| | Supported research and development of digital art STEM educational experiences |
| 2006–2007 | Fulbright Fellow , US State Department, Netherlands Researched performance art and technology for young people in the Netherlands |
| 2013–2016 | Affiliate Faculty , Office for Veteran and Military Academic Engagement |
| 2013–2016 | Affiliate Faculty , The Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict |
| 2013–2016 | Affiliate Faculty , The Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian & East European Studies |
| 2013–2016 | Honors Faculty , Barrett Honors College |

Awards, Funding & Honours

Awards

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| 2020 | <i>Most Innovative Show Award</i> , Paris Fringe for <i>Improbatics</i> Role: Director, Media Designer Context: Recognized for outstanding innovation in theatrical production among international entries |
| 2018 | <i>New York Times Critics' Pick</i> for <i>Soot & Spit</i> Role: Media Designer Context: Highlighted as a must-see performance by the New York Times, reflecting significant critical acclaim |
| 2018 | <i>NY Innovative Theatre Award</i> , Outstanding Performance Art Production for <i>Soot & Spit</i> Role: Media Designer Context: Awarded for excellence in performance art within the New York independent theatre community |
| | <i>Arizoni Theatre Award of Excellence</i> Nominations |
| 2014 | Artistic Specialization (Projections) for <i>Nation</i> |
| 2014 | Artistic Specialization (Projections) for <i>Red Planet Respite</i> |
| 2014 | Artistic Specialization (Projections) for <i>Soot & Spit</i> |
| 2012 | Lighting (Projections) for <i>Zoot Suit</i> |

Grants and Funding

Awarded Grants

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| 2023 | Principal Investigator , Special Project Fund, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Coventry University Project: Art Residency and Technology Development, Venice Biennale Collaboration Project Funding: £14,000 Impact: Enabled collaborative art residency and development of technology showcased at the Venice Biennale |
| 2022 | Co-Investigator , Immersive Project Fund, Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Coventry University Project: Development of an accessible immersive gallery design platform Funding: £13,000 |

- Impact:** Advanced accessible tools for immersive gallery design, enhancing digital exhibition capabilities
- 2021 **Co-Investigator**, The Recovery Innovation Fund, East Kent
Project: Live music performances in mixed reality
Funding: £7,500
Impact: Facilitated innovative live performances integrating mixed reality, supporting the arts during pandemic recovery
- 2021 **Co-Investigator**, Enabling Innovation: Research to Application, East Kent
Project: *Telecaster*—Remote Controlled Media System for Live Performance
Funding: £7,500
Impact: Developed a remote media control system enhancing live performance capabilities in virtual settings
- 2020 **Co-Investigator**, Enabling Innovation: Research to Application, East Kent
Project: Feasibility Study—Adapting Jasmin Vardimon’s *Alice In Wonderland* Dance Experience for Virtual Reality
Funding: £7,500
Impact: Explored VR adaptation of a dance experience, contributing to advancements in virtual performance art
- 2019 **Investigator**, Teaching Enhancement Small Support Award, University of Kent
Project: *PROJECTING@KENT*—Creative Student Outputs in Public Space Using an On-campus Projection Mapping Platform
Funding: £5,000
Impact: Established a projection mapping platform, enriching student learning and public engagement
- 2018 **Principal Investigator**, Public Development Office Outreach Fund, University of Kent
Project: *Claiming Space*—Workshops for Youth in Digital Literacy and Social Empowerment
Funding: £15,000
Impact: Provided digital literacy workshops empowering youth in underserved communities
- 2016 **Principal Investigator**, Herberger Research Council Project Grant
Project: *sideCoach*—A Digital Tool for Communicating Science Research
Funding: \$5,000
Impact: Developed an interactive digital tool assisting scientists in effectively presenting research
- 2016 **Principal Investigator**, The Sustainability Conoscente Network Seed Grant (Matching)
Project: *sideCoach*—A Digital Tool for Communicating Science
Funding: \$5,000
Impact: Supported the creation of tools for enhancing science communication and outreach
- 2014 **Co-Investigator**, Institute for Humanities Research Seed Grant
Project: *Lived Histories: The Veterans Project*
Funding: \$12,000
Impact: Developed digital media systems facilitating critical dialogue between military veterans and the public
- 2014 **Co-Investigator**, Herberger Research Council Project Grant

- Project:** *Lived Histories: The Veterans Project*—Touring Production
Funding: \$5,000
Impact: Facilitated the touring of a production promoting understanding of veterans’ experiences
- 2011 **Principal Investigator**, Pave Program in Arts Entrepreneurship Arts Incubator Grant
Project: *The Blue Bike Kid Show*—STEM-focused Entertainment for Kids and Families
Funding: \$5,000
Impact: Created educational entertainment promoting STEM learning among children and families
- 2011 **Principal Investigator**, Pave Program in Arts Entrepreneurship Arts Incubator Grant
Project: *Shakespeare Hero*—An Educational Video Game for Learning Poetry
Funding: \$2,000
Impact: Developed an interactive game to aid in teaching poetry and literature to students

Grants (Submitted)

- 2016 **Co-Investigator**, The Department of Homeland Security
Funding Requested: \$500,000
- 2016 **Co-Investigator**, Department of State American Day Cultural Event in Osaka
Funding Requested: \$40,000
- 2016 **Co-Investigator**, Arizona Project Humanities
Funding Requested: \$5,000
- 2015 **Investigator**, US State Department Exchange Grant
Funding Requested: \$500,000
- 2015 **Co-Investigator**, National Endowment for the Arts Art Works Media Arts Grant
Funding Requested: \$20,000
- 2015 **Co-Investigator**, Surdna Foundation Artist Engaging in Social Change Grant
Funding Requested: \$5,000
- 2014 **Investigator**, National Research Foundation Research Trainee Program
Funding Requested: \$2,449,747

Publications

Preprint URLs available at <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3166-4358>

Journal Articles and Proceedings

1. **Branch, B.**, Mirowski, P., Ppali, S., Covaci, A. (2025). Designing and Evaluating Dialogue LLMs for Co-Creative Improvised Theatre. In *Proceedings of the IEEE International Congress on Cognitive Computing*. (Accepted).
2. Ppali, S., Scorer, M., Ppali, E., **Branch, B.**, Covaci, A. (2025). Remote Rhythms: Audience-Informed Insights for Designing Remote Music Performances. In *Designing Interactive Systems*. (Accepted).

3. **Branch, B.**, Mirowski, P., Ppali, S., Allain, P., Von Jungenfeld, R., Efstratiou, C. (2023). Mirror Placement Matters in Remote Collaboration. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*. DOI: 10.1145/3544549.3585798.
4. Ppali, S., Vali, L., **Branch, B.**, Ang, C., Thomas, A., Wohl, B., Covaci, A. (2022). Keep the VRhythm Going: A Musician-Centred Study Investigating How VR Can Support Creative Musical Practice. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*. DOI: 10.1145/3491102.3501922.
5. **Branch, B.**, Mirowski, P., Mathewson, K. (2021). Collaborative Storytelling with Human Actors and AI Narrators. In *Proceedings of the IEEE International Congress on Cognitive Computing*. arXiv: 2109.14728.
6. **Branch, B.**, Efstratiou, C., Allain, P., Mirowski, P., Mathewson, K. (2021). Tele-Immersive Improv: Effects of Immersive Visualisations on Rehearsing and Performing Theatre Online. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*. DOI: 10.1145/3411764.344531
7. Mirowski, P., Mathewson, K., **Branch, B.**, Winters, T., Verhoeven, B. (2020). Rosetta Code: Improv in Any Language. In *Proceedings of the IEEE International Congress on Cognitive Computing*. ISBN: 978-989-54160-2-8.
8. **Branch, B.**, Hughes, E. (2014). Embodied Historiography: Rupture as the Performance of History. *Performance Research*, 19(3), 40-48. DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2014.985118.

Book Chapters

1. **Branch, B.** (2025). Technology and the Emergence of Performance Capture. In Allain, P., Camilleri, F. (Eds.), *Routledge Milestones in Actor Training*. Routledge.
2. **Branch, B.**, Mirowski, P. (2025). Artificial Theatres of the Absurd. In Lively, G., Slocombe, W. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of AI & Literature*. Routledge.
3. **Branch, B.** (2024). Immersive Design for Live Performance. In Oliszewski, A., Fine, D., Roth, D. (Eds.), *Digital Media, Projection Design, and Technology for Theatre* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
4. **Branch, B.** (2023). Virtual Platforms for Rehearsing Theatre Remotely. In O'Dwyer, N. (Ed.), *Extended Reality Performance*. Bloomsbury Publishing. (*Conditionally Accepted*).
5. **Branch, B.** (2022). Virtual Director. In Sermon, P., Dixon, S. (Eds.), *Telepresence Stage Handbook*. University of Brighton.
6. **Branch, B.** (2017). Digital Media Design Process and Workflow. In Oliszewski, A., Fine, D., Roth, D. (Eds.), *Digital Media, Projection Design, and Technology for Theatre* (pp. 135–138). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315666976-3.

Conference Presentations

1. Mirowski, P., **Branch, B.**, Mathewson, K. (2023). Visual Theatrical Improvisation alongside Artificial Intelligence Image Generators. In *Theatre about Science: Theory and Practice*, Coimbra, Portugal.
2. Williams, T., **Branch, B.**, Buzatu, S. (2022). Discussing Now and Then: The Sound of Coventry's Story. *Music and/as Process*, Farnham, UK.

3. Mirowski, P., **Branch, B.**, Mathewson, K. (2022). From Improv to Language Models: Artist-In-The-Loop Artificial Intelligence. *Theatre about Science: Theory and Practice*, Coimbra, Portugal.
4. **Branch, B.**, Mirowski, P., Mathewson, K. (2021). Hell is Other People's Robots. *International Federation for Theatre Research Symposium*.
5. **Branch, B.**, Mirowski, P., Mathewson, K. (2021). Platforms for Multilingual Tele-Immersive Storytelling and Improvisation. *Electronic Literature Organization Conference and Festival: Platform (Post?) Pandemic*.

Peer Reviewer

1. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 2023.
2. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 2022.
3. *Science & Diplomacy: Special Issue: Future-Casting Science Diplomacy*, 2021.

Professional Activities

Original and Devised Productions

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| 2024–Present | Writer/Director/Designer , <i>ALEx and The Improbots: An AI Show for Kids!</i> Original live scripted and semi-improvised show featuring state of the art LLMs, an interactive robot, and dynamic video projections. Premiered at the Gilded Balloon for the 2024 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and the 2024 Brighton Fringe Festival, Brighton. |
| 2013–2016 | Co-Director/Technologist , <i>The Veterans Project</i> Annual production supported by grants from the ASU Office of Veteran and Academic Affairs and The School of Film Dance and Theatre. Venues included The Film Bar, Phoenix, AZ; Lyceum Theatre, Tempe, AZ; Combine Art Gallery, Phoenix, AZ; Arizona State Museum, Tucson, AZ |
| 2012–2015 | Co-Owner/Director/Writer/Technologist , <i>The Blue Bike Kid Show (LLC)</i> STEM-focused performances and installations using puppetry, interactive projected media, sound, and physical computing |
| 2013 | Writer/Director/Technologist , <i>Neuro: A Chemical Romance</i> Original design fiction production exploring neuroscience and morality. Presented at Mesa Arts Center's SPARK! Festival of Creativity and ASU EMERGE Festival, Tempe, AZ |

Digital Media Design

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| Current | Researcher/Media Designer/Performer , <i>Improbotics</i> Artificial intelligence-based improv theatre experiment. Selected engagements include Improfest (Gothenburg, Sweden), Brighton Fringe Festival (UK), Maryland STEM Festival (online), Paris Fringe Festival (online), VOILA! Europe Festival (London, UK) |
| 2023 | Digital Media Technical Director , <i>Cuspidi</i> |

Original devised production by Rome-based theatre company Labirion, commissioned for The Venice Biennale, 2023

Other Professional Experience

- 2018–Present **Director**, *Improvisational Media & Performance Lab*
Provides improvisational training for STEM professionals and students to build community, develop leadership skills, and effectively communicate
- 2006–2007 **International Program Director**, *Tweetakt*
Annual international theatre for young audiences festival in Belgium and the Netherlands

(Selected) Teaching Experience

Coventry University

Graduate Level Courses:

- 7058MAPA **Research Methods:** Qualitative, quantitative, and practice-based research methodologies
- 7064MAPA **Immersive Technology:** Survey of emerging technology for Virtual and Augmented Reality and Projection Mapping experiences
- 7072MAPA **Emerging Media Practice:** Theories and practices related to virtual production, virtual reality cinematics, and mixed reality experiences

Undergraduate Level Courses:

- 5071MAPA **Creative Hacklab:** Intensive module where students build and critically engage with XR cinematic experiences
- 3029MAPA **Research and Development in Digital Media:** Research methods for investigating digital media concepts and practices
- 4062MAPA **Creative Digital Media: Context and Practice:** Core skills for producing, distributing, and analyzing digital media
- 4063MAPA **Digital Storytelling and Media Design:** Design theories and practices for developing augmented reality experiences

Supervision

- 2016 **Ian Shelansky**, MFA Student, Arizona State University
- 2016 **Minsoo Kang**, MFA Student, Arizona State University
- 2016 **Michael Largent**, MFA Student, Arizona State University
- 2016 **Rebecca Eckert**, Honors Student, Arizona State University

Commissioned Workshops

- 2017–2025 **Yale University: Ciencia Initiative**
Engineering Community Through Improvisation: Annual science communication workshops as part of the diversity in leadership training program for scientists and engineers across the U.S.
- 2022 **British Science Festival**
Performing with AI: Workshop on improvising with Artificial Intelligence image and text generation inside immersive spaces, Leicester, UK
- 2022 **ACM International Conference on Interactive Media Experiences (IMX 2022)**
A Workshop on Designing the Performances of the Future: Co-led a workshop on designing future performances, Aveiro, Portugal
- 2020 **Mount Sinai Medical Center**
Unleashing Creativity out of Crisis: Three-week improv-based resiliency training program for medical students, New York City (online)
- 2018–2019 **University of Kent Public Outreach**
Claiming Space: A Digital Intervention: Grant-funded workshops in digital content creation and public projection mapping for youth in Kent, UK
- 2016–2018 **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)**
Improvisation for Science Diplomacy: Workshops delivered as part of the annual AAAS Science Diplomacy Training Program, Washington, DC
- 2014–2016 **Consortium for Science, Policy, & Outcomes**, Arizona State University
Improvisation for Leadership and Critical Communication: Workshops presented as part of the annual science communication leadership program, Washington, DC

University Service

- Member of the Arizona State University Faculty Senate (2017–2018)
- Chief organizer and host for the 2nd annual *Science Fiction Theatre Conference* at Arizona State University (2017)
- Developed and administered science communication workshops for faculty from various departments at Arizona State University (2017)
- Mentored and advised graduate and undergraduate students on media for main-stage productions at Arizona State University (2013–2018)

References

Available upon request.