

# **total theatre** magazine

The magazine for Total Theatre Network – celebrating physical and visual performance

Volume 14 Issue 4 Winter 2002/3

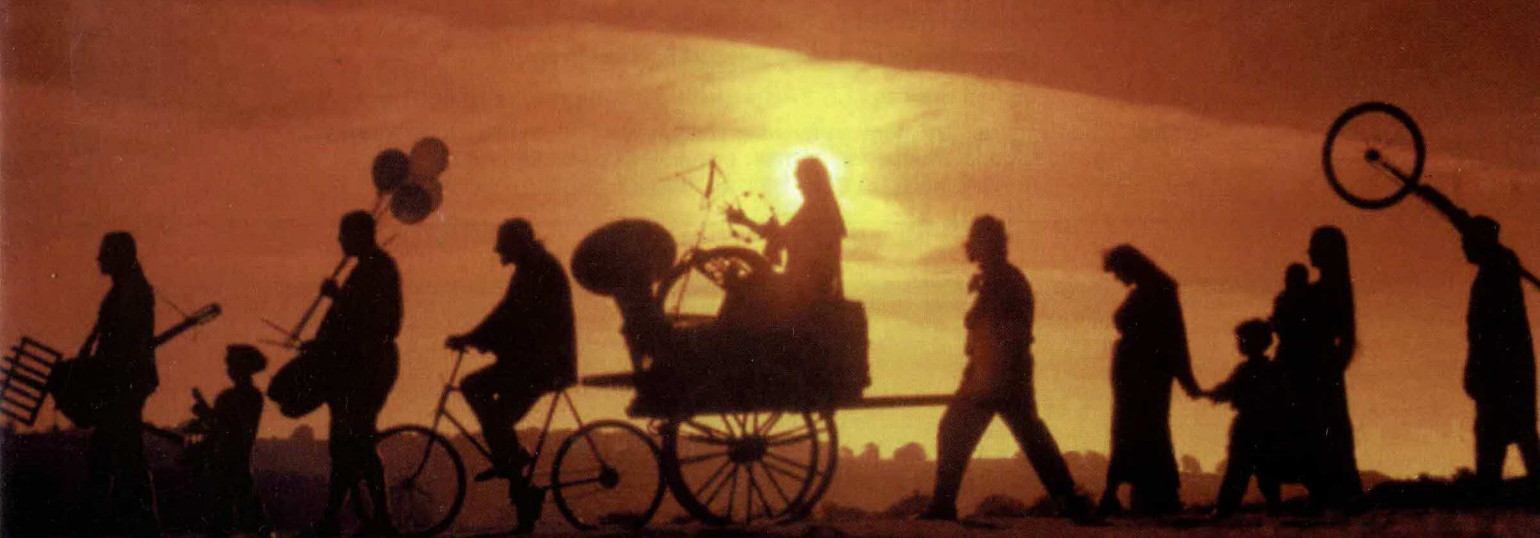
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# total theatre magazine

Celebrating and promoting physical and visual performance  
Volume 14 Issue 4 Winter 2002/3



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If you would like to submit news, views, letters or advertise in the Spring issue, please note that the copy deadline is 14 February 2003. The Spring issue will be published on 7 April 2003 and will cover the period April to June 2003.

**Cover**  
Circus Ronaldo's 'Fili'  
at the London International  
Mime Festival, 17-19/1/03  
Photo: Benny de Grove



# Editorial

Festivals, festivals... Is it really that time of year again? Like Father Christmas, the London International Mime Festival (LIMF) comes but once a year – unlike LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre) which now flowers all year long...

The Mime Festival has always had a special relationship with Total Theatre Network; we've dropped the 'mime' tag, they haven't – but we are both dedicated to supporting and promoting the best in physical and visual performance. To that end, we highlight LIMF visiting artists 33 Fainting Spells in our Inbox Questionnaire (and see the Listings section for details of all LIMF performances). We will also be holding our traditional New Year Critical Practice discussion in collaboration with LIMF – except that now we have changed the name to Total Theatre Talks. Simple, succinct, to the point, that's us.

Our theme on that day will be the role of design in theatre-making – and there is plenty related to that theme in this issue, with a report from a colloquium dedicated to the legacy of Edward Gordon Craig, and a special focus on the recent Visions Festival. We also have a feature from Ross Brown (head of undergraduate studies at Central School of Speech and Drama) who looks at another element of design – the sound. Sound design as a special theatre discipline may be relatively new, but as Ross makes clear a sensitive awareness of the element of sound has always been a part of the dramaturgical process.

Elsewhere in the magazine, you'll find plenty of first-hand reports from artists on the frontline of theatre production: Emi Slater of Perpetual Motion is in New York, whilst Chris Goode of Signal to Noise is back at his home base in Camden People's Theatre, grappling with the complexities of installation/performance 'The Big Room'. David Woods of Ridiculusmus gives academia a good kicking on his way to a stint at the Barbican, whilst 'Silent Witness' Alex Mermikides watches Forced Entertainment create their new work 'Travels'. We also get to hear from Para Active on what they feel about cultural diversity, with Akua Obeng-Frimpong taking up the baton and asking what we can do to encourage young black people into performance.

We've come to the end of 2002 – the 'Year of Cultural Diversity' – but the theme of diversity will resonate throughout Total Theatre Magazine in 2003. We will continue our Internationalist approach, highlighting work that crosses boundaries of language, nationality and culture, and we will seek out innovative performance work of all sorts made by all sorts of people.

Wishing you all a happy and productive New Year!

**Dorothy Max Prior**

## Total Theatre Talks

We are pleased to be holding our latest discussion (in what was previously known as the Critical Practice series) as part of the London International Mime Festival at 2.30pm on 18 January 2003 in the Voice Box, Royal Festival Hall. This year's topic is the role of design in physical and visual performance and we will look at the designer's function in the creation process, how design influences the finished product, and whether a designer and scenographer are one and the same. Our panel includes Professor Anthony Dean (King Alfred's, Winchester), Olivia Jacobs (Tall Stories), Danny Ronaldo (Circus Ronaldo) and Steven Wasson (Theatre de l'Ange Fou and Ecole de Mime Corporel Dramatique). We are delighted to announce that Dick McCaw will once again chair the discussion. This event is free to Total Theatre Network members (one ticket per individual member, two per company member, etc.). To ensure a place please let the office (020 7729 7944) know that you would like to attend. Every year there is a long queue for returns so tickets not collected by 2.15pm will be released to the waiting list.



Okidok: photo by JC Dherville

The Mime festival programme is looking particularly interesting this year, with an eclectic mix of British and international work. If you haven't yet seen the brochure, have a look at the website on [www.mimefest.co.uk](http://www.mimefest.co.uk).

## Writers/Reviewers

In the interests of balanced representation, Total Theatre Magazine is looking for more writers/reviewers who are based somewhere other than London and the South of England. We also encourage theatre-makers, writers or academics who are members of cultural groups currently under-represented in the magazine to approach us with proposals for future features. E-mail [editorial@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:editorial@totaltheatre.org.uk) or telephone 020 7729 7944.

## Doesn't Time Fly?

There was a little error in the last issue of Total Theatre Magazine. If you spotted it, congratulations – you did better than your humble editor, production editor, proofreader, director and communications officer. Your prize? A free sticker to correct the error – available on request. Email [admin@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:admin@totaltheatre.org.uk).

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# total theatre news<sup>network</sup>

## Au revoir...

Annabel Arndt writes: We are about to say a sad farewell to our latest intern Pauline Pepin. Pauline has been with us for three months from the Toulouse Graduate School of Management. She has been concentrating on arranging our various archives. She has also been helping with the preparation of a European funding application made in partnership with other European organisations supporting circus and street arts.

## Total Theatre Awards

The very good news is that the Awards will definitely be back next year. A decision had been made that we would hold these every other year, but we have subsequently had sponsorship promised by King Alfred's, Winchester. This two-year sponsorship means that the Total Theatre Awards will be going ahead in 2003 and 2004. Professor Anthony Dean, Head of School (Performing Arts) at King Alfred's (formerly of Central School of Speech and Drama) and an Awards judge for the last 3 years, should be thanked for this relationship, which builds on the collaboration already established with King Alfred's in presenting the Users Guide Symposia and linked publications. We are delighted to have an organisation sponsoring us which is so in tune with the aims and spirit of the Awards.

## Re: Visions

It was good to meet so many members at the recent Visions symposium on New Media in Performance. You will find a report on the Visions Festival and symposium by Dorothy Max Prior later in the magazine. The event was a collaboration between Visions Festival, Total Theatre Network and King Alfred's, Winchester. A publication, The Users Guide to New Media in Performance, will be available in 2003.

## European project

Eagle-eyed readers might have seen some new European logos in the magazine. This is in connection with our European project 'Bite Size'. The good news is that funding has now been confirmed for this project, which will

involve the Total Theatre Network office going on the road offering one-stop shops in training and advice over the next two years. Please take some time to fill in the questionnaire inserted with this magazine, as we will be offering training based on requests received.

## Arts Council Review

We have just had our last review by the Arts Council of England before it changes its name and we are delegated to the London office. While there are mixed feelings about this change (for example, how appropriate it is for a national organisation to work with the regional office in which they happen to be based), the good news is that our funding is now secure until March 2006.

## AGM

This year's Total Theatre Network AGM will take place at 2.30pm on Saturday 18 January in the Voice Box, Royal Festival Hall (on the same day as Total Theatre Talks – Design for Performance). Members will have received papers with this magazine confirming time/agenda. Do come along – it'll be a full

day, with free performances as part of the London International Mime Festival (we've scheduled the meetings so there is a chance to see these). Also, an opportunity to meet and talk to director Annabel Arndt and editor Dorothy Max Prior about your organisation and the magazine it publishes, and to meet Tansy Lihou, our new communications officer... Looking forward to seeing you there.

## Fresh 2

We are very pleased to be collaborating once more with The Brit School in their second Fresh festival. They will be hosting six weeks of workshops, discussion and performance examining the role of young people in theatre. This will involve a series of innovative exchange projects with visiting companies working with Brit school students, and young people working with local community groups. Any companies or practitioners who would like to be involved, or would like to be part of their 'meltdown' sessions to take part in the debate about the next generation of theatre makers please contact Phil Gunderson at [pgunders@brit.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:pgunders@brit.croydon.sch.uk), telephone 020 8665 5242 or write to The Brit School, 60 The Crescent, Croydon CRO 2HN.

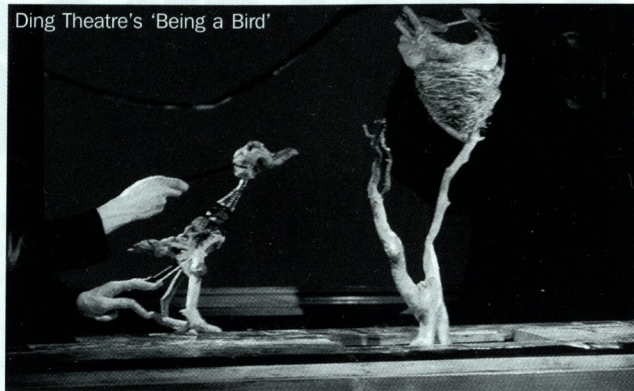


Theatre de l'Ange Fou's 'Government Inspector'; photo by Geraint Lewis



# Ping go the Strings

Ding Theatre's 'Being a Bird'



Having established itself as the leading UK festival of puppetry and animated theatre, Visions 2002 came with a new by-line: 'the festival of visual performance'.

**DOROTHY MAX PRIOR** investigates

So what's in a name? Visions is now 'the festival of visual performance'. Is this an opportunist jumping-in to fill the space left by Battersea Arts Centre, who have replaced the British Festival of Visual Theatre with Octoberfest? Is it an attempt to move away from the tag of puppetry, as this is too often viewed as non-serious theatre for chil-

dren? Or is it a challenge to theatre-makers and audiences to take on board the immense breadth of possibilities in the field of visual performance?

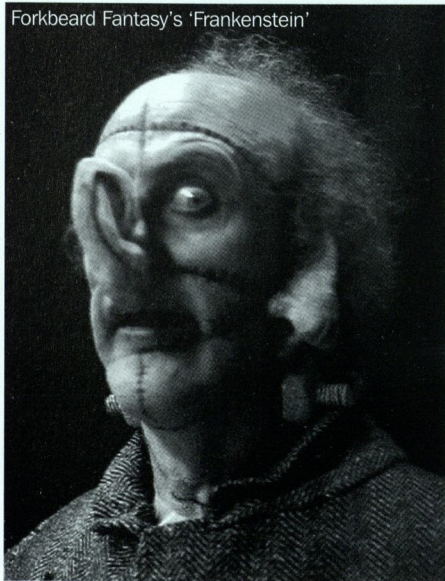
The answer is probably a little of all three. Regardless of BAC's reasons for knocking the BFVT festival on the head, there is no doubt that this is Visions' gain. Those interested in visual theatre need no longer dash up and down the M23 between the two, but can just pitch up in Brighton for ten days to experience the best national and international work. Being concentrated into a short period of time gives Visions the feel of a true festival – racing from venue to venue to catch shows; bumping into people from other parts of the country that you haven't seen in ages and seeing people of all sorts from the local community coming out to join in the fun. One characteristic of a true festival is that it engages the community it takes place in – it is something that people approve of and feel proud to have happening in their neighbourhood.

An example: Forkbeard Fantasy's 'Frankenstein' played a sell-out four nights at Brighton's newly refurbished Corn Exchange. On the opening night, I bumped into dozens of people I knew – not just the usual crew of

fellow artists and theatre fans that you'd expect but people that I knew from my children's school, family friends, neighbours. And this wasn't an exceptional occurrence – most of the Visions performances were full, and many of the people attending events weren't regular theatre-goers. Visions has obviously built on its established good record and pushed itself further into the consciousness of the local community.

So what of the content of this year's festival? One concern about the name change was that it might open the door to such a broad range of work that puppetry would be sidelined. As it is such a neglected form, this would be a genuine worry as there would be even less opportunity to show work for theatre-makers using puppetry and animation. But fears were unfounded as many of the shows still fitted the previous brief of representing innovative puppetry and animated theatre. There were plenty of good shows for kids (this being half-term week) – from Menin-gen's beautiful interpretation of 'The Tin Soldier' (shadows of tiny paper models and flickering lights on the walls of a snowy white dome) and Ding Theatre's whimsical 'Being a Bird', which had one of the best sets in the festival – a cross between a doll's house and

Forkbeard Fantasy's 'Frankenstein'





a Victorian cabinet of curiosities, peopled by beautiful and batty birds of all sorts.

An aim of this year's Visions seemed to be to show puppetry as a vibrant form that could step outside of its conventions to work with other disciplines or be placed outside of regular theatre spaces. French company Les Locataires performed 'Fantasmagorie' from the boot of their car. England's own Wireframe were commissioned to create 'Elevation', an installation and performance piece in Fabrica gallery (see p8). Anglo-Romanian company Theatre Insomnia showcased their new production 'Amalia' using a Gypsy fortune teller's tent as its stage, and the cheeky walkabout booth of Castalet Portatif wooed passers-by with Pepe the puppet's singing and portrait painting.

Pepe and his hidden operator Daniel Rafael were voted the Best of the Fest by the Visions team of Young Consultants, a pack of 8 to 12 year olds who scurried round the festival doing workshops and seeing shows as part of their investigative brief. This scheme was one of the brainwaves of the Visions team, created in collaboration with Brighton and Hove Council Play Service... other councils and festivals take note!

There was also plenty of puppetry for adults: cabaret fun from 'Maybellene the Living Fashion Doll', dark and dreamy images from Tram Theatre's 'Plume d'Ange' and the extraordinary Israeli/German collaboration 'Children of the Beast', which explored the relationship between memory, truth and fiction in Holocaust survivors and the children of survivors.

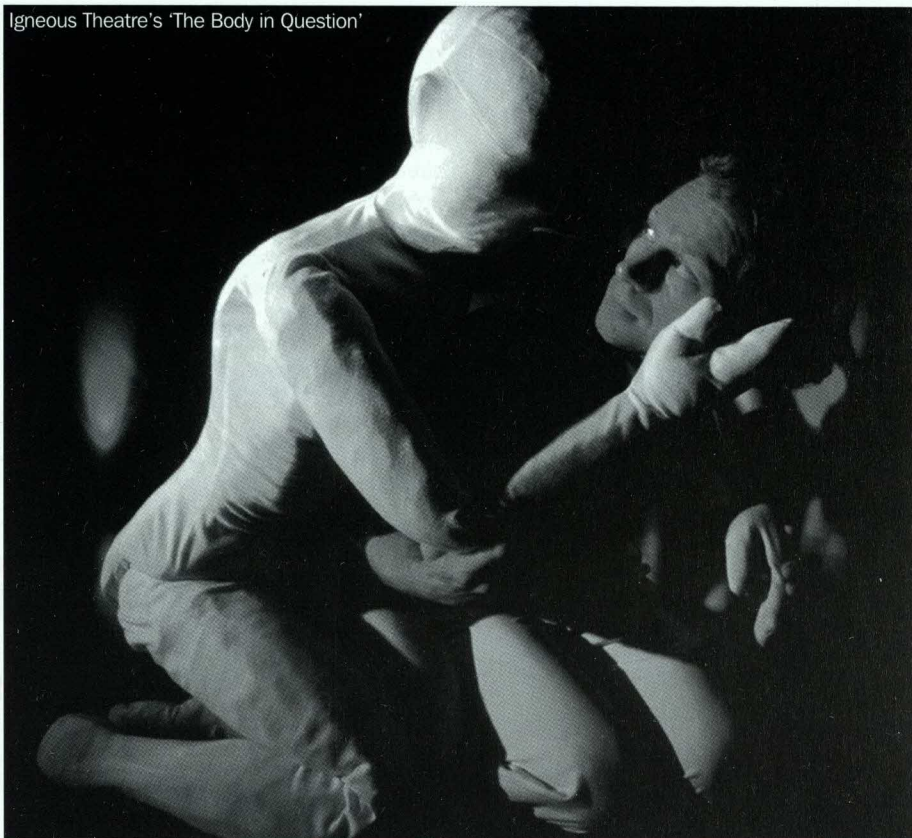
But part of the remit for this year's festival was a desire to push the boundaries out a little more: to include work that wasn't based around puppetry or object animation, but which used technologies such as film and video in imaginative new ways; to bring art forms other than theatre into the festival and to encourage the investigation of new hybrids of forms and new ways of working.

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**One characteristic of a true festival is that it engages the community it takes place in – it is something that people approve of and feel proud to have happening in their neighbourhood**

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Igneous Theatre's 'The Body in Question'



With the intention of approaching some of those desires and interests came the opening event of the festival: a symposium created in collaboration with Total Theatre Network and King Alfred's Winchester. Entitled 're:visions', it looked at the application of new media in live performance. Artists, academics and producers from a variety of visual and performing arts disciplines presented their personal visions and practical explorations.

Mat Adams from Blast Theory took us through the workings of a real live manhunt computer game acted out on the streets of Sheffield. Filmmaking collective Yeast showed us how they were re-inventing documentary and mixing it with live music performance. Holger Zschenderlein initiated us into the mysteries of sound sculpture. In a presentation straight out of an HG Wells novel, the professor and his prize student (graduate in the University of Brighton's BA Music with Visual Practice course Owain Rich) demonstrated a strange metal structure placed on top of buildings that 'read' the weather elements of temperature, humidity and wind, data which, when fed into a computer programme, created an ever-changing soundscape.

A little closer to home (to those delegates with a theatre background) was Alex Hoare (a.k.a. Alex Shelton), a scenographer who presented a lyrical reflection on her artistic choices when working to integrate visual arts with performance. She was presented in virtual reality as a mouth on a screen, whorls of paint swirling round the moving lips. At the

end of the presentation, she stepped out from behind the screen, her hands daubed with paint... a perfect way of showing rather than telling how such marriages of form can happen.

Jasmin Fitter from Random Dance showed how the company had transposed their own professional working practices into their extensive education programme – for example by teaching young people how to choreograph on computer regardless of their own dancing ability. Andy Lavender from Central School of Speech and Drama gave us a thought-provoking analysis of modernist, post-modern and contemporary approaches to new technologies in performance – examples shown included footage of such visual theatre luminaries as Robert Lepage.

But in their interest in the use of new media within theatre practice, these three presenters were the exception rather than the rule: many of the invited speakers seemed to uphold the current rather tedious orthodoxy that theatre as an art form wasn't particularly interesting, and that all the happening stuff occurred elsewhere...

This view was contradicted by the many shows in the Visions festival that were innovative and/or challenging despite being set within theatre boundaries. Australian company Igneous presented an autobiography in motion, 'The Body in Question'. Using a variety of media (including film projected onto movable screens, projections superimposed on the performer's body and a life-size crash ►



dummy) this was an exploration of dancer James Cunningham's relationship to his body before, during and after the motorcycle crash which left him with a paralysed arm.

Echoing Alex Hoare's presentation, Joan Baixas and Paca Rodrigo's *Terra Prenyada* placed live painting and performance together to create one of the most meaningful and visually beautiful works in the festival. A very different kettle of fish was Italian company Fanny and Alexander who presented 'Romeo and Juliet – Et Ultra'. A deconstruction of Shakespeare's story of lost love, the produc-

tion used torches, mirrors and a soundscape of distorted voice effects to batter the audience's senses. Although not a show that I enjoyed, I was interested in the festival's decision to include work that couldn't, under any stretch of the terminology, have fitted into any previous Visions festival programme. Nothing resembling puppetry or animation in sight!

Personally, I hope that Visions doesn't become too seduced by the lure of new technologies and continues to seek out the best of puppetry, animation and related forms to present – regardless of the media used, old or

new. As was proved many times over in this festival, it is the artist not the tools that he or she chooses which is the most important factor. In the right hands, a piece of paper or a length of string can create images as powerful and mesmerising as any created by any other more hi-tech means. It's the vision that counts! ■

*Following on from the re:visions symposium, The User's Guide to New Media in Performance will be published in 2003. To register an interest, e-mail [admin@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:admin@totaltheatre.org.uk)*

# Wireframe's 'Elevation'

Wireframe's new installation and performance piece 'Elevation' was created for Visions 2002 and sited in *Fabrica*, a church-turned-gallery that still retains its original features. During the day, 'Elevation' functioned as an installation. Entry was free, so visitors could drop in as often as they liked. The installation had both sound and vision elements. The soundscape was a gentle symphony created from concrete 'real life' samples and pure electronic sounds, layered together in many different combinations: sometimes overtly referencing birdsong or stormy skies, but at other times drifting into a more abstract dream-like hum.

The visual element was minimal but quietly beautiful. Around the altar, softly lit hanging globes had tiny peepholes that rewarded the curious visitor with an insight into another world hidden within. Small spheres moved on pulleys up and down the space, drawing the eye up towards a number of glowing chrysalis-like forms suspended from the beams above. The amorphous shapes could be all sorts of things – cocooned butterflies, angels, ghosts...

The evening performances used a number of different sorts of puppets to tell a tale of evolutionary striving and ascension into freedom. The audience are free to move around their space ('Why sit in rows – why not acknowledge you're in a room with other people?' say Wireframe) which we take to be below sea-level, with the balcony level as land (home of the sphere-bellied puppets) and the

Wireframe photo by Ben Pacey



enormous roof space the heavens above.

Unlike 'At Home' (presented at Visions 2000), 'Elevation' has a linear narrative, although there is a reasonable amount of flexibility, with sections placed in a fixed order but variable in length. There is a surreal, dream-like and haunting quality to the piece. In a nod to Magritte, the visible puppeteers are dressed in neat suits, and retain neutral expressions throughout, cool and collected servants of their charges. The lighting design uses a great deal of muted greens and blues to create a feeling of an elemental netherworld.

The four members of Wireframe share a history of training in applied art rather than

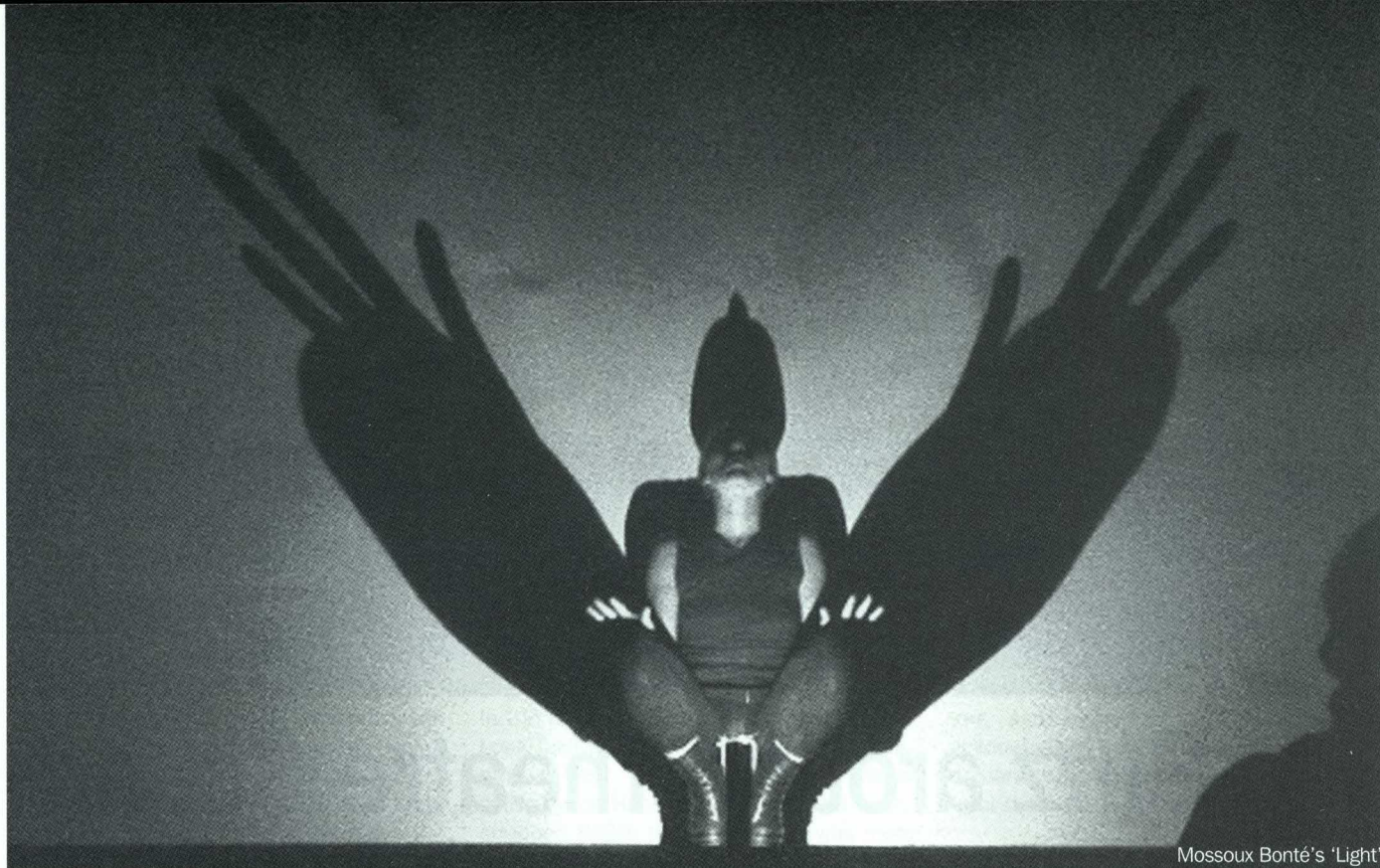
fine art or performance, being theatre designers who tired of the usual hierarchy where the visual design tends to come after the ideas are workshopped. Wireframe's work treats the visual, aural and physical aspects of the piece as being of equal weight. Working with four-way authorship could be problematic, but they acknowledge that 'the places where our ideas overlap are the most interesting' so everyone contributes to all elements of the work – and each is willing to let go of a pet idea if it's not liked by the others.

Similarly, they have a refreshingly even-handed attitude to the tools of their trade, using whichever is the most appropriate medium for the idea that they wish to express – be it crumpled paper, a video monitor or a computer software programme that can randomly select sounds for live mixing. Their work often features puppets, but this is 'a choice not a manifesto commitment'.

To date, each Wireframe installation or show has been a unique experience. They have a refreshing approach to performance work that values the currency of dreams and fantasies, rightly perceiving these to be as real as any other life experience, but have a balancing intrigue with the minutiae of existence – the sheer physics involved in the daily toil of life. It's a good combination – each soar to the heavens having its corresponding bump to the ground. ■

*Wireframe are hoping to recreate 'Elevation' in 2003. See [www.wireframe.org.uk](http://www.wireframe.org.uk).*





Mossoux Bonté's 'Light'

# A day with Edward Gordon Craig

Early 20th-century pioneer Craig envisioned theatre as a symphony of sound, light and moving masses. He explored the use of lighted screens, shadow and the creation of atmosphere and ambience in place of naturalistic set. Often viewed as the 'godfather' of scenography as a distinct theatre discipline, his legacy lives on – as MISCHA TWITCHIN reports...

*'After the practice the theory'*  
(*'The Mask'*, 1908)

In an encouraging sign of renewed interest in Edward Gordon Craig – as a figure not only about whom, but also from whom, to learn – the Dramaturgy Forum organised an international colloquium, hosted by the Central School of Speech and Drama this summer, to address his legacy. Over and beyond the scholarship which they brought to the day, all the contributions were charged with an enthusiasm which carried through into the discussions and made this an inspiring occasion. The day began with an introduction to the venue itself – the Embassy Theatre at Central, in which, as the site of the former Hampstead Conservatoire, Craig staged Purcell's *'Dido and Aeneas'* in 1900.

This was not the day's only direct connection with Craig. Harvey Grossmann, who spoke on Craig's understanding of scenography as creating an art of the spectator – not simply designing what is to be seen, but how it is seen (understanding theatre as the

dynamic of seeing) – had worked with Craig in the late 1950s. Besides his paper on Craig as an artist, Harvey was able to answer questions and offer reminiscences about Craig as a friend, which gave the proceedings a special character.

In this informal atmosphere, the papers began with Henryk Jurkowski offering an introduction to Craig as a poet of theatre, as someone who realised new metaphors with which to think about its art, not simply verbally but scenically, changing the way we understand the creative possibilities of the stage. Offering a precise example of this, Christopher Baugh's talk included his own computer-generated imaging of Craig's famous screens in movement, showing how the seamless changes in space and light would effect the action of the stage itself – the art of which Craig was the modern pioneer.

My own paper addressed Craig's theories of the actor, drawing on his celebration of Decroux in 1945 to explore the meaning of his much misunderstood espousal of the 'über-marionette'. Craig's little known work for mar-

ionettes themselves – his projected cycle of 365 puppet plays, the *'Drama of Fools'* – was opened up with a performance by the Little Angel Theatre of one of them, *'The Tune the Old Cow died of'*. Accompanied by the music of sewing machine and typewriter (for which the text asks), as well as the more familiar fiddle, the performance ended with the wonderful image of the old cow's soul fluttering heavenward, jumping one last time over the face of the moon.

Finally, John Keefe offered a personal reflection on Craig's place within the history of the idea of a 'total theatre' practice. The colloquium, held in a school where theatre is approached in practice as well as theory, demonstrated that Craig's work is there not simply to be taught, as if it were a thing of the past, but that it still has much to teach – to the theatre artists of the future. ■

*The proceedings of the Craig Colloquium will soon be available online in a special edition of the Dramaturgy Forum at [www.dramforum.net](http://www.dramforum.net)*





Complicité's 'Mnemonic'; photo by Sebastian Hoppe

# The Buzz around Theatre Sound

From horses' hooves with coconut shells to the latest computer software, sound design has always been an integral part of the dramaturgy of theatre production. ROSS BROWN hears the future

Theatre sound design as a profession is the new kid on the block, the fastest growing area of theatre production over the past ten years. You can now do both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in it. In Summer 2002, an International Colloquium on Sound Design organised by the Central School of Speech and Drama and the Royal National Theatre attracted professional theatre sound designers from 13 different countries – and at least two Histories of Theatre Sound are being written at the moment. So what exactly is the buzz about?

Few would deny that sound (small 's') is as intrinsic to the essential 'liveness' of the theatre experience as it is essential in our daily life. Hearing, in evolutionary terms, provided two crucial functions: linguistic communication and early warning. Musicality may contentiously be attributed to the former: an echo of a pre-verbal stage of evolution when sexual desire, rage, or territorial warning were communicated through vocal timbre, rhythm and cadence alone.

As an early warning mechanism, our hearing is astoundingly sensitive and works almost entirely, to borrow from computer-programming terminology, in the background. We hear in 360°, 24/7. In range of sensitivity to volume and pitch, our ears are by far our most sensitive organs of perception. And yet we consciously use them to listen infrequently. When we do, it is in a moment of danger (straining to hear a noise in the undergrowth) or in an aesthetic moment: listening to music, a loved

one's breathing, the small sounds of a rare moment of quiet. The active act of listening is thus either indicative of a state of heightened alert or of precious self-indulgence.

And yet the hearing never stops. Whether we dwell on it or not, the musicality of expression that once told us about another human being's intention or mood, is still present. Listening to spoken words occupies our cerebral consciousness in deciphering meaning, but the timbre, rhythm and cadence of what is being said is still heard and affects our interpretation of that meaning. We listen to words, we hear sound. This is as true in theatre as it is in life and is as fundamental an understanding for the actor as the subtext that physicality and movement express.

In the wider physicality of performance, running alongside verbal language, is a parallel sonic text. It accompanies each kinetic actor movement and provides us with information about the substance, texture and character of the physical environment (floors, walls, props, costumes). When triangulated with the visual, this information is essential to the credibility of illusion or integrity of the live experience. Into this complex perceptual ecosystem we dare to introduce artificial sound effects, or – with even more bravura – we underscore the dramatic moment with music. The grammatical rules that govern such a precarious aesthetic undertaking might be described as the Dramaturgy of Sound.

Such dramaturgical understanding begins with an appreciation of the way that we

unknowingly hear and knowingly listen to the soundscape we inhabit, and of the way that which is Heard relates to and affects our appreciation of that which is Seen. Be it in a 'real-life' context or a dramatic narrative, sounds, as well as words, are signs, carry meaning and also possess abstract musicality at the same time. The way that sounds resonate in acoustic space tells us more about where we are and what lies beyond than we can necessarily see. When one also introduces musical underscoring or abstract use of disembodied sound, the phenomenology becomes mind-boggling.

Theatre sound designers have suffered from the unhelpful legacy of the 1960s and 70s, when theatre sound became technology driven. Previously, stage managers, working closely with directors throughout rehearsals, would employ a range of traditional kinetic methods (coconut shells, thunder sheets, wind machines, etc.) to produce bespoke sounds. The advent of electronic recording and amplification equipment (and the cultural expectation that it should be used) required that new specialists be brought in. These tended to be engineers rather than theatre practitioners – often rock 'n' rollers with little understanding or interest in the subtleties of integrating effects or recorded music into the soundscape of theatre. In theatre, success (and intelligibility) is contingent on achieving a believable relationship between the sound cue and the acoustic sounds and words of performance, whereas in rock 'n' roll



the whole soundscape is contained and under the engineer's control in an electro-acoustic mix.

Traditional sophisticated practical understanding of the dramatic power of sound was rapidly forgotten. The (sadly out-of-print) book 'Noises Off' (1936) by Frank Napier – a stage manager at the Old Vic who specialised in 'noise-making' – describes in detail a sophisticated, experimental approach to the (low) technology of creating stage sound effects. Tellingly, Napier stresses the importance of collaborative partnership with the director and cast, communication skills, research and text analysis, which chimes almost precisely with the new orthodoxy of theatre sound design that is emerging from professional forums such as the Theatre-Sound Mailing List and the recent Colloquium. In his foreword to the book, Tyrone Guthrie describes how he hoped, one day, to stage a production of Maeterlinck's 'Les Aveugles', which contains such stage-directions as 'The nightbirds exalt in the trees.' What Guthrie recognised was that Maeterlinck's poetic scripted sound moments and 'silences' were as important as dialogue (as they are in Chekhov, Ibsen, Pinter and Beckett) and his production was as contingent on Napier's availability as it was that of himself or his cast.

Guthrie knew he could not simply employ a technician and issue him with a list of required cues. What he needed was an artistic collaborator capable of understanding the dramatic moment: someone who could experiment with a range of alternative ideas, had an appropriate vocabulary and communication skills and who would respond quickly and discreetly within a sometimes stressful rehearsal room without allowing the technology to hinder the wider effort.

He knew that in order to realise the potential of sound in performance, a director must collaborate with someone with not just a technical, but a specialist dramaturgical capability. It was just such a recognition that led to the emergence of a new breed of sound designer in the late twentieth century. In the rarefied environment of the international festival circuit, this new breed was epitomised by long-term Robert Wilson collaborator Hans Peter Kuhn. The cash-strapped British theatre industry was more reticent. However, in the 1980s, Peter Hall – fresh from the National – insisted that his commercial producers pay both fee and royalty, as well as give poster credit, to fellow ex-National collaborator Paul Arditti. A Drama and English graduate of Hull University rather than the stereotypical pony-tailed techie,

Arditti's experimentation with newly available PCs and samplers offered a quick and flexible way of bringing sound into the rehearsal room devising process.

This was culturally unheard of at the time and an extra expense which producers resisted then and still do today. However, it does seem that the will of the director is prevailing, just as it did with lighting designers in the 50s and 60s. Simon McBurney will not contemplate a Complicité production without the services of Chris Shutt or Paul Arditti, and Katie Mitchell now insists on Gareth Fry – one of the first practitioners with a BA (Hons) in Theatre Sound Design. The future of theatre sound design as a profession is thus in the hands of enlightened directors with the kudos to make such demands of theatre's paymasters. Academics and critics can help by acknowledging that the dramaturgy of Sound demands specialist cognitive as well as technical skills. ■

*Ross Brown is Head of Undergraduate Studies at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, which offers specialist sound design training at BA and MA degree level.*

*The Theatre-Sound Mailing List can be found at [www.brooklyn.com/theatre-sound](http://www.brooklyn.com/theatre-sound).*

Photo by Peter Mumford



## IN BOX

# 33.fainting.spells

## The latest of our e-mail questionnaires

### Your names?

Dayna Hanson and Gaelen Hanson.

### How would you describe yourself and your occupation?

Co-Artistic Directors of 33 Fainting Spells, a Seattle-based dance theatre company.

### What have you seen, read or experienced recently that has been an inspiration?

The guy in the karaoke bar giving the 'thumbs up' to no one in particular and removing his dental bridge with his tongue.

### Which of your artistic achievements are you most proud of?

Having our short film 'Measure' screened at the New York Film Festival.

### If you could change one thing (in yourself,

### your life/art or anything anywhere) what would it be?

To have life pass more slowly.

### What do you think was the best example of theatre in the past year?

Most definitely the Wooster Group's 'To You, The Birdie! (Phèdre)'.

### What does the term Total Theatre mean to you?

The guy in the karaoke bar giving the 'thumbs up' to no one in particular and removing his dental bridge with his tongue.

### Your manifesto for theatre?

We make every effort *not* to take for granted the elements of theatre, be they production elements such as light or sound, or materials such as text and movement. Our chore-

ography ranges from full-throttle dancing to small gestural sequences borrowed from film. Often looking at the world through a nostalgia-tinted lens, we find great value in both out-dated and low-fidelity technology as well as bargain bin records and paperbacks from the past. The fine and fuzzy line between humour and pathos is of special interest to us. ■

33 Fainting Spells' 'Dirty Work' will be performed in the London International Mime Festival 2003 at the ICA, 24-26 Jan. 'Dirty Work' uses low-fidelity media equipment (including school issue record players and projection screens) as a lens for viewing 21st-century performance. 33 Fainting Spells' work has been commissioned and presented by many leading contemporary venues. See website: [www.33faintingspells.org](http://www.33faintingspells.org).



# Silent Witness

Can a witness be invisible and objective, asks  
**ALEX MERMIKIDES**, who sat in on the making  
of Forced Entertainment's 'The Travels'

What happens in a creative process?

Speaking at the recent 'Nightwalking: Navigating the Unknown' conference on performing arts processes (ResCen, 27-29 September 2002), Professor Sue Melrose asked 'How do you show process, how do you word process?' Her view is that 'something very elusive, something vague' makes it almost impossible to describe creative practice. Yet, as the conference itself indicated, there is a demand from both practitioners and academics to document and discuss what happens in the studio and in the minds of practitioners.

At the very least, this demand stems from historical interest: imagine how much we could learn had Shakespeare kept the sort of artist's diary *Total Theatre Magazine* publishes. We have resources now to document our processes for posterity. But a well-constructed account of a creative process can have immediate value, allowing the practitioners involved – and indeed, other practitioners –

to reflect, develop and share good practice. This is all the more true when the process under observation is that of a pioneering company, one that is breaking new ground in its ways of working. Short of bagging a job with such a company, how can others benefit from the discoveries and insights of our leading-edge artists?

With this in mind I undertook a study of Forced Entertainment's process, following the creation of their latest show, 'The Travels', which is currently touring the UK and Europe. Forced Entertainment's unique process already attracts the attention of students, practitioners and academics, creating a demand for information that the company meets through educational projects, publications, a video ('Making Performance') and an archive at the British Library. Publicity officer Helen Burgun (now at the Barbican) believes that 'the more you know about the process the more you can understand the end result'

– without this contextual understanding, she suggests rather contentiously, there is a danger that first-time audiences might dismiss the work.

In preparing for this study, I looked to the work of others who, like me, regularly sit in the corner of the rehearsal room, watching and scribbling: accounts of Peter Brook in rehearsal dating back to the 1960s, Rob Ritchie writing about Joint Stock in the 1970s, the RSC's 1980s adaptation of 'Nicholas Nickleby' and, now, the National Theatre's 'Theatre at Work' series. It is apparent from these publications that, despite the difficulties Professor Melrose predicts, there are established strategies for documenting and discussing what happens in a creative process.

## February – notes

In order to make a clear account of what happens in the process, I am required to be 'invisible' (so as not to impact on the rehearsal process) and 'objective' (so the rehearsal process does not impact on me). To be 'invisible' I must be silent, not allow my presence to intrude. To be 'objective', I must not let personal preference give undue bias to any one aspect of the process, the work-in-process or its participants.

## March – Day one

I find that Forced Entertainment do a lot of talking, smoking, drinking coffee and lapsing into long moments of 'waiting for something to happen'.

## March – April

They work through an assortment of seemingly unrelated ideas, sometimes abandoning them after just a few trials. There are only two more-or-less constant elements in these early versions of the show. One is a table that the performers sit around. The other is the notion of a 'virtual world' (in this case a fictional event) that the performers evoke through false memories, mock confession and games of invention. It is rather like a large-scale version of their 1998 show 'Dirty Work', in which two speaking performers describe an impossible stage play.

'The Travels'







#### 'The Travels'

First problem: does being 'objective' mean that I should include in my account, ideas and versions that the company exclude from the potential show? I'm the only live audience to some remarkable one-off shows (one in which the performers describe themselves in clown-porn scenarios, another formed out of apologies for a failed show) – do I have a duty to document these unrepeatable events? Or does being 'objective' mean not getting attached to this 'rejected' material?

#### May – July

During a break for touring, Forced Entertainment becomes disheartened with 'virtual worlds' that are premised on a fictional event. They decide instead to create a real event. This eventually becomes the 'street-names' project:

'Looking at maps, we began to pick places solely on the basis of their names. We wondered about Luck Street and Riches Street, about Orpheus Road and Cyclops Way, about Cutthroat Alley, England Road and Memory Lane. These would be our destinations – blind stabs and blunderings. Each destination an unformulated question to the landscape and to ourselves. What were these places that had been so specifically and so literally named and what secrets would they spill?' ['The Travels']

#### August

I re-read 'Certain Fragments' and am struck by Tim Etchells's much-quoted description of the

audience as 'witnesses': '...to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one's place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment, as an onlooker...' (page 17).

#### August and September

'The Travels' is turning the performers into witnesses of the streets and of themselves. Their experiences – whether caught in the Cricklewood flooding during the hunt for the missing Soham schoolgirls, being mugged on Universal Street or simply finding that Lost Wood does not exist – indeed weigh upon them. So does the prolonged effort of so much travelling – '200 miles to see a suburban dead end with sixteen houses' – and the struggle to articulate this in the reports they give when they return to the studio, sitting at the table.

#### Late September

I join the company in Frankfurt for the last intense week of work before the opening night. Long hours are spent re-structuring and re-working the 'reports' that constitute the show, knocking it into shape. I'm still hunched over my notebook while the work goes on. But there's a discernible difference: I am no longer the cool, objective observer of the process. I, too, feel the weight of things upon me. I am still witness to the 'rejected' versions and the performance moments that can never be

repeated, but the memories of which will form a constant accompaniment to each subsequent version I see. But more importantly I'm a witness to these people, to the impact of the project – and of the process – upon them, and, as the first night approaches, to their concerns as they prepare to face the first of their audiences.

My objectivity has lapsed but I hope at least to have remained 'invisible'. Not so: on the last day of rehearsal, Tim tells me he had a dream in which he finds, by his bedside, the notebook I had been using to document the process – a telling symbol of the extent to which, despite my efforts, my presence has indeed left its mark on at least one of the participants.

#### October

The company is touring and the show's seemingly ludicrous attempt to measure up the actuality of the street with its name is coalescing into a poetic metaphor for the futility of seeking meaning from a world that resists easy answers. Meanwhile, as I begin to write my account, I remember that being a witness is not just to 'feel the weight of things' but also 'one's place in them' – this, I realise, is a fundamental part of 'what happens'. ■

*Tim Etchells's 'Certain Fragments' is published by Routledge. See [www.forced.co.uk](http://www.forced.co.uk) for further information on the company.*



# Life Isn't Perfect

A year on from 9/11, Perpetual Motion Theatre found themselves in NYC. But which New York did they find – the hot bed of experimentation or a city embracing a new conservatism? Company director EMI SLATER reports...



In the shadow of Ground Zero, right next door to the infamous Ugly Coyote bar which sports Madonna's bra hanging from the ceiling, lies Theatre for the New City. Slap bang in the middle of First Avenue on Manhattan's Lower East side, this was to be our home for a two-week run at the New York International Fringe Festival.

We are Perpetual Motion Theatre – and in the heat of a New York summer we collected together (from Switzerland, Spain, London and Berlin) to rehearse two of our touring shows 'Perfect' and 'One – (the other)' in an old warehouse rehearsal loft in Williamsburg (NYC's hippest new arts community) lent to us by Black Moon Theatre Co.

We were nervous; this was the first time we had performed in the US. Were we weird enough? Were we too weird? What would be the reaction of the notoriously cruel New York critics? Would we even get an audience?

The whole ethos of our company is hybridity. We mix styles of theatre, combining multi-lingual text, digital video and movement. We mix verbal and physical languages. We mix performers who have different cultural and training backgrounds. As a result, it was almost impossible to categorise and market

our work in a city where no one knew us – although the festival organisers assured me that audiences would not be put off by such descriptions as avant garde, or experimental. The New York audiences are a discerning, brave group ready for anything, I was told.

One of the reasons that we chose to take part in this festival was because New York has a history of nurturing free creative expression, and has provided a solid base for many of the theatre practitioners and art movements which have influenced our work the most: Laurie Anderson, John Cage, the Wooster Group, Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman – a whole plethora of contemporary theatre and art makers. The ideal backdrop for our own work, we thought. The New York Fringe owes its conception to the huge array of American performance makers who find it too expensive to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe. The difference is that you don't hire a venue at a prohibitive cost as most people do in Edinburgh – instead you have to be accepted by a panel of judges on the basis of a video of your work and once you are, a venue is provided on a box office split basis. We were keen to get our work seen in New York and thus took a huge financial risk getting there. We

were lucky to find a fabulous network of people in New York – friends and friends of friends – who provided support of many kinds.

The venue was ideal for our purposes. We shared the space with nine other companies, who performed a huge range of theatre, including: Nibras Collective's fabulous piece about being Arabic in America post 9/11 (called 'Sajjil', it was a theatrical testimonial woven from recorded interviews and 'goes beyond belly dancers and terrorists to illuminate a more real Arab identity in America'); through some very dodgy Chekhov and Gogol; plenty of soap opera-style new writing – and us, the only movement-based company in the venue.

The festival involved 190 companies this year, all performing in good venues across Manhattan's Lower East side such as 45 Bleeker St (where Theatre O recently concluded a run), The Culture Project, St Mark's Theater (where Richard Foreman is based), Collective Unconscious and PS 122 (a venue known for showing a fair amount of British physical theatre – DV8 and Improbable among others).

Only nine of the companies in the festival were international and the festival organisers



claimed to have major immigration issues since 9/11 with companies already contracted for the festival from Russia, Zimbabwe, Iran and Colombia all having their visas turned down. This, I suppose, gives some idea of the climate in which the festival is held.

Shows with such wondrous names as 'Bang', 'The Boob Movie', and 'All American Boy' all gained the most press attention – contenders for the role of 'next Broadway smash hit musical'.

The Village Voice, New York's premiere alternative arts paper, kept up a sardonic commentary throughout the festival, criticising it for not nurturing enough experimentation and kow-towing to Broadway. I think they had a point. We had other performers coming up to us and thanking us for performing work which was a little more 'on the edge'.

The festival just preceded the anniversary of 9/11 and inevitably those events of September 2001 were foremost in people's minds. Tragic events will often change the direction of the arts culture of the place in question. Dean Moss, performance curator of The Kitchen (a high profile multi-media venue which made its name during the 70s, providing a experimentation ground for Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass, Cage and others) told me that after 9/11 many newspapers, including the New York Times, published articles questioning whether it was ever possible to make art in New York again... Clearly these major global events inform everything we theatre-makers do. Our art is always a response to the world around us (either overtly or subliminally).

One of the two shows we performed in New York is called 'Perfect'. It was originally

intended as an upbeat, light, comic 'high octane fantasy', in contrast to our other show 'One – (the other)' which is essentially about racism. We began the devising process on September 13th 2001. Every day, on the way to rehearsal, we were bombarded with the news of terrorism and Bush idiocy and horrors in New York and Afghanistan. Hardly conducive to devising comedy. Consequently, as New York and the world gradually picked up the pieces and began to live again, 'Perfect' grew away from the original intent and instead developed into a calmer reflection. The subject matter of our show touched the New York audiences who saw it and the response to the show was fantastic. Although we had not, when devising the show, known that we would be performing it in New York, the fact that we now were seemed wholly appropriate. It was beautiful to hear our audience's definitions of what they considered perfect so soon after what had happened.

But what of the style of our work? Like many physical theatre companies, Perpetual Motion have been influenced by Artaud. We have, as Artaud said, 'given words approximately the importance they have in dreams'. This was difficult for some of the New York critics to cope with, and the non-narrative structure of 'Perfect' was often hard for them to swallow – although we had many very good reviews, including one from Ivana Cullinan of the New York Magazine who despite being a self-confessed 'text junkie' said it had 'a vividness that adheres to your gut'.

The venue manager at Theatre for the New City, Peter Kyte, said that he thought American audiences are stuck on text and plot

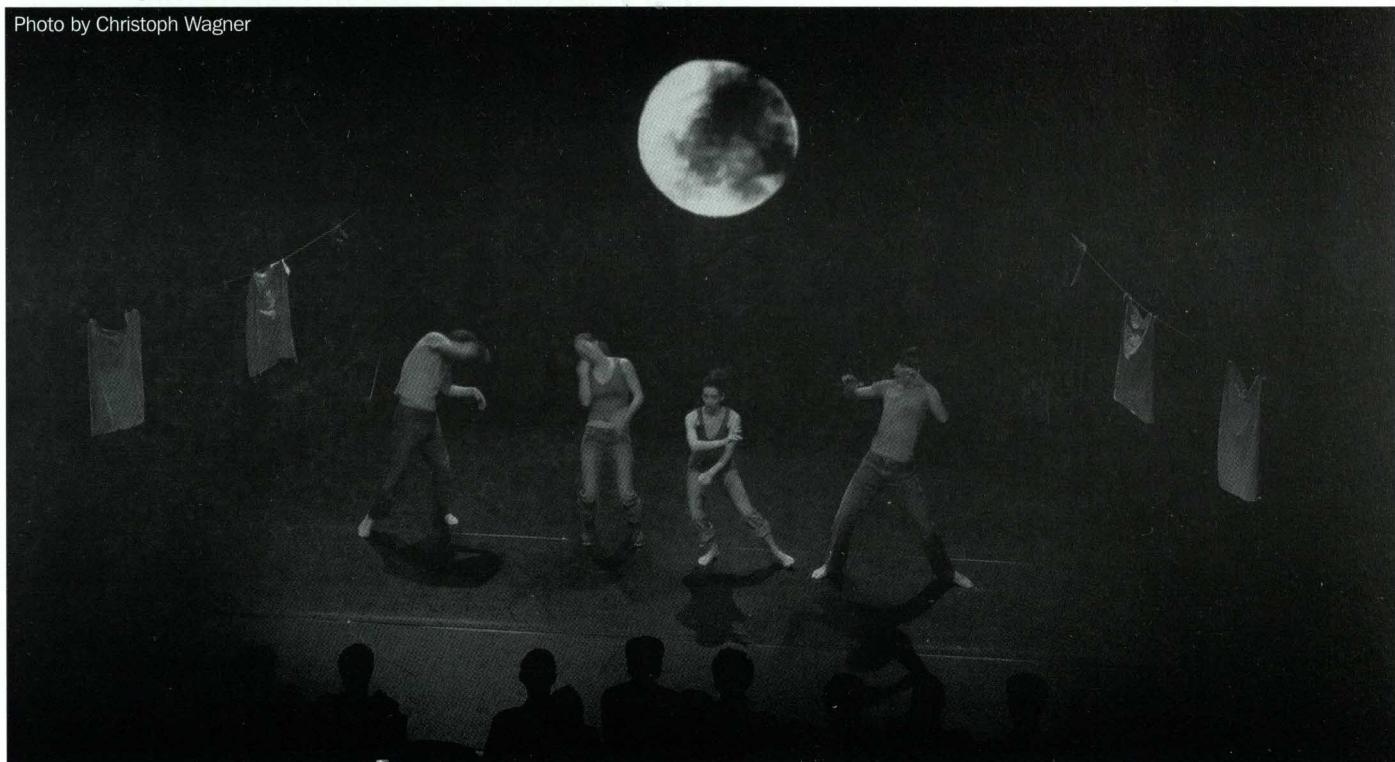
because of the influence of Hollywood. According to Arnold Aronson, a leading expert on the American avant garde, it was Gertrude Stein, one of the most influential women on the American experimental theatre scene, who claimed that plot 'as a structural device is such a strong and constraining factor in Western drama that it exerts an enormous control over the spectator, allowing, at best, a narrow range of response'.

The organisers of the New York festival certainly seemed to promote and champion the less experimental work and the Philadelphia Fringe Festival (which takes place in September every year) has gained a reputation for being much more receptive to experimental total theatre, movement-based work and multi-media.

It seems a shame that New York City, such a hotbed of contemporary art and dance, and with such a history of performance art, cannot hold a theatre festival which champions the cutting edge. We sold out most nights, which proves there is an audience for this kind of theatre work in New York, but the festival itself has become, it seems, a slave to Broadway and it is great shame that the events of 9/11 have not led the festival organisers to focus less on hard core selling and more on nurturing the new and the radical. ■

*Perpetual Motion were able to perform at the New York International Fringe Festival thanks to the support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Black Moon Theatre Company. The company will return to the US in 2003. See [www.perpetualmotion.org.uk](http://www.perpetualmotion.org.uk) for details.*

Photo by Christoph Wagner





# The Grove of

**DAVID WOODS** of Ridiculusmus has spent the past year as an MA student and here explores the attractions of academia and the joys of reflective practice and archiving

**R**idiculusmus were ten years old this summer and to mark the occasion Jon Hough and I<sup>1</sup> developed a few plans – to write (and then try to publish) a book about the experience and our discoveries and to present a season of revivals of all our shows since the beginning.

Rather like the millennium celebrations, we were unable to contain ourselves and started the project a year early with the retrospective season lined up for May and June 2001. Sixteen different shows<sup>2</sup> were meticulously rehearsed and produced into a cluster of events gathered around a four-week run of 'Say Nothing'<sup>3</sup> at Riverside Studios. Two days in with only 'Dada music'<sup>4</sup> and 'ARSEFLOP illustrated'<sup>5</sup> performed, Jon's lung collapsed<sup>6</sup> and all I could do was throw myself off a bridge into the Thames<sup>7</sup>.

With the 2001 attempt to articulate what we were or what had led to our current state deflating itself we gave up on the retrospective plan and looked for ways to develop the book idea. By chance I saw a little blue poster for a new MA in Practice as Research (PAR) offered by the drama department at the University of Kent. I thought it would be

a good way to discipline myself to write something.

There were other reasons for going back to study – escape, de-cluttering and re-writing the history books.

## Escape

At times of crisis or exhaustion I often dream of giving up. I've applied for arts admin jobs (the administrators seem to be the ones who get all the money and kill off the art); I thought it could be a good outlet for subversion but the mind numbness and standard plastic lies are unbearable and too ridiculous, and I'd rather live in the van than that. I've tried other jobs – painting and decorating<sup>8</sup>, packing salads in sub-zero in Folkestone with other aliens, van driving, early morning cleaning and even drama workshops but the separation from the coal face of creativity was more painful than the theatre hardship.

Our funding has always been minimal and forced us to live from long and exhausting tours. London Arts board once gave us £3,000 in project money and after five years of trying to grasp at the slippery ladder of rev-

enue funding the arts council of Northern Ireland awarded us £6,000, then £10,000, then an incredible £20,000, then cut it in half forcing us to give up our efforts with them. Feeding and accommodating two people at this rate is barely possible, let alone developing new work. Homelessness and Safeway savers potatoes have been regular friends for a long time.

## The Academic Escape Route

Another escape route I had long thought of was the academic one. Plenty of Poor School and Ridiculusmus colleagues had opted for it though mostly at secondary school level. The idea of prioritising discipline over thought and the experience of umpteen soul-destroying schools workshops meant higher education was the only option. It was an escape route that apparently offered access to resources, holidays long enough that we might be able to carry on working or even a research position that might be compatible with creative outbursts, albeit on a smaller scale.

But the problem was how to get in there when you have only a BA and not a great desire to write theses on aspects of perfor-

## Notes

**1** Remaining artistic directors of Ridiculusmus: first there were three (us plus Angus Barr) then four (plus Kevin Henshall) then five (plus Lucy Cuthbertson) then four (minus Kevin – disappearing money, now a teacher), then the original three (minus Lucy – artistic diversion, now a teacher), again then two (minus Angus – filmmaker).

**2** The Shows were (in order of opening):

'Radio Ridiculusmus' (on air 17 May-17 June all day via website)

'Things to do' (on Radio Ridiculusmus, 17 May)

'Dada Music' (BAC Studio 2, 17-19 May, 9pm)

'Arseflop Illustrated' (Old Operating Theatre Museum and Herb Garret, 21 May, 6.30pm)

'Say Nothing' (Riverside Studios, 22 May-17 June except Mondays, 7.30pm, 6pm, Sundays)

'The Dive' (Hammersmith-Kew, 27 May, 1pm)

'The Overcoat and the Nose' (Shunt railway arch, 28 May, 8pm)

'Where are you from?' (BAC Studio 2, 29-30 May, 8.30pm)

'Paranoid Household' (15 Sprules Road, Brockley, 4 June, 6 and 8pm)

'The Exhibitionists' (National Theatre Olivier foyer, 7-9 June, 1pm)

'Yes Yes Yes' (Soho Theatre, 7-8 and 14-16 June, 10pm)

'The Third Policeman' (secret venue, 8 June, midnight)

'Three Men in a Boat' (The Museum Of, 10 June, 2pm)

AGM (The Friends House, opp. Euston station, 16 June, 2.30pm)

'At Swim-Two-Birds' (secret venue, 16 June, midnight)

'Film Night' (BAC, 17 June, 8.30pm)

**3** 'Say Nothing' is a loving attack on apathy in the warzone that is Northern Ireland at peace. It is based on our time there from the 1994 ceasefires through the Good Friday agreement euphoria to the 1999 Omagh bomb.

**4** 'Dada music' was the result of a desperate attempt to raise money in 1999. It was only possible to get funding for new shows and as we were still busy working on 'The Exhibitionists'<sup>4a</sup> and 'Yes Yes Yes'<sup>4b</sup> we had no urge to develop anything so came up with the idea of doing a dada revival/biopic and tour it around peculiar venues.<sup>4c</sup> We got the cash and spent it on glossy art books and Edinburgh fringe costs.<sup>4d</sup>

**4a** 'The Exhibitionists' was an attempt at a silent comedy so we could tour more overseas. It ended up as a physical comedy with whispering about art gallery attendants and their efforts to alleviate boredom.

**4b** 'Yes Yes Yes' is our vision of the world. It was made on several trips to India between 1994 and 1999 and drew on a lot of mental health experiences, personal and otherwise. It is a celebration of failure, an exposure of fake gurus, an adventure in identity and inoffensive racism.



# Academe

mance studies, GrotStanKantBauschForced or other such darlings of the academic world.

The practice-based phenomenon that the Kent MA was a fecund part of seemed to offer alternative attitudes. Reflect on your own practice while still doing it.

## De-cluttering

Having lived out of boxes for the last three years or so, de-cluttering is an ever-present need. When you de-clutter you become more portable, gain a sense of progress, of putting something into its place in its essential form. Unhindered by irrelevances so that it (the information) is more accessible, easier to use – rather like taking all the cellophane and packaging off your shopping when you get home from the shops and putting the empty plastic bags into the bag drawer or sock and the fruit in a bowl – a dip – the wrapper from a cake, a photocopied dog, two broken yellow rubber gloves emerge...

A Dutch student placement attempted to organise it for us last year and had a nervous breakdown.

The course was a good motivation to sort it out. ►



Photo by Tim Nunn

## 4c Dada tour dates

July 1999

### Monday 12

11am Back seat of Nissan Micra car parked outside the White Horse pub in Saintfield Co. Down – because the pub was shut.

3pm Table nearest the toilet and shop in Mountstewart National Trust coffee shop, Co. Down

6pm 91 South Street, Newton Ards, Co. Down

### Tuesday 13

3pm Reception, Mourne Country Hotel, Newry

5pm The Square, Crossmaglen

7pm Pat Fairon's House, Ballgassoon, Co. Armagh

### Wednesday 14

1.15pm Ballygawley roundabout, Co. Tyrone

2.15pm The gates of Castle Balfour, Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh

3.16pm Picnic tables, Florence Court forest park near Belcoo, Co. Fermanagh

### Thursday 15

10am The public conveniences, Derry road car park, Strabane

11.30am Grounds of Gransha psychiatric hospital, Derry/Londonderry

2pm The peak of Dart mountain, The Sperrins, Co. Tyrone

4pm Glenshane pass layby, Co. Derry/Londonderry

### Friday 16

6pm Squash court no. 1, Larne Leisure Centre, Co. Antrim

9.30pm Arrivals exit, by the bus stands, Belfast international airport

### Saturday 17

12.32pm Small fishing hut off the track down to the Giants Causeway, Co. Antrim

4pm The pet food aisle, Sainsbury's, Coleraine

10pm Starboard seats close to the green stairs, Stena HSS Belfast to Stranraer (9pm departure)

**4d** We played two shows at the 1999 Edinburgh fringe: 'The Exhibitionists' at the Pleasance Upstairs (11am slot) and 'Yes Yes Yes' at St Brides (11pm in week 1 in the main hall and 3pm weeks 2 and 3 in the clap clinic down the road) as part of the Continental Shifts programme. We won the Total Theatre Award for Best British production ('Exhibits' and 'YYY'), a Herald Angel award ('YYY'), were nominated for the Granada media comedy writing award and lost about £7,000 in venue hire, accommodation and publicity costs over box office income.

**5** 'Arseflop illustrated' – a performative<sup>5a</sup> lecture on our working methods.

**5a** See glossary of acadamian<sup>5a1</sup> terms.

**5a1** See glossary of acadamian terms.

**6** Spontaneous pneumothorax (collapse of the lung) generally happens to young 'pushing 40'<sup>6a</sup> lean men.

**6a** Jon as Liam Brady in 'Office' – a work in progress show commissioned by the Barbican about two ideas men with no ideas, which will change its name and content for its premiere next year. Jon variously quotes his age as anything between 20 and 60. I am 33, same as my waist size.

**7** 'The Dive' – an outdoor derive<sup>7a</sup> starting with plastic food in the Starburger café, King Street, Hammersmith, with a shopping-not-buying fashion exploration with Jack Straw on the election trail, a clarification of the illegality and risk of death of dicing into the Thames, and ending with me diving off Kew railway bridge into the Thames.

**7a** A term borrowed from the Situationist movement for unplanned artistic walks and actions of a free/long form nature.

**8** This summer Jon and I offered our services as The Boys in Blue Overalls – DIY basics at £5 an hour. We earned £350 each.





Photo by Tim Nunn

### The History Books

I mean things like 'A 20th Century Performance Reader', 'Contemporary Theatre', 'In Yer Face Theatre', 'Modern British Theatre'... annually reinvented under different glossy covers so that so many of us happily part with upwards of £15.

Apart from a paragraph in Dymphna Callery's<sup>9</sup> 'Through the Body' and a footnote in a book on Flann O'Brien<sup>10</sup>, Ridiculusmus are not mentioned in anything. This despite ten years of work that we considered more cutting edge than the dull slickness of contemporary theatre, funnier than the banalities of the stand-up comedy zone and more progressive than the indulgences of the supposedly experimental live art scene. I wanted to see if these Maoist feelings were true and to address the question of whether we were of any relevance to the development of theatre or not. Whether we had something to say or were, in the words of John McGrath:

'an egomaniac subsidy-sucking pseudo-

democratic group of freaks, performing rubbish for an elite of similar freaks'.<sup>11</sup>

Articulating our practice seemed to be a good way to start this particular journey. A self-published result – perhaps a doorknob to those broader ranging tomes.

### The Course

With this three-fold purpose I plunged in. The Kent course is organised into a practical presentation and a 20,000-word dissertation. The general idea being to ask and answer a research question(s) – in my case: 'What do Ridiculusmus do?'

We created a new piece of theatre which would be the lab rat to test the variety of theories on. I feared that the creation of theories and constant analysis of a work in progress would kill off any creative impulses and result in a dead performativity.<sup>12</sup>

Before we began I wrote:

'It is a great fear that in analysing the magic of creativity you kill it.' I want to ignore

the suggested reading so that the work can flourish. 'Only bad work can be written about,' said Jon the other day, quoting some academic text or other on his reading list. Tim Etchells calls it, 'The attempt at capture, a dragging down of the ephemeral into the fossilising mud of all that is fixed and fixing'.<sup>13</sup>

To get over the fear I ignored the conventional rituals until after the practical work was made, simply recording some thoughts on its progress to go with the saved drafts of text, occasional videos of work-sharings<sup>14</sup> and mini-discs of early free-form<sup>15</sup> improvisation sessions.

Afterwards the contextualisation became a joy – following peculiar whims of thought that dip into art, pop music, football, business management literature and food recipes. Everything from chewing gum on the pavement to discussions of transculturation are invigorating. For this alone the dabble in PAR is worth it. The course at Kent runs every calendar year and accepts late entries, digs in Canterbury are cheap, it is commutable from London and there are some of the most interesting and alive academics in the UK in the department. The cost is reasonable at £3,000 odd – when you consider that you have unlimited studio space for 2-3 months, a production budget of up to a £1,000, access to a well-stocked library and unlimited internet access, and at the end, hopefully, a piece of fine paper and the chance to wear a funny hat again. ■

*Ridiculusmus are performing 'Say Nothing' and 'Yes Yes Yes' at the Barbican until 4 January. For more information see the company's website [www.ridiculusmus.com](http://www.ridiculusmus.com) or ring their producer David Jubb – Your Imagination 020 7223 0086*

*For information on the MA by practice as research at the University of Kent contact Dr Paul Allain on 01227 823338, or e-mail [p.allain@ukc.ac.uk](mailto:p.allain@ukc.ac.uk) or write to Eliot College, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NZ*

<sup>9</sup> Dymphna is head of drama at the University of Wolverhampton and author of 'Through the Body' and numerous articles and reviews for this magazine. She knows Jon from university days at Sheffield<sup>9a</sup> and our work through performances at the Real Action project in Liverpool 1999. Later she became one of our network of understanding digs in Liverpool and Wolverhampton and arranged gigs for us in Wolverhampton.

<sup>9a</sup> Jon, Dymphna (early 80s) and I (late 80s) all studied English literature at Sheffield University and took the practice-based theatre option 'curriculum B'.

<sup>10</sup> Flann O'Brien (aka Myles na ngopaleen) is the author of 'At Swim-Two-Birds' and 'The Third Policeman' (amongst many others), two post-modern novels that we adapted in the 90s and toured around the UK and Ireland to great acclaim.

<sup>11</sup> McGrath, John, 'Naked Thoughts that Roam About', Nick Hern Books, London, 2002, p112.

<sup>12</sup> Performativity – see glossary of acadamian terms.

<sup>13</sup> Etchells, Tim, 'Certain Fragments', Routledge, London, year forgotten, p71.

<sup>14</sup> The work we made was shown in altered states every night for two weeks in a residency at the GFZK gallery in Leipzig in late August/September prior to the MA assessed performances – which were also recorded.

<sup>15</sup> Freeform is what we call an open-ended improvisation session. They are without rules or plan. In sharing this system with newcomers we have found that there is however a certain amount of necessary pre-knowledge for these sessions to succeed in terms of taste and working language and to some they have been difficult to endure. This is for a variety of reasons – their need for direction, for context, exhaustion, their feelings of disempowerment and so on. The main point however of the system is that any possibility is allowed freedom to be expressed.

### Glossary of Acadamian Terms

**Acadamian:** Made-up word referring to language used only rarely outside an academic environment, e.g. hegemony, palimpsest, liminal. Named after the nuts, which is what it drives you after a short period of exposure.

**Hegemony:** Domination by one – like Arsenal in the premiership until Wayne Rooney's goal.

**Liminal:** Another made-up word related to sub-liminal, perhaps meaning on the edge of awareness, perhaps not.

**Palimpsest:** Layers

**Performativity:** Academic abuse of dictionary meaning to refer to anything to do with performance. Generally used to describe and excuse awful productions in an academic context that brilliantly illustrate some theory or other but are dull, humourless, badly directed and written, with abysmal acting.



# Circus arts news

News from the Circus Arts Forum: Issue 11 Winter 2002/3

www.circusarts.org.uk ■ e-mail: info@circusarts.org.uk ■ Tel.: 020 7729 7944 ■ Fax: 020 7729 7945  
c/o Total Theatre Network, The Power Station, Coronet Street, London N1 6HD

Welcome to Circus Arts News issue 11. I can't quite believe that we have been going so long. If you're a circus practitioner and have any thoughts on issues you'd like covered or features that you'd like to see in CAN, please let us know.

We are currently planning our next conference, which will take place in Spring 2003 and will focus on attracting audiences. This is a free conference and is likely to take place at the beginning of April in London. We will mail out details nearer the date as well as placing information on the noticeboard section of the Circus Arts Forum's website: [www.circusarts.org.uk](http://www.circusarts.org.uk). For those of you who have not yet used the website, it is an excellent way to post information

about what you are doing – and free to join online.

The Arts Council of England is currently in the middle of union negotiations with announcements being made soon on a new simplified funding process. There will be a special report on funding in the next issue of Circus Arts News. Until then, wishing you all a good 2003.

**Annabel Arndt, Director, Circus Arts Forum**

*Circus Arts News is published by Total Theatre Network and edited by Dorothy Max Prior on behalf of the Circus Arts Forum.  
© Total Theatre Network*

## Development Support for Circus Arts

The Arts Council of England have initiated a pilot programme for the strategic support and development of circus in 2002/3. Chenine Bhathena Projects were selected to lead the pilot project – providing the benefit of their management experience to circus artists and companies.

A selection panel comprising Pax Nindi & Kate Laird (ACE), Annabel Arndt (CAF) and Chenine Bhathena (CBP) met and selected seven artists/companies from over 30 applications received. There was some tough decision making, as we knew that all applicants could do with some support/guidance.

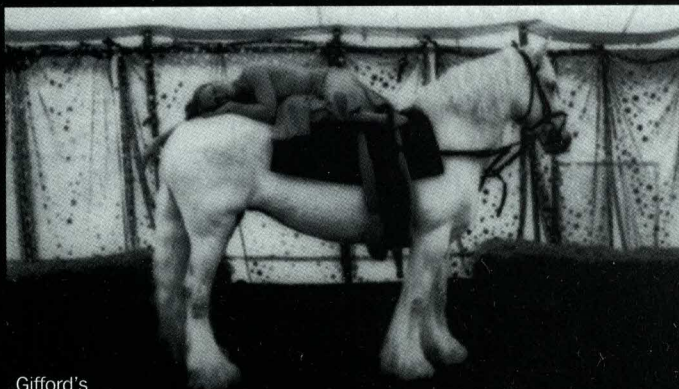
The lucky recipients of the pilot programme are: Wrong Size Productions (Bea Fritzsing/Kirsty Little); Danny Schlesinger; Dominic Leclerc & Co; Flying Dudes; Matilda Leyser; Swamp Circus; and Zippo's Circus. An evaluation report of the process will be submitted and hopefully ACE will be able to lobby for further strategic funds to keep the programme going into 2004/05. Contact Chenine Bhathena on 020 8671 4668 or e-mail [chenine@cbprojects.co.uk](mailto:chenine@cbprojects.co.uk).

## Expressive Feat Productions

'Looks Deceiving', the company's first touring production, is a show about clothing and identity performed on a unique aerial sculpture (designed and created by Michele Weaver). Stealing influences from advertising, religion and haute couture, the aerial dancers explore the comedy and tragedy of what we wear. On 9 February there is an 'informal sharing' – those interested in attending should contact the company direct. Opening night is 15 February at the Exchange Theatre, Maidstone. Full tour details available soon. See [www.exfeat.com](http://www.exfeat.com) or e-mail [exfeat@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:exfeat@globalnet.co.uk).

## Zippo's News

Zippos have won two prestigious awards – 'Best Circus with Animals' and 'Best Animal Act' for Tom and Linda Roberts' equestrian presentation. The departure of David Hibling resulted in Chris Maddocks taking over as tour director whilst Nick Barltrop returned to Zippo's to manage the Academy of Circus Arts and Festival Circus. Martin 'Zippo' Burton continues to champion the Circus industry and has been appointed Chair of the Arts Council of England Circus Advisory Committee, in addition to driving forward the Code of Conduct for animal welfare in conjunction with the home office. The company are at Dorking Halls, Surrey, for the Christmas season and launch a brand new show in March 2003. See [www.zipposcircus.co.uk](http://www.zipposcircus.co.uk)



Gifford's

## Jerwood Circus Award winner – Gifford's

In September 2002 Gifford's Circus won the Jerwood Circus Award. This will go towards development time for the 2003 show. Exciting new artistes are being lined up for the new season. They include a Dutch horse trainer from France called Miriam who is bringing over her Friesian stallion. The company are about to start auditions for next year. Please can anyone interested (particularly clowns) send their CV and photograph to: Gifford's Circus, Folly Farm, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire GL54 3BY. Gifford's Circus musicians and artistes are available throughout the winter for parties and events. Call 07789 395184 for more information.

## International Circus Reunion – London 2003

This year's event is being held on Sunday 2 February 2003 at the Marriott Hotel, Langley, Slough. A free afternoon forum will discuss the relationship between the Arts Council and traditional circus. The evening begins at 7pm; a 'fabulous function' for the circus and allied industries to meet, dine and dance with old friends and new. Ticket price for the evening is £36 (£20 for children). To book, e-mail [allenmcperson@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:allenmcperson@blueyonder.co.uk) or telephone 01253 352681.

## Circ.Elation

Plans are afoot for the next circ.elation project to be held in Sheffield in 2003/04. A Yorkshire Arts funded consultancy has been undertaken to look at possible venue options and also a new artistic programme, developing what was started in 2000. More detailed information will be distributed through the Circus Arts Forum in the coming months. To register an interest e-mail [info@cbprojects.co.uk](mailto:info@cbprojects.co.uk)



# Re: Generation

To start a brand new company with no definite income, with a group of artists wanting to devise a show and coming from a project that had been kicked to pieces by the media somehow seemed like a good idea to Genco producer PAUL COCKLE...

**GENERATING  
COMPANY**

The Generating Company (Genco) was formed in Jan 2001 but the idea began in Jan 98 as the first plans for the Dome show were being put in place. Four years on, 'Storm' opens in the Barbican theatre before touring Europe from April 03. The Dome show was perhaps the biggest performer-rehearsed new show ever in the UK. The project put together a creative team (led by designer Mark Fisher) that included musician Peter Gabriel, choreographer Micha Bergese and artist Keith Khan. The investment into creating a company of 162 performers was on a financially massive scale and constituted the biggest piece of investment ever in circus arts training. The Circus Space contract to train the aerialists embodied the principles of the Dome project,

supporting regeneration through the creative industries.

The Dome show had high ideals and a large budget to assist in realising them. Nobody expected the central show to create a legacy. Jennie Page (then CEO of the New Millennium Experience, now a mentor of the company) supported it from the beginning against all the political criticism of such expenditure. At the beginning it was about further regeneration of the Circus Space building through refurbishment of the Combustion Chamber, enabling this organisation to grow as a training provider and start a degree course. It was about a serious growth in training ideals and fitness standards and, most of all, investment in people. Alongside the circus training, the Dome show set up a technical summer school to further create opportunity and address ethnicity in a predominately white industry. The Genco summer school continues to create opportunity, addressing ethnicity and offering progression to further training.

The Genco aim is to create a route of progression for the creative idea and the artist and the technician through a programme of work that should include:

- A nationwide youth programme and annual national summer school.
- An annual touring student degree show from the Circus Space (TCS).
- An annual regional cabaret tour and outreach programme.
- An expanding high-end corporate market and special events portfolio.
- A succession of large-scale shows that have a life of five years and are produced annually or bi-annually and tour to global audiences. ('Storm' is the first.)

The development of a company that would survive commercially and compete on an international market, not just a UK market, is the vision and it still remains after nearly two years of work.

Developing the company has not just been about funding – it's been about the right people working to a common goal. It is not about making money as individuals, it is about re-investing in the company. It is about the training schools such as TCS developing a standard of artist that can grow quickly as a professional. The production standards within training need to be high, so that it's a shorter leap into the industry; also it's a leap that means performers don't drop their skill or their creativity, but carry it with them. It is also about Genco learning as a producing company and creating a way of channelling this creativity and exploiting it to create more opportunity. There needs to be a natural route of progression to enable the performer to grow and the technician to experience more and become more creative.

Genco would be nothing if we did not have ambition, huge ambition that enthuses people to deliver the best performances, the best skills and the most original shows. We aspire to be greater than we are,



Generating Company





Generating Company

we know we have to improve. We know we have standards to achieve in performance, in production and in management.

Genco almost did not happen, with many promoters and the Arts Council turning away from us at the beginning. I decided that the money I had made through working as Head of Show at the Dome should be invested in the company. It seemed only right. I was angry that the marvellous ideals of the training and the need for a circus production company to produce at the highest level was to be ignored because of the political nature of the project that gave birth to it. It seemed typical of a system that could not join up its funding ideals. New Millennium Experience, having been encouraged to support the Circus Space and the industry, was to see its investment isolated and so wasted. Personally I could not allow this to happen; I had invested too much time and was so excited by the chance to build a company. This was my motivation and it produced the determination to start to try and create the opportunity for the artists as directors – namely Matt Costain, Abigail Yeates, Corrine Pierre and Sean Kempton (the founding directors of Genco) – to work.

Genco needed more than my investment and we knew there was a chance we would get more support if we could only keep going. We also knew that if I showed commitment and the artists showed commitment by working for low wages then we would have a chance. This policy worked and we soon received an initial investment from NESTA and then a grant from the Arts Council. From that point on it was up to us.

We have now the basis of an experienced production team. A production team that is following a commercially driven plan that does not leave much room for mistakes or experiments. We no longer work for low wages; we work for realistic ones.

I have always believed that if core funding was available to support a five-year plan we could form a much stronger creative base from which to grow. A five-year plan would see a national summer school

programme to feed the whole network of training schools, not just the Circus space – a programme that could see a talented student progress. An advanced student touring programme to regional venues would lead to the creative foundation of a touring company. This touring company would create shows that would be commercially promoted through a licensing agreement protecting the ownership and inspiring and rewarding the artist. After five years the company would plan to promote its own shows and, if successful, it would be able to support itself. Core funding is not just about the creative platform, it is about the production platform being resourced. The right equipment, the right technicians, the ability for designers to lead and create and to integrate with the performance creation.

Genco survives because of the continued support of its staff, its performers and its technicians – and the leadership of its chairman Adrian Evans and a board of directors that include Mark Fisher OBE, Teo Greenstreet, Charlie Holland and Richard Sumray – all of whom share a vision of the way forward.

Genco is about grabbing an opportunity and offering it to a lot of artists to compete on an international market. The audience is there waiting for us but we need to join up our thinking in how to reach it. The window of opportunity for a new large-scale contemporary circus company is open. It might depend on traditional skill base but it can't depend on traditional production design – it must seek out new spectacle, it must galvanise design, it must apply technology and raise its production standards. If we do not do this quickly the window will close and British circus will remain the domain of the dedicated few. We need to be bold on all fronts and compete. ■

*'Storm' runs at the Barbican Theatre, London, as part of the BITE season, until 4 January 2003 prior to a European tour from April 2003. Box office 020 7638 8891.*

See [www.generatingcompany.co.uk](http://www.generatingcompany.co.uk).





# Hanging in the Balance

**AMY HOWARD** takes a look at the work of the Wrong Size Productions and reflects on circus cross-bred with other contemporary artforms

Circus is a belief system. It is a potent iconography. Mention the word 'circus' to any passer-by, child or adult, street sweeper or chief executive, and you will conjure an unvarying set of images and stereotypes – the clown, the flying trapeze artist, the big top – drawn from a universal reservoir that even in today's technologically saturated world remains part of the human psyche.

No wonder then that the legacy of circus holds such a fascination for many modern artists, and that the challenge of combining circus imagery and circus skills successfully with other contemporary artistic media continues to tax the artistic mind.

No wonder also that convincing fusions are few and far between. A feat of circus stands up on its own. It is recognized immediately by the audience and accepted for what it is, and it comes with its own little frisson of magic. Which is why marrying circus to a wider theme and drawing it into a broader context – a narrative line, a theatrical plot, a philosophical treatise – is so unerringly difficult. The results can be clumsy and unconvincing.

However, with enough intelligence, subtlety and awareness, they can sometimes be surprisingly effective... An apt, if bizarre analogy might be squeezing a big muscly angel into a tiny plastic pink tutu. Pick the right angel (and the right audience) and you're laughing.

In their latest work, shown at Jackson's Lane as part of the Zone 3 season, the Wrong Size Productions go some way to striking a balance. Their two pieces, 'A Sharp Inhalation of Breath' and 'P.I.L.' (Poetry in Light), are markedly different in outlook and pace, but they are linked compellingly by a meditative use of circus skills to explore some of the complexities of life, love and confusion.

The first piece weaves the elegance of static trapeze into a simple, pared-down narrative that brings two women together from their separate reveries into a sinuous and tender dance of love. The soundtrack jars soulful fragments of K.D. Lang with the abrupt bursts of an alarm clock and the noises of office life. The women wear men's suits and smoke cigarettes. Their brief courtship ends in contemplative estrangement.

The second piece is more ambitious in its multi-media experimentation, setting two female stiltwalkers in long white dresses against

a visual and aural backdrop that introduces us to the 'ecstatic' poetry and philosophy of Mevlana Jalauddin Rumi – founder, in the 13th century, of the whirling dervishes. The restricted movements of the women as they dance on their stilts are contrasted with the more fluid incarnations of the same women on screen, filmed in a London alleyway as they work up to their frenzied and (we suppose) enlightened climax. Later the dancers reappear on stage in red and swing together on a bungee rope, their movements again reflected on screen. The whole piece conveys a sense of eternal mystery, the importance of acceptance and the promise of peace. 'Ultimately,' company director Kirsty Little writes about 'P.I.L.', 'we all hang from the very same strop.'

What differentiates the two pieces and, arguably, makes 'P.I.L.' the more convincing, is the degree of emphasis that is placed on narrative and the way the circus skills are integrated. In 'A Sharp Inhalation', the simple narrative hinges entirely on one powerful and sensuous feat of strength. Without the narrative, the power would remain, yet in order to orchestrate the feat, both narrative and action are in places interrupted and therefore diluted – when, for example, the meeting on the central trapeze is negotiated.

By contrast, 'P.I.L.' doesn't pivot around narrative, but uses circus skills to enhance what is already a vibrant feast of poetic and visual imagery. Thus, circus does not have to play as central and 'theatrical' a role in this piece as it does in the first but can co-exist in independent harmony with the other artforms.

The future of circus in today's cross-disciplinary, multi-tasking and generally confusing world is a long-standing source of debate, and many circus 'purists' would argue for an end to the 'mongolisation' that lies at the core of many contemporary circus companies. However, this very spirit of invention and reinvention has been the essence of circus from the beginning, and without it the old myths will never be made new. So I'd argue for as many angels in pink tutus as possible please – and one day, maybe we'll have a whole troupe of them, hanging as light as air from the strop. ■

*Bea Fritzsching and Kirsty Little are the artistic directors of Wrong Size Productions. See [www.wrongsize.co.uk](http://www.wrongsize.co.uk).*



# Active Service



Have you heard the one about the Arab, the Indian and the Colombian? JONATHAN GRIEVE of Para Active Theatre reflects on performance and cultural diversity in London's East End

**P**ara Active Theatre was founded in 1997 in East London. Our original mission included the statement:

'We have an inter-cultural approach, provoking meetings of culture in performance. Our aim is to develop audiences through focusing on the theatre as a meeting place for actors and audiences and as a place of active culture.'

Five years ago, we were asked by Newham Youth and Community to run drama sessions with English as a Second Language students in the East End of London. We bartered our sessions for rehearsal space at a community centre.

Persis Jade Maravala and I had just formed Para Active and had been busy training each other and trying to develop some work focusing her story. I am British, from North London. She is of Yemeni, Iranian, Indian origin. The focus of the work from the outset was on Persis Jade's cultural origin that manifests itself in five languages (Arabic, Gujarati, Avestan, Hindi and Urdu), dance (belly dance, Indian dance, Bhangra), the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism and her personal history growing up in London.

I did not take to the community work as easily as Jade, who felt at ease amongst the working-class immigrants and refugees. Still, we ran some successful sessions and focused on the idea of active communication; that the doing of language as action is what is important, not the acquisition of words for which you have no immediate use. The students entered the class silently but left unable to stop chatting to us.

We then embarked on 'Fravashi', our first production together. 'Fravashi' was a difficult piece of theatre that expressed the story of a

girl who was raped by a demon. It was a wild disconnected narrative that became the template for 'Al' Daakan', a later production. The most remarkable aspect of the production was the lack of English; it was performed in all of Jade's languages. This was unpopular, even though it was essentially a piece of physical theatre and dance. We were heavily criticised for the lack of English, but I have always had a huge antipathy for our tedious literary theatre and was defiant.

We stopped the work with refugee groups for a short time but continued our cultural explorations with our next production 'Holy Terror'. In addition to Jade's languages, 'Holy Terror' contained Punjabi, Spanish and Japanese. This show was a mythology of terrorism, cultural conflicts and all the now raw nerves of Islamic terrorism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. After this I had had enough of being criticised for making obscure physical theatre not in English, and we paused to collect ourselves.

We put our feelers out and met Patricia Melander who worked on the Newham pro-

ject, and we started to work with excluded 15 and 16 year-old refugees. This was hard; we realised that refugees are not a homogeneous group. They do not all have a common experience which binds them together. Much of the group were Kosovan Albanians. Some were racist, sexist and aggressive – a difficult group. It was no walk in the park. From this encounter we developed a photography project, where we worked with nine young refugees, gave them a disposable camera and asked them to take all the photos in a day. We took their portraits and they wrote stories. We presented this as an exhibition at the local cinema in Stratford. It was very successful and a source of inspiration for the participants.

We began to work on the new show 'Al' Daakan'. By this time we had accidentally begun to create theatre that matched funding criteria; work that dealt with issues of race, cultural conflicts and Asian women. It is a bilingual show with the main character Zenobia speaking Gujarati with simultaneous translation into English. This again happened by chance. It just so happened that an Indian radiographer, Mayur Zaveri, joined the company from our community theatre class. We didn't plan it, but his first language was Gujarati.

During this time we began to make funding applications for our current show called 'Onion Bar', the main thrust being community work with refugee groups, laboratory theatre work to create an ensemble, and the production of a show.

At the time I struggled to justify my input into theatre as a white male. I feel that the least interesting perspectives on life and art come from white people from the UK, from Western Europe, from the US, from Australia; ►

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**I had had enough of being criticised for making obscure physical theatre not in English, and we paused to collect ourselves**

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I did not take to the community work as easily as Jade, who felt at ease amongst the working-class immigrants and refugees. Still, we ran some successful sessions and focused on the idea of active communication; that the doing of language as action is what is important, not the acquisition of words for which you have no immediate use. The students entered the class silently but left unable to stop chatting to us.

We then embarked on 'Fravashi', our first production together. 'Fravashi' was a difficult piece of theatre that expressed the story of a

girl who was raped by a demon. It was a wild disconnected narrative that became the template for 'Al' Daakan', a later production. The most remarkable aspect of the production was the lack of English; it was performed in all of Jade's languages. This was unpopular, even though it was essentially a piece of physical theatre and dance. We were heavily criticised for the lack of English, but I have always had a huge antipathy for our tedious literary theatre and was defiant.

We stopped the work with refugee groups for a short time but continued our cultural explorations with our next production 'Holy Terror'. In addition to Jade's languages, 'Holy Terror' contained Punjabi, Spanish and Japanese. This show was a mythology of terrorism, cultural conflicts and all the now raw nerves of Islamic terrorism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. After this I had had enough of being criticised for making obscure physical theatre not in English, and we paused to collect ourselves.

We put our feelers out and met Patricia Melander who worked on the Newham pro-

ject, and we started to work with excluded 15 and 16 year-old refugees. This was hard; we realised that refugees are not a homogeneous group. They do not all have a common experience which binds them together. Much of the group were Kosovan Albanians. Some were racist, sexist and aggressive – a difficult group. It was no walk in the park. From this encounter we developed a photography project, where we worked with nine young refugees, gave them a disposable camera and asked them to take all the photos in a day. We took their portraits and they wrote stories. We presented this as an exhibition at the local cinema in Stratford. It was very successful and a source of inspiration for the participants.

We began to work on the new show 'Al' Daakan'. By this time we had accidentally begun to create theatre that matched funding criteria; work that dealt with issues of race, cultural conflicts and Asian women. It is a bilingual show with the main character Zenobia speaking Gujarati with simultaneous translation into English. This again happened by chance. It just so happened that an Indian radiographer, Mayur Zaveri, joined the company from our community theatre class. We didn't plan it, but his first language was Gujarati.

During this time we began to make funding applications for our current show called 'Onion Bar', the main thrust being community work with refugee groups, laboratory theatre work to create an ensemble, and the production of a show.

At the time I struggled to justify my input into theatre as a white male. I feel that the least interesting perspectives on life and art come from white people from the UK, from Western Europe, from the US, from Australia; ►

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**I had had enough of being criticised for making obscure physical theatre not in English, and we paused to collect ourselves**

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from areas of the world that have been over-colonised and where the indigenous peoples have become minorities or wiped out. I believe that our experience as rich white people is fundamentally not very interesting. Our countries are stable, we are unwilling to take any sort of risks with ourselves because we have such a huge amount to lose. We fear having no money, we fear for our physical safety, we want to have dinner parties and have cultured experiences in foreign countries. Our recent history is of a very banal materialistic aspiration.

The idea behind 'Onion Bar' is very simple; it is a place that outsiders, refugees, immigrants go to peel onions and cry and tell their stories. It fitted in well with the fashion of telling the stories of refugees. We changed our mind at this point and decided that we weren't going to act like cultural vampires sucking bad luck stories out of refugees, but use it only as a premise and carry on with the community work separately.

The most recent project we did with young refugees was very difficult – a project for excluded young people in Newham. It began with the best of intentions: using drama games, music, rhythm and singing to try to provide a variety of input into their syllabus. The money that was supposed to come through for us never did, we had to let one of the drama leaders go, the musician got a better job and he didn't have the heart for it anyway. We continued regardless and what we lost in 'professional quality' we gained in rawness.

Jade and I worked with a small group of boys on a percussion piece. I was humbled. The young people had never performed in front of an audience before; they were nervous and shaking like leaves. I forgot what it was like to be in that position; they gave me a fresh perspective. They were not in their country and were doing something they had never done before. A young girl from the Republic of Congo spoke, trying to explain her

frustration at living in a country where people think you are stupid if your command of English is poor.

Finally we produced 'Onion Bar' with an Arab, an Indian, a Colombian, a Pole, a Greek and two English actors but it was by chance that these people came together. We didn't especially look for actors from those cultures, they came to us because they are also a group of outsiders who needed somewhere to work.

Ultimately we have struggled to gain acceptance even though we have trodden this path for five years now, but I would say that our 'raison d'être' remains firmly with our commitment to theatre – narrative, myth and ritual. The work aims to cause a dynamic change, concentrate itself on the level of transformation, transgression or ritual impact on the performers and the audience, and ultimately avoids a feeling of safety. ■

For more info see [www.para-active.co.uk](http://www.para-active.co.uk).

# We Have to Represent...

Zena Edwards



## 2002 was the Arts Council's Year of Cultural Diversity. AKUA OBENG-FRIMPONG looks at ways of profiling and developing the work of Black British artists

other 'minority' groups. The 'minority' is outgrowing its label; so as far as the arts go, what else is changing?

This has been a year for recognising artists of the African and Asian diaspora and their support structures. Annually, October is a month where we are encouraged to celebrate and support the achievements of the Black community through 'Black History Month'. Artists and arts workers aim to raise their profile through seeking and accepting the kinds of opportunities that, in the past, appeared more commonly available to their 'majority' counterparts, but perhaps were not adequately structured to attract or maintain their involvement.

When I was approached to contribute a piece on this subject, I was at first concerned. I am not accomplished as an arts practitioner (but I hope to get there), my contemporaries hardly know who I am, much less would they take the time to ask someone unqualified to give their opinion on such a topic. However, I am black; part Ghanaian, part

Philippino, and probably more if I delved into my heritage. But what do I possibly have to add on this subject?

I don't feel disenfranchised or a victim of institutional racism. Am I experiencing it? Am I blind to it? Have I missed something? Maybe that's why they call it a 'Glass Ceiling'. You don't see it and you only know it's there when you hit it on your way up. I entered the arts profession as an administrator immediately after undertaking the appropriate training, on an established course at university. Currently, I work as the General Manager of a children's theatre company.

So, what's the problem? There are a number of issues that affect practitioners, including: training, audiences, quantity of work and sustainability. To better understand what the issues were, I spoke to Josette Bushell-Mingo and Ruth Nutter, responsible for PUSH, a diverse festival programme of contemporary Black Arts, Culture and Media. I also spoke with two performance poets, El Crisis and Zena Edwards, who work with Apples and

In recent years it has crept to the fore of the mainstream press and other publications that British theatre has within it little representation by black people. There are few in managerial or producing roles, and the work of black arts practitioners is not being sufficiently developed. Britain has changed socio-logically and continues to change, and the arts communities in Britain, in particular funding organisations, are beginning to recognise that there isn't enough high-profile artistic output to acknowledge the diversity of the population – growing communities of black, Asian and

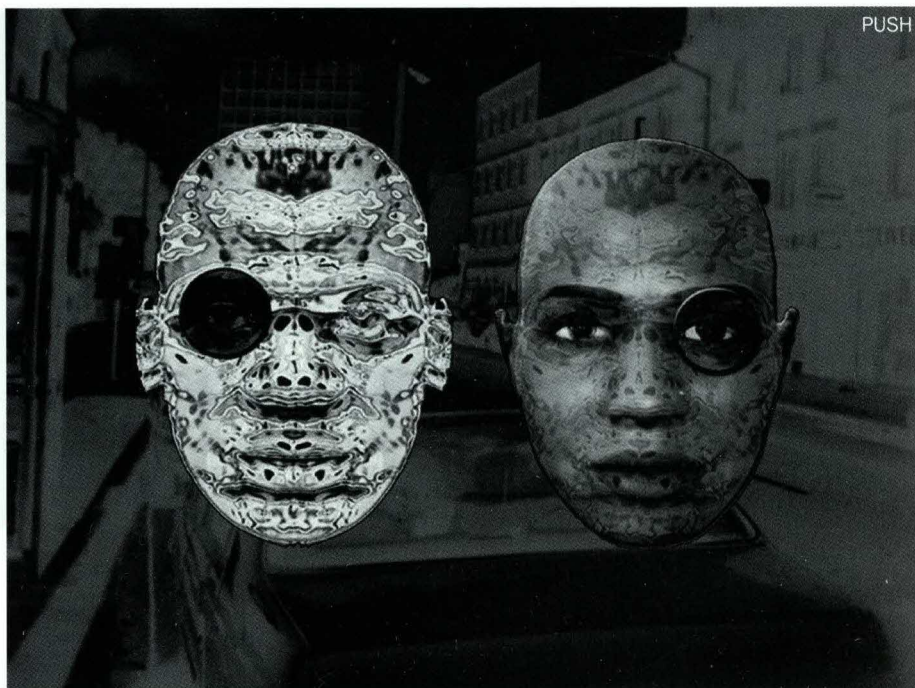


Snakes, an established promotional organisation for UK poets, which presents platforms with the aim of making poetry cross-cultural and accessible to a wide range of people. I attended a symposium event at the Theatre Museum entitled 'Finding the Gaps', exploring how effectively black theatre history has been documented. All have involvement supporting or producing work from the African diaspora. (For the purposes of this piece, when I use the term 'Black' I refer to people from the African diaspora; I felt it fairer to comment on an experience closer to my own. Although it can't be ignored that in other 'minority' communities a similar experience is had.)

What are the ways in? From the viewpoint of many young black people who have considered work in the arts, few entry points appear to be available other than via the mainstream media, where there are examples of successful black artists; however entry into that arena may appear even less accessible.

The discussion at 'Finding the Gaps' focused on a lack of prominent role models and a history which desperately needs to be maintained and highlighted at every opportunity. Young black people today find themselves of a generation who are not sure of their heritage. Are they Black British? African? Black-African? Caribbean? Afro-Caribbean? Which box do they tick on the 'ethnic origin' section of the form? Where do they look to for sources of information about where they come from? Speakers at the symposium (including Yvonne Brewster, founder of Talawa) recounted a rich history of achievement in theatre by black performers in Britain since the early twentieth century including Pearl Connor, Cy Grant, and Corinne Skinner Carter.

Zena Edwards and El Crisis recounted experiences which involved no formal training. They began their involvement on the performance poetry scene through attending underground or low-key events experimenting with their ability and being encouraged by peers to further their talent. They appreciate working with Apples and Snakes, which has structured their development, by providing high-profile performance platforms both in England and abroad. Most recently Zena was one of a number of Black and Asian poets



PUSH

who performed in 'The Babel Project' at the Royal Festival Hall in October. When offering her view of how a young black person can consider entering the profession, Zena felt that promoters of events showcasing work by young performers needed to find a way to increase their profile, and participants should be given more incentive to perform on the semi-professional or professional circuit.

There appears to be a psychological block within the black community which has in the past prevented some from celebrating their worth. Establishments such as the Arts Council have appeared unapproachable to those just starting out. Josette Bushell-Mingo and Ruth Nutter established PUSH to provide a means for artists to develop to the next level: the chance to collaborate with mainstream and high-profile organisations. Having said that, they are quite clear that the purpose of PUSH is not to act as yet another development organisation. They simply wish to demonstrate that there are artists out there who could benefit from the support of the existing infrastructure. Josette and Ruth feel that the work of PUSH will be done if it is no longer required.

PUSH aims to demonstrate that there is a quantity of artistic work made by black artists of a high quality and broad appeal. To date the festival has collaborated with organisations such as the Young Vic and the National Theatre Studio, where traditionally the programme has had a more 'European' feel and audiences reflected this. However, PUSH's programme (which included the first ever British Black 'Night at the Circus' and contributions from Turner Prize nominee Isaac Julien and composer Errol Walden amongst other performers and artists) brought a new audience into the doors of mainstream

venues such as the Young Vic and challenged their existing audiences. Josette was quite clear that the work was a success not because it was performed by black artists – it was because of its high standard of presentation.

PUSH is about looking forward to a future where there is no need for an organisation which specifically develops black arts alone. They hope that their work encourages mainstream organisations to think more inclusively and laterally when it comes to audiences and be more curious and ahead of the game with their programming. The work is out there; they just need to grab it.

I wanted to look at the aesthetic of black performance and whom the artists perceived their work was aimed at. Indeed I did ask, but none of the artists I encountered claimed that their work was specifically for black audiences. On observation I believe it appeals as it reflects on experience(s) which could be labelled as 'race specific'. Having said that, the stories and representations are created to be shared, to inform beyond a specific group. The importance of encouraging more black artists and arts workers into the field is simply to redress the balance of opportunity. The more in the frame that are succeeding, the better the example and the higher the profile of their work. It requires more representation and, as Zena put it, 'we [black arts practitioners] have to represent'... ■

*PUSH is planned to take place in London in July 2003; for more information visit [www.pushherenow.com](http://www.pushherenow.com). Apples & Snakes are presenting 'Writers on the Storm', a national tour of workshops and performances; for more information visit [www.applesandsnakes.org](http://www.applesandsnakes.org).*

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**PUSH was a success not because it was performed by black artists, but because of its high standard of presentation**

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# THE BIG ROOM

A space where time exists as a fluid stream – past, present and future action held in parallel states of being. Enter the Big Room with CHRIS GOODE...

A young, shaven-headed man stands looking at an empty seat. For what seems a long time – maybe a minute – he gazes at it, finally reaching out a hand, running a finger along the back of the chair. Then, abruptly, he stoops, picks up the chair, and carries it out through the doors at the back of the theatre.

Eleven other actors have been watching all this, in silence, transfixed. Some are aghast at what has just happened; some are amused. Personally I feel deep pangs of – what? Disappointment? Nearly everyone is experiencing some confusion. Perhaps everyone is struck by the same question.

How many people just left the room?

Rationally, we know the answer is one: but for those of us who were concentrating on the after-image, on that chair, of a colleague who had been sitting there but then got up and walked away, the complexity of what has just happened is bizarrely unsettling.

It's day one in the Big Room.

*Big Room, the /n./ The extremely large room with the blue ceiling and intensely bright light (during the day) or black ceiling with lots of tiny night-lights (during the night) found outside all computer installations. 'He can't come to the phone right now, he's somewhere out in the Big Room.'* (Source: [www.jargon.net](http://www.jargon.net))

In fact, this present project began in the spring of 2001, when I was working with the Leeds-based company Unlimited Theatre on a collaborative piece called 'Scream If You Want To Go Faster'. As part of the devising process we developed a model which came to be referred to as 'the ghost room'. This was an open-field improvisation conceived initially as part of an enquiry into how a single space may be occupied by actors who are each inhabiting different time frames, so that they cannot – quite – connect with each other. While one actor improvises a slowly unfolding, fairly mundane sequence of home-alone events (reading a book, having a cup of coffee...), all

around him other performers are engaged in more (initially) obscure actions, the vestiges of past and future presences in that space, a vortex of traces and reverberations. Meaningful eye-contact is impossible and yet the echoes and recombinations accumulate, over time, into a network that carries any number of possible meanings, and a characteristic tone that is tender, elegiac, endlessly redolent of human care and affinity in the face of enigma and loss.

Eighteen months later and Signal to Noise's 'The Big Room' project – which will lead to a five-hour installation/performance at Camden People's Theatre, undertaken by twelve actors, improvised within a strict formal structure and without dialogue or narrative, and shown on five consecutive days – is just starting. At this point the questions posed by Unlimited's ghost room have, for me, constellated around three principal points of enquiry: how to hold the individual gesture or moment of interaction open in such a way as to make it readable in a multiplicity of ways; how to preserve within the performance space the memory, the trace, of past events without recourse to an imposed narrative; and, perhaps most importantly, how the individual actor might make interventions within a performance event so as to not draw attention, but rather give it away.

This last question is the key to much that I'm trying to achieve.

When an actor and a spectator in the Big Room (and in the conception of theatre that the Big Room indicates) catch each other's eye, they must each see a person looking back, substantially no different from them. Demolishing the fourth wall is not about breaching the sides of the boxed-in stage by having actors running around in the auditorium or the foyer, under instructions to 'interact'; it's about the moments of confrontation between people, strangers, that theatre affords. Not aggressive or accusatory confrontation, but the simple connection of two individuals in an



Photo by Pavi



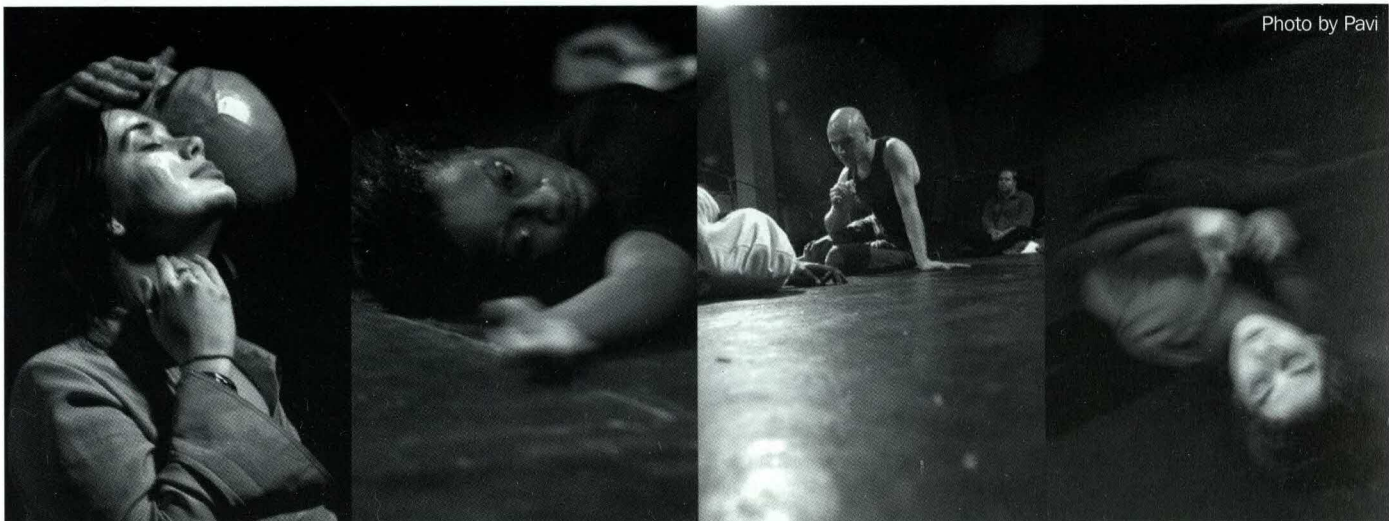


Photo by Pavi

instant of public communication. This is unbelievably hard to achieve. The implications are enormous. If actor and spectator are on a level, the conditions under which each lives in the moment of theatre must be closely equivalent. The actor should know little more than the spectator about what might be about to happen at any time and, as Grotowski came to realise, 'technique' must not be used to elevate the actor to the status of 'performer'.

At the same time, however, there must be, in combination with the 'realness' of the actor, something about them that encourages – even compels – the attention of a spectator, the quality that Ken Campbell has called 'Quotient X'. It is strikingly similar to Iain Sinclair's description (in 'Suicide Bridge') of stardom – 'anonymity... spray[ed] with gold light': and to the 'muse' quality that Bruce Weber examines in his beautiful recent film 'Chop Suey'. To watch an actor, a stranger to you, and know that you would follow them to the ends of the earth: that's the feeling we're after. Yet to cultivate an involuted sense of that in the individual actor is disastrous: the vanity it promotes too often feeds ego, the desire to control, which is inimical to the total project. And so each actor has to be inspired to see, to feel, to read each fellow actor as their 'muse': to direct attention away from themselves and into the other.

Thus, in the second component of the Big Room – the deck of fifty or so fragments of devised material that may be overlaid on the continuing improvisation during the last hour each day – each mini-piece is made by one actor as a gift for another.

Creating the conditions in which this is possible is, unsurprisingly, one of the most rewarding aspects of developing the Big Room. Frequently we work by candle-light; actors look at each other differently in this light, the quality of their interaction is softer, more intimate. It is high-stakes work, exposing and unnerving; but the atmosphere is one of absolute kindness and acceptance. Something similar

happens halfway through the process where we try telepathy experiments with playing cards: not to prove or disprove the possibilities of mind-reading, but to consider how people look at each other, what exactly is the proximity described as 'close attention'.

After just four development weeks the Big Room opens its doors. The long performance days are initially disorienting, the close concentration required is draining for everybody and the work is consequently uneven. It seems the biggest challenge, ultimately, is to let go of those paradigms in which 'performance' is synonymous with 'achievement' – the hitting of 'performance targets'. I find it frustratingly difficult, sitting at the sound-desk, not to be assessing what I'm seeing (that moment works, that moment doesn't...): which is exactly what I've been trying to release us from. After all, you don't sit by a river, or even watch the polar bears at the zoo, thinking those things, and yet the encounter you have still feels valuable.

Reflecting on this, three things buoy my enthusiasm. Firstly, the Big Room did generate many moments, indeed extended periods, where we were very moved and excited. Secondly, CPT has a long history of encouraging genuine experiment and looking benignly on risk-taking work that, even as it's shown, continues to provoke questions rather than propose answers: and that, I think, we've done. Thirdly, as one of the participants reminds me in an e-mail, 'the project hasn't really ended'. And certainly the Big Room once again brings me close to the notion that it is in absences and traces, and in individual hearts and minds, that the explosions of change take place which perhaps only theatre, of all species of friendship, can detonate. ■

*Chris Goode is a founder member of Signal to Noise, and artistic director of Camden People's Theatre. CPT's sixth annual Sprint Festival of new performance runs 5-30 March 2003. See [www.cpt.dircon.co.uk](http://www.cpt.dircon.co.uk).*

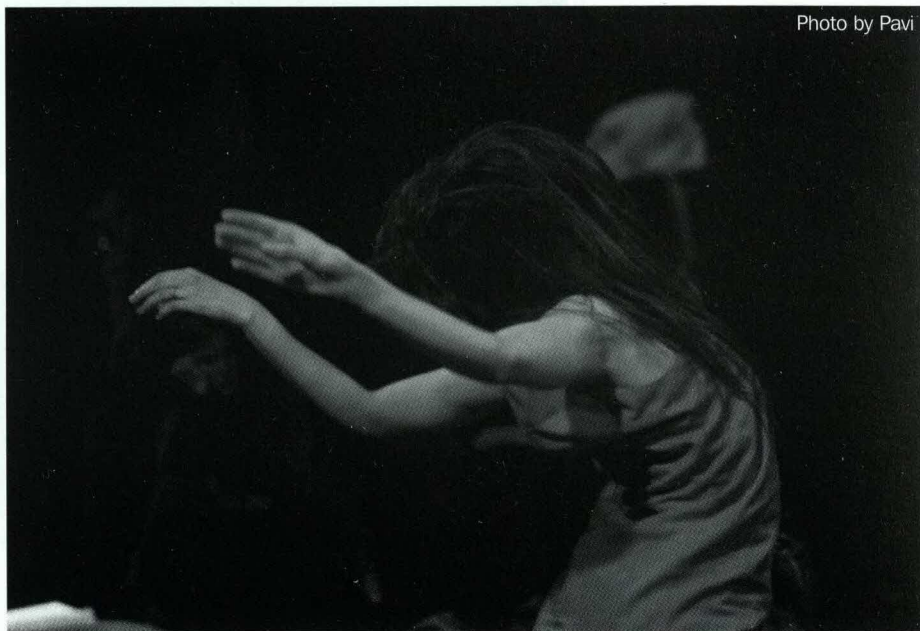


Photo by Pavi



## Fanny & Alexander

**'Romeo and Juliet – Et Ultra'**

Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton, Visions fest, October 2002

Italian theatre group Fanny and Alexander promised what would be an eloquent and fascinating physical performance mixing genres from childhood fantasy and myth to create a work of love, beauty, grief and finally catharsis.

We got elements of 'Romeo and Juliet' presented as if through the choking mists of a nightmare. The show was an intellectual exploration in costumed 3D of the notion of impossible love, which for me was a one-dimensional orgy of relentless submersion into angst and darkness.

The show is performed by a cast of seven behind a screen that holds shadows and reflections. It was hard, even irritating to view – let alone listen to. I could make out an agonising, thrashing, stomping Juliet throwing a red-gloved tantrum. Could hear demented laughter, much groaning, despairing and amplified whispering. Found it hard to focus on what was happening, like being in an underground car park overhearing treacherous conspiracies in Italian with torch-lights flashing. I had the feeling they were having a powerful time on their side of the screen and we were obscured from the potency of the experience.

After half an hour of this, and checking in with the surtitles to get a grasp on what I might be missing, I really needed to know when they would cheer up. Where was the delight, innocence, play and pleasure? Mirrors behind the screen were to symbolise liquid light, a playground, yet all they reflected were more gloom and despair. The experience was shrouded in relentless howling angst. Very theatrical angst that didn't reach through the screen to touch me.

All this frenzy seemed a dressed-up exploration of the notion and desperation of impossible love, with the relentless despair reflected in multiplicity until it became a vacuum of monotonous angst. A gilded spectacle, glimpsed through a screen. The experience was as riveting as sitting in a dentist's waiting room for an hour and equally as gruelling.

A concept made theatrical that left me puzzled yet ultimately cold.  
**Miriam King**

## Teatron Theater/ Figuren Theater Tubingen

**'Children of the Beast'**

Sallis Benney Theatre, Brighton, Visions fest, October 2002

An Israeli/German collaboration, this production (based on David Grossman's novel 'See Under Love') is an exploration of the impact of Holocaust survivors' testimonials on the children of survivors. Through a multiplicity of narrative voices it explores the relationship between memory, truth and fiction: Momik, the nine-year-old son of survivors; his father; his grandfather; and the adult Momik who as a writer revisits his own childhood and also seeks out documentation of the Holocaust. A central idea around which all else revolves is of the grandfather as a Scheherazade figure who tells stories to survive (although his original bargain with the Nazi interrogator is a story in exchange for a clean death – a bullet through the head).

It ultimately holds a message of love and hope, as witnessed in the determined survival strategies of the 'death camp' inhabitants and in the

resilience to the terror of the small child hearing the hushed references ('what sort of creature might the Nazi Beast be and where might it be hiding?').

In the re-creation of his family's history Momik is constantly aware that the art of memoir writing is, in the words of William Zinnser, to 'invent the truth'. The 'invention' strategy of this production is to place two brilliant artists – actor and puppeteer – together to tell the many interweaving stories using dialogue, storytelling, physical action, and some of the most skilled puppetry and object manipulation one is likely to see anywhere – dark shadows on screens; ghostly figures rising, falling, transforming from the swathes of white cloth lying on the floor.

'Children of the Beast' is that rare and wonderful thing: an exploration of the darkest forces in human nature that leaves the spectator shaken and stirred but not drained and despairing.

**Dorothy Max Prior**

## Joan Baixas and Paca Rodrigo

**'Terra Prenyada'**

Sallis Benney Theatre, Brighton, Visions fest, October 2002

How could a show 'born out of the Australian deserts and mud planes of Russia' convincingly migrate to the bland interior of a University theatre

on a chilly Saturday night? Answer: Enthrallingly so.

Catalan artist Joan Baixas is a collector of earth, a creator of images and an engaging storyteller. In 'Terra Prenyada' ('Pregnant Earth') Joan casually enters the sawdust-sprinkled stage to explain that we will not see a puppet show, but the experience will be a view into the workshop of someone who loves to paint. Joan paints with mud. He prepares his surface: a translucent screen, which is hoisted and stretched centre stage like a diaphragm onto which his mud-drawn images can breathe.

Behind the screen, Joan creates, in large-scale doodling manner, faces, characters, plants, expressions of mood and being, painted and scraped in fluid mud and illuminated by projected light. He is a conjuror, an alchemist, an artist, a down to earth man, who in a relaxed manner tells us a story and then, through mud, gives expression to it. He tells the story of mud made from the ashes of burned books from a Sarajevo library. Once in his cauldron, the former printed words transformed into new visual poetry.

Black and white photographic projections are used to stunning effect. Joan holds into the dark an A4 sheet of paper on which he momentarily captures projected images of children's faces, like a net catching precious butterflies. Then the paper is crumpled and thrown away.

'Terra Prenyada' is accompanied live by musician and singer Paca Rodrigo, who weaves her voice and music into Joan's paintings, giving yet another dimension to the already full experience.

'Terra Prenyada' is a unique and highly pleasurable show, not without humour. Joan concludes the evening, wiping his hands and telling us with a smile that they pride themselves on being the dirtiest show in the world. We laughed and left enraptured.

**Miriam King**

## Tell Tale Hearts

**'Donkey Haughty'**

Komedia, Brighton, Visions fest, October 2002

'Don Quixote' this isn't but it is a magical realist comedy of transformation and ambition, surreal and funny. It has many parts, from slapstick to pastiche





to puppetry. Directed by Javier Marzan of Peepolykus, it maybe leaned a little on Consuelo Garcia as a female Manuel (from 'Fawlty Towers') as much as the potentially long-lost descendant of Don Quixote's companion's neighbour's brother's sister.

In trademark Peepolykus style, there were lots of translation jokes. ('In my village, they say...' followed by an almost Spanish phrase, followed by the Engleesh rendition: 'Ina mya coundree, they say it isa noah use a feeding ze dead donkey.' She adds that you should of course feed it before, and then it wouldn't be dead.) But the central conceit, of lost librarian Wendy Williams's search for the real Don Quixote and his story, let loose all sorts of parody and humour, some of it cerebral, some of it slapstick and some of it plain surreal, like the flapping sail of words from a page that alternately becomes a butterfly they pursue or a vast sheet in which they are trapped.

They moved in and out of puppets of themselves walking the high library shelves in distant perspective, and a close-up comedy of gesture and expression. Sometimes I felt that the retelling was a little episodic and disconnected, but at other times their presence and skill in these episodes stimulated thought and laughter in equal measure.

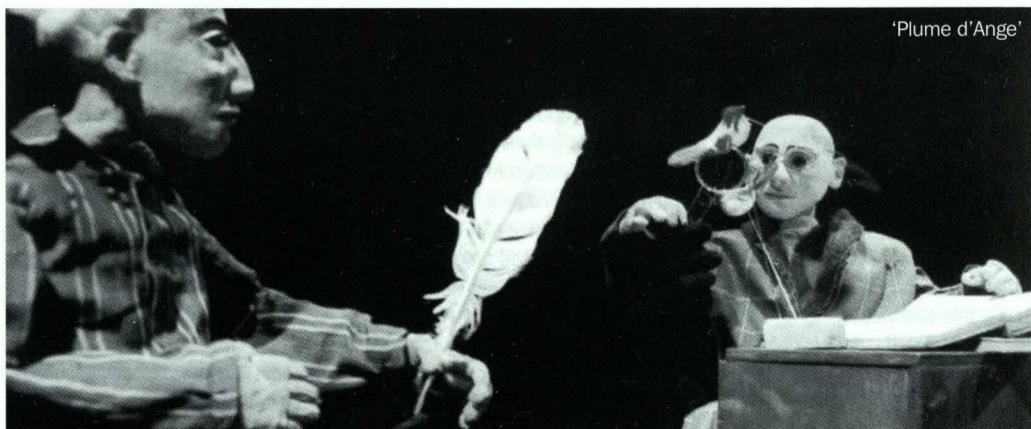
**Bill Parslow**

## Stephen Mottram's *Animata* 'In Suspension'

Komedia, Brighton, Visions fest, October 2002

The stage is set with primary-coloured wooden doll-like puppets draped in poses, lying down, hanging on trapezes. Mottram begins to work them like a wise old magician breathing life into his creations, especially the first puppet that must crawl with terrible effort in front of the audience. So far, so good; the jokes are good (the weight-lifting puppet, the trapeze artiste) and he operates these plain wooden puppets with smooth, unhurried, exact skill.

Then the puppets become more otherworldly, literally disconnected except for their strings, torsos and hands and feet and heads that dance together and apart. It is bizarre, funny



'Plume d'Ange'

and frightening by turns, but above all the showmanship is spot on.

The last section is Punch and Judy meets the real world, the puppetry collapsed from the whole stage to a smaller conventional hand-puppet theatre, but the audience is well warned up now for the jokes and the twists and turns of perception. Mottram plays with puppetry in an interesting way – not the faint praise 'interesting', but the interesting that drags you deep into these other worlds. The visual flow of his performance is nearer dance than anything else, and the strong vibrant soundtrack underscores and supports every move.

**Bill Parslow**

## Tram Theatre *'Plume d'Ange'*

Komedia Theatre, Brighton, Visions fest, October 2002

Out of the dark we witness the manifestation of one large, solitary, hovering white feather, suspended mid-space between the audience and the set where the story of 'Plume d'Ange' unfolds. Tram Theatre, based in Berlin, is a company of puppeteers, a video artist, an actor and a scenographer.

This is a production that relies on the powerful suggestive force of images, fusing traditional puppet manipulation skills and shadow play with 'new technology' – video projection and not-so-new slide projection. The video image of the feather fades away, and through the screen we see the hero of the story, Augustin, a weary pyjama-clad man, preparing for sleep. Visited by an angel in the dead of night, he finds in his possession a feather, a gift from his nocturnal visitor leaving him with the task to convince just one person that angels

exist. The goal – to spare humanity from suffering.

His journey is sepia toned in a despairing twilight world where his visionary claims are shunned. It's a very cheerless tale, yet illuminated by some fantastic slide projections, such as a corner of a chair taken from the angle of a chair leg, and some clever visual perspective and scale changes, such as what appears as an aerial shot of Augustin strolling on a cold empty pavement.

He is a little man on a lonely mission in a world that fails to be enlightened. We witness him in his nightmare and the experience is a sombre one, where the poetry and the utopia of a dreamer finds bleak confrontation in reality.

This production, although so technically full and expertly articulated, maintains something of a heavy atmosphere throughout. The lightest thing about it is the feather. A moment of relief comes at the end when finally the screen lifts for the first time and it is as if we wake from the same dream as Augustin. We see him vividly, there where he started in his little bed, and he peers back at us. A perfect moment of connection and clarity.

**Miriam King**

## Clod Ensemble *'For One Night Only'*

Battersea Arts Centre, Octoberfest 2002

Three pieces: two from the repertoire and one new. All examples of the company's ongoing investigation of the relationship between music and physical performance, as envisioned by director Suzy Willson and composer Paul Clark. First, 'Frere Jacques' (1996), with Tristan Sharps in the title

role of Gentleman Jack asleep in his chair, entreated to (tormented by?) an enigmatic female character (played by performance artist Stacy Makishi). Is she wife, maid or lover? Or perhaps the embodiment of the accompanying (live) music which seems to cause the ticks and twitches that make him restless? But maybe it is the music that is the expression of his dreams? Just eight minutes long, 'Frere Jacques' is a small but perfectly executed delight.

Second: the much loved and oft-performed collaboration with Split Britches 'It's a small house and we lived in it always' (1999). As it has been reviewed in these pages I shall say no more than that it is performed by Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver and should be seen by everyone, being a near perfect piece of theatre.

Third: a scratch performance of the latest Clod Ensemble piece 'The Wrestling Project'. Piano, drums – and Lois Weaver at the side of the stage sitting reading. She has the air of a diva awaiting her call. On stage, a wrestling arena. Two women slog it out, with Lois nonchalantly dingling the beginning and end of rounds. This is no abstracted dance-theatre reenactment of a wrestling match; the women really engage their full physical force, grapple and hit the floor (British Association of Wrestling coaches have been engaged in the devising of the piece). And this is no voyeuristic girls-get-sweaty porn-fest. There is an Olympian grace in their battle. The moments of kitsch and camp are provided not by our battling heroines but by timekeeper Lois and the 'special guest appearance' of Miss High Leg Kick who sashays on to the accompaniment of Nina Simone. An extraordinary piece of theatre that is to be developed with other new pieces in 2003. Watch this space!

**Dorothy Max Prior**



## The Goodman Theatre

'Galileo Galilei'

Barbican Theatre, BITE, November 2002

Directed by Tony award-winner Mary Zimmerman and with music by Philip Glass, this opera opens in an Italian piazza dominated by a vast canopy of stars with the figure of Galileo standing stock still centre stage.

Galileo's life is presented in 10 scenes by stepping backwards in time from the blindness of his later life – the opening a scene of great poignancy and irony for a man who spent his life looking at the stars. Back through his exile at the hands of the inquisition for challenging the Church in believing that 'the bible is a book about how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go'. Through the important realisation that the earth goes around the sun, to his childhood where Galileo as a boy watches his father's opera about how Orion fell in love with Merope.

Though Glass's music is beautifully hypnotic it fails to capture the passion of its subject, of the joy of discovery and the fear of the dangers this discovery represents in a society dominated by religious doctrine. However 'Galileo Galilei' was a rich visual spectacle, the stage filled with acrobats and singers as servants to the rigid religious figures and the inquisitive Galileo. But Zimmerman presents a very literal story using a medium more accustomed to high drama and as a result this opera becomes a classic example of opening well and ending with a wonderful crescendo of voice and choreography, while the contents in-between were little more than diverting fluff.

David Bere

## Betty Nansen Theatre

'Woyzeck'

Barbican Theatre, London, BITE, September 2002

Robert Wilson's 'Woyzeck' shows the way to a theatre that places the body at its focus, but resists the remote-control humanism of too many that aspire this way. His production for the Betty Nansen Theatre of Copenhagen

floats its images free of their literality – but never arbitrarily – and throws them into orbit about each other and the pursuing bodies of the characters. The result is a transcendent display of human figures schmoozing with the memes of free-floating militarism and medicine, marching to a beat of that dull fate that passes for eroticism in a world too full of peas.

The design is a set of sliding planes; fragile over-endowed windowed walls keeping nothing out and too much in; and arrows prodding Woyzeck towards violence. Characters are driven by more than their associations and drive us, the audience, likewise. Through these dynamic grotesques the outside comes into the theatre: a split Doctor, a walking Cartesian binary unable to escape from itself, a possessed Captain performed with the massive dignity of a robot that has wet its pants.

Tom Waits has lent the performers more than a music that parodies the military march of music hall sentimentality: his throat. The strangled vowels of the voices – there's nothing natural about this 'fate' – accuse a murderer that is a social/philological one, something more than Private Woyzeck.

For a few momentary passages the production edges towards an expressionist pastiche – and the text is an open maw of romantic (self) destruction for artists who fancy indulging themselves – but Wilson's aesthetic resists them both. Misery's the river of the world. Wilson and the superb ensemble of the Betty Nansen Theatre make it a source that doesn't have to be poisoned.

Phil Smith

## Tbilisi Puppet Theatre

'Battle of Stalingrad'

The Barbican Pit, London, BITE, November 2002

This intensely moving piece for tabletop puppets played to well-filled houses over ten days, part of the BITE festival which has proved its attachment to the puppetry medium many times. Designed, written and played by Rézo Gabriadzé of the Tbilisi Puppet Theatre company, Georgia, the subject was the fragility of human and animal bodies and the strength of human and animal love in the time of

war. It might have been speaking of any war, but actually referred to the battle of Stalingrad of 1942-43.

Physical fragility was depicted in the delicate, attenuated, loosely jointed forms of the puppets, most poignantly of all in the figures of two horses yearning for each other in life and death. There were several vignettes, kinetic paintings in light and sound and form, with the story of the horses running through it like a thread. Devastated landscapes, terrifying explosions, the hovering presence of a tiny Angel of Death, and a scenario without dialogue combined to make an assault on the senses which I might have found a touch sentimental had it not been for the commentary. As spoken by Samuel West, interpolating the Russian text, it brought some dryness and humour to the pervading suffering.

The most interesting aspect of the production was its insubstantiality. The impressionistic scenes, brief and often static, made for a show as light as thistledown. But the audience was deeply moved, attentive and warmly appreciative. When performed as well as this, puppetry can surely make its audiences work hard, filling in the interstices of the action with their own memories and tragedies, attributing profound feelings to the little blankfaced characters. Gabriadzé is as much a fine artist as a theatre director.

Penny Francis

## Theaterhaus Stuttgart

'The Maids'

The Barbican Pit, London, BITE, October 2002

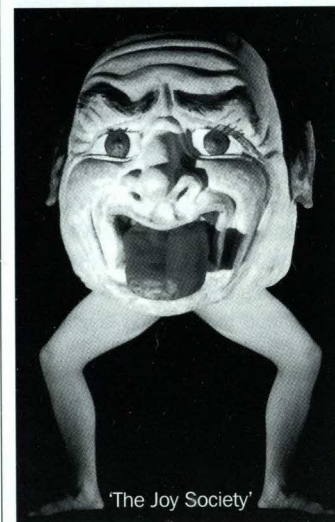
Genet's metaphorical evocation of imprisonment is taken quite literally in the prison setting of this production, with Koffi Koko and Ismael Azazi as two inmates who plot to kill their sexually frustrated gaoler – Ziya Azazi. The two 'maids' enact rituals of confinement, evoking a claustrophobic world where a cigarette shared through a hole in the wall carries the ache of longing – whether for a lover or the world outside.

Although fragments of Genet's text are recited from time to time, they sit uncomfortably in a piece which is more dance than dance-theatre. It conveys the visceral under-

belly of Genet's original play more powerfully in the fusion of dance and physical theatre than in the spoken dimension. One senses director Yoshi Oida's debt to Peter Brook in the use of cloth and metal: reams of red cloth unwind from the gaoler in a breathtakingly dervish-like centre-piece when the gaoler-mistress returns; deep-toned metal bowls supply an eerily disturbing accompaniment to the dance-action. And the precision and grace of every tiny movement is bewitching.

As an example of multi-ethnic collaboration, this was one of the treats of the Barbican's BITE season, combining choreographic talent from Africa, Brazil and Turkey, with Japanese direction and German music. Genet would perhaps have applauded.

Dymphna Gallery



## Dark Horse Productions

'The Joy Society'

Prospect Theatre, Farnborough, October 2002

This densely packed new production by Dark Horse begins serenely and elegantly but quickly descends into orchestrated chaos. Dark Horse reference the erosion of control by drugs, spiritual movements and a variety of human desires, as represented through the conflict between Rev. Master Barry and his trio of buffoons.

Lying neatly in the territory of physical theatre, Bim Mason's company draw upon a variety of skills and techniques that can be sourced with-



in Mason's Lecoq training and subsequent work at Circomedia. The show is a blend of clowning tactics and puppetry. The added use of aerial silk work allows a haven for Master Barry's tolerant and beautiful assistant, the only character unsullied by the chaos of the conflict.

We are treated to a succession of inventive comic scenarios: a puppet show that wavers delightfully between pathos and comic chaos as it disintegrates before our eyes; a modern morality play, introducing us to 'Business', his 'Bastard son Advertising' and a host of other characters. We are suitably entertained by this pastiche and the audience responds warmly to the buffoons, who reciprocate by increasing the intensity of their chaotic performance as the piece reaches a climax with a rapid succession of nightmarish images. This final phase of licentious behaviour is the key to Dark Horse's investigation into the roots of carnival with its paradoxically liberating and controlling forces in medieval and contemporary society.

In the transitions between sections the piece loses momentum, but the imaginative barrage of images hooks the predominantly youthful audience. Ideally suited for those new to the genre, but with enough for experienced audiences to be entertained.

Thomas Wilson

## The Etcetera Theatre Company 'Blue Jam'

Battersea Arts Centre,  
Octoberfest 2002

This is comedy. Comedy that turns conventional laughs on its head, cuts that head off, shoves it in a blender and then drinks it.

Based on original material from the master of dark pranks Chris Morris, the Etcetera Theatre Company perform sketches that have previously been heard on the radio and seen on TV. The essential premise of this material is that it takes the familiar and turns it into something uncanny. A woman pays a plumber thousands of pounds to bring her baby back to life by sorting out his pipes. A middle-aged man talks banally to his wife about murdering a colleague whilst she reads 'House and Garden' magazine.

This show embraces multimedia tools to create a world filled with strange sounds and skewed images. A video projection of a sofa – simple iconography to represent a living room – the weird electronic soundscapes (of Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada and others) to heighten the surreality, and an off-hand, detached performance style all go into the mix to create an atmosphere that is edgy, keeping the audience on its toes, ready to surprise and shock you.

All that was missing was a greater awareness of the audience – the complicit awareness that this was live and not televised prevented the show from achieving its true potential; to satirise the expectations and the mores of a society cosseted by wealth and privilege. Despite this, fans of Chris Morris's work will not be disappointed.

David Bere

## Acrobat

London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), October 2002

The ensemble, some androgynous, some bearded, kick-start with a traditional Blackpool style, beachside-esque, acrobatics display. The junk vinyl soundtrack, cross death metal, hits hard, as you bear witness to the bizarre, nappy-clad (and baggy) per-

formers as they propel each other on seesaw teeterboards in a 1940s-style gymnasium.

The venue (London's Roundhouse) provides the perfect setting for the show, which brings with it an alternative spin on Monty Python's Flying Circus, although of course by far physically superior! With unique delivery, you are bombarded with continuous and intense 'mini pieces' strung together, hinting at pastiche of circus old and new.

It is suggested that 'Acrobat' may not wish to be contextualised or 'fitted into the picture of the world arts scene'. However, it is their embracing of the unconventional and the anti-commercial that draws the attention and creates interdisciplinarity, crossing boundaries of circus (both traditional and contemporary) street theatre, performance art, physical theatre and mime. So in essence, they do 'fit in' to the larger, richer picture – as a truly individual, inspiring and appealing company.

You have to witness first hand the bizarre, yet hilarious breakfast on a low-slung rope or the handkerchief pulled from the nether regions, to appreciate the performers' professional high-energy fusion of skills with slapstick and watch them push the boundaries of their craft. So, it's no surprise to read that they have just been awarded the first 2002 Adver-

tiser Southwark Adelaide Fringe weekly award for excellence.

Tansy Lihou

## Niki McCretton 'Heretic'

Phoenix, Exeter, October 2002

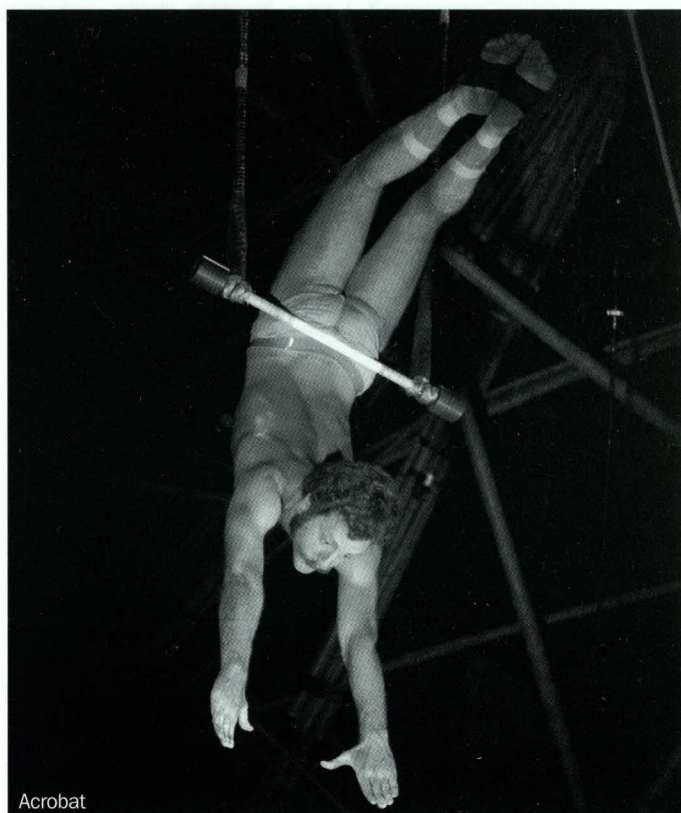
'P for prophet, Q for quench' – Fooltime-trained Niki McCretton begins with an unrevealing alphabet of dusty bible and liquid staging. With snatches of dance, liturgicalised monologue and 'fuck, fuck, fuck!' irritability she takes us through the part-desert, part-oasis of her set of religious doubts. There are conventional moments of sandy self-scarification, crunching sexuality and spirituality in the usual manner. McCretton introduces herself first as a screen, then introduces a tiny tomato plant to the unction of her bodily fluids.

Clunky chunks of theology and science – 'that Flood was just bad weather' – ironically and unproductively rub up against each other while McCretton works in between them. With sacraments in specimen bags this is transgressive stuff, but it, thankfully and exceptionally, moves beyond that into an un-ironical de-attitudinised sublimeness. A territory somewhere between doubt, faith and disbelief – somewhere adjacent to the religion-less Christianity of Dietrich Bonhoeffer – but there isn't really a name that wouldn't misrepresent it.

When her apotheosis comes it is in a personal mass – bread from the plastic piqued with her own sweat ('Quiet Days In Clichy'), blood from the meat of a piss tomato (Andre Serano) – it is cool and messy, reference-full but representationless, sacred symbols floating free from their meanings.

This is an honest, ascetic, pery and sulky personal struggle with an aspiritual world – weeping and winking at us from its altar/kitchen top, casually inflecting its sceptical commandments ('The Ten Suggestions'). She turns the humiliation of the street evangelical, furiously proselytising an audience of bottles, into an accessible meeting with God/astronaut, the heavy breathing apex of rationality and earth a heaven far away. Wonderful.

Phil Smith





## Royal de Luxe 'Petits Contes Chinois revus par les Nègres'

Calais, October 2002

In 1997 Royal de Luxe toured a show based on European experiences of African stories to villages and markets in Cameroon. They then toured it on the European Festival circuit before taking it to a small Chinese village where it was reworked filtering Chinese stories through African and European sensibilities.

The resulting show is presented in a large slightly raised area of sand/gravel with Chinese yurts at either end. There is a hut made of branches for the musicians to sit under. The audience sits on a custom-made bank which allows everyone a great view. The musicians (dressed in blue and red bellboy costumes) take their seats and play. An unearthly Chinese woman's voice accompanied by Chinese fiddle, djembe, guitar and xylophone. The cultural mix starts here. A trapdoor in the sand opens and African chiefs and dignitaries climb out – strangers in a strange land...

The show intercuts its narrative with stories from legend and proverbs – adding some new ones of its own. It is performed with all the panache that characterises the company – a real feel for pace and energy, wonderful small puppets made of scrap material and a series of images that take your breath away. The raised sand stage is a box of tricks in itself – at one point the Great Wall of China grew in front of your eyes. The technicians are visible as they set up objects and effects but they never detract from what's going on. The result could be a bland mish-mash of cultural cliché but to its credit it retained a dark humour and a very particular vision to ensure this wasn't the case.

Edward Taylor

## Forced Entertainment 'The Travels'

Phoenix, Exeter,  
November 2002

For this show Forced Entertainment spent three months travelling sepa-

ately to street locations around Britain chosen for the resonance of their names (Dead Lane, Paradise Street, Rape Lane, Cutthroat Alley). But that resonance creates a problem: a rooting in text not space. And though Claire Marshall makes a neat summing-up after one particularly allusive sequence that they are 'building space out of rumours' the claim doesn't quite stand up.

Artists like Richard Long and Hamish Fulton say that their travelling is their art and the photographs and text they produce but a secondary distillation. It is hard not feel the same about 'The Travels'.

There is a stripping away of the style of previous shows, but still a ventilation throb of yearning. The 'neutral' staging, performers seated behind two long desks, should let the audience visualise for themselves the spaces travelled. But I wouldn't have minded some angry trees to manifest a landscape.

The studied acting of not acting, the mix of faked and real events, the over-portentous conclusion of some accounts ('The future will be paranoid... will be scared') felt like an acknowledgement that the most exciting part of the project was missing, its re-performing too distant from its original motion.

There are wonderful sequences: Claire Marshall making her own death road of predictions, Cathy Naden's innocent photography of kids at Oracle Court challenged by scared, angry parents and her trip to Storybook Glen where nothing is in her scale, Terry O'Connor's precarious wander between Karaoke bars in early hours London... but wouldn't we have rather gone with them?

Phil Smith

## Company Coelacanth 'Mutations'

The Place Theatre, London,  
November 2002

A body moves convulsively. Disjointedly. The arm has no conventional human or dance gesture. It regains control, with no apparent reason, and walks away as somnolent human. What is the body? How is the body? Where do we begin and end? How do we begin and end? These questions and similar were continuously pro-

voked for me when experiencing 'Mutations', choreographed by Marie-Gabrielle Rotie in collaboration with composer Nick Parkin and realised by her new company of five women dancers.

Company Coelacanth's name evokes a sense of mystic: mystic here meaning something that is difficult to easily perceive. A coelacanth is a prehistoric fish, with a hollow spine, that was thought of as extinct, yet has fairly recently been discovered again. For me, it is a metaphor for primordial aspects of ourselves, perhaps once lost but which may yet be found again. It and the performance itself raise disturbing questions on many planes – spatial, temporal, biological – about any fixed or solid or comprehensively defined notion of self.

In Japanese the word 'Shintai' means the body – a body that incorporates the mind as a holistic entity. Yet it is a body that exists only in relation to the external world. The ancient Japanese had no word for the human being that was individuated from nature. We are nature: constantly in flux, transforming, 'mutating' violently with both internal and external causation. The music of Nick Parkin, inspired by geophysical sounds, envelops both dancers and spectators in such a biomorphic world. Some of the emotional, mental images that the dancers provoked were haunting; images that one recalls in one's sleep.

Ajaykumar

## The Kala Chethhena Kathakali Company 'Dussassana Vadam'

Phoenix, Exeter,  
November 2002

Earsplitting drumming summons attention from the synopsis to the stage. The beatific enthusiasm of Kalamandalam Barbara Vijayakumar bathes the stage: 'In a moment this stage will be alive with characters from the world of the gods.' And we are not disappointed by the searing show that follows. Behind an 'inadequate' screen the gods are assembling, peeping into our world, their hemispheric skirts trembling like half-worlds. Behind their thick make-up

and enveloping costumes a cosmology is simmering, exploding through the performers' seed-reddened eyes.

Unlike the well-made play's mountain-range graph of rising tension with peaks of exposure and revelation, the emotional geography of Kathakali is closer to the huge designs made by Peruvian Indians on the Nazca Plains. The narrative and rhythm lead us to a high tabletop of intense feeling and there we stay for long ecstatic periods as the performers etch and decorate in a single plane of penetrating emotion.

The tale of Dussassana Vadam is a 'Macbeth' of Indian dance – with a scarifying cannibalistic battlefield scene and two beautifully sustained evocations of redemptive dialogue with Krishna. The glowering presence of Dussassana, performed by Kalamandalam Unnithan, I will carry with me – his sublime performance is that rare thing: the uplifting portrayal of evil. His face a grinding machine, shaking with the unease of his own chuckling malevolence, seething with pain and hilarity. Perfectly matched by the tremulous empathy of Kalamandalam Vijayakumar's performance of the humiliated wife, Draupadi. But they were all stunning.

And a curtain call to rival Donald Wolfitt shook the Phoenix...

Phil Smith

## Dynamic New Animation 'Skin Deep Circus'

Chats Palace, London,  
October 2002

The point of reference for Skin Deep Circus is the fairground sideshows of yore – using puppets as a means to illustrate the spectacle and voyeurism, in observing the 'alternative', the 'unique' and the 'curious'. The simple narrative is constructed around the lives of the characters, who were based upon real people who frequented these sideshows, including the stereotypically sinister and creepy ringmaster, who had himself a hidden uniqueness under his hat...

As each character was introduced, the more disturbing the content became. The small, musty and tatty tent changed from an exciting and curious spectacle into a surreal and ominous display of fragile and



exploited characters, which indeed made for a thought-provoking and absorbing performance.

Ivan Ivanitch's Flying Fleas were hilarious as they danced in unison across the small stage, legs akimbo and crying out like the Bluebell Girls of can-can. In contrast however, Sammy Stonehead was a sad little man who could barely walk across the stage for the weight of his heavy head, although he triumphed as the hero at the end of the tale.

At times the pace and flow was a little erratic, but maybe this was due to the show requiring a larger audience to do justice to the atmosphere that was being produced. The show held multiple references, creating many layers to engage with, supported by the strengths of the performances and the humorous undertones which helped to break some of the more disconcerting elements. Skin Deep Circus will most certainly leaving a lasting impression on its spectators, as did the sideshows of the past.

**Tansy Lihou**

## Discreet Theatre 'Invitation to a Beheading'

The Shunt Railway Arch,  
London, November 2002

We are all going to die – that's the premise of the latest hybrid cultivated in Shunt's Bethnal Green arch. The artists invited by Shunt to devise and perform have taken a Nabokov short story as the starting point for their theatrical installation; Gemma Brockis of Shunt directs this intricate piece of nastiness with surprising sensitivity. Death and torture may be crucial to the proceedings, but the tale of a doomed man visited repeatedly by his despairing lawyer, bewildered wife and prison cleaner ends up more moving than it sounds.

The key to this performance of imprisonment is its economically site-specific staging. The inmate's paper prison cell holds some 25 voyeurs and allows the characters' actions to encroach on the audience's immediate environment. What begins as a pristine place to sit ends as a pile of debris inhabited by a life-size spider... this eight-legged creature nearly stole the show by developing human eyes and finally emerging as the potential-ly unfaithful wife to dance with the

prison cleaner. Arachnids aside, the return of the actor who played the lawyer proved equally confusing when the actor donned a golf player's guise, as the relationship between the two characters was never clarified.

However, these surreal quirks can be forgiven in a production that bursts with an absurdist energy whole-heartedly embraced by the whole cast. Vivien Stern gives a captivating performance as the enigmatic wife, and Jeremy Hardingham's rendition of the condemned man is soulful indeed. Simon Kane is well cast as the stuffy lawyer, warming to the curlicues of Michael Regnier's quirky script. All in all, a show worth being confused by.

**Helena Thompson**

## Pete Postlethwaite 'Scaramouche Jones'

Riverside Studios,  
Hammersmith, October 2002

Millennium Eve 1999. In the backstage area of a circus sounds of applause and traditional circus music can be heard. Enter Scaramouche Jones, played by Pete Postlethwaite, a clown as old as the century, born in Trinidad of an English father and a Trinidadian prostitute, who then proceeds to re-enact his life as a clown, '50 years to make the clown, 50 years to play the clown,' through the horrors, privations and absurdities of the 20th century, including a stint as a gravedigger in a Croatian concentration camp in the 2nd World War,

where he found he had a talent for clowning, amusing the children as they are led to their death.

This solo performance is a tour de force by Pete Postlethwaite, a superb actor, who, with subtle gestural and vocal inflections, presents the heart of darkness at the core of humanity, whilst removing his clown's motley to reveal an everyman for the 20th century.

However, Justin Butcher's script, although containing some wonderful storytelling, is overlong and tends towards the mawkish and sentimental. Furthermore, the circus tent design is static and old-fashioned, and creates a very literal space to explore the 'seven white masks of the clown'.

What is more problematic is that in a show which depends on the clown, Pete Postlethwaite makes a few vague, overly literal and hackneyed gestures to convey his act. Consequently, what could have been an exciting and thought-provoking piece is ultimately timid and rather insipid, neither fully realised as a fable nor thoroughly explored as storytelling.

**Richard Cuming**

## Grzegorz Jarzyna 'Festen'

Sadler's Wells, LIFT,  
November 2002

A spotlight. A man sitting, looking – at us, at his past... a long silence. Then a piano begins to sound. Two or three minutes before we hear a word. A powerful opening that reminds me

of Maly Theatre or Pina Bausch in its mixture of image-silence-sound. These echoes continue for the next 15 minutes or so as the stage picture unfolds with a sense of pacing, of a heightened choreography of movement, of patterns across space, of figures in space.

But this beautiful, bold theatricality is not sustained; the piece pales against such comparisons. The music stops being a soundtrack, becoming merely atmospheric spot effects. The movement and patterning cannot conceal the lack of ensemble in the acting, the acting also feeling uncommitted or remaining on the surface of the many layers of psycho-history that the story unpeels, lacking the raw power required.

The overlapping and interweaving scenes and plot lines become messy in the unfocused blocking of locations in the stage space. Both blocking and acting remain a non-confronting social realism rather than extending and deepening the stage pictures. Nudity and sexual encounters become an embarrassing coyness.

By the end, the production fails to command and control space, fails to bring together the many lines of the performance score it raises. It remains trapped by the film (of the same name) rather than being a translation of the film into the uniqueness of the theatrical space. Whilst the drama does have the echoes of Chekhov, etc., that other reviewers discern, the odd moment of introspection or metaphor does not displace the deeper failings of the piece as non-total theatre.

**John Keefe**





### PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATE

#### Albatross Environmental Theatre Unlimited

is a new company, set up to produce large-scale open-air theatre in collaboration with artists and theatre companies. The first production will premiere in summer 2003. 'Albatross', an epic drama, will tell of the last hero of the romantic age. His story leads from the Antarctic to the Great War that heralded the beginning of the 20th century. This new street theatre initiative is supported by the National Touring Programme and North West Arts, Manchester International Arts and Stockton International Riverside Festival. 'Albatross' will be produced and directed by Mike Lister. Contact michael.lister@gconnect.com.

#### CB Projects

are currently working on touring productions for Edinburgh, autumn 2003 and spring 2004. If you are looking for management support for Edinburgh or touring, please contact them so that they can see your work and look at possibilities for working partnerships. They are currently representing Angela de Castro, Jade and Nofit State Circus, as well as being affiliated with Liquid Theatre, Scarlet Theatre, Shifting Sands and Zygo, and are also interested in managing your marketing campaign, troubleshooting and business consultancy! E-mail info@cbprojects.co.uk, see www.cbprojects.co.uk or phone/fax 020 8671 4668.

#### Contemporary Clowning Projects,

led by artistic director Angela de Castro, have just finished a highly successful tour of 'My Life is Like a Yoyo', which travelled around the UK and Eire and which will be showcased at the 2003 Edinburgh Fringe. They have also started work on their next show, working with writer Sarah Woods, and a work in progress will be presented in summer 2003. Angela de Castro has just received a NESTA Dreamtime Award and The Why Not Institute has received a capital lottery grant for organisational development. For more info e-mail clowningprojects@aol.com.

#### Dark Horse,

following a very busy autumn tour, with their new indoor touring production 'The Joy Society', can announce that they are extending the tour into spring 2003. They are also starting to plan outdoor activities for summer 2003 with their big faces show. Contact Bim Mason for more information: bim@circmedia.demon.co.uk.

#### Dynamic New Animation

has just completed a tour of 'Skin Deep Circus' around the UK culminating with two shows at the Science Museum. Christmas shows of 'Sweetie Pie' at the Arcola Theatre, Dalston, take place before creating a new children's performance 'The Enormous Turnip', which is touring nationally from February 2003. DNA's hit show 'Chicken Licken' played a number of performances in France at the 'Brumes et Frimas' festival, and many more performances in France and Spain are being sought for 2003, as well as a national and international tour of 'Skin Deep Circus'. The company's groundbreaking performance for 14-year olds concerning sex and relationships, 'Sex &

Chips', will be touring in April 2003. See www.dynamicnewanimation.co.uk.

#### Expressive Feat Productions

is proud to announce, after much waiting and nail biting, that the show 'Looks Deceiving' will go into production in January 2003. The debut touring production is a show about women and clothes. Performing on an imposing sculpture (designed and created by Michele Weaver) and stealing influence from advertising, religion and haute couture, the aerial dancers utilise a melange of aerial acrobatics, structural clothing and everyday knicker-twisting to explore the comedy and tragedy of what we wear. For more information contact Tina Carter 01227 280399 or see www.exfeat.com

#### Foursight Theatre

presents rollicking robbers, a marching snowflake army, acapella singing and 'The Snow Queen' like you've never seen before... Foursight Theatre is renowned for its expressionistic and visually stunning productions which entertain, enthrall and excite the whole family. Foursight Theatre secured Arts Council funding for the production, which will tour to 19 significant national venues from December 2002 to mid-February 2003. Through this project, Foursight will celebrate its sixteenth year as a devising company. For a complete tour schedule and further information about 'The Snow Queen' and Foursight Theatre's work visit: www.foursight.theatre.mcmail.com.

#### Funding Pending Live Arts (FPLA)

are currently awaiting the green light from RALP to make two new pieces of street work: 'Bench' (utilising their own mobile street bench they will respond site-specifically to locations that book them) and 'Chaps in Black' – up to five be-suited chaps who rove the streets in search of aliens and mayhem. Birmingham City Council have confirmed support for this venture... Other recent activities include: 'Watch with Mutha' a showcase event for short film; 'Tags' – a film with tagged young offenders working with Stans Cafe and John Humphries; facilitating irregular artists evenings and interventions with the legendary 'Harry Palmer'... Contact sandra@livearts.co.uk or see www.livearts.co.uk.

#### Komedia Theatre,

Brighton, is about to start on major redevelopment work that will enable it to receive an even greater range of experimental and innovative touring theatre and dance, as well as creating an exciting new environment for producing both local and national companies. The theatre will be closed from January to April 2003, but the basement cabaret will remain open, offering a mix of music, comedy and comedy theatre. The redesigned theatre will open in time for a brilliant programme of international and national work for the Brighton festival in May 2003. See www.komedia.co.uk or call Komedia admin on 01273 647101 for further information.

#### The Little Angel Theatre,

the oldest puppet theatre in England, has reopened its doors to children and their families following a hugely successful campaign to save it from permanent closure. Based in Islington, London, the theatre was forced to close its doors

temporarily in April 2002 following the loss of long-established funding and the death of a major benefactor. Over the summer months, its 'Save the Little Angel' campaign attracted tremendous support and donations to help secure its target of raising £180,000. The Christmas show is a large-scale production of 'Beauty and the Beast'. The theatre will continue its Saturday puppet-clubs for children, and its two touring shows – 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'The Frog Prince' – will visit arts venues and schools around the country.

#### MissingLinkProductions

present: Entertainment Solutions! 'Work like you don't need the money, dance like nobody's watching and love like you've never been hurt.' If you wish to be kept up to date with MissingLinkProductions (who represent performers working in physical theatre, mime, circus, street arts and cabaret), then subscribe to their free newsletter. E-mail subscribe@MissingLinkProductions.co.uk, phone 020 8341 7645 or see www.CircusPerformers.com.

#### Natural Theatre Company

are performing in the streets of Venezuela, France, Portugal, Lapland and Swindon in winter 2002/3. They are also master-minding a community show in Newcastle city centre on New Year's Eve. Around Christmas their work tends to be for corporate events or parties, raising useful funds. In the spring, as well as touring their street theatre around Britain and the world, they will be touring a small-scale indoor stage show 'One Lump or Two?' (topical songs and cucumber sandwiches). Their recent tour of Pakistan (street theatre) was described as 'phenomenally successful' by the British Council, and they were crowned 'King and Queens of Comedy' in Romania in July. Phone 01225 469131, e-mail naturals@dircon.co.uk or see www.naturals.dircon.co.uk.

#### Perpetual Motion Theatre

will continue to tour 'Perfect', as well as creating two new shows in 2003. 'Beckett Shorts' (three Beckett shorts performed with video) will go into rehearsal in January in association with Prema Arts Centre, Gloucestershire, and has received funding from Leche Trust to tour to Moldova in May 2003. The company will also create a new devised show in Madrid in April 2003 (working title 'Risk' – based on the board game about world domination), which will tour alongside 'Perfect' to Canada and the US during July, August and September 2003, followed by a UK tour and a run in London and Berlin in Autumn/Winter 2003. Perpetual Motion are Emi Slater, Toby Hughes, Karin Heberlein, Leticia Santafoe, Philippe Spall and Christoph Wagner. For details please call Emi on 07779 723730 or see www.perpetualmotion.org.uk.

#### Playbox Theatre's

movement director for their epic new work by Ron Hutchinson is to be Marie Gabrielle Rotie, the UK's leading exponent of Butoh movement. Marie Gabrielle choreographed Peter Hall's staging of 'Bacchae' at the National Theatre this year. Her current creation 'Mutations' – recently seen at The Place, London – will also visit Playbox's theatre in Warwick, the Dream Factory, in spring



2003. The new work from Playbox is currently undergoing development work in the studio exploring the origins of religion and creation of dogma. Stewart McGill and Ron Hutchinson have a team of actors who are exploring the draft text before the choreographic and video-installation creators join the project. The project has received Arts Council funding and is scheduled to premiere in October 2003.

#### Scarlet Theatre

are following the success of 'Love and Other Fairy Tales', Nick Revell's radical reworking of Chaucer, with a tour of their new production, 'The Wedding', in the spring. Written by Virgilio Piñera, one of the giants of Cuban literature, 'The Wedding' is a darkly funny study about how ludicrous people become when their pride has been injured. When Flora overhears her husband-to-be talk about her less than firm bosom to his best friend, no one is prepared for the repercussions, least of all Flora. For more details please call Scarlet on 020 8441 9779, e-mail [admin@scarletttheatre.co.uk](mailto:admin@scarletttheatre.co.uk) or go to [www.scarletttheatre.co.uk](http://www.scarletttheatre.co.uk).

#### Tall Stories

have two productions of 'The Gruffalo' this winter – one at London's Soho Theatre, and one at Nottingham Lakeside. Meanwhile, 'Snow White' heads off to Broadway and a North American tour in spring 2003, following a month-long run at the National Theatre platform space. Their final Christmas show, 'Something Else', is on its way to tour Southern and South-East England after its seasonal run at Brighton's Komedia. The company will be receiving RALP funding from London Arts for their next project, which they will be devising in the spring. See [www.tallstories.org.uk](http://www.tallstories.org.uk).

#### Theatre de l'Ange Fou,

after a highly successful Edinburgh festival, will be touring Israel 15-25 December with their adaptation of Gogol's 'The Government Inspector', and follow this with a month-long run at the Pleasance Theatre, London, 14 January to 8 February, the first two weeks as part of the London International Mime Festival. More international touring is to come in 2003, and l'Ange Fou will be starting a new production (Bulgakov's 'The Master and Margarita') in February.

#### Théâtre Sans Frontières

is currently touring Alice – a magical adventure for children aged 7 and upwards. In the new year, TSF will be touring into schools with a new show for 9-13 year olds, 'Le Petit Chaperon Rouge' ('Little Red Riding Hood') and 'Chinye', a traditional tale from West Africa. Both stories will be performed in French. The show will be touring in England and Scotland between 24 January and 4 April. 'El Sombrero de Tres Picos' ('The Three Cornered Hat') is Théâtre Sans Frontières' first full-scale Spanish production, which will be touring in March and April 2003 (see listings). For further info, phone or fax 01434 652484/607206, e-mail [admin@tsfront.co.uk](mailto:admin@tsfront.co.uk) or see [www.theatresansfrontieres.co.uk](http://www.theatresansfrontieres.co.uk).

#### Theatre Trash

is currently working with Camden People's Theatre under a new scheme called TONIC (Training of

New Innovative Companies), supported by the Esme Fairbairn Foundation. Theatre Trash will premiere its next production as part of the Sprint Festival at CPT in March 2003. For further information see [www.theatretrash.co.uk](http://www.theatretrash.co.uk) or contact Ria Parry at [theatretrash@aol.com](mailto:theatretrash@aol.com).

#### Travelling Light

will be retouring their production of 'The Stones' in spring 2003. This award-winning play is based on the true story of two young boys from Melbourne who threw stones onto a motorway and caused a fatal accident. 'The Stones' has been toured around the world by its creators, Zeal Theatre, and was performed by them at the National Theatre last May. Travelling Light's production toured schools and venues in the South West earlier this year, and this second tour will include national venues, three weeks in Scotland and a visit to a festival in Belfast. For more information contact Jude Merrill on 0117 955 0086 or visit [www.travlight.co.uk](http://www.travlight.co.uk).

#### The Whalley Range All Stars

have just received funding from the Arts Council's National Touring Programme to create a new show entitled 'Pig'. This features a 25-foot long sleeping pig. She has a row of holes along her belly – the audience are invited to look inside these holes. Viewed from the outside, they resemble a litter of piglets suckling their mother. Inside, their heads become part of a short performance that is enacted in the pig's belly. For this project the company are working with Andy Plant on the pig's mechanised head, Clive Bell on the music and Penny Saunders of Forkbeard Fantasy on the pig's body. Like all their work 'Pig' is suitable for every age but is specifically targeted at children. The show will be available from March/April – you can contact the company for more info on [wr.allstars@mcr1.poptel.org.uk](mailto:wr.allstars@mcr1.poptel.org.uk).

## MANAGEMENT NEWS

#### An International Touring

training seminar will take place at Greenwich Dance Agency, on 29 January 2003. Aimed at dance and movement theatre company managers and self-managed artists. Contact Sarah Trist on 020 8541 5399 or e-mail [trist@supanet.com](mailto:trist@supanet.com).

#### Arts Council anti-clash diary...

Arts managers: if you're managing an arts event, press launch, etc, check that your event doesn't clash with another by contacting Steve Woodward, Arts Council Press Officer, on 020 7973 6414. E-mail [steve.woodward@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:steve.woodward@artscouncil.org.uk).

#### Arts Hub

is a new service for arts workers – with job listings, news bulletins, etc. Free to advertise. [www.artshub.co.uk](http://www.artshub.co.uk)

#### Decibel Performing Arts Showcase

will take place in Manchester, in May 2003. Aimed at raising the profile of culturally diverse arts in the UK and produced in collaboration with xtrax, the showcase will have an 'industry focus'. To find out more contact Phillip Deverell on 020 7973 6424 or see [www.xtrax.org.uk](http://www.xtrax.org.uk).

#### Illustrator

creates original artwork for theatre publicity. To view portfolio call 07989 438028. (See ad p34.)

#### Mimbre

are searching for a part-time administrator and are having problems finding someone who has worked with street theatre companies before. Any leads to [lina@mimbre.co.uk](mailto:lina@mimbre.co.uk) or see [www.mimbre.co.uk](http://www.mimbre.co.uk) for more about the company's work.

#### Scarabeus

is looking for an experienced administrator, able to work on her/his own initiative as well as part of a team. Good communication skills, adept at multi-tasking, and with enthusiasm for visual theatre, site specific and street arts. The post is available from February 2003. Contact Daniela on 020 7281 7493 or e-mail your CV to [info@scarabeus.co.uk](mailto:info@scarabeus.co.uk)

## FUNDING

#### Black Dance and Theatre Scheme Awards

is a new ACE initiative in collaboration with West Midlands Arts and Birmingham City Council, funding independent producers and artists. Deadline 31 January 2003. Find out more from Performing and Combined Arts Administrator at West Midlands Arts on 0121 631 5715.

#### The Junction/Cambridge Drama Centre's

'Support for theatre companies and artists scheme' is now inviting submissions for April 2003 to March 2004 support – grants up to £5,000. For more info, contact Carrie Carruthers at The Junction CDC, Clifton Road, Cambridge CB1 7GX, or e-mail [carrie@junction.co.uk](mailto:carrie@junction.co.uk) or phone 01223 578000. Deadline for completed applications is 8 January 2003.

#### Lisa Ullman Travelling Fund

funds artists wanting to travel abroad to attend a conference or short course/study project in dance or movement. (NB does not finance cost of attending full-time study abroad!) Deadline 25 Jan 2003. Download application from [www.ullman-trav.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.ullman-trav.fsnet.co.uk).

#### Waterways Trust Small Grants Programme

offers up to £5,000 to community arts schemes. Call 0151 373 4387 or e-mail [jenny.rogers@the-waterwaystrust.co.uk](mailto:jenny.rogers@the-waterwaystrust.co.uk).

## OPPORTUNITIES

#### Albatross Environmental Theatre Unlimited

seeks performers for Albatross – see Company Update section. Rehearsals will begin in Manchester in April 2003. Contact: [michael.lister@gconnect.com](mailto:michael.lister@gconnect.com)

#### Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2003

is approaching. Now is the time to make contact. E-mail [admin@edfringe.com](mailto:admin@edfringe.com). Total Theatre Awards will be taking place as part of the Fringe. If you make physical or visual performance of any sort you are eligible to enter! Details via the Fringe or Total Theatre offices.



## Fresh 2,

the festival held at the Brit School in collaboration with Total Theatre Network is back. In June 2003 they are hosting six weeks of workshops, discussion and performance examining the role of young people in theatre. This will involve a series of projects with Brit school students, young people and local community groups. They are interested to hear proposals from companies or practitioners interested in working with them. For information contact Phil Gunderson at [pgunders@brit.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:pgunders@brit.croydon.sch.uk) or write c/o The Brit School, 60 The Crescent, Croydon CRO 2HN. Tel: 020 8665 5242

## The Omnibus project

has moved away from London down to Brighton and is looking for performers interested in training and devising starting at the end of November. Please contact Zoe Bouras for more details at [helozoe@hotmail.com](mailto:helozoe@hotmail.com).

## Spacecadets

are looking for North-West based performers for their new show 'Fish out of Water'. Spacecadets specialise in designing inflatable structures that are animated by performers, lights & music. They are looking for people with good movement skills who would also support the technical side of the show – get-ins and get-outs. Good daily fee. Please send CV/letter to: [info@spacecadets.com](mailto:info@spacecadets.com). For more info ring Dawn on: 020 8988 0282.

## Streets of Brighton 2003

seeks great shows for the Streets of Brighton Showcase – 8, 9 and 10 May 2003. Spaces are limited; please register online at [www.zapproductions.co.uk/nsam](http://www.zapproductions.co.uk/nsam) or call 01273 821 588. They can offer: travel expenses; accommodation/meals; technical support; the opportunity for your work to be seen by over 200 potential bookers and funders from the UK and abroad; an audience of more 100,000 people.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

### Laban

Creekside, London SE8 3DZ  
Tel: 020 8691 8600 / Fax: 020 8691 8400  
E-mail: [info@laban.org](mailto:info@laban.org) / [www.laban.org](http://www.laban.org)

## WEBSITES

### [www.theatretraining.org.uk](http://www.theatretraining.org.uk)

has information on training opportunities and workshops run by TTI or recommended by them.

### [www.theplace.org.uk](http://www.theplace.org.uk)

The Place website has a new discussion board plus info on dance, live art, etc.

### [www.theatremuseum.org](http://www.theatremuseum.org)

has the theatre museum's online archives.

### [www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists)

contains contacts for Live Art.

## RESOURCES

### Rehearsal room

for hire in Trestle Arts Base, St Albans, Herts. Sprung dance floor. Call Syd Foggarty on 01727 850150.

### Rehearsal studio

for hire in London N16. Moving East – light, airy, sprung floor. Prices from £6 per hour. Online diary at [www.movingeast.co.uk](http://www.movingeast.co.uk). Call 020 7503 3101.

### The Place Greater London Space Directory

can help with rehearsal space. Let them know amount you can pay, size required, when and where, and they will help. Call 020 7383 3524 or e-mail [artistdevelopment@theplace.org.uk](mailto:artistdevelopment@theplace.org.uk)

### Powerful video projector and van

for hire. Scarabeus have a Sanyo XGA 2600 Ansilumens projector and a van with driver for hire. The van is a long wheelbase Mercedes, with 9 seats, wheelchair access and cargo compartment. Both available during winter. Contact Søren on 020 7281 7493 or 07974 978783 or email [info@scarabeus.co.uk](mailto:info@scarabeus.co.uk).

### Sidecar Ltd

is an East London digital video access facility based at 89a Kingsland High Street, London E8 2PB. (Near train, buses and free parking.) Call 07005 938427 or e-mail [sidecar@sidecar-studio.com](mailto:sidecar@sidecar-studio.com). Cheap rates.

# ECOLE DE MIME CORPOREL DRAMATIQUE AND THEATRE DE L'ANGE FOU

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS: STEVEN WASSON & CORINNE SOUM

## WHAT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THEATRE?

THE RESPONSE HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO PLACE THE ACTOR AS THE ONLY INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT. NAMING IT DRAMATIC CORPORAL MIME, ETIENNE DECROUX CREATED AN INNOVATIVE METHOD AND PRECISE TECHNIQUE FOR A NEW GENERATION OF CREATIVE PERFORMERS WISHING TO TRANSFORM THEIR IDEAS INTO A PHYSICAL REALITY. OUR SCHOOL OFFERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THIS DISCIPLINE IN DEPTH FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES, BOTH FORMAL AND CREATIVE



- **Training includes:**  
Technique, improvisation, composition and repertoire.
- **Students may join the school at the beginning of each month.**
- **Class Schedule:**  
Monday to Fri 10am to 2 pm (October to June)

Ecole de Mime Corporel Dramatique  
Unit 207, Belgravia workshops, 157-163 Marlborough Road, London N19 4NF  
Tel: 020 7263 9339 - E-mail: [infoschool@angefou.co.uk](mailto:infoschool@angefou.co.uk) - Website: [www.angefou.co.uk](http://www.angefou.co.uk)



## COMPANIES

### The Chipolatas

#### JANUARY

18-19 London International Mime Festival (QEH)

#### FEBRUARY

19-21 National Theatre, London (children's shows)

#### MARCH

6-9 Thessaloniki Carnival, Greece  
12-24 The Ukraine (British Council tour)

### Dark Horse

#### 'THE JOY SOCIETY'

#### JANUARY

16 Marlborough College  
22 Tameside College, Ashton U/Lyme  
25 Stanwix Theatre, Carlisle

#### FEBRUARY

20-22 Take Art, Somerset

#### MARCH

6 Trinity Arts, Tunbridge Wells  
13 Arena, Wolverhampton  
14 Pontardawe Arts Centre  
15 Wyndeside Theatre, Wales

### Nola Rae's London Mime Theatre

#### MOZART

#### PREPOSTEROSO

#### JANUARY

25 Saran  
28 Coulanges Les Nevers  
31 Le Peage de Roussillon

#### FEBRUARY

4-8 Marseilles  
14 Ganges

### Scarlet Theatre

#### 'THE WEDDING'

020 8441 9779

[www.scarlettheatre.co.uk](http://www.scarlettheatre.co.uk)

#### FEBRUARY

18-22 Drum, Theatre Royal Plymouth  
25 The Bull, Barnet  
26 Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury  
27-28 Harrow Arts Centre

#### MARCH

1 Croydon Clocktower  
4 Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster  
5-6 Darlington Arts Theatre  
7-8 Cambridge Drama Centre  
11 Unity Theatre, Liverpool  
12-13 Theatre Royal Winchester  
14 De La Warr, Bexhill  
15 Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead  
17-1 April Southwark Playhouse

### Spymonkey

#### 'STIFF' AND 'COOPED'

#### JANUARY

20 London International Mime Festival, QEH

#### 'COOPED'

#### JANUARY

24 Quay Arts, Isle of Wight  
8-9 Theater am Brennpunkt, Baden, Switzerland  
11-12 Casino Theater, Winterthur, Switzerland  
13-16 Ticino Theater, Waedenswil, Switzerland

#### 'STIFF'

#### JANUARY

25 Havant Arts Centre

#### FEBRUARY

1 Forest Arts, New Milton  
18-21 Neuchatel Switzerland

### theatre alibi

#### 'WHY THE WHALES CAME'

Tel 01392 217315 [alibi@eclipse.co.uk](mailto:alibi@eclipse.co.uk)  
[www.theatrealibi.co.uk](http://www.theatrealibi.co.uk)

#### MARCH

5-12 Exeter Phoenix  
19-21 Acorn Theatre, Penzance  
24-26 Lighthouse Poole  
27-28 Norden Farm, Maidenhead

#### APRIL

1-5 Drum Theatre, Plymouth

### Trestle Theatre Company

#### THE ADVENTURES OF THE STONEHEADS

#### FEBRUARY

4-8 Gateway Theatre, Chester  
11-12 Arena, Wolverhampton  
13-14 The Point Eastleigh  
20-21 Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury  
24-25 MAC Birmingham  
27-1 March Theatre Royal, Bury

### Theatre Sans Frontières

#### 'SOMBRERO DE TRES PICOS'

#### MARCH

5 Queens Hall Arts, Hexham  
7 Wynd Theatre, Melrose  
11 Gardner Arts, Brighton  
12 Warwick Arts  
17 Brewery Arts, Kendall  
19 Gulbenkian Studio, Newcastle  
26 Harlow Playhouse, Essex  
27 Corn Exchange, Newbury  
28 The Point, Eastleigh  
31 Mumford Theatre, Cambridge

#### APRIL

1 The Hawth, Crawley  
2 Trinity Arts, Tunbridge Wells  
3 Bloomsbury Theatre, London  
8 Darlington Arts Centre  
9 The Dukes, Lancaster

### Travelling Light

#### 'THE STONES'

0117 955 0086 [www.travlight.co.uk](http://www.travlight.co.uk)

#### FEBRUARY

4 Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds  
5 Junction Theatre, Cambridge  
13 The Ridings Arts Centre, S Glos  
14-15 Lighthouse Arts Centre, Poole  
18-19 Ustinov Studio, Bath Theatre Royal

#### MARCH

6 Tacchi Morris Arts Centre, Taunton  
7-8 Mercury Theatre, Colchester  
10-11 Warwick Arts Centre  
13-14 Feile An Phobail Festival, Belfast  
16-18 The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen  
20-22 Tron Theatre, Glasgow  
24-29 MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling  
31-2 April North Edinburgh Arts Centre

#### APRIL

3 Lakeside AC, Nottingham

### Foursight Theatre

#### 'THE SNOW QUEEN'

#### JANUARY

4 Square Chapel, Halifax  
8-9 Komedia, Brighton  
10-11 The Hawth, Crawley  
14 The Phoenix, Exeter  
16-17 Mac, Birmingham  
20 Eastwood Theatre, Eastwood  
21 Elizabethan High School, Retford  
22 Toot Hill School Theatre, Bingham  
23 The Old Library, Mansfield

24 Dukeries CC Theatre, Ollerton  
28-9 Stamford Arts Centre, Stamford  
30 Auden Theatre, Greshams, Holt  
31-1Feb Cambridge Drama Centre,

#### FEBRUARY

5-6 The Music Hall, Shrewsbury  
7 The Courtyard, Hereford  
8 The Palace Theatre, Redditch  
10 William Brookes Sch, Much Wenlock  
13-15 Jersey Arts Centre

### Third Angel

#### 'LEAVE NO TRACE'

Tel: + 44 (0) 114 281 2044

[mail@thirdangel.co.uk](mailto:mail@thirdangel.co.uk)

[www.thirdangel.co.uk](http://www.thirdangel.co.uk)

#### JANUARY

30 Alsager Arts Centre

#### FEBRUARY

3-4 The Hawth, Crawley  
6-8 Ustinov Studio, Theatre Royal, Bath  
11-12 CCA, Glasgow  
18 Portsmouth College Studio Theatre  
20 Victoria Studios, Nottingham  
22 The Gate, Goole  
26-28 Crucible Studio, Sheffield

#### MARCH

4 Phoenix Arts, Leicester  
5 South Street Arts Centre, Reading  
6 Warwick Arts Centre  
14 MAC, Birmingham

## VENUES

### Portsmouth Arts Centre

#### FEBRUARY

21 The Kosh - '20th Century Girls'  
26 SCAT Theatre - 'Drumlines and Dragons'

#### MARCH

9 Pop Up - 'Wild Girl, Wild Boy'  
21 Voodoo Vaudeville - 'Voodoo Vaudeville Cabaret'  
30 Little Angel Theatre - 'King Arthur and the Quest for the Grail'

#### APRIL

5 Horse + Bamboo / Company of Angels - 'Charlotte Salomon'

## FESTIVALS

### Live Culture, London

27 MARCH - 1 APRIL 2003

See [www.liveart.demon.co.uk](http://www.liveart.demon.co.uk)

### Moving Parts 2003

MAC, Birmingham

0121 440 3838

20 FEBRUARY TO 22 MARCH 2003

All performances start at 8pm. Many have free after-show discussions

#### FEBRUARY

20-21 Henri Oguike Dance Company - 'Frontline'  
22 Julian Fox - 'Goodbye Seattle Coffee Company'  
24-25 Trestle Theatre Company - 'The Adventures of the Stoneheads'  
27-28 Motionhouse Dance - 'Theatre Volatile'

#### MARCH

5 Metro-Boulot-Dodo - 'Blownup'  
11 Anurekha Ghosh - 'Moments of Give'  
14 Third Angel - 'Leave No Trace'  
15 Unlimited Theatre - 'Safety'  
17 Kaos Theatre - 'The Importance of Being Earnest'  
20 mind the ... gap - 'Don Quixote'  
21 Metaphysique - 'Soul in a Suitcase'  
22 Point Blank - 'Nothing to Declare'

## Newcastle Gateshead

New Year's Eve (and Day) Celebrations

Featuring amongst others:

Natural Theatre Company - 'Everyone's Place'

Neighbourhood Watch Stilts International

- 'Dali's Box'

The Dream Engine - 'Heliosphere'

Skinning the Cat - 'Claire de Lune'

Men in Coats - 'Men in Coats'

Melissa Colello - aerialist

Walk The Plank - 'Feel the Heat' fireworks

La Tortue Magique - 'Life is a Super 8'

Teatro de Pronto - 'Primigenio'

Xarxa Teatre - 'El Foc Del Mar'

Compagnie Jo Bithume - 'Fanfare'

## New Territories, Glasgow

[www.newmoves.co.uk](http://www.newmoves.co.uk)

3 FEBRUARY - 16 MARCH 2003

Live Art, Dance & Experimental Theatre

## Puppet Up! 2003

14-18 MAY FESTIVAL WEEKEND

Blackpool Festival of Puppetry & Visual

Theatre - details in next issue of Total

Theatre or see

[www.blackpool.towntalk.co.uk/puppet.shtml](http://www.blackpool.towntalk.co.uk/puppet.shtml)

or e-mail

[rachel@dynamicnewanimation.co.uk](mailto:rachel@dynamicnewanimation.co.uk)

## Streets of Brighton 2003

8-10 MAY 2003

Including the National Street Arts

Meeting. Details in next issue.

## 25th London International Mime Festival

10-26 JANUARY 2003

Brochure available from

[mimefest@easynet.co.uk](mailto:mimefest@easynet.co.uk) or by ringing

+44 (0) 20 7637 5661. Website

[www.mimefest.co.uk](http://www.mimefest.co.uk)

#### JANUARY

10-12 Metzger/Zimmermann/Deperrot - 'Gopfl'  
11-14 Okidok - 'Ha Ha Ha'  
13-15 A2 - 'Do you want this once again?'  
13-15 Compagnie Jerome Thomas - 'Juggling Hands'  
13-25 Theatre de l'Ange Fou - 'The Government Inspector'  
13-1 Feb Told by an Idiot - A Little Fantasy'  
16-19 Fiat Lux - 'Nouvelles Folies'  
16-19 Teatro Corsario - 'Vampyria'  
17-19 Circus Ronaldo - 'Fili'  
17-19 Jade - 'On The Edge of the Wheel'  
18 Moving People - 'The History Men'  
18-19 Chipolatas - QEH Foyer (free)  
20 Spymonkey - 'Stiff' and 'Cooped'  
20-22 Company F/Z - 'Throat'  
20-22 Mosseux Bonte - 'Light'  
21-23 Company:Collisions - 'La Petite Mort'  
23-26 Compagnie 111 - I.J.K.  
24-26 33 Fainting Spells - 'Dirty Work'  
24-26 Andrew Dawson - 'Absence and Presence'  
24-26 Wishbone - 'Scapegoat'



## UK TRAINING

### The Academy of Circus Arts

Winchester and touring, 07050 282624  
**DIPLOMA COURSE**  
 Six-month training inside the big top. E-mail [zippos.circus@virgin.net](mailto:zippos.circus@virgin.net)

### Central

London, 020 7559 3990

#### MA ADVANCED THEATRE PRACTICE

A full-time four term course offering the following strands: Creative Producing, Dramaturgy, Lighting Design, Object Theatre and Puppetry, Scenography, Sound Design, Writing, Performance, Direction. See [www.cssd.ac.uk](http://www.cssd.ac.uk)

### Circomedia

Bristol, 0117 947 7288

- One Year Foundation (RSA Diploma)
- Three Month Introductory
- Evening Classes

### The Circus Space

London, 020 7613 4141

BA (hons) Theatre Practice - Circus (two-year degree course). E-mail: [enquiries@thecircusspace.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@thecircusspace.co.uk)  
 Also adult classes in circus skills.

### The Desmond Jones School

London, 020 8747 3537

Full-time and part-time professional training in Mime and Physical Theatre. Also run short courses in impro/mask, etc.

### Ecole de Mime Corporel Dramatique

London, 020 7272 8627

Movement Theatre and Corporeal Mime (Decroux Technique)

### Expressive Feat

01227 276069 ([www.exfeat.com](http://www.exfeat.com))

Aerial workshops for adults and children every week at Whitstable Sports Centre. Professional training available in aerial silks, trapeze and choreography.

### Kaizen Creative

Manchester, 0161 374 2353

The Arts of Coaching courses for arts professionals. Phone or e-mail [info@kaizen-creative.org](mailto:info@kaizen-creative.org) or see [www.kaizen-creative.org](http://www.kaizen-creative.org)

### Laban Centre

Creekside, London SE8  
 020 8691 8600 [www.laban.org](http://www.laban.org)

MA's offered in Choreography and in European Dance Theatre Practice

Also, series of lectures:  
 13 Feb - Laban Analysis  
 20 Feb - Laban, European Man of Theatre  
 27 February - Discussion

### Middlesex University

London, 020 8411 6148

School of Art, Design and Performing Arts - MA Choreography with Performing Arts. Full time, exploring choreography.

### Nose to Nose

01342 823410

Introductory weekends, residential

intensives. Call for brochure or see [members.aol.com/nosetonose](http://members.aol.com/nosetonose)

### The Penquoit Centre

01342 825639

Close to sea and mountains in west Wales, an ideal place to develop new forms of theatre discipline. Phone or e-mail [dan.skinner@btinternet.com](mailto:dan.skinner@btinternet.com)

### School of Physical Theatre

Waterhouse Studio

11-12 January - workshop led by Ron East on 'Passion Play' with the Mime Festival  
 10 March - showcase of a new show called 'Loving the Game' by Emergency Theatre Co. directed by Ron East

### Theatre of the Oppressed Courses

London [www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk](http://www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk)

17-21 February - Forum Theatre Week - led by Adrian Jackson  
 25 February - 1 March - The Rainbow of Desires - led by Augusto Boal & Adrian Jackson

### Theatre Training Initiative

London, 07931 710808

Ongoing weekly practice sessions based on Tadashi Suzuki's actor training method at Chisenhale Dance Space, Wednesday evenings. Intro sessions also available. More details: [www.theatrettraining.org.uk](http://www.theatrettraining.org.uk) or [info@theatrettraining.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrettraining.org.uk)

### Total Theatre Talks

18 JANUARY AT 2.30

In collaboration with the London International Mime Festival and SBC, Total Theatre Network presents: 'Total Theatre Talks: The Role of Design in Physical and Visual Performance'. Voice Box, Royal Festival Hall. £5 (£3 concs). Free for Total Theatre Network members. To reserve a place call 020 7729 7944 or e-mail [talks@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:talks@totaltheatre.org.uk).

### Trestle Theatre Company Workshops

01727 850950 / [admin@trestle.org.uk](mailto:admin@trestle.org.uk)

One day workshops in St Albans, Herts, led by artistic director Toby Wilsher.  
 25 February - Storytelling in Theatre  
 26 February - Visual/Physical Theatre  
 27 February - Mask Theatre  
 9 March - Making Modern Theatre

### Welfare State International

Lanternhouse, Cumbria 01229 581127

15-16 January - an introduction to useful, safe materials and simple techniques for imaginative activities and transformations.

### The Why Not Institute

London, 020 8987 6661  
[whynotinstitute@aol.com](mailto:whynotinstitute@aol.com)

Performance, teaching and professional development connected to contemporary clowning. Courses and weekly sessions. Artistic director: Angela de Castro.

## OVERSEAS

### Butoh Centre Mamu

Gottingen, Germany +49 551 485863  
 or 551 790 6245

One-month butoh workshop: 13 January to 15 February. See [www.tadashi-endo.de/workshops](http://www.tadashi-endo.de/workshops) or e-mail [endo@em.mpg.de](mailto:endo@em.mpg.de)

### 'Circo a Vapore' School of Theatre

Rome, Italy, +39 06 700 9692

Two-year professional training. See [www.circoavapore.3000.it](http://www.circoavapore.3000.it) or e-mail for info in English [circoavapore@tiscalinet.it](mailto:circoavapore@tiscalinet.it)

### Dell'Arte

[www.dellarte.com](http://www.dellarte.com)

Auditions for Physical Theatre Programme take place throughout the US, Canada, Mexico and Europe. For info and application see website.

### Ecole Internationale de Theatre Jacques Lecoq

Paris, +33 1 47 70 44 78

Two-Year Course plus the Laboratory of Movement Study (LEM).

### Espace Catastrophe

Bruxelles, +32 (0) 2 538 12 02

Training in circus and performing arts. Contact [espace@catastrophe.be](mailto:espace@catastrophe.be) or see [www.catastrophe.be](http://www.catastrophe.be)

### Mime Centrum

Berlin, +30 44 651860

Movement training for actors, mimes, directors and dramaturgs. See [www.mimecentrum.de](http://www.mimecentrum.de)

### Patricia Bardi

Amsterdam, +31 (0) 20 689 7783

Vocal Dance and Voice Movement Integration - courses throughout autumn/winter. Phone for brochure or see [www.patriciabardi.com](http://www.patriciabardi.com)

### The Seahorse Project

Paris, +33 (0) 1 43 38 79 75

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### Total Theatre School (Australia)

[www.totaltheatre.com.au](http://www.totaltheatre.com.au)

Opened in March 2002, Perth, Western Australia. Director: Annie Stainer. Includes: Creative Movement, Theatre, Mime, Feldenkrais, Mask, Improvisation, Dance, Acrobatics, Trapeze, Tightrope, Stilt Walking, Juggling, Martial Arts, Voice, Singing, Text, Stage Combat, Clowning. See website for full details.

### ZID Theater

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tel: +31.20 4888449 Fax number: +31.20 6817 760  
[info@zidtheater.nl](mailto:info@zidtheater.nl) [www.zidtheater.nl](http://www.zidtheater.nl)

ZID Theater offers a training opportunity for performers, dancers, performance artists and other professionals. Exercises based on various physical disciplines, the use of voice, working with materials and group improvisations.



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