

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE

VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 03 | AUTUMN 2005 | TOTALTHEATRE.ORG.UK
TOTAL THEATRE NETWORK CELEBRATING PHYSICAL + VISUAL PERFORMANCE



PLUNGE INTO THE MAINSTREAM
LOSE THE MOON AND FIND NEW DIRECTIONS IN PUPPETRY
ENCOUNTER THE MASKED PLEASURES OF PUNCHDRUNK
CELEBRATE THE PAST AND PRESENT GLORIES OF DESPERATE MEN AND HEAD TOWARDS TOMORROW WITH CPR
SEE THE DAWNING OF A NEW AGE FOR AURORA NOVA FESTIVAL
GET IN THE RHYTHM WITH PARA ACTIVE
HARVEST A BUMPER CROP OF PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE FEATURES, REVIEWS AND
NEWS PLUS A FREE 4-PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON THE TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS AT EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2005

EDITORIAL

A question that has come up a lot recently has been the purpose of criticism – in particular, performance reviews in newspapers and in specialist magazines like Total Theatre. This issue was high on the agenda at the National Street Arts Meeting in May 2005, with both a presentation and a break-out session led by Guardian feature writer and critic, Lyn Gardner. It was also raised at the Circus Arts Forum conference, held at the National Theatre in April, at which a panel of critics and producers each presented their views – a rather odd session as one of the companies used this as an opportunity to lay into the critic (sitting on the same panel) who hadn't liked their work! This really does flag up the need to recognise that a review is after all only a personal opinion – and if you ask someone to come and give their opinion, you have to accept they then have an obligation to be true to themselves in their responses. We have on many occasions been made aware of the subjective nature of reviews at Total Theatre when we've come away from shows with very different responses, an example being Teatr Piesn Kozla's Chronicles – A Lamentation which was a big hit at Aurora Nova 2004 and which I enjoyed greatly; reviewed in this issue at BITE by David Harradine, who didn't like it at all!

For emerging artists and companies, there is a real need for their work to get some sort of attention. There is a further issue in circus, live art and street arts that many established artists and companies working in these fields get no more coverage than absolute beginners, as these forms are still not really on the radar of most critics. So here we have a question of criticism needing to exist to raise the profile not only of specific artists, but of the artforms themselves. For many physical and visual theatre companies, this is thankfully no longer the case, as much of the work (at least by established artists) is covered in the national broadsheets and we are a long way from the days when The Scotsman refused to consider mime/physical theatre for Fringe First awards at Edinburgh – it is now a usual occurrence for Total Theatre Award winners to also receive Fringe Firsts!

This leaves a dilemma for specialist magazines like Total Theatre to ask whether there is a purpose in reviewing work that is getting good national newspaper coverage. Or would it be a shame to abandon artists (like Complicite or Kneehigh) that we have supported for two decades just because the rest of the world has cottoned on to them? It's an ongoing dilemma – as always, your thoughts and reflections welcome!

Dorothy Max Prior, Editor

Comments on anything in this issue of Total Theatre Magazine welcome to editorial@totaltheatre.org.uk

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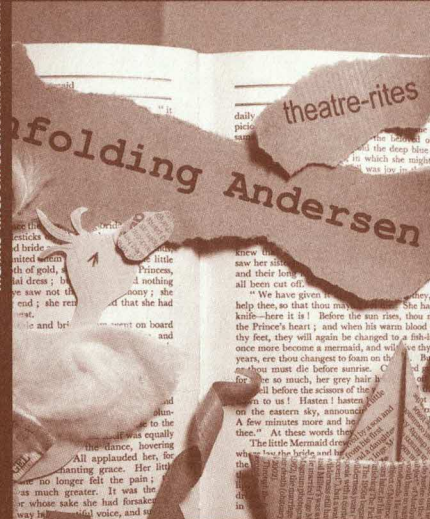
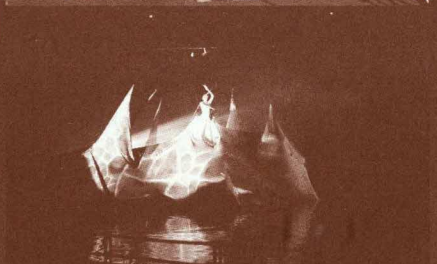
COVER: STATION HOUSE OPERA'S ROADMETAL SHEETBREAD AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL SHOWCASE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2005. PHOTO BY TONY PATTINSON



In this issue's bumper crop of features, we kick off with a look at the drift towards the mainstream in **SWIMMING WITH THE CURRENT** EDWARD TAYLOR **P8**. We've an artist's diary by a puppeteer-performer breaking out in new directions in **LOST AND FOUND** MANDY TRAVIS **P10**. Chelsea Theatre's Live05 season is highlighted in **LIVE – ART OR THEATRE?** SETH KRIEBEL **P13**. Punchdrunk's choreographer shares the pleasures and challenges of making collaborative large-scale site-responsive performance in **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS** MAXINE DOYLE **P14**. In the first of what will be an ongoing series of features on the Best of British, here's **HUDDLY DUDDLY – 25 YEARS OF DESPERATE MEN** EDWARD TAYLOR **P16**. For the Aurora Nova Festival of Dance and Visual Theatre, there's a **NEW AGE DAWNING** MIRIAM KING **P18**. The Towards Tomorrow? Conference at the Centre for Performance Research in Aberystwyth explored the past, present and future for theatre/performance – see **TOMORROW'S THEATRE TODAY** DOROTHY MAX PRIOR **P20**. Rounding off our feature articles, Para Active hit us with their rhythm stick in **THEATRE IS RHYTHM** ALEX MERMIKIDES **P23**. You'll also find a free 4-page pull-out supplement on the Total Theatre Awards at Edinburgh Festival Fringe, highlighting some of the physical and visual theatre shows on offer this year. All of this is book-ended by our regular pages. Catch up with who is doing what in **NEWS & PREVIEWS** **P4** and **PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATES** **P6**. There's an abundance of **REVIEWS** **P24** from Brighton Festival and beyond, including a contribution from our newly appointed New York correspondent Robert Ayers. **MEDIA** **P32** and **TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** **P33** round off this issue of Total Theatre Magazine.



THEATRE- RITES UNFOLDING ANDERSON HEART



RULES & REGS: FARNHAM Rules and Regs is looking for professional artists working in Live Art who are based in the South East of England and would like to be involved in our next event. Artists should be recent graduates or in the early stages of a professional career and will need to be available and able to travel to Farnham (Surrey) on the following dates: September 28th: 10am-6pm and October 18th-November 4th: various times (rehearsal and performances). We are keen that 'Live Art' be defined as widely as possible for this event, and seek both experimental performance and experimental installation/film work that deals with liveness. Potential applicants are invited to have a conversation with Rajni Shah (Creative Producer) prior to applying. Tel: 01252 718 001 or email rajni.shah@farnhammaltings.com. Application deadline: 15 August 2005.

THE PUPPET CENTRE TRUST In its capacity as a national development agency for puppetry, PCT is delighted to announce their upcoming new exploratory project, Moving Words. The project will investigate the processes of creative collaboration between new theatre-writers, puppeteers and directors in generating new work through a series of workshops, commissions and discussions. The project will be running later this year – please contact the Centre for further info. email pct@puppetcentre.demon.co.uk T: 0207 228 5335. www.puppetcentre.com

UNFOLDING ANDERSEN AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY Theatre-rites and the British Library present a show and exhibition celebrating two hundred years of Hans Christian Andersen. The show is aimed at 4-8 year olds, and uses paper, music, puppetry and object manipulation. It's directed by Sue Buckmaster with artistic collaborators Mervyn Millar and Nam Hee Kwon. It's free, but can be booked in advance. British Library, Kings Cross, London 11 July - 19 August, twice a day at 10.15 and 13.30 See www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/andersen/learning.html#unfold

WATCH THIS SPACE AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE

Friday 24 June – Saturday 3 September 2005
The National Theatre presents its free outdoor summer festival of innovative arts, contemporary music and exhilarating entertainment in Theatre Square. With performances from Monday to Saturday, at lunchtimes, early evenings and late night Saturdays, Watch This Space offers over 125 world-class shows across its ten weeks. The festival will be an explosive artistic and cultural extravaganza consisting of the best of British street theatre, breathtaking circus, bands from across the globe, late-night cinema, art installation, dance and mind-blowing spectacle. National Theatre, South Bank, London SE1 9PX. 020 7452 3400 / www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/wts

VISITING ARTS

As part of their ongoing commitment to providing opportunities for UK and overseas artists, Visiting Arts are pleased to announce the 2005/2006 Fellowship Programme. This year's fellowship in Taiwan will be open to application from artists working in the field of dance and choreography who are living and working in England. The Fellowship will provide an opportunity for an outstanding dancer or choreographer living and working in England with the opportunity to be based at the Taipei Artists Village in Taiwan for three months. Contact: Sioned Hughes, Professional Development Manager, Visiting Arts, Bloomsbury House, 74 - 77 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DA. Tel: + 44 (0) 207 291 1618 See www.visitingarts.org.uk

THE BELLUARD BOLLWERK INTERNATIONAL

CREATION CONTEST 2006 The BBI is a festival that has produced and presented artistic projects in Fribourg since 1983. Their Creation Contest invites applications from amazing and innovative projects. Any form, method or means are admitted. Each selected project will be supported by the BBI up to a total amount of 6,000 Euros. Other funding can be sought to support the project. The contest is open to all. Each project is to be presented on 2 A4 pages maximum. A detailed budget must be included. It is highly recommended that additional documentation be sent, but materials cannot be returned. Project proposals must be sent by 16th January 2006 to Belluard Bollwerk International, Contest 2006, PO Box 214, CH-1701, Fribourg. All participants will be informed of the results by February 17th, 2006.

DANCE SCREEN 2006 The major international 4-day film and video festival came to an end with the screening of the awarded films on Sunday 19 June. Out of 237 entries from 25 countries competing for the first prize, the overall Dance Screen Award was given to Gold, an experimental film directed by Rachel Davies, choreography by Hanna Gillgren, exploring the formalities and demands of Olympic gymnastics, seen through the determination, skill and playful competition of two girls at the Europa Gym Club, Erith, London. DV8's The Cost of Living, directed and choreographed by Lloyd Newson, was winner of the category 'Best camera re-work (Category B)' Shelly Love won the 'screen choreography (not longer than 15 minutes)' prize for her animation/choreography Scratch, which she created in collaboration with puppeteer Orlando Bishop.

DELL'ARTE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL THEATRE

This American centre for the exploration, development, training and performance of the actor-creator, is proud to celebrate its first-ever graduating class of Master of Fine Arts students. DAI offers the only MFA in Ensemble-Based Physical Theatre currently accredited in the U.S., in addition to its one-year Professional Training Program for Physical Theatre Actors. The Danish Institute for Popular Theatre honoured DAI with the 2005 Prize of Hope Award, presented to theatres that have fought for human hope – in a daring, loving, sincere, serious and poetic manner. Email: info@dellarte.com www.dellarte.com

NUFFIELD THEATRE FUNDS NEW ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Musician, animator, director, performer and storyteller Kazuko Hohki, who delighted audiences in May 2004 with her show My Husband is a Spaceman, is working with The Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster University for a year as their 'Time and Space' artist. The Nuffield has received £10,000 in funding from the Arts Council for the Time and Space project which allows experimental artists with a proven track record the time to develop new work within the Higher Education system. Theatre Studies students at Lancaster University will have access to the artist as work progresses, giving them a valuable insight into the creative processes of professional performers. For further information please contact Sarah Nash at The Nuffield Theatre on 01524 594160 or email sarah@nuffieldtheatre.com

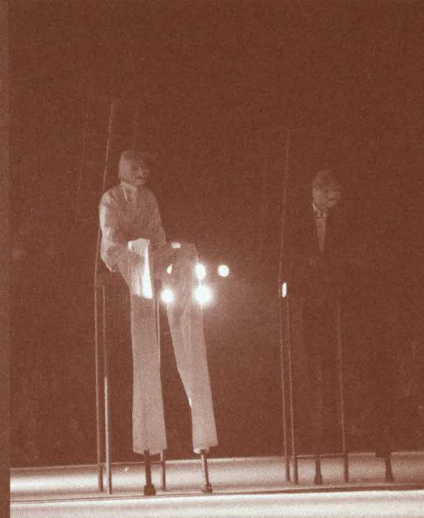
PIG IRON THEATRE COMPANY WIN OBIE

The Philadelphia theatre ensemble Pig Iron has been honoured with an OBIE for its production of Hell Meets Henry Halfway, which premiered at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival in 2004, and toured to New York for three weeks at the Ohio Theater in Soho. The OBIE represents Off-Broadway's highest honour. Pig Iron will remount the show in Philadelphia in 2006 in the company's Tenth Anniversary Season which will feature the presentation of four of the company's acclaimed repertory works as well as the creation of a new work, Love Unpunished.

NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY - WALKIES



WATCH THIS SPACE AT NT - PIGS



TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS first presented in 1997 and now a well-established event at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, honour the best in physical and visual theatre/performance. The Total Theatre Awards 2005, again generously sponsored by University of Winchester, will be presented at a ceremony on the morning of Friday 26th August. For further details on the Total Theatre Awards 2005 or to request an entry form, email awards@totaltheatre.org.uk or see www.totaltheatre.org.uk Also see the Total Theatre Awards Edinburgh Festival Fringe supplement with this magazine for further information.

BRITISH COUNCIL SHOWCASE IN EDINBURGH

A wonderful line-up of British physical and visual performance artists and companies are taking part in the British Council Showcase 2005 – proving what a vital contribution the artform that Total Theatre supports is now making to the cultural landscape of the UK – those presenting work include Gecko, Matilda Leyser, Station House Opera, NoFit State Circus, Peepolykus and Curious. Full Showcase details announced on 8th August. See www.britishcouncil.org

PUPPETRY FESTIVAL IN SKIPTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

This new festival embraces both national and international companies, with plenty to suit all tastes, from children's work to family shows to performances for adults. There are four UK premieres by international companies – by Laku Paka, Figuretheater Namlos, Cartouche and Peter Ketturkat, as well as a crop of home-grown talent, a range of workshops and a lively street programme. The festival, running 15 – 18 September, is the brainchild of a group of Yorkshire-based puppeteers. Festival Director is Liz Lempen of Lempen Puppet Theatre. For further information tel: 01756 797149, e-mail: info@skiptonpuppetfestival.co.uk See www.skiptonpuppetfestival.co.uk

CB PROJECTS Currently developing projects for 2006/7 working with their key clients, including Gravity & Levity (Spring/Autumn 06), Company FZ (Spring/Summer 06), Contemporary Clowning Projects (Spring/Autumn 06), Jade (Summer 05/Autumn 06), Circelation in April 06. They also support NoFit State Circus with marketing and in a consultative role. www.cbprojects.co.uk

TAMASHA WIN TOP ARTS & CULTURE AWARD

Kristine Landon-Smith and Sudha Bhuchar, joint founders and artistic directors of Tamasha Theatre Company, have been awarded the 2005 Asian Women of Achievement Award for Arts & Culture. With Tamasha, Sudha and Kristine have together created a unique company, which has played a key role in bringing the Asian experience to the forefront of British theatre. Since its inception in 1989 production successes include East is East, Balti Kings, Fourteen Songs, Two Weddings and a Funeral and Strictly Dandia. For further information: email info@tamasha.org.uk or tel 020 7633 2270.

NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY Happy birthday to The Naturals – they're 35 years old! The company has grown from strength to strength and are proud that they are still taking their strange characters and surreal scenarios across the UK and all over the world. Their trademark piece 35 years ago was the Normals, who are bowler-hatted dinner-suited men with silver faces marching around in strict order. However, they are probably now more famous for their Flowerpots, immaculately dressed with their heads contained in beautifully arranged flowerpots or their pointy-headed aliens, the Coneheads. The Natural Theatre Company are always looking for new places to take their characters. Contact details: Tel 01225 469131 or email info@naturaltheatre.co.uk. Visit www.naturaltheatre.co.uk

DAIWA INTERNATIONAL BUTOH FESTIVAL

Launched in Spring 2005, the festival continues from 26th September 2005 for two weeks, programmed by Frances Barbe for Jacksons Lane Theatre, London. Performances and workshops by Tadashi Endo, Shinonome Butoh and Katsura Kan. Screening of A Summer Storm on 1st and 8th October, a film of Tatsumi Hijikata's performance in 1973. Butoh symposium on Sunday 9th October 2005. International guest speakers include Sondra Fraleigh, Akiko Tachiki and Stuart Lynch. UK speakers include Greg Hicks, Lorna Marshall and Frances Barbe. All events take place at Jacksons Lane Theatre, Highgate, London. Bookings +44 (0)208 341 4421 or email info@daiwabutoh.co.uk See www.daiwabutoh.co.uk

STOCKTON INTERNATIONAL RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL

2005 SIRF 2005 offers an extraordinary range of outdoor productions and street entertainment. Highlights will include a stunningly inventive water-borne theatre production from Israel; a multi media international co-production featuring dancers, musicians and film-makers from the UK, Belgium and Holland and a showcase of Dutch outdoor theatre highlighting mechanical ingenuity and surreal humour in equal measure. Meanwhile, Stockton's famous High Street will be the setting for an action-packed programme of family-friendly comedy, music, magic and circus centred around an impressive outdoor stage. For a full programme see www.sirf.co.uk

CULTIVATING IDEAS AT NEW GREENHAM ARTS, NEWBURY

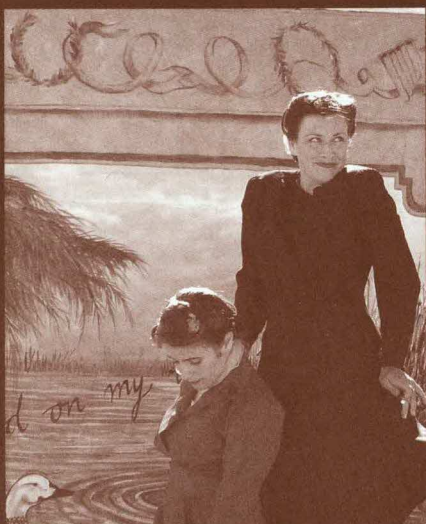
New Greenham Arts is to become a safe space for artists and producers to play, thanks to a new scheme created by Director Martin Sutherland and Visual Arts Manager Sally Childs. The concept is loosely framed by a series of monthly events called Cultivate, in which artists can share work between themselves and a supportive audience. Professional artists wishing to be considered for Cultivating Ideas should contact Martin Sutherland, Director, The Corn Exchange, Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5BD. Information 01635 522733 See www.newgreenhamarts.com

CROYDON CLOCKTOWER Company FZ will be staging a new work in progress version of Dracula at Croydon Clocktower this December 7th to 10th. This is the second year of a three-year creative collaboration between the venue and company, and will again see Flick Ferdinando and John-Paul Zaccarini working with new circus artists to create an inspiring circus/theatre version of the classic gothic horror story. Croydon Clocktower is proposing a third season/festival of new circus based companies and acts for Metro Circus in summer 2006. If you would be interested in making a submission or participating, please contact jonathan.kennedy@croydon.gov.uk

PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATES

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RAGROOF THEATRE



FOURSIGHT THEATRE



1157 PERFORMANCEGROUP New work from theatrical innovators 1157performancegroup, inspired by Noel Coward's *Private Lives*. Is described as a 'gorgeous, glamorous, glitzy, camp and sexy romp'. 1157performancegroup premiered *Ha Ha Ha* by Sam Dowling in May to rave reviews. The company will be reworking the piece for an Autumn/Spring National tour, check website for dates. Tel: 01628 682556 email: 1157@nordenfarm.org www.1157.org

ANGEL EXIT THEATRE Look out for Tamsin Fessey and her company Angel Exit Theatre performing their latest creation *Master Shuttlefate* at this year's Dublin Fringe Festival, at the Players Theatre, Trinity College, 27th Sept – 2nd Oct. An absurd tale told with all the company's usual panache, this will be the show's premiere after a successful scratch performance at the Santa Fe Opera, U.S. last January. Email info@angelexit.com or see www.angelexit.com

CONTEMPORARY CLOWNING PROJECTS Angela de Castro is developing her next mid-scale show *Only Fools No Horses* with director John Wright and writer Sarah Woods, and will go into production in autumn 2005, and tour from January 2006. They are also developing a new mid-large scale opera to be developed in 2006/7, and opening 2007/8. De Castro also continues to develop the why not institute professional development programme for clown-actors. For more information contact info@cbprojects.co.uk www.contemporaryclowningprojects.com

DREAMTHINKSPEAK are presenting *Don't Look Back* as part of the British Council showcase in August in Edinburgh, then from 10 – 29 October 2005 they bring *Underground* (inspired by Dostoyevsky's *Crime & Punishment*) to a disused warehouse in Clerkenwell, London, as part of the BITE:05 Young Genius season. After its sell-out premiere at Brighton Festival, *Underground* will be re-created for the first time in the basement and sub-basement of an old abattoir at 187–211 St John Street. See www.barbican.org.uk/bite to book, or for more details on the company visit www.dreamthinkspeak.com

DYNAMIC NEW ANIMATION After a successful summer of touring their new outdoor venue, *Puppets a Go Go!*, to Glastonbury, Stockton Riverside and the Green Man Festival, Dynamic New Animation are having a period of organisational development supported by Penny Mayes of Dramatic Solutions, thanks to support from Arts Council North West. DNA continue to tour *Baba Yaga – Boney Legs* to theatre venues nationally for the autumn season. For further information please contact Dynamic New Animation on 01772 253100, email info@dynamicnewanimation.co.uk See www.dynamicnewanimation.co.uk

FOURSIGHT THEATRE Foursight Theatre are delighted to announce a return of their cult classic *Six Dead Queens...* and an inflatable *Henry!* Meet the six wives of Henry VIII – three Catherine's, two Anne's and a Jane: betrayed, beheaded, bemused and bored... Foursight Theatre presents an intensely physical, highly visual, darkly comic piece of theatre. *Six Dead Queens* create a new order: perversions, subversions, wild parodic dancing and unholy rituals – an anarchic utopia for all dead queens! Suitable for age 14 plus. Touring from 4th to 20th October 2005. Contact Emma Beale. Tel 01902 714257. Email foursight.theatre@boltblue.com

FRAN BARBE Fran Barbe is artistic director of the Daiwa International Butoh Festival in 2005. During the festival she will be assistant choreographer to Katsura Kan on 'Fragment of Adam', a piece he is staging with three London dancers, Nina Fog, Victoria Macarte and Gabrielle Daris. Fran Barbe is also working on a new choreographic work for her company, called 'Chimeras', in collaboration with composer Keith Johnson. They are interested to hear from venues that would like to host the first performances of the work in Winter/Spring 2005/6. Details are available at www.daiwabutoh.co.uk

GRAVITY AND LEVITY This stunning aerial dance company, led by Lindsey Butcher, toured from 5 May – 25 June 2005, with a promenade installation performance taking flight, with the installation directed by Kevin Finnan (Motionhouse), with penultimate performances in the piazza at ROH, Covent Garden. The response has been electric and we are now planning a re-tour plus new projects for 2006/7. For more info please contact info@cbprojects.co.uk, www.gravity-levity.net

HEART has recently performed *The Hole In The Universe* as part of the Spice Festival at the Hackney Empire in London. This piece is a non-linear solo performance by Eva Millauer, who is an associate artist at Oh!Art, Oxford House. She collaborates with video artist Charles Levinson and the percussionist Mark Holub. The piece weaves together and juxtaposes comedy, profound poetry, dance, visuals and live music. It is a humorous and touching play of life and death, love and unlove, inviting the audience into the beauty of the unknown and happiness beyond reason. See www.heartlivemedia.org

HORSE+BAMBOO Horse+Bamboo, currently making big waves on the Festival circuit with its innovative portable theatre the pPod, will be mounting a special Christmas production in collaboration with the Royal Exchange Studio Theatre in Manchester. Royal Exchange booked Horse+Bamboo's recent award-winning production, *A Strange (& Unexpected) Event!* for a week-long run at the Exchange's Studio Theatre last November. Horse+Bamboo intend to make the Christmas show, *In the Shadow of Trees*, an enchanting magical production with a Miyazaki-like charm and it will run from December 17 to January 8 2006.

JADE After the huge success of the 2nd tour of *Cake* in summer 05, Jade are looking to tour the show internationally in 2006/7. They are also developing a new show with Company FZ for a middle-scale production to tour in Autumn 2006/Spring 2007, and a new play with writer Sarah Woods for 2007/08. For further information please contact info@cbprojects.co.uk See www.jadetc.co.uk

NOLA RAE Nola is on the road again – currently in France with *Exit Napoleon Pursued by Rabbits* at Avignon Theatre Festival, then on 4th August she presents *Elizabeth's Last Stand* at Villefranche-de-Rouergue. In September, she takes Napoleon to the 9th Quay Theatre, Sudbury on the 9th, then *Mozart Preposterous* to the Playhouse Weston Super Mare on the 22nd. For further information contact Valerie West. Tel: 00 44 (0) 208 444 6248. Email: vwest@dircon.co.uk See www.nolarae.btinternet.co.uk



OILY CART THEATRE COMPANY Oily Cart Theatre Company are re-mounting their critically acclaimed production of *Conference Of The Birds* this summer. Oily Cart will also be hosting three two-day training sessions in regional centres (London, Birmingham and Newcastle). At each of these sessions, which are being planned with the Equals Consortium of Special Schools teachers, up to 30 teachers will observe the company working with young people on the first day, and on the second day will discuss the issues, introduce other areas, share expertise, and work with the teachers to create their own art-based projects.

PUNCHDRUNK THEATRICAL EXPERIENCES MAYHEM! MOLESTATION! MUSIC! LIBERTARIANS UNITE! Following the success of *Woyzeck* at the Big Chill 2004, Punchdrunk returns with *Marat/Sade*, a specially commissioned site-specific performance installation at The Big Chill Festival, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire, Fri 5 – Sun 7 August 2005. Punchdrunk will have its own tent and the show will take place in and around it, from 10pm – 2am on each day of the festival. On Saturday 6 August the company will be on site all day with an array of interactive stuff until the night-time show. Festival Tickets: www.bigchill.net See www.punchdrunk.org.uk

RAGROOF THEATRE After successful projects in the Jersey Liberation Festival and Streets of Brighton, Ragroof Theatre continue to make site-specific performances based on the memories of local, older people. Currently writing and directing *A Town in the Sea*, a community production to commemorate the 1953 floods for Canvey Island, this is part of the borough-wide 12Ft Under project. Make Do and Mend and The Button Museum will be part of Watch This Space at The National Theatre Saturday 20th August. That same evening, Ragroof will also be Dancing under the Stars on a large outdoor ballroom for the National's evening extravaganza from 10pm. Contact ragrooftheatre@yahoo.co.uk

REJECTS REVENGE Rejects Revenge had a very successful UK tour with *Out of the Blue*, following its premiere at the Everyman theatre in Liverpool earlier this year. Directed by John Wright and written by Andrea Earl with seven performers, an original sound/musical score, video and projections, *Out of the Blue* was one of the company's most challenging shows to date. Next up, we'll be previewing our newest comedy 'The Steppe Brothers' at the Byre Theatre, St Andrews before a three week run at Southside as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. For full details email rejects.revenge@virgin.net See www.rejectsrevenge.com

TALL STORIES The Gruffalo, The Snow Dragon and Them with Tails continue their tours – and the latter two also go to the Edinburgh Fringe. In the autumn we will be adapting 'The Gruffalo's Child'. Question: how to make a book that 'isn't as good as the first one' into a play that is? At some point soon, the company will be moving offices. For more info, see www.tallstories.org.uk

THEATRE MODO brings its highly physical production of *UBU* to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this August (see the Total Theatre Awards supplement with this issue for details). After that, the company presents a new interactive production of *The Snow Queen* for 4-7 year olds using story telling, music and movement to create an enchanting and exciting performance of Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale. The show will tour Scotland from October – December. See www.theatremodo.com

THIRD ANGEL After an intense period of making and showing (thirty-seven The Lad Lit Projects, four Hurricksickness and one Pyramid Festival including two new pieces of work in progress, a film night and a soundtrack at Sheffield Theatres) comes a window of calm, as Third Angel begins four weeks of R&D on yet another new work, *Parts For Machines That Do Things*, in collaboration with Chris Thorpe. But it's not long until Edinburgh and another 24 Lad Lits at the Underbelly throughout August! See www.thirdangel.co.uk for all the details.

TIEBREAK THEATRE COMPANY Dianne Hancock has been appointed as only its second artistic director in Tiebreak's twenty-four year history, succeeding founding artistic director, David Farmer. Her appointment follows a recent teaching fellowship at Bretton Hall and four years as associate director of SNAP. Dianne's first responsibility will be to direct *Mouse and Mole* (December 05-April 06), which has been adapted by David Farmer from the much loved books by Joyce Dunbar. *Mouse and Mole* will be in residence at the New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich in December 2005 before touring throughout spring 2006. For more information contact Tiebreak at: info@tiebreak-theatre.com tel: 01603 665899 www.tiebreak-theatre.com

TRAVELLING LIGHT THEATRE COMPANY After the overwhelming success of *Clown* in Spring 2005, the company will be re-touring it this Autumn to local schools, national venues, Dublin and Galway, finishing at Komedia for Christmas. *Clown*, an adaptation of Quentin Blake's book, is a textless piece of theatre for 3 years +. The play, directed by Sally Cookson, makes use of dance and puppetry with live music scored by Stu Barker (*Tristan And Isolde* for Kneehigh). We have also received Arts Council funding for a new show, *Mother Savage*, inspired by the short story by Maupassant aimed at 14 years + touring in Spring 2006. For more info see www.travlight.co.uk

WELFARE STATE INTERNATIONAL On 17 September, Ulverston's 24th lantern parade concludes with Welfare State's grand finale – a celebration of awe-inspiring Morecambe Bay. Exhibitions at Lanternhouse this summer include *Tidal Trails*, prints on the theme of the Bay created by Shelley Burgoyne, and *Metamorphosis*, a video-based installation developed by WSI artists in partnership with .:thepooch:. and Lancaster University Computing Department. T +44 (0)1229 581127 e info@welfare-state.com www.welfare-state.org

WISHBONE In January, Wishbone ran workshops for their new epic piece, *A Chronicle of the American Automobile*, at the Drill Hall. The show tells the story of a family involved with automotive industry, from the early 1900s as Henry Ford's horsy neighbours to guilt-ridden SUV drivers of the new millennium. We are now seeking a producing partnership for the show with a theatre outside of London. Wishbone are also planning development with the Rondo, Bath, of *Sleeper*, first outed in a Scratch performance at BAC Octoberfest, 2004. All this after an enjoyable time performing *Interference* at the Recklinghausen Ruhrfest in June. See www.wishbonetheatre.org.uk

SWIMMING WITH THE CURRENT

ARE MAINSTREAM AND FRINGE NOW REDUNDANT LABELS?
EDWARD TAYLOR GETS TO GRIPS
WITH NORMALITY

Is it that we just don't like it when something that was a secret between those of us in the know becomes popular?

IMPROBABLE'S THEATRE OF BLOOD. PHOTO KEITH PATTISON



In 2002 myself and 1500 other people of all ages sat in the Place des Armes in Calais on raked seating and watched Royal de Luxe present a show about China which featured puppets and machines operated in many different ways, as well as startling effects that came from below the stage. The show used broad humour, stereotypes and unexpected visual poetry to convey a complex view of China. Royal de Luxe's work is a balance between creating a dramatic scene and showing you how they created that scene. The company uses very simple forms of theatre to enthuse their audiences. Their success in achieving this was proved by the ecstatic reaction they received at the end of the show.

In 2005 myself and about 1500 other people of all ages sat in the Lyceum Theatre, London and watched the Lion King. The use of puppets, the extremely effective stage-craft (from above and below the stage) and colourful spectacle was remarkably similar in approach to Royal de Luxe, as was the emphasis on theatricality. How they told the story was as important as what the story was about. You could see how they created theatre; there was no hiding behind computerised effects. In fact, at one point you are convinced they are using some sort of animated projection and are amazed when you realise it's all done with things on poles, hung material and simple lighting. This approach again fired the audience up, and the show was rewarded with bursts of enthusiastic applause throughout its two hours. If you wanted to illustrate what total theatre is, where all the elements are

in harmony, either of these shows would provide perfect examples.

Yet despite their similarities, the Lion King is firmly lodged in the mainstream while Royal de Luxe although popular, are seen as very much outside of the mainstream. Now I've mentioned 'the mainstream', it's only fair that I attempt to define what I think it is. It's a minefield. The dictionary defines the mainstream as the main current of a cultural trend – I would add that it tends to be work that makes an impact on a large section of the public, many/most of whom are not traditional followers of culture. I must confess, I went to the Lion King with my prejudices about Disney and the West End very firmly in place. Although the aesthetics of the show were at times too smooth for me and the Elton John/Tim Rice tunes leave me cold, I have to admit that some of the ideas, effects and theatre worked as well as anything I've seen. It was undeniably a fabulous piece of popular theatre.

A theatre company or solo performer needs to play to as many people as possible. You want people to like your work, even if the content is difficult or challenging. In some ways a West End venue is a perfect set-up – no taking down and putting up every day and no travelling up and down congested motorways. Being in a single place for a length of time allows the possibility of working with untourable heavy theatre machinery and sophisticated lighting. Yet what is it about the terms 'mainstream' or 'West End' that causes a judder in the artistically sensitive? There's

a feeling that the company you saw in that tiny art centre has lost everything that made it special when it transfers to a West End theatre. Is it the slick marketing? Is it the adjustments necessary to make a show work in a larger space? Is it the feeling that clichéd producers have got hold of ideas which were once so fresh and milked them dry? Is it that we just don't like it when something that was a secret between those of us in the know becomes popular? Is it that we don't like it when the actors/performers of the original leave after six months and are replaced by people we perceive to be not as good? Is it that we don't like the audiences who go to these shows? Is it because we think that anything popular enough to be in the West End is inevitably middle-brow crap?

Ben Elton musicals or the Reduced Shakespeare Company would appear to confirm that yes, West End shows are indeed crap, but in amongst the Lloyd Webber blockbusters and the biographical musicals (Buddy Holly, Madness et al) have crept shows such as the Lion King whose choice of director (Julie Taymor) proved very inspired or Festen which features those sure-fire commercial ingredients – middle class hypocrisy, incest and racism. Shockheaded Peter was a show that you could easily imagine watching at an arts centre, but it managed to retain its artistic integrity in its new surroundings. For those of us who know where a show like that is coming from, seeing it in a plush West End venue accompanied by an aggressive marketing campaign can be a disorientating experience.



Of course, the mainstream isn't just tourist fodder, and it is more than the West End. The National Theatre is mainstream but even they have made dramatic shifts, with the appointment of Tom Morris from Battersea Art Centre, the staging at NT of companies like Improbable, Kneehigh and Complicite, and the co-production of work such as Shunt's *Tropicana*, *Avanti Display's Hydromania* (with the cast of *South Pacific*), and especially Jerry Springer the Opera. They have thus shown a willingness to embrace work and ideas from the 'lower depths' – literally in the case of Shunt who create and perform their work in their own 'shunt vaults' under London Bridge station – without necessarily compromising it. The National Theatre's *Watch This Space* events (a summer programme of street art outside and around the main building) are an

excellent example of an institution actively supporting outdoor work rather than tacking it onto their programme to meet some accessibility tick-box requirement for funders.

The British Council regularly sends companies that were previously considered stalwarts of the alternative scene abroad as ambassadors for British culture – an example being *Forced Entertainment*, for some the current benchmark of experimentation.

There will be rumblings below deck about how this stuff is just selling out and how you end up feeding the hungry dog of popular culture which just wags its tail and demands more. To an extent, I think that's true, there is an endless appetite for new experience and an endless line of talent queuing up to supply it. There is a risk of culture that depends on the hit single approach. Dennis Potter said that there was no point being in the middle of the road looking at flattened forms of life when there were more interesting rounded examples to be found in the verges. But this is from a man whose work was extremely popular and much discussed by everyone. So for me, it does come back to playing to audiences. Growing up in the 70s and 80s, I saw any number of fantastic shows playing to small, dedicated audiences and what excites me about current developments is that a chance to break out of that ghetto is being fashioned. Good work needs to be seen by the many not the few. We currently have producers and promoters in indoor and outdoor venues that increasingly understand that there

are audiences who don't necessarily like theatre with the edges smoothed away and who don't want work that reinforces the status quo. We have a population that seems to accept modern art for what it is, as can be seen by the enormous popularity of places such as Tate Modern. For those of us over 45 with our experiences of 'alternative art practices', this could mean that the mainstream is becoming ever more pervasive and inescapable – or it could mean that something interesting is brewing.

There are areas of work that, no matter how popular they may be, are always seen as being outside of a mainstream and below the critical radar. Street theatre has begun to receive increased Arts Council funding because promoters and artists successfully argued that there was in fact a huge audience for this kind of work, which was in direct contrast to its critical status. Change can be slow: circus and variety are still seen as 'minor' art forms despite the fact that they were an influence on and were advocated by 'major' artists such as Picasso in the early twentieth century. As with street theatre, the funding bodies are slowly waking up to the fact that these areas of work are rich with artistic promise. Of course, recognition through funding isn't the be-all and end-all, but as there is already a big audience, it helps raise the profile to where it deserves to be. I don't believe there's any chance of staunching the flow of musicals based on the back catalogue of 80's pop groups – but there is a distinct possibility of creating a parallel mainstream.

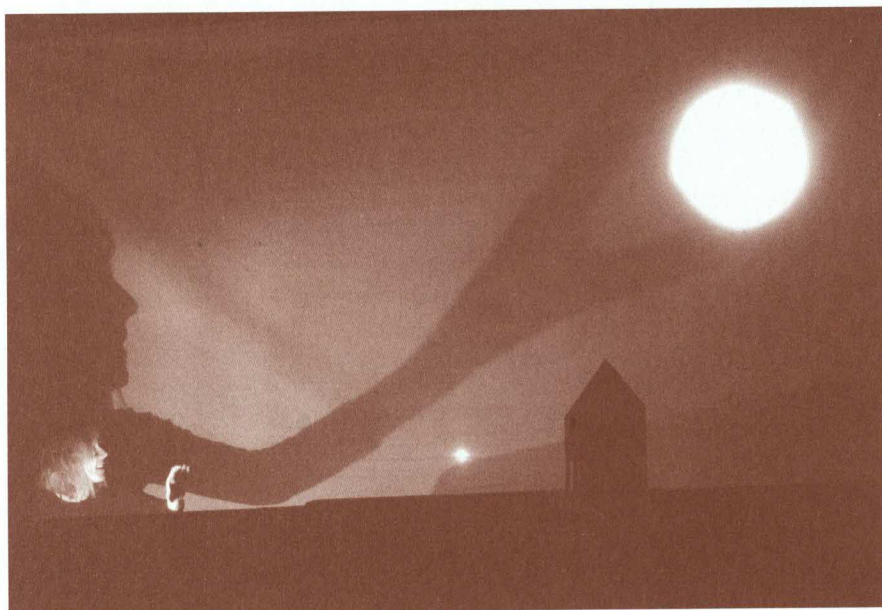
What excites me about current developments is that a chance to break out of the ghetto is being fashioned

Look out for *Royal de Luxe* in London this September. *Shunt's Amatos Saltone Starring Kittens and Wade* opens 18 October 2005 at *shunt vaults*. For further information on the National Theatre's programme, including *Watch This Space* and *shunt*, see www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

LOST AND FOUND

MANDY TRAVIS LOSES THE MOON
AND FINDS HERSELF ON THE
BRINK OF NEW POSSIBILITIES

ALL PHOTOS ARE LOST AND FOUND - THE LOST MOON



*I didn't feel I could really
continue if I had to rely on
other people asking me to
work with them on their ideas
in their companies*

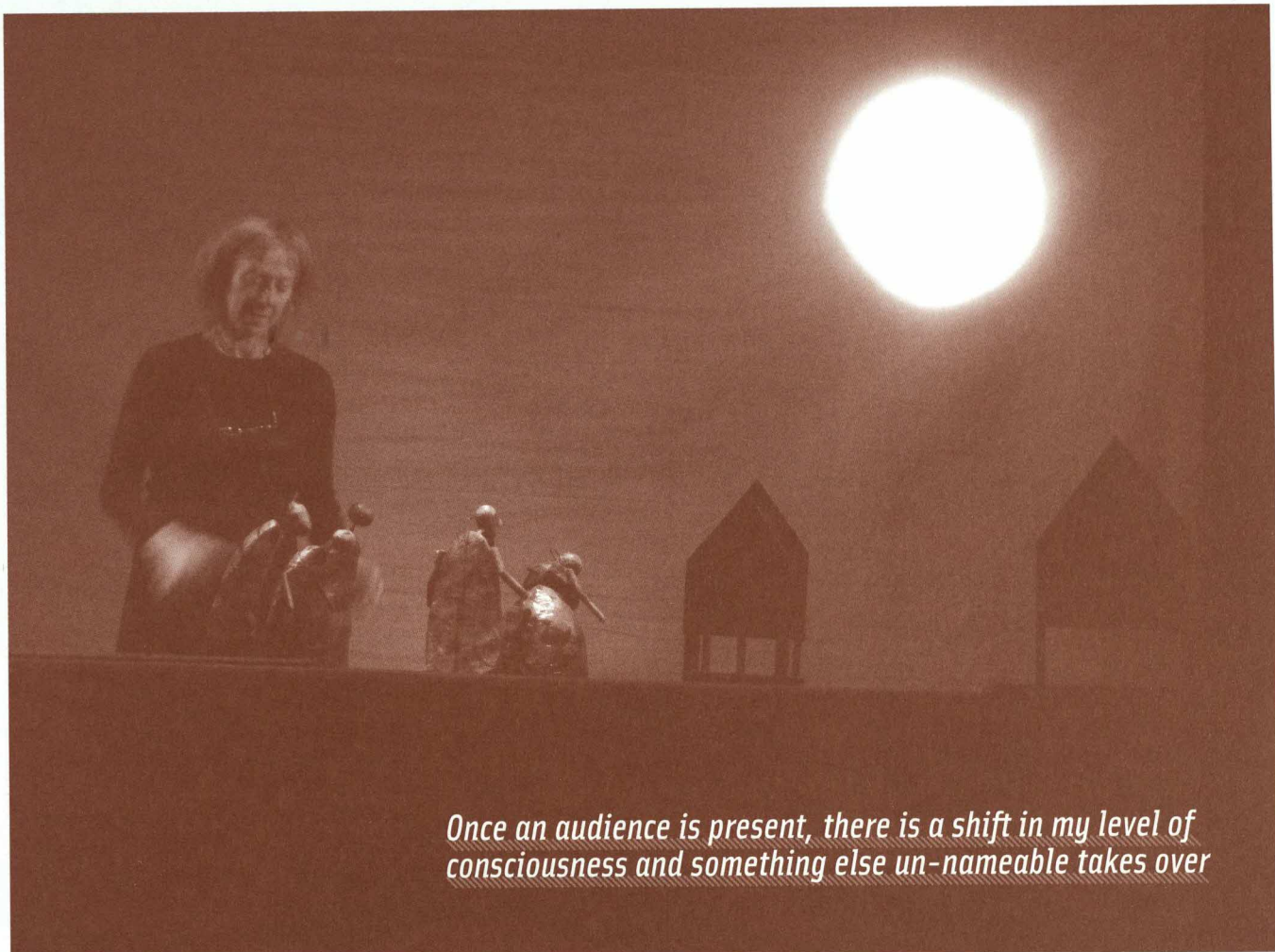
Everyone loses stuff from time to time. You can lose anything – a sock, confidence, a train ticket, self-esteem, an earring, your bottle. These things can all be found as well as lost – and if you don't find the thing you lost, quite often you find something else instead. Sometimes you have to really search hard and sometimes things just turn up by lucky chance.

Which may or may not have anything to do with the fact that I have worked successfully as a professional actor, performer and more recently, puppeteer, for 30 years. I've done everything from Street Theatre, Performance Art, Fringe, Rep, West End, Telly, Puppetry, Musical Theatre – a lot of stuff – all for other people's companies or projects, contributing to and interpreting their ideas. However, in the last few years a little inner voice has been urging me to make my

own show and try to realise my own ideas and develop my own artistic skills more fully. At the same time, I found this an extremely frightening prospect. I was so used to working with other people on ready written scripts in conventional theatre or on others' ideas in collaborative/devised theatre that starting from scratch on my own seemed completely unachievable. I tried alone from time to time to work out how I could make a story into a one-person performance with puppets and music but each time, I came up hard against a blank wall. Knowing many people who do work alone and not only devise their own shows, but make all the puppets and props and write the script and operate the sound and lighting and do all the administration, my own failure to even make a start left me feeling totally inadequate and ready to give up. I didn't feel I could really continue in the profession if I had to rely totally on other people asking me to work with them on their ideas in their companies. If I couldn't be more creative than that, I felt I was finished.

It was while I was taking part in The Little Angel Theatre's production of *Jabberwocky*, (directed by Steve Tiplady and designed by Peter O'Rourke with music by Hannah Marshall), that I had a sort of a revelation. I think what happened was that I started to think more positively about the things I could do well, rather than focusing on all the things I thought I couldn't do, particularly once we started actually performing the piece. Performing, particularly puppeteering, is where I get my kicks. It's what makes me feel good and that's why I keep doing it. I find that however hard I work during rehearsals, my own artistic skills develop even more through the actual performance. Once an audience is present, there is a shift in my level of consciousness and something else un-nameable takes over. The puppeteers and performers start to interact with each other in a heightened, more sensitive way (on a good night!) with the introduction of an audience, and that's when the magic happens.

But back to my 'revelation'. The answer then was not to even try to go it alone but to collaborate with artists specialising in other related theatre forms (such as directing, designing, making, composing music, lighting), whose strengths and skills complemented my own performing and puppeteering skills. I feel that the most successful collaborations



Once an audience is present, there is a shift in my level of consciousness and something else un-nameable takes over



I had never made anything before, but I thoroughly enjoyed it, and it turned out to be the most important and rewarding activity I had done to date, with regard to my own artistic development. My final performance was rubbish but that mattered not at all because the process itself was invaluable and this experience, along with the confidence gained whilst working on Jabberwocky, encouraged me to ask Steve, Peter and Hannah if they would work with me on *The Lost Moon* to create a solo 'work-in-progress' piece, performed with a live musician, hopefully to be developed further if that was successful. To my utter surprise, they all agreed!

The next step was as alien to me as making stuff and asking people to work with me had been. I had to apply to the Arts Council for a grant. This was the next most important thing that happened to me in terms of my artistic development. It forced me to accurately look at what I did, what I wanted to do, how I wanted to do it, what I hoped to achieve, who I hoped to benefit, and how that would all comply with the Arts Council's aims. The hardest part for me was how to budget the project, but there are people who specialise in this skill and I realised that I could collaborate with them in the same way that I could with directors, designers and musicians. I received invaluable help from Charlotte Bond and Agnes Meadows

occur when the artists involved specialise in different skills or have different approaches to theatre and puppetry; for example, some puppeteers are more technical and others have more experience in the performing or musical field. When artists share their skills or use their particular skill to complement another's, it creates performance of a very high quality. This type of creative collaboration is mutually beneficial and the professional development of each participating artist is enhanced.

With this in mind, I approached Steve, Peter and Hannah and told them about a story I had worked on during a five-day course with Horse + Bamboo Theatre Company. The course enabled participants to create a one-person show out of a suitcase, in the process of which a puppet, a mask and a little world in a suitcase would be made, culminating in an eight-minute solo performance. I took the story of *The Lost Moon* (an old English folk tale from the Lincolnshire Fens – about how the Moon got lost but was found again) to work on. I was very nervous – partly because

The most successful collaborations occur when the artists involved specialise in different skills or have different approaches to theatre and puppetry



of the Little Angel Theatre and from Sian Thomas, Director of Celebrations from the Winchester Hat Fair. The Arts Council told me I needed to get funding from another source as well, so I managed to extract money from Winchester City Council – Winchester being where I live and where I hoped to do two of the performances of the work-in-progress. I named my company Lost and Found Productions – and I got the grant! Another confidence booster – if the Arts Council believed I could do it enough to give me £5000, then I must be able to... scary!

The next step was also alien to me – organising rehearsals, juggling the availability of those involved, inviting schools to watch the performance and participate in a post-show discussion, liaising with Tower Arts Centre in Winchester, keeping spreadsheets, paying wages and expenses, marketing, producing programmes and flyers (that last item made entirely possible by the utterly indispensable Glen Alexander of the Little Angel); in fact everything that a producer does... and until this time, I hadn't actually realised what a producer did do – another learning curve.

We had an eight days devising/ rehearsal period spread over two months; twice I worked just with Hannah, twice Adam Crossthwaite of the Little Angel worked with us on the lighting, and between-times Hannah wrote music and Peter made stuff and I wrote and re-wrote the script and played alone on my kitchen table with the fantastic little puppets Peter

had made me. I found this whole period mind-numbingly frightening and at times I did wonder why I was putting myself through it. But I have no regrets. The Lost Moon was performed twice successfully at the Little Angel. Audience feedback was good and encouraging and Korinna Roeding, who also helped out with the making, videoed the show and took photos – a very necessary part of the evaluation process, which again was something I had never personally had to think about before. There was a gap of over a month before performing it twice at the Tower Arts Centre, Winchester, due to the fact that for the whole of April, the four of us were involved in the Little Angel's production of *The Mouse Queen* at the Polka theatre – another highly successful Tiplady/O'Rourke collaboration!

The Lost Moon was received even better than I had hoped for in Winchester, audience feedback being extremely positive. Which was the whole point really, as one of my aims had been to take this sort of puppet theatre to people who hadn't seen anything like it before, and, as I put it to the Arts Council, to raise the profile of puppetry and object animation especially in my home region, and help encourage new audiences for this art form. Because I was given this grant, I was also given the opportunity to learn a huge amount about the whole process of making a piece of theatre, and not just from the performer/puppeteer's point of view. My own creative skills have benefited tremendously, my confidence as a theatre

practitioner has been enhanced, and it has also given me the opportunity to provide work for other artists whose work I admire and to create an original and fresh piece of work with them.

I am now in the process of applying for a grant to develop *The Lost Moon* into a fully-fledged piece of puppet theatre which initially will tour the south and south-east before hopefully going national and international! So... feel the fear, do it anyway – and watch this space!

Research and development of The Lost Moon was funded by Arts Council England, South East and by Winchester City Council. Contact Mandy Travis on lostandfoundtheatre@hotmail.co.uk For further information on The Little Angel Theatre see www.littleangeltheatre.com

LIVE – ART OR THEATRE?

SETH KRIEBEL REFLECTS
ON THE CHELSEA THEATRE
LIVE 05 SEASON



It's always a cause for celebration when an organisation ventures out of its safety zone to present new work. Such was the case when the Chelsea Theatre took another step away from its formerly play-centred programming to produce its Live 05 season of live art, featuring three months of work from seventeen different companies and representing a wide spectrum of contemporary performance.

I confess to being nervous when I saw the banner outside the Chelsea reading 'Live Art – Theatre's Future?' The season kicked off with a panel discussion on live art chaired by Guardian theatre critic Lyn Gardner and featuring, amongst others, members of some of the contributing companies, an Arts Council representative, and (inexplicably) the literary manager of the National Theatre. The Chelsea's history showed from the start as the discussion was framed in terms of 'story' and, there it was again, 'the future of theatre'. It was Exit Strategy's Theron Schmidt who

punctured a slightly self-congratulatory mood by noting from the audience that, if live art is the future of theatre, 'why are we at the Chelsea and not the National?' As the panel haltingly began to address live art in terms other than theatrical, some of the practitioners involved (Robert Pacitti, Vicki Arbuckle) were able to nudge things along and the discussion managed – barely – to avoid asking 'just what is live art, anyway?'

Which brings us back to the banner. Live Art – Theatre's Future? Well, no. If anything, it is theatre's past which helped birth live art; the inability of the conventions of traditional performance to accommodate the new time and body based explorations of the performance artists who rejected object-based fine art and its associated commercial context. I had high expectations from an organisation supporting the excellent ROAR experimental theatre season, but with a misapprehension writ large outside and the

I confess to being nervous when I saw the banner outside the Chelsea reading 'Live Art – Theatre's Future?'

launch event asking the wrong questions, I was worried about what the Chelsea had in store. Even the original call for artists emphasised fractured narratives (story, again) and 'an aesthetic likely to utilise new technology' (Techno-gimmickry – Theatre's Future?)

It turns out I needn't have worried. The Chelsea is finding its feet in the uneven terrain of live art, and these few minor missteps are perhaps indicative of an organisation in transition. With its website still offering audiences 'exciting plays in friendly and comfortable surroundings', the Chelsea is turning its attention to previously unexplored territory. Artistic Director Francis Alexander assembled an impressive range of artists and should be congratulated for his efforts. Featuring both old hands (1157 Performance Group ticking the technology box, Third Angel with their charming, if a little lightweight Hurrysickness) and emerging companies (The Society of Wonders, Demonstrate), Live 05 was a brilliant opportunity to sample a wide variety of new performance.

Alexander, now cultivating relationships across the live art sector, said he was pleased with the diversity and scale of the season. He found Live 05 'rewarding and tantalising...[we have] only scratched the surface,' and promised much more live art at the Chelsea in the future. He was particularly excited that some of the Chelsea's traditional audience crossed over to test the live art waters. Attendance across the season seemed to vary considerably... perhaps inevitable with a large programme, or perhaps a reflection of the Chelsea's own uncertainty as to what they were presenting.

It's encouraging to see an organisation challenge itself to embrace new work and I am excited to see what Alexander and the Chelsea present next. I just hope Live 06 has a different banner out front.

Seth Kriebel is the artistic director of Rules and Regs and a contributor to Live 05 participating company Sidelong

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

THE FIREBIRD BALL WAS A SITE-SENSITIVE PROMENADE WORK THAT MIXED AND MATCHED ARTFORMS IN AN EXTRAORDINARY ENVIRONMENT – PUNCHDRUNK'S MAXINE DOYLE SHARES HER REFLECTIONS ON THE PURSUIT OF INTIMACY AT A DISTANCE

Dancing in a cold, cavernous, four-storey, Victorian pottery factory is not for the faint-hearted. From January to April of this year, Punchdrunk Theatrical Experiences moved in to Offley Works in South London, to create *The Firebird Ball* – a large-scale performance/installation based around Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Stravinsky's *Firebird* ballet.

Punchdrunk was formed in 2000 by a collaborative team led by artistic director Felix Barrett to produce work that aims to allow audiences to re-encounter the childlike excitement and anticipation of exploring the unknown. Masked audiences are given the freedom to roam entire buildings and soak up the atmosphere of magical yet fleeting worlds.

Offley Works was not one of the architecturally grand spaces we'd been chasing (original sites had included the former Lloyds Bank headquarters in the City) – but it was highly atmospheric. The first day on site, Felix sent the performers individually into the space. Scattered on each of the floors, in corners and pinned on walls were improvisation tasks ('respond to the rhythms of the space') and triggers ('who's hiding in the corner?') to stimulate performers' responses. I remember Lizzie Barker (*Firebird*) spending ages in the basement because she 'loved that space'.

The performers had very instinctive responses to areas and it was important as directors that Felix and I trusted their appetite for the environment.

I felt daunted. Despite having found the site with Felix, I couldn't quite get my head around how the show would fill this epic building. What if the audience lost themselves in the matrix of the basement? Navigating the audience around the space, suggesting without telling, teasing without taking was one of the main choreographic and performative challenges of the project. Small moments of touch, a gesture, a look, a stillness, became triggers to direct audience focus.

In *The Firebird Ball*, each character followed his or her narrative journey – known as the 'loop' – organised by its location and content. This was story-boarded in advance of rehearsals to save time and to prevent the space overwhelming the devising process. Each loop lasted 52 minutes and was performed three times in one evening.

The audience could – should they wish – latch on to the loop and use it as a tool for navigation.

The loop format develops a structural concept, which infuses the multi-dimensions of theatre with a cinematic sensibility so the audience becomes an

invisible witness on a film set. The implications for 'staging' a play within this format (albeit a play without words) are significant as all characters are present at all times. There's nowhere to hide. This results in the need for a density of theatrical and choreographic material. Some audiences found the multiple stories confusing, desperate for that Hollywood-style singular narrative fix, whilst others delighted in working it out or following a whim.

Initially, Felix and I worked for three weeks with the performers at the Jerwood Space whilst the design team began the installation work. Felix had designed the four floors of the space, together with the entrance and exit routes, drawing on images and environments from both the fairytale and the play to include a magical forest, a desecrated church and a blown-up living room. The design was fundamental in inspiring, framing and illuminating the choreography and the narrative. In the main, my responsibility was to work with the cast, but Felix would move between rehearsals and site facilitating the devising process and feeding the aesthetic relationship between body and space. Our collaborative process in the main was/is very fluid – I share in Felix's vision about theatre and the nature

PUNCHDRUNK THE FIREBIRD BALL. PHOTOS BY BEN DUCKETT/SAM HOLDEN



I felt daunted. What if the audience lost themselves in the matrix of the basement?

of theatrical experience. Intimacies of distance and experience lie at heart of our ambitious, big picture sensibility.

We battled over use of music. I found it difficult, as a choreographer, to completely relinquish ownership over this element of the work. Ultimately, I trusted Felix's talent (and collaborator Stephen Dobbie) to hear the show as a sound design for site as opposed to a score for the stage.

Studio time is a core part of our process as it is during this period that we devise the more physically demanding elements of the dance/movement theatre language before transposing it to the site. I find transposition a handy choreographic tool in site work as movement can often gain from the limitations imposed by the physical conditions of its environment. As an example: the fight/death scene between Tybalt, Mercutio, Romeo and Paris was a challenge. The architecture of the 'fight room' was imposing with a low ceiling and four centralised concrete pillars. It possessed a kind of hostility essential for this scene. When reworking the pre-choreographed material, we found that the real risk in the contact-based partner work had to be modified to compensate for the hostile features of the room (cold, concrete floor, sharp edges). It was difficult to impose movement onto this space. The most edgy material emerged

Small moments of touch, a gesture, a look, a stillness, became triggers to direct audience focus

when the dancers went with its inherent physicality, climbing up pillars and diving off ledges.

One of the pleasures of the project was noticing ways in which the site and design continually informed our (performers and directors) choreographic and directorial instincts and made us engage with the present. Discovering the tricks and surprises of the site was an infinitely evolving process. During the fifth show, I walked around a corner and was surprised to see Jami Quarrell hanging upside down

One of the pleasures of the project was noticing ways in which the site and design continually informed our instincts and made us engage with the present.

in a doorway, blocking the audience's entrance. This developed over the course of the run into a witty choreographic game of 'should I stay or should I go?' between performer and audience.

A naturalistic scene between Lady Capulet and Tybalt devised in the studio became something much more visceral after I'd visited Lady C's actual, intimate and very red dining room on-site. This space was filmic in its form (windows and doors offered possibilities for multiple and simultaneous framings) and so rich in character that it seemed wasteful to use it simply as a context for narrative. The dining room desired a danced duet. Sarah Dowling (Lady C) and Jami (Tybalt) responded to the space by choreographing their kissing, holding, falling, balancing dance within the physical boundaries of the window ledge – offering an 'on the edge' metaphor for their relationship. Some people peeped through the windows whilst others used their masks to get up close – intimacy at a distance.

Lady Capulet's solo also grew organically from that space. In the studio, Sarah had been working on opposing tensions within the body to try and find the abstracted, dance essence of her character. The dining room space seemed to illuminate the angularity and tension we'd been exploring in the body and her solo developed as a three-way dialogue between dancer, choreographer and space.

The weather was definitely against us.

The site was freezing. I remember laughing as it started to snow – in March – as I was driving to the site. During rehearsals, people would spend as long as they could bear it in their spaces and then hide out in the warmth with a cup of tea. At times, I felt more like shop supervisor than choreographer, calling time on cigarette breaks and persuading people to do just another half an hour.

Never again.

Not in the cold.

Not until next time...

Maxine Doyle is a choreographer and a director of Punchdrunk Theatrical Experiences. She teaches Physical Theatre at St Mary's University, Twickenham. The Firebird Ball was produced by Punchdrunk in association with Creative London and The Big Chill and funded by Arts Council England. For further information on the company history and future projects, see www.punchdrunk.org.uk

BEST OF BRITISH

EDWARD TAYLOR BRINGS US THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES OF FEATURES PROFILING SEMINAL BRITISH COMPANIES

25 YEARS OF DESPERATE MEN

I recently unearthed a flyer for a series of performance art events that Jeremy Shine put on in Manchester in 1983. One of the events listed was a performance by Desperate Men entitled *Eggs & Enemies*, on upstairs at the Thompson's Arms on Wednesday 13th April. The publicity for the show started 'After cheating, lying and pretending to be clever on stages all over Europe, Desperate Men return...'. I didn't even know they'd been away, in fact, I hadn't a clue who Desperate Men were, but it was this sentence that tempted me to go and see them.

On arriving at the Thompson's Arms I discovered that it was now a building site and that the show had been relocated to a lecture room at the University. Eventually I and fifteen others saw the show which more than lived up to the promise of that sentence. In fact, the show went down so well with the sixteen of us that it set in train a relationship between Manchester and Desperate Men that continues today.

This year Desperate Men are 25. This is something well worth celebrating. If, as I did, you type Desperate Men into a search engine you will get over 120,000 results. Sadly most of them are testament to the lengths sad males will go to in order to get sex but in amongst this desperate list are a few sites which will give you information about the company. Their own website www.desperatemen.com will give a good background to the company as well as telling you where you can see them next.

They were formed in 1980 by Richie Smith and Jon Beedell who had worked together in Germany and Holland with, amongst others, the Friends Roadshow. Their first act together was the Pipe People. This consisted of a costume (a balaclava hood with rubber gloves sticking out like antlers, dark glasses and a long robe), a piece of plastic drain pipe and the freedom to be whatever they wanted to be. Sometimes they struck up poses, sometimes it was loose improvisation,



sometimes it was choreographed and sometimes they would just natter with the public. I dimly remember something to do with boiled eggs and the magic words 'Huddly Duddly' as well.

During the 80's and 90's Jon and Richie (and the many different Desperate Men line-ups) consistently created inventive and imaginative work in what was a none-too-encouraging climate. Shopping centres on a Saturday afternoon with no facilities provided by the bookers (who, often as not, weren't there to see the show either) are not conditions conducive to producing work of any kind let alone good work.

Characteristic of the Desperate Men approach is a desire not to fall into a formula. There are recognisable elements in all their shows but each production looks quite different to the one before. I've seen them many, many times over the years and the variety of their work never fails to surprise me. Their shows can stretch from a cabaret double act to an indoor performance art show about the arms race or from street animations with broad humour to a street show where three non-dancers spend an hour dancing. This sort of experimentation is most commonly associated with groups from

the live art sector. One of Desperate Men's achievements is to carry on developing within a more populist area of work where consolidation of skills is often the norm. I've seen their *Tory Bastards* expose the den of council sponsored filth that is the South Petherton Folk Festival; the filming of a pop promo with a Madonna-style rock chick dancing in the streets of Bath; the 10 piece Bridlington Porno-Palace Silver Band all crammed into a tiny tent in the middle of an empty festival field; and a tribe of ants roaming the streets with their mobile laboratory who categorise, label and bag the rubbish they find. Turning up at a gig by the late great Viv Stanshall, I discovered that Jon and Richie were half his backing band, playing piano and drum kit respectively.

As the above examples would suggest, much of their work is extremely ridiculous but they do like to slip in a political point or two and manage to do it without seeming preachy or over earnest.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (made in 1999) suggested that behind the general jollity of the Millennium celebrations all was not as rosy as it appeared. The ending of the show, where the four horsemen confront the audience,

EARLY DESPERATE MEN

TOTALTHEATRE

AWARDS 2005 / EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2005

CELEBRATING PHYSICAL + VISUAL PERFORMANCE

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GECKO - THE RACE

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2005

Total Theatre Awards, first presented in 1997 and now a well-established event at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, honour the best in physical and visual theatre/performance.

The Total Theatre Awards 2005, again generously sponsored by University of Winchester, will be presented at a ceremony on the morning of Friday 26th August. Awards will be made to the artists or companies presenting the shows at this year's Fringe deemed by Total Theatre to be the best examples of physical and visual theatre/performance. An esteemed Advisory Panel of industry professionals from the physical and visual performance sector will be helping us with our decision-making.

Total Theatre Awards are given to professional artists and companies presenting work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. We will be considering a variety of different sorts of physical and visual theatre/performance work, but what the awarded artists and companies will have in common is a belief in, and demonstration of, the power of movement-based or image-led theatre to communicate, entertain and inspire audiences – cutting across boundaries of nationality or language. This does not exclude the use of spoken text – but we would, in this case, be looking for work that is not predominantly driven by that text, and in which any spoken text is only one of the elements of a 'total theatre' production.

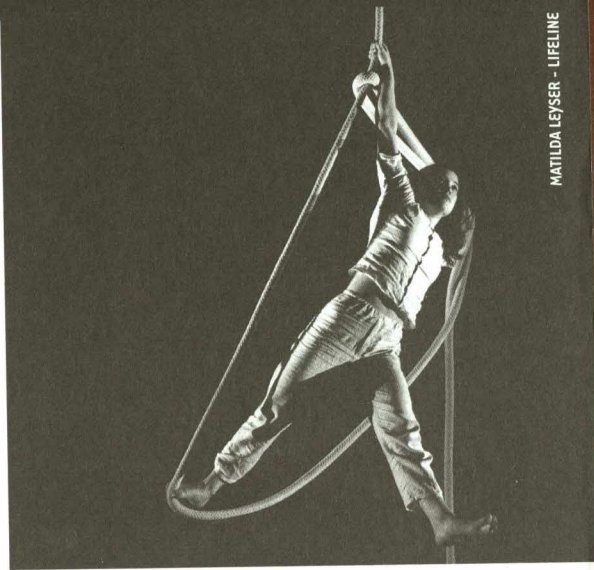
In this special supplement to Total Theatre Magazine, we are highlighting a selection of physical and visual theatre/performance works on at the Fringe 2005. On the back page you'll also find more on the history of the Awards and on Total Theatre.

Here's to another great year in Edinburgh for physical and visual performance!

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR
EDITOR, TOTAL THEATRE



ANDREW DAWSON - ABSENCE AND PRESENCE



MATILDA LEYSER - LIFELINE

NOMINATIONS AND AWARDS ANNOUNCEMENTS 2005

Artists, companies, producers or venues can nominate work they are presenting. Anyone who sees a high-quality production that they feel fits the Total Theatre remit can nominate that show. Nominations have to be made on an entry form and completed forms must be emailed or faxed to reach us on or before Thursday 11th August.

A Longlist will be announced on 16th August, and a Shortlist on 24th August. Winners will be announced on 26th August. All these announcements will be posted on the website.

For further details on the Total Theatre Awards process for 2005 or to download an entry form, see www.totaltheatre.org.uk. Email awards@totaltheatre.org.uk Fax 020 7729 7945.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS START HERE WITH THE AURORA NOVA FESTIVAL OF DANCE AND VISUAL THEATRE

If you are interested in physical and visual performance, **AURORA NOVA** at St. Stephen's is a must! Established in 2001, this festival within a festival brings another bursting-at-the-seams programme to Edinburgh 2005.

FROM THE UK

Contemporary circus performer **MATILDA LEYSER** presents **Lifeline**, a fusion of aerial skills, dance and theatre. **GECKO** bring their second production **The Race**, which like previous runaway success Taylor's Dummies previously appeared at the London International Mime Festival.

ROTOZAZA present **Doublethink** in which every night, two new actors who can't see each other gamely interpret the same instructions. **Absence and Presence** is a solo performance from veteran mime/physical theatre performer **ANDREW DAWSON** (who directed the award winning **Pandora 88** for Fabrik, which returns to Aurora Nova this year).

INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

Award-winning Russian company **DO THEATRE** return with **Sleep... less...ness** from Italy, **COMUNA BAIRES & FARE ANIMA** bring to life harrowing true stories of the 20th century's defining moments; there's expressive Brazilian Butoh from **LUME** in **Shi-Zen 7 Bowls**; **JO STRØMGREN KOMPANI** from Norway present **The Department**, a dark and absurd spectacle; and **RAINPAN 43** All Wear Bowlers creates a surreal world which brings together Beckett, Magritte and Laurel and Hardy. For the full programme or further details, see www.auroranova.org

TOTAL THEATRE RECOMMENDS – A SELECTION OF PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE SHOWS FROM THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2005

VISUAL THEATRE, PHYSICAL COMEDY, PUPPETRY, LIVE ART, MIME, CLOWN, CIRCUS, MULTIMEDIA PERFORMANCE, NEW VARIETY, STREET ARTS.... THE SHOWS WE'VE SELECTED BELOW GIVE A PICTURE OF THE WIDE RANGE OF WORK THAT FALLS UNDER THE 'TOTAL THEATRE' BANNER, HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE/PERFORMANCE ARTISTS WE WILL PERHAPS BE CONSIDERING FOR A TOTAL THEATRE AWARD. AND DO LET US KNOW IF THERE IS A SHOW NOT LISTED HERE THAT YOU FEEL SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR AN AWARD! EMAIL AWARDS@TOTALTHEATRE.ORG.UK

7K SHADOWS

Hill Street Theatre
Haunting visual theatre inspired by the work of Artaud

BAC ONE O' CLOCK SCRATCH

Smirnoff Underbelly
London venue BAC's Scratch launched Jerry Springer and Jackson's Way – and it's now coming to Edinburgh. Get to see new ideas, early versions, fresh collaborations – maybe witness the beginnings of the next big thing!

CATALYST THEATRE CARMEN ANGEL

Hill Street Theatre
If previous work (House of Pootsie Plunkett/Blue Orphan) is anything to go by, this Canadian show will be a visually stunning 'total theatre' production.

CAESAR TWINS AND FRIENDS TRILLION DOLLAR COMPANY/MZA

Assembly
A full-length show from the double-trouble blond bombshell boy acrobats who previously headlined La Clique.

THE CHIPOLATAS CHIPOLATAS 3-STYLE

Spiegel Garden
Fun for all the family – clog dancing meets hip hop meets club juggling from these world-touring street art supremos.

CIRCLE X ARTS STEINER GRAFFITI

C Central
Words, movement, action graphics – one man (Christopher Markus) and his blackboard take on the philosophy of Rudolph Steiner.

**LA CLIQUE – UN SPECTACLE SENSUEL
SPIEGELTENT/ THE SPIEGEL GARDEN**
Smash hit of 2004 returns – a classy burlesque show bringing together the best of scintillating new circus, vampy vaudeville and cutting-edge cabaret. No postmodern pastiche – this is for real.

THE CLOD ENSEMBLE THE SILVER SWAN

McEwan Hall, Bristo Square
Clod are composer Paul Clark and physical theatre director Suzy Wilson. Together they make visually stunning music-theatre – here, seven singers sing 17th century melodies!

CLYDE UNITY THEATRE/BANDBAZI BREAKFAST AT AUDREY'S

Gilded Balloon Teviot
A collaboration between writer John Binnie and an aerial dance/trapeze artist, exploring the life of Audrey Hepburn

COMPAGNIE DE L'ESCALIER THE SOLE COMPANION

Greyfriars Kirk House
Lecoq-trained international company explore the relationship between two solitary characters using physical expression, music and humour.

COMPANY F.Z LOSER

Pleasance 2
F.Z won a Total Theatre Award for the fabulous Throat, and now bring their circus-theatre skills to the darkly funny and moving Loser, which explores loss, grief, moving on – and just being there. An engaging and entertaining piece in which joy and pain, grief and humour, the gorgeous and the grotesque all co-exist.

CURIOUS ON THE SCENT

Smirnoff Underbelly
A live art production which investigates the elusive connections between smell and memory. The performance takes place in a home through which audience members are invited on intimate and distinctly aromatic journeys.

DODGY CLUTCH ELEPHANT

George Square Theatre
Veteran UK streets arts and alternative performance company Dodgy Clutch bring together performers, musicians and puppeteers from the UK and South Africa collaborate to create a celebration of humanity – Ubuntu.

DREAMTHINKSPEAK DON'T LOOK BACK

HM General Register House
Inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, this is a visually beautiful and moving exploration of love and death. Although many of the elements are the same – which include visual set-pieces, projected video, live music and the occasional appearance of a live performer, the piece is transformed in response to each new site in which it is placed.

EDDIE LADD FIDEOTEK

Theatre Workshop
Eddie's Club Lux won a Total Theatre Award in 2003 for her stunning combination of electro-music, physical performance and video. She's back with another cutting-edge fusion of music, movement and striking visuals, featuring a DJ, moving cameras, live editing and motion capture technology.

GRID IRON THE DEVIL'S LARDER

Traverse 4/Debenhams
A promenade piece which will include elements of story-telling, visual installation and song. Grid Iron examine how food can act as a catalyst for unleashing our fears, desires and taboos. It will no doubt be one of the hot tickets for this year's Fringe, being as it is the latest in their long line of highly successful site-responsive productions.

KAZUKO HOHKE EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF BORROWERS

Theatre Workshop
A journey through the venue in the search for those extraordinary little beings The Borrowers. Expect to come across teeny Borrowers artefacts, games and musical instruments, and to read emails sent from Borrowers purportedly attempting to make contact with our species!

KINDLE THEATRE WITH CARRAN WATERFIELD BEASTLY BEAUTIES

Smirnoff Underbelly
A modern take on myth and fairy tale from a young female company exploring the potential of physical and devised theatre.

LAZZI WITKACY IDIOTA

Rocket Demarco/Roxy Art House
This bioplay by Lazzi artistic director David W Johnstone is a 'dazzling psycho-theatrical experiment' which examines the bizarre life of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, aka Witkacy, the early 20th Century surrealist painter, photographer, playwright who inspired both Grotowski and Kantor.

MARK MURPHY PRODUCTIONS THE NIGHT SHIFT

Traverse Theatre
A physical / visual theatre piece from this acclaimed choreographer promises a visually striking and intellectually engaging story of one woman's desperate attempt not to find her father.

NOFIT STATE CIRCUS IMMORTAL 2

A promenade event in a big top that brings together circus spectacle, contemporary performance and new technologies, Immortal 2 is a reworking of the Immortal show that toured successfully last year, winning critical acclaim.

PANTS ON FIRE SPLICE

Smirnoff Underbelly
A feelgood mime show racing through the history of cinema – from Chaplin to The Matrix via Hitchcock's The Birds and about 100 other examples. Watch out for the dancing screens doing Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend.

PEEPOLYKUS ALL IN THE TIMING

Assembly Rooms
This three-man theatre-clown combo have had umpteen successes with devised shows such as I Am A Coffee and Horses For Courses. Here they tackle David Ives's play, presenting a series of joyfully absurd worlds in their own inimitable way.

PETER REDER GUIDED TOUR

McEwan Hall
A mixture of true stories, unreliable histories, and philosophical musings on our relationship to the past. Guided Tour mixes video and performance to draw the audience into a shared contemplation of the nature of architectural spaces and the memories and feelings they evoke.

PEZ EN RAYA MILK

Pleasance Courtyard
A bedevilled cow, an amateur exorcist and two crazed clowns... surreal slapstick and physical comedy from Spanish company Pez En Raya, directed by David Sant of Peepolykus.

This is by no means a complete guide to physical and visual performance at this year's Fringe! Please also see the Edinburgh Festival Fringe brochure, available from venues or from the Fringe office at Royal Mile. The brochure will have further details, dates and times of all the shows recommended here, or see www.edfringe.com. Any Fringe ticket can also be booked on 0131 226 0000.

CURIOUS - ON THE SCENT

GRID IRON - THE DEVIL'S LARDER



GRID IRON - THE DEVIL'S LARDER

POINT BLANK ROSES AND MORPHINE

Rocket Demarco/Roxy Art House
A mix of lyrical text and frenetic physicality exploring repressed memories and dismantled histories.

REJECTS REVENGE THE STEPPE BROTHERS

Southside
Set at the time of the Crusades, The Steppe Brothers finds a variety act of medieval muscovite marauders on the Road to Jerusalem. Written by and starring original Reject Tim Hibberd, expect superb silliness from the creators of Fringe First winning Peasouper.

SINÉAD RUSHE/OUT OF INC NIGHT-LIGHT

Komedia Roman Eagle Lodge
Sinéad Rushe and Camille Litalien together create Night-Light, a new dance/physical theatre piece about fear. Expect stories that lose their way, games that don't follow the rules, toys that don't play as they should: Night-Light is a surreal journey through an inner darkness that affects child and adult alike.

SOMA CABARET DECADANSE

Gilded Balloon Teviot
Gloriously decadent puppets lip-synch to camp cabaret classics – a lush and entertaining grown-up puppetry show from internationally renowned Montreal company Soma.

STAN'S CAFÉ OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN ALL THE WORLD

Edinburgh College of Art
Live art durational installation from this enterprising company who work across many media. Expect to be provoked, shocked, amused...

STATION HOUSE OPERA ROADMETAL SWEETBREAD

Theatre Workshop
Station House Opera create site-sensitive performance work that requires the audience to really engage with what is being presented. Re-made and re-filmed for each location, Roadmetal Sweetbread cleverly juxtaposes video and live action, with a man and a woman competing with their own video images for survival.

SORCEROR BAKLAVA A WORLD IN YOUR SHELL-LIKE

Sweet on the Grassmarket
A charming multi-media puppetry/object animation show from a young company.

SOUND AND FURY/ SHUNT ETHER FROLICS

Smirnoff Underbelly
A visceral and provocative piece of total theatre exploring the history of anaesthesia and the nature of consciousness.

TALL STORIES THE SNOW DRAGON/THEM WITH TAILS

C Too at St Columba
Two recently devised productions from children's theatre supremos Tall Stories, whose Gruffalo is still touring to great acclaim.

TANGLED FEET LOST PROPERTY

Gilded Balloon Teviot
Text, music and movement as Tangled tell stories of where our lost things go.

THEATRE 2.0 / RICHARD JORDAN PRODUCTIONS BREATH(E)

Traverse 7
No words, no actors – a dramaturgy of light and sound. Inspired by Samuel Beckett's 30-second drama 'Breath', this is theatre that is experienced through the whole body. Maybe the ultimate in physical and visual theatre experiences?

THEATRE CRYPTIC TROJAN WOMEN

Scotland's Theatre Gateway
Euripides' tragedy gets the 'total' treatment from Cryptic, who proved their multimedia credentials with 2004 production Each...and Every Inch which was a labyrinth of spaces featuring inter-related sound and vision installations and performances.

THEATRE MODO UBU

Smirnoff Baby Belly
A highly physical production of Jarry's Ubu that promises 'filthy language, casual violence, sordid sex, vegetable aggression, and the chance to win a tenner'. Who could resist?

TEATR KTO I'LL SELL THE HOUSE IN WHICH I CAN LIVE NO MORE

C, Chambers St
This esteemed Polish physical theatre company present a word-free production about Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal.

THEATRUM BOTANICUM CHILDREN OF THE SEA

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Previous Total Theatre Award winners in 2002 (for Go-Go: the boy with the magic feet) are back with another outdoor extravaganza. An international cast from areas affected by the Tsunami use mask, music and dance to explore tales of hope.

THINGS ON FIRE THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR

Southside
Experimental puppetry, physical theatre, mechanical dogs – what more could you want?

TRESTLE THEATRE COMPANY BEYOND MIDNIGHT

Pleasance Courtyard
A dark fairytale that merges visual theatre, music and new writing – all played out with Trestle's definitive mask work.



SINÉAD RUSHE/OUT OF INC - NIGHT LIGHT

UMBILICAL BROTHERS UMBILICAL BROTHERS – THE REHEARSAL

Pleasance Courtyard
Zany physical comedy from these 'internationally acclaimed fools' – rumour has it they're making it up as they go along.

WALK THE PLANK & MARK MURPHY SWALK - SEALED WITH A LOVING KISS

Old College Quad
More Mark Murphy! This time in collaboration with street arts/site specific company Walk the Plank. SWALK is outdoor cinematic theatre that combines live performance, an original score, large-scale film images and pyrotechnics.

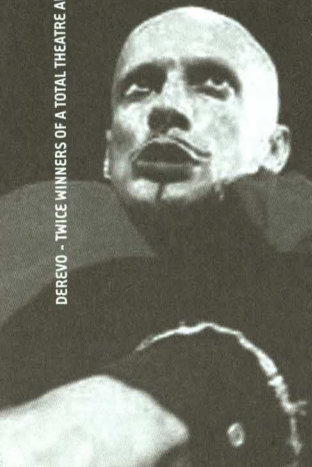


ANDREW DAWSON - ABSENCE AND PRESENCE

TOTALTHEATRE

AWARDS 1997 - 2005

DEREVO - TWICE WINNERS OF A TOTAL THEATRE AWARD

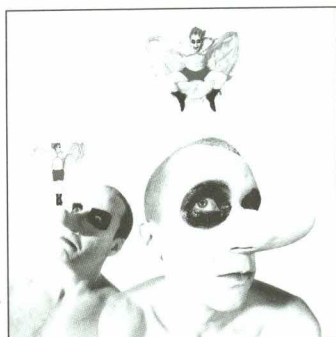


The Total Theatre Awards are a mark of excellence, awarded for theatre work seen at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in which the physical or visual elements are at least as important as any spoken text the work might contain.

The very first Total Theatre Awards (1997) were a total success, with over a hundred entries over five categories – celebrating the 'flourishing range and diversity of physical and visual theatre on the Fringe'. Those first Awards included a lifetime achievement award to Steven Berkoff, and The Right Size were awarded for 'most innovative overall production' for *Do You Come Here Often? They've since moved on to mainstream success with their Morecambe and Wise tribute The Play What I Wrote.*

The second Total Theatre Awards, held in 1999, received a high profile, with the BBC featuring the work of the award-winning companies. For the first time, there was an Award for Most Supportive Venue, given to Continental Shifts at St Bride's for 'its belief in, and consistent programming of, physical-based work'. The Awards ceremony was held at The Assembly Rooms and hosted by Ken Campbell – who was surprised to find himself amongst the winners! He was awarded the Lifetime Achievement jointly with Nola Rae. The Anonymous Society won an award for Jacques Brel, Best British Production was by Ridiculusmus and metro-boulot-dodo won best newcomer. There was a People's Choice award for the 'company I'd most like to get physical with' which went to No Ordinary Angels – that company's performer/director Deb Pope is now associate director of Circus Oz.

2000 was something of a bumper year. The Pleasance won Most Supportive Venue and show winners included the extraordinary Russian company BlackSKYwhite for Bertrand's Toys, which went on to wow audiences at the London International Mime Festival. Generally Better Productions (Now known as Theatre 0) won with 3 Dark Tales they've gone from strength to strength, with a recent run at Barbican BITE with Astronaut. Fellow 2000 winners Shunt presented The Ballad of Bobby Francois, the first of a run of innovative site-responsive works including most recently the National Theatre supported Tropicana at the new Shunt Vaults venue under London Bridge station. In that same year, Pig Iron Theatre Company (Philadelphia's finest, who recently picked up a prestigious OBIE award) won a Total Theatre Award for Poet in New York and Spymonkey won for Stiff – Undertaking Undertaking. Spymonkey are currently working for Cirque de Soleil in Las Vegas and will be touring the US before a triumphant return to the UK this autumn.



ANONYMOUS SOCIETY



COMPANY F.Z. - THROAT

The fourth Total Theatre Awards in 2002 were the biggest to date, with over 200 companies entering. The award ceremony was compered by Stewart Lee, writer of Jerry Springer The Opera. A Total Theatre Special Award went to Derevo not only for *La Divina Commedia*, which was presented that year, but in acknowledgement of all the previous excellent work seen at Edinburgh Fringe. They are the only company to have won a Total Theatre Award twice, having previously picked one up for *The Red Zone*. That same year, Company F.Z won an award for Throat, high-quality children's theatre was honoured with an award for Shona Reppe Puppets' *Cinderella*, and Wishbone won an award for *Scapegoat*.

The fifth Total Theatre Awards in 2003 saw a new sponsorship deal with the University of Winchester. The awards ceremony was again held at The Assembly Rooms and compered by John Hegley. Winners included a number of International companies presenting shows at the Aurora Nova festival at St Stephen's, including Akhe for *White Cabin* and Fabrik Company for *Pandora 88* – and St Stephen's Aurora Nova won the Award for Most Supportive Venue for the second time. UK show winners were three very different productions: Eddie Ladd for sound-and-vision sensation *Club Lux*, Duckie for their burlesque extravaganza *C'est Vauxhall* and theatre-clown duo *Blow Up Theatre* for the wonderfully silly *The Illusion Brothers*.

The Total Theatre Awards 2005, kindly sponsored by the University of Winchester, will continue this tradition of celebrating and supporting the flourishing range and diversity of physical and visual theatre/performance on the Fringe. Don't forget to check the website www.totaltheatre.org.uk for details of this year's longest, shortlist and winners.

The Total Theatre Awards are a project of Total Theatre Network, which is an organisation funded by Arts Council England to celebrate and promote physical and visual performance.

Total Theatre Magazine is the leading national magazine for physical and visual performance, published quarterly by Total Theatre Network and available by postal subscription, at specialist outlets, and via multi-access subscription which includes print and online access.

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For further information on the organisation, the magazine or on subscriptions and advertising, see www.totaltheatre.org.uk

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER





THE MIRACLE SHOW



FEATURES

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE



HUDDY DUDLEY - 25 YEARS OF DESPERATE MEN EDWARD TAYLOR

was a splendidly unnerving experience. A half-human half-horse drooling and speaking in tongues is a far cry from your usual friendly stilt-walker. Indeed the show unsettled many of the promoters who booked it. Their reactions suggested that they had completely missed the point of the show. The company's disinclination to water their work down in order to increase its commercial appeal is to be applauded. It has meant that the work hasn't been seen as much as it should be but it also means that there is some street theatre work around on the UK scene with a distinct edge to it.

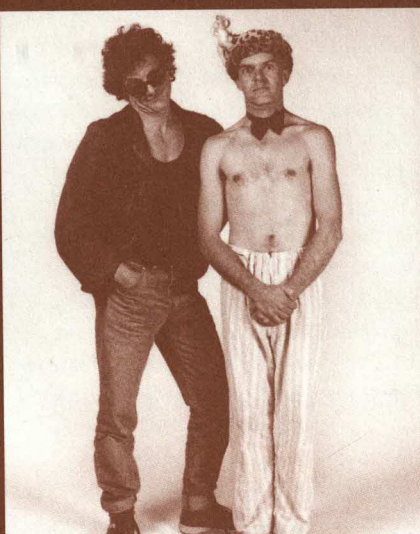
Over the years, Desperate Men have worked with some excellent performers and musicians – Shirley Pegna, Richard Headon (both full-time members with Jon and Richie of the current team), Dik Downey, Luci Gorell Barnes, Vic Llewelyn and Jo Kessell amongst many others. Personally speaking, I'm delighted to see them still going strong in a climate which, although tons better than the 80s, still doesn't make life easy. I wouldn't wish a further 25 years on any company but I do hope they'll carry on 'making mincemeat out of flimsy reality'.

Desperate Men is an international touring street theatre company based in Bristol, UK. See www.desperatemen.com for full details of current productions, which include The Miracle Show.

FILM CREW DIRECTING A DOG



THE DESPERATE MEN

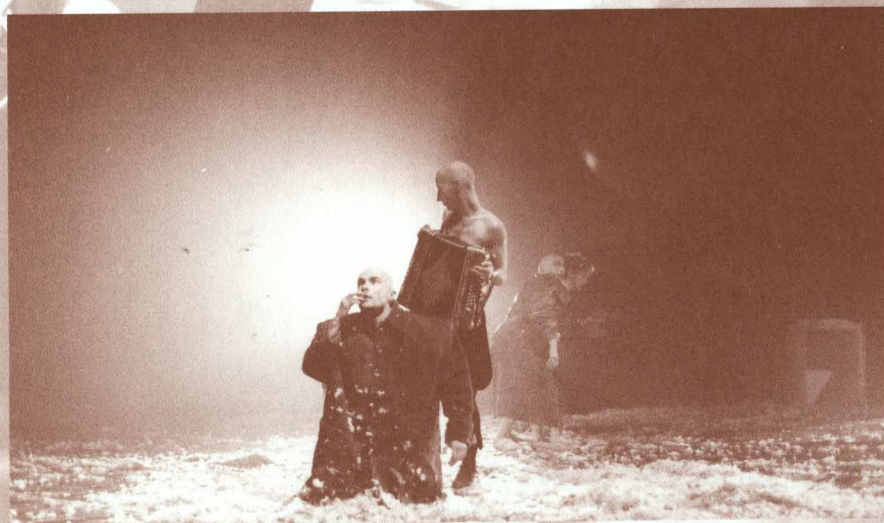


The co-operative spirit of the artists appearing at Aurora Nova has impressed anyone who has had any involvement with the festival

NEW AGE DAWNING

MIRIAM KING CHARTS THE RISE AND RISE OF THE AURORA NOVA FESTIVAL AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE AND BEYOND

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 03 | AUTUMN 2005



DO THEATRE - BIRD'S EYE VIEW

The looming church tower, the expectant thrill in the queue on the steep steps before the show commences, the hub bub around the reviews and preview write-ups on the boards outside, catching up on recommendations during brief yet languid lounging between shows on the cafe tables outside... it's Aurora Nova at St Stephen's, one of the defining events of recent years for physical and visual performance.

Begun in August 2001 at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Aurora Nova is a co-production between the Fabrik company of Potsdam, Germany (with Wolfgang Hoffman as artistic director) and the Brighton/Edinburgh arts venue Komedia (as producers/managers). Viewed as the most coherent and consistently impressive programme of physical and visual performance on the Fringe, in the past four years Aurora Nova has won over thirty prestigious awards (including twice-winner of the Total Theatre Award for best venue) and enough excellent reviews to fill many scrapbooks.

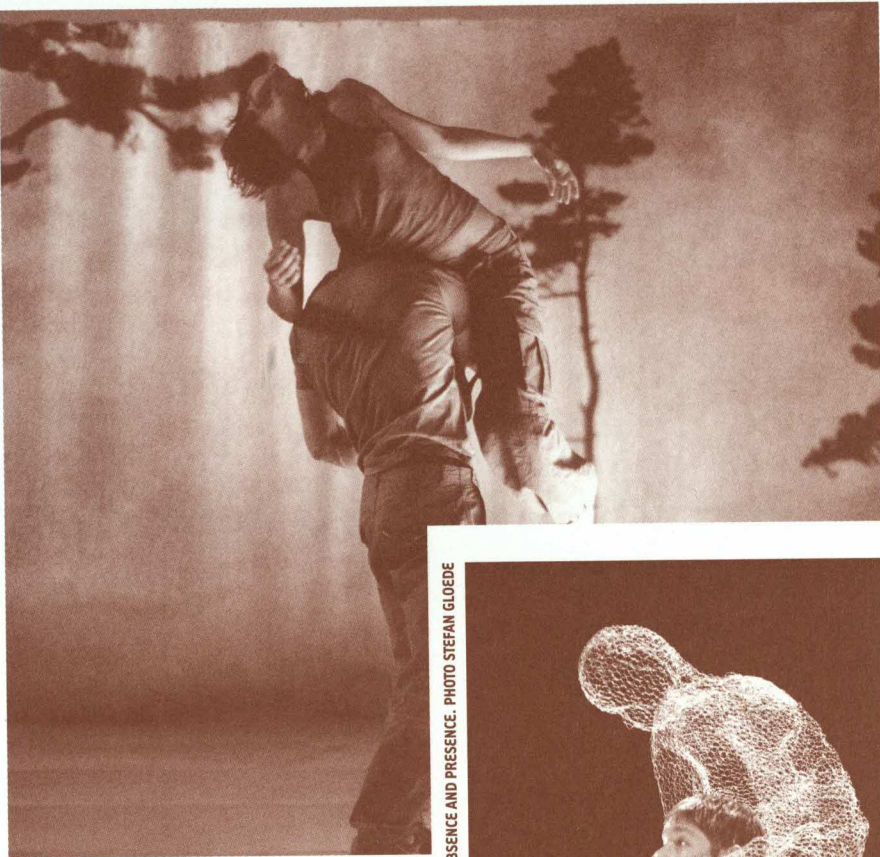
Aurora Nova is a festival within a festival, bringing companies from all over the world to Edinburgh (and soon beyond). The past four years has seen an enormous variety of dance and visual theatre work programmed, including companies from Japan, India, Australia and Brazil – though

particularly Eastern Europe and Russia where the use of visual metaphor is such an important element of theatre-making. Examples have included Derevo, who brought the beautiful and mesmerising Islands in the Stream to St Stephen's; Theatr Novogo Fronta, a Czech company of Butoh-esque dancers and acrobatic clowns who presented Dias de las Noches in 2004; and Akhe (Russia) whose wonderful 'theatre of engineering' piece White Cabin was a 2D/3D experiment in film and live performance that won them a Total Theatre Award. I've also seen and enjoyed Fabrik (Germany), Do Theatre (Russia) and Nats Nus Dansa (Spain) amongst many other artists. These are artists who question the mind, inspire the heart, enliven the spirit and quiet those restless spaces in the soul. Their shows live on in the imagination well after the performance has ended...

Aurora Nova was set up to present outstanding and original visual and dance theatre productions at the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe – but also to provide the best working conditions possible for participating artists, fostering an environment that promotes creative exchange and communication between the artists. The co-operative spirit of the artists appearing at Aurora Nova has impressed anyone who has had any

involvement with the festival. There is a genuine feeling of a shared space, with ownership of the need to keep that space running smoothly – and it is impressive in a festival that relies on a quick turn-around, with numerous shows in one day, to see that this doesn't have to mean a reliance on small-scale work with just one or two performers, which is so often the norm at the Fringe. Housed in the wonderfully imposing church of St Stephen's in the Stockbridge area of Edinburgh, Aurora Nova has developed a name for excellence and the venue provides a vital decent-sized performance space, allowing for high production standards and a facility for visually elaborate set designs. There's a sense of potent expectation when going to see a show that's part of Aurora Nova... one knows it's the place to see the best in imaginative and unusual European 'Body-Theatre'; largely text-free theatre with a high reliance on physical/visual expression and communication. There's also a hope, when heading for St Stephen's (and it's a hope often fulfilled) that one's engagement with the work will afford a highly sensual and compelling experience of what theatre and dance can be; a combination of the beautiful and the bizarre, choreographies that take the least obvious route and are packed with an emotional depth charge.

Edinburgh 2005 sees another bursting-at-the-seams programme throughout August at the Fringe, featuring the usual international mix of physical and visual performance – with a higher than usual profile of UK artists included in the line-up. Contemporary circus performer Matilda Leyser presents Lifeline, a fusion of aerial skills, dance and theatre in an unusual autobiographical piece. Gecko's second production The Race (following the runaway success of Taylor's Dummies) was well received during its run at BAC in the London International Mime Festival 2005. Rotozaza present Doublethink in which every night, two new actors who can't see



ANDREW DAWSON - ABSENCE AND PRESENCE. PHOTO STEFAN GLOEDE

each other, must gamely interpret the same instructions. Doublethink poses the provocative concept: 'It will work perfectly if you simply do what you're told.' Absence and Presence is a solo performance from veteran mime/physical theatre performer Andrew Dawson (who directed the award winning Pandora 88 for Fabrik, which returns to Aurora Nova this year).

From elsewhere around the world come Compagnie Martine Pisani, Couch Potatoes' Paradise, Comuna Baires & Fare Anima, Jo Strømgren Kompani, and Rainpan 43 – whose All Wear Bowlers promises 'the desolation of Samuel Beckett, the mysterious beauty of Rene Magritte, and the pathos of Laurel and Hardy' which 'collide to create a surreal world of venomous ventriloquists and belligerent bowlers'.

But beyond the Fringe... the first step out of Edinburgh for the festival will be the Aurora Nova in the South, which is launched this autumn. The aim is for this to be an annual event. To start the ball rolling – this year, between 5th October and 12th November 2005, four companies will perform at Komedia and The Gardner Arts Centre in Brighton, with three of the companies also touring to other selected theatres in the South East region. This season will incorporate the 2nd International Producers Forum organised by Visiting Arts, which will take place at Komedia Brighton on Tuesday 11th October.

Wolfgang Hoffman's wide knowledge of international dance and visual theatre drives Aurora Nova and the festival is powered by the commitment from the



TEATR PIESN KOZLA - CHRONICLES A LAMENTATION

Komedia team who produce it. This new venture is just the first stage of the development of Aurora Nova beyond Edinburgh. Asking Wolfgang what are his hopes for the future he replies: 'My hope for Aurora Nova is that it continues to delight and inspire its audience with excellent work and that its growing popularity will allow us to take on more ambitious projects in the future. I'd like Aurora Nova to facilitate its associated artists with a worldwide touring agency and information network in order to nourish the spirit of artistic exchange and to promote new and exciting work.'

On the evidence seen to date, Aurora Nova is set to grow and grow!

Aurora Nova in the South October–November 2005

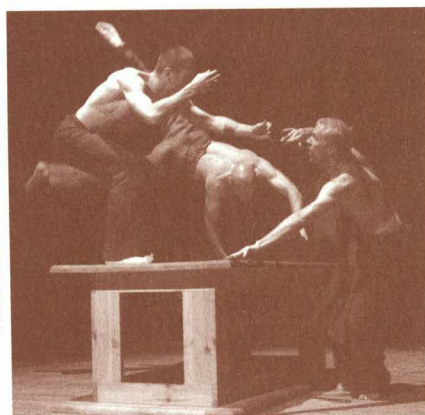
Ristorante Immortale by Familie Floez (Germany) at The Point, Eastleigh (5th Oct); Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury (7th & 8th Oct); Corn Exchange, Newbury (9th Oct); Komedia, Brighton (12th–15th Oct); South Park Hill, Bracknell (16th Oct).

Chronicles – A Lamentation by Teatr Piesn Kozla (Poland) at Komedia, Brighton (26th–29th Oct); Corn Exchange, Newbury (3rd Nov); South Hill Park, Bracknell (10th Oct); New Theatre Royal, Portsmouth (12th Oct).

Islands In The Stream by Derevo (Russia) at Trinity Arts Centre, Tunbridge Wells (12th Oct); Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton (18th & 19th Oct), Nuffield Theatre, Southampton (21st & 22nd Oct); South Hill Park, Bracknell (24th Oct).

It's Only A Rehearsal by Zero Visibility Corp. (Norway) at Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton (11th & 12th Oct).

See www.auroranova.com



Additional reporting by Dorothy Max Prior

Full details of the Edinburgh season and the Aurora Nova in the South tour can be found on www.auroranova.org

TOMORROW'S THEATRE TODAY

**DOROTHY MAX PRIOR GOES TO
THE TOWARDS TOMORROW?
INTERNATIONAL GATHERING AT
THE CENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE
RESEARCH IN WALES**

ENRIQUE PARDO



30 YEARS OF CPR CELEBRATIONS PHOTO: FRANC CHAMBERLAIN

J'ACCUSE

We're here in the 'courtroom' to witness theatre and performance facing the music – and we are invited to 'provoke, accuse and generally agitate the waters of discussion'. Today is the second day of Towards Tomorrow? – a five-day international gathering held at the Centre for Performance Research at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth on the occasion the thirtieth birthday of Cardiff Laboratory Theatre and CPR. Rather than navel gaze at their own achievements, CPR have generously opted to broaden the gaze to the furthest horizons – the past, present and future of theatre and performance. The five days include all sorts of events: performances, panels and debates, performative lectures, all-night talk-ins, a banquet – and this rather odd little number that we are eagerly anticipating.

This J'Accuse session is overseen by Philip Auslander the eminent writer, performance studies guru and cultural commentator (on everything from glam rock to performance and disability to robotics). We are told we have the opportunity to bring a charge and state our case (in no more than four minutes). The bewigged Justice Auslander is enthusiastically embracing his role as judge; the hammer comes crashing down with authority at regular intervals, objections are overruled and eventually the jury of 'twelve good folk and true' are dismissed for apathy. All in all, it's a pretty good performance...

Protest, propaganda, manifestoes, cries from the soul are all encouraged, but 'ad hominem' attacks are proscribed – an early reference to Forced Entertainment sternly disallowed.

All sorts of accusations are made: supported or contested from the floor, verdicts returned.

J'Accuse: The theatre establishment are accused of erasing the voices of women from theatre history. The accuser cites a lengthy list of lauded playwrights and

directors – male one and all.

J'Accuse: Theatre of the day is accused of appealing to the intellect rather than the heart and soul.

J'Accuse: British government agencies/ arts organisations are accused of a failure to respond appropriately to campaigns that caused the closure of the Birmingham rep and the attempted censorship of Jerry Springer the Opera.

J'Accuse: Academy and artists alike are accused of a fear and loathing of the term 'theatre', with a tendency to accord the term 'performance' to anything that was interesting or which challenged the boundaries of theatre.

J'Accuse: That binary divides continue to confound – such as the divides between theory and practice, academic and artist.

J'Accuse: That the French philosophical mafia have a stranglehold on the conference.

J'Accuse: That performance studies are too English, too American, too Swedish, too Japanese – in other words, too tied to specific sites and national research agendas.

J'Accuse: That the previous two accusations are racist – and in any case, being rooted in one's own specific culture/ geographic location informed the work one created – local knowledge being more important than generalisations.

The J'Accuse session was one of numerous colloquies, panels and discussion sessions which provided an opportunity for questions to be raised and responses expressed to what had been seen and heard throughout the very full five-day programme of performances, papers, presentations and provocations.

A concern felt particularly strongly by younger delegates, many of whom were students at Aberystwyth or invited to the conference as part of the Generation 24 panel of young practitioners, was that the conference was weighted too heavily towards the academic discipline of performance studies rather than reflecting

What's theatre/performance for? What do we hate most about it? Where has it been, where is it now and where is it going? So much information, so much inspiration – where to start? CPR's Towards Tomorrow? was a five-day feast and this report can serve only as an hors d'oeuvres to whet the appetite. I hereby offer a few morsels that hopefully give something of the flavour of this seminal event, a little soupçon of the many reflections on the past, present and future of theatre/performance.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



SO WHAT BOX DOES THIS ONE GO IN?

A challenge to dividing lines came in the lecture-performance by Stelarc: performance artist, academic, scientific investigator and new technologist. I'll admit here to a little fear and trepidation in encountering Stelarc in the flesh (so to speak) on account of all that hanging the naked body from hooks and growing extra ears. So I was pleasantly surprised when I realised that the cheery Oz technician cracking jokes as he set up the laptops was the man himself – a case of didn't recognise you with your clothes on. His lively presentation, full of humour and boyish enthusiasm for life, gave a whole new dimension to the challenging content of so much of his work. As we watch video and stills of suspensions, third hand attachments, lasers linked to heartbeats and stomach sculptures, we are given a riveting insider-eye commentary: in one of his few public-space performances, attached to cables and swinging naked across a street in New York, we learn that 'the police demanded ID'. He extols the virtues of 3-D 'printing' of live cells with hydro-gel, bio-technology which will soon make the embryo/stem-cell research

debate redundant. He bemoans the fact that the medical community will 'only do experiments on the aged and the ill' – he's grown six or seven new ears in the lab, but no-one is willing to help him grow one actually on his body and he's keen to have a go at eyes, nose and a mouth too and 'might have to go to Brazil'. We are then introduced to Head, a sort of CGI human/computer interaction. The Head face-station can respond to questions asked via a keyboard. We are invited to test Head's 'conversational strategy'. Someone asks Head what came first, the chicken or the egg? Answer: the rooster. Head can do all sorts of things, including writing poetry – and demonstrates with an example of concrete/sound-led poetry that includes alliterating lines like: 'there's worms in my wellingtons'. Grand finale to the session is a demonstration of computer-controlled body action. Four 'guinea pigs' have electrodes and cables attached – and hey presto, arms are raised involuntarily – Stelarc speculates on what other body parts we might want to try this with, but to the relief of the young volunteers, restricts the demo to the upper limbs.

actual artistic practice. This was an accusation that reverberated well beyond the J'Accuse session, and one that I felt some sympathy with – although it was rebuffed quite strongly by CPR's Richard Gough, who felt that those sorts of divides hardly existed.

But it must be said that although the performative lecture was a strong feature of the programme, and many performances were structured into the event, there were little opportunities to hear 'non-academic' artists speak about their work – and most of the presentations made were by interpreters of art rather than the makers themselves. A notable exception was Julian Maynard Smith of Station House Opera who gave a great presentation on his company's innovative work, which crosses divides of visual art and theatre in its on-going investigation of the possibilities of site, scenography and the inter-relationship of video and live performance in works such as *Bastille*, *Roadmetal Sweatbread* and *Live from Paradise*.

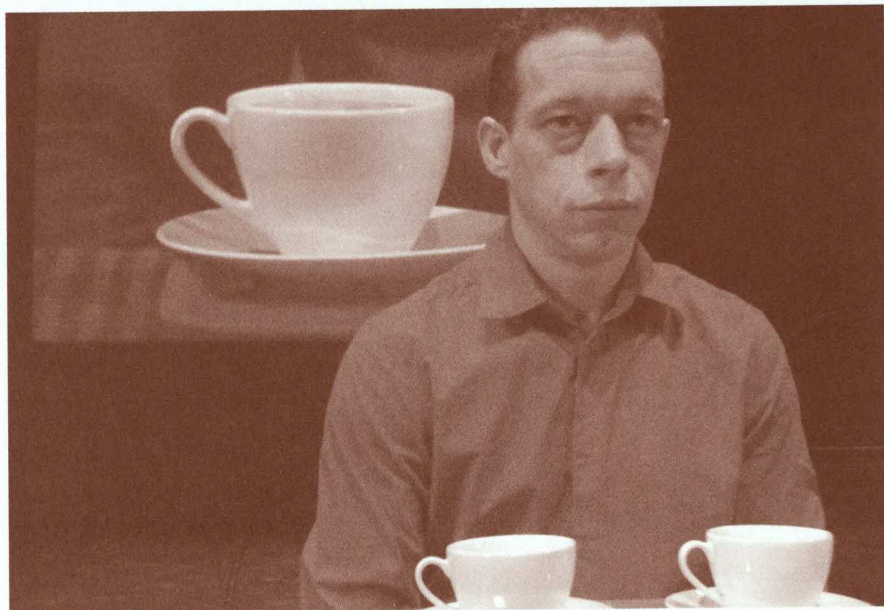
But it was a positive sign that the opportunity for such criticism was built into the conference – and there was no doubt that this international gathering was a very special event.

The amount of food for thought that was tasted, chewed over and digested was gargantuan. Here's a few titbits from the many sessions that I don't have the space to report on:

- the importance of pedagogy – what we teach and how we teach
- the re-evaluation of the term 'community arts' to take in the notion that 'communities are those who have made themselves known', which includes communities of illness and dissent
- the role of the audience – 'to tell the story there has to be a receiver'
- the use of the term 'mise en scene' and how it might apply to live art practice and performance in public spaces
- nervousness versus safety – Enrique Pardo spoke of the importance of 'nervousness' in contrast to the 'cult of cool'
- Patrice Pavis' presentation on the 'reverse anthropology' of Mexican/American artist Guillermo Gomez-Pena in which he discussed the coming together of the 'Ethno' and 'Techno'.

One last word from writer Victoria Nelson, who urged 'enlightened awareness of the gaps – where we are all coming from' – to which we could add 'and where we are all going to'.

STATION HOUSE OPERA PHOTO BY TONY PATTERSON



THE ACADEMIC PERFORMS (OR IS THAT THE PERFORMER ACADEMES?)

A strong feature of *Towards Tomorrow?* were the lecture-performances that challenged that 'binary divide' between academic theory and performance practice. One of these was called *A Constant State of Research*, performed by Kristine Nutting, who presented an academic 'self' who gave the lie to the bluestocking-bimbo divide (pages torn from books; photocopied hand-outs stuffed into panties; key lines of text scrawled on thighs). With the aid of some wonderfully bad puppetry (Derrida and Lacan as arguing hand-puppets and a Barbie and Ken exploration of 'masculinist' and 'feminist' theatre), she raced through the feminist performance studies canon – from Cixous' 'if the stage were a woman, that would mean ridding it of theatricality' to Finlay's 'theatre of the womb' to Britney Spears as the modern Ophelia... And yes – she got her tits out for the gals, a riposte to previously-experienced disapproval within the American Academy: 'there's titties on the stage... she can write about them, talk about them – but not show them?'. She ends bound and gagged, with the words of Julia Kristeva playing on tape. 'I am just pornography parading around as art.'

THE COMMENTATOR INFORMS – A WHIZ BANG CRASH THROUGH THIRTY YEARS OF PERFORMANCE

Boundaries between artforms and practices were seen, in a presentation by Bonnie Marranca, co-founder/editor of *Performing Arts Journal*, to have been breaking down for many decades. She gave us a great Cook's Tour of three decades of the journal's coverage of the American experimental theatre/performance scene – from Wilson and Foreman's 'Theatre of Images' to the shift (which she described as 'driven by women artists') from the impersonal to the autobiographical, and the artforms of dance, music and video-art fused into new performance hybrids – citing the work of Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown and Laurie Anderson. She went on to tackle the questions: when does a performance become unwatchable? Raising the controversy around Bill T. Jones' use of images of AIDS patients (dubbed 'victim art' by some commentators), the growth of 'body art' and increasing use of self-mutilation. Just one hour – but she whizzed through the development of work that was inter-textual, inter-cultural, inter-media; performance as ontology and the breakdown of life/art and audience/performer boundaries; sexuality in performance as liberating act versus buying into the oppression of women; performance in cyberspace and the discourse around new media; the return to a stripped-down art and the re-emerging of spirituality. Her final statement offered a challenge to contemporary artists: '[theatre/performance] works need to dramatise not just document human behaviour.'

To find out about this and future CPR projects, see www.thecpr.org.uk

THEATRE IS RHYTHM



ALEX MERMIKIDES IS THERE TO SEE PARA ACTIVE THEATRE SHARE THE RESULTS OF THEIR RESEARCH INTO PERFORMANCE RHYTHM



Is there a universal natural law of rhythm? This is the question that led Para Active performers Persas Jade Maravala, Magdalen Hayes and Zoe Crowder into a week-long research project at the Chisenhale Dance Space (June 2005), during which they trained in Capoeira Abuda, Bharata Nhatyam and Butoh. At the project's concluding 'sharing' event, hosted by Dr Dick McCaw, we were introduced to each of the practices, then shown a series of demonstrations in which the rhythmic qualities of each discipline was applied to a common text: Samuel Beckett's *Come and Go*, which they first performed 'straight' (a beautifully precise piece of theatre in its own right).

Capoeira (which the performers learned from Capoeirist Manjerico) is a Brazilian martial art-dance practice 'played' between two partners to live percussion. The basic four-four time of the music gives the players a framework of set moments of contact and for improvisation. To illustrate this, the performers worked with a limited vocabulary (a basic folk-dance step and the act of giving and taking an object), revealing what Para Active's Jonathan Grieve called 'flow', a

shared sense of rhythm that allowed the performers to improvise as an ensemble. Bharata Nhatyam is a traditional Indian form that is spoken/chanted and danced to very precise, almost mathematical rhythms. It is structured from specific patterns of accented and unstressed beats within sixteen-beat bars. Practitioner Shane Shambhu noted that certain metrical patterns relate to particular emotions or qualities: he demonstrated how a five-beat block suggests anger and how series of repetitions, in which accented beats are gradually phased out, gives a sense of ending or resolution. Yumino Seki spoke of how Butoh has an organic Jo-Ha-Kuy cyclical rhythm that is individual and internal to each artist, and which ultimately becomes more about the perception of time.

In the versions of the Beckett piece that followed each introduction, the performers attempted to absorb – to a greater or lesser degree – the basic rhythm of each discipline. In the first the seated performers confined the Capoeira beat to their bodies (a rhythmic shifting of the upper torso) while spoken text and gestures took the place of the form's

moments of contact. The second was performed to the beat of a metronome, with a precise pattern of directions and spoken text, and using the Bharata Nhatyam 'ending' to close the piece. The Butoh version, a long slow walk from the back wall to a ring placed downstage, made the most radical departure from the text, translating Beckett's spoken text and gestures into more abstracted movement (the performers moving closer and further away from each other) – and was the most successful for it. It was this that brought to light something that had been bothering me throughout the event: the project's admitted failure to fully recognise that the Beckett text, like any scripted piece of writing, has its own rhythm: its own structure of repetition and the particular rhythms of spoken speech and 'natural' gestures (standing up, sitting down, raising a hand to whisper in someone's ear).

What we got, then, within the exquisitely performed versions of Beckett, was a clash of rhythms, for example, when spoken text was unnaturally disjointed in order to fit the rhythm, and of stylistic forms, for example the essentially naturalistic vocabulary of the Beckett versus the more dance-like movements that resulted from internalising the rhythms.

This clash suggests that seeking a 'universal natural law of rhythm' across four very different cultural forms (for we must include Beckett as a form alongside the others) ultimately risks failing to appreciate the diversity of human expression.



GRAVITY & LEVITY

Gravity and Levity

TAKING FLIGHT

Corn Exchange

After a 20-year career as a dancer and aerialist, Lindsey Butcher is now artistic director of her own company, Gravity and Levity, which evolved from the desire to explore the creative and expressive potentials of aerial dance, applying a dance aesthetic to a circus artform – literally dancing in the air. Taking Flight is an 'aerial dance installation performance' made in six parts (three live pieces, three films) with a team of collaborators. It opens with Falling Up, an elegant and complete solo with Lindsey on a single-looped rope, a continual corde lisse on a mechanical pulley, we enjoy beautiful images of falling, foetal flying, suspension, and – yes – falling up. The three films interspersed throughout the performance show: a beautiful aerial solo vertical dance set against a huge red brick wall; a documentary of the rehearsals, high and low-lights, seen through choreographer/filmmaker Becky Edmund's eyes, and a humorous day in the life of two office workers in a topsy-turvy world. Reinventing the Wheel gives us a trio: two dancers (Charlie Morrissey and Lindsey Butcher) and a wheel. Like a constructivist Michelangelo – poised and impossible moments of suspension and counterbalance within a large rocking 'German wheel'. I enjoyed the peaceful moments of poise between elevation and return. On single-line harness, Why? is a driven and seemingly perpetual aerial dance duet with Scott Smith, in two parts. Exploring improbable angles, where weight, gravity and relationship to floor is altered, visually there was a bleakness to it, all was monotones and void of vibrant colour. Calculated precisely and with strong physical articulation, this was something of a visually boggling promenade performance, skilful in the extreme – an excellent presentation of the form of aerial dance and an exciting exploration of the possibilities of cross-artform collaboration.

Miriam King



AURELIA'S ORATORIA

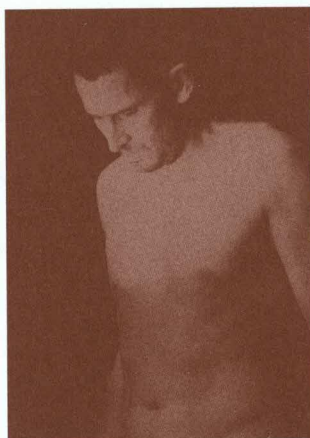
Victoria Thierre Chaplin/ Aurelia Thierre

AURELIA'S ORATORIA

Gardner Arts Centre

Some girls seem to have blessings heaped upon them at birth, and Aurelia Thierre is one of them: first, there is the family heritage – great-granddaughter of music hall star Lily Harley, granddaughter of Charlie Chaplin, daughter of 'new circus' gods Jean-Baptiste Thierre and Victoria Thierre Chaplin. She and brother James Thierre (Compagnie du Hanneton) famously made their stage debut – aged three or so – in their parents' Cirque Imaginaire, as suitcases that sprouted little legs... Then there's the good looks – boy, have those legs grown up nicely, here seen snaking in and out of a chest of drawers in a classy re-working of the 'dismembered lady' variety act. So – a wonderful showbiz heritage, great looking and a highly experienced and talented performer... what more could we want? A skilful team of supporting cast/technicians? Check – Aurelia is ably aided and abetted onstage by dancer Timothy Harling and a three-strong team of skilful object manipulators. How about a show that is a surreal and sophisticated visual delight? Check – director/designer Chaplin creates a staggering number of classy visual gags and moving pictures to amaze. Every vaudeville turn that you can think of is subverted, undermined, re-presented, but – and here's the ace card – with all the same skill and expertise that would have been expected of the trick in its original form. No postmodern pastiche here; instead a gorgeous reworking of all the things that we love about circus, vaudeville and music hall. One example – I could have picked a hundred – a regular sort of tissu aerial number suddenly takes off in extraordinary new directions as the voluptuous red curtains framing the stage take on a life of their own; dipping and swinging, dancing and flirting. Yes, I said flirting: you too will believe curtains have a beating heart. Catch her if you can... Aurelia is in a class of her own – a magic life indeed.

Dorothy Max Prior



Rodrigo Garcia

RONALD, THE STORY OF THE MCDONALD'S CLOWN

Gardner Arts Centre

Well, you have a child, there's a crisis – maybe a parent dying, a late circumcision has gone wrong. Amid the pain, the narrators say, sloshed in milkshake, coca-cola all over the stage, I had my first trip to McDonald's – how else would your aunt cope, looking after a ten-year-old nephew while his father dies? The show starts with these stories, and starts with a messy explosion of liquids and crap, it felt like the stage was drowning in grease from the biggest burger you ever saw. But the show is as much about the more insidious infiltration of Big Macs into the emotional fabric of our lives. Later the stories become rants about sex and love, amid this backdrop of crud and stuff coating, covering the stage like a batter made from sewage. The show forces strong physical revulsions, but allows connection with the actors' stories. And these explore burlesque comedy (bodies too slippery to shake hands, have sex, falling over one another), sad tragedies, stories of loneliness, where there are no happy meals, only Happy Meals®. Yes, people (mainly older people) did walk out. Some nights audiences were stunned, others gave standing ovations. The sheer physicality of bodies in gunk is strong stomach-churning stuff, but this show is far more than empty agit-prop. It explores the substance and texture of our lives where multi-national fast food brands coat our minds and slop over into our feelings as well as our intestines.

Bill Parslow

RONALD, THE STORY OF THE MCDONALD'S CLOWN



ZYGO - THE FALSE CORPSE

Zygo Theatre

THE FALSE CORPSE

Theatre Royal

The False Corpse is presented as a double-bill with Zygo's earlier production, The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana. Previously reviewed in Total Theatre (by this writer) The True History... deals with the harrowing tale of a Mexican peasant woman sold to a travelling freak-show as a carnival grotesque. Following the intensity of this 'theatre in the dark' piece, False Corpse – a piece of comedy and music hall – was, I think, a relief for the audience. The True History... is a tour de force in itself, but it made sense to combine these two productions, even if one is slighter than the other. It said to me: hey, there's nothing wrong with enjoying yourself watching people suffer, this is comedy, this is showmanship! And there is a slightly dark undertow from the earlier show – are we comfortable with ugliness as entertainment? There's all these old chestnuts about shared space, audiences being 'involved' in a show, even does art change life? And so on and so on – but hey! humour is a part of the way in which we take it all on. If you can't laugh you can't live – it's that important to share enjoyment, to laugh and applaud as part of an audience and it's what makes us feel better. You don't have to throw the baby out with the bath water, you can be entertained yet still have uncertainties and shadows underneath. The False Corpse (which, like The True History, is written by Shaun Prendergast and directed by Andrea Brooks) treads that line well, with strong presence from the cast and plenty of jokes, some subtle, some in your face. I waited all evening for someone to sit on the pink icing layered cake left on a chair – but they never did... now that's what I call inventive dramatic tension! The central conceit of a music hall performer about to stage his suicide was a good frame for a lively show.

Bill Parslow

*Desperate Men***THE MIRACLE SHOW**

Bartholomew Square/Streets of Brighton

We arrive at Brighton's Town Hall square via a mock passport control into a charmingly surreal scene – a traveller's encampment, with a van, a yurt-tent and a resident family of refugees. The opening creates a brilliantly warped sense of another culture in the celebration of the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Bears. The repeating bear absurdity works with great charm to portray the madness and precious fragility of this imaginary culture: the hilarious offering of bear's cheese is typical of this cunning interaction of absurd images and a tickling humour of cultural alienation. Was the play inspired by Shakespeare's infamous stage instruction 'Exit pursued by a bear'?

The visual, physical and verbal elements of the narrative radiate delightfully from a small core of images. This is how theatre poetry should work! Some members of the audience are invited into Ursula's tent for 'The cinema of the lost and found', and others into the van for storytelling washed down with a swig of something heartwarming, while outside the main play continues without loss of tempo and with exquisite comic timing, as when Grilho (Jon Beedell) finishes his pantomimic mourning the loss of his son with the mundane question 'What time is it?'

Strong performances all-round created a convincing world in which exploration of the plight of refugees was combined with a delightful sense of dysfunctional family culture and very un-English feelings of volatility and warmth. Agnieszka Blonska's tremendous energy and vivacious performance as Krusza was nothing short of sensational. From her entry to the end she held the audience in her palm.

One needs to see The Miracle Show more than once to get it all – I hope I do get that opportunity.

*Paul Miskin**Boilerhouse/Metalvoice***3600" (THREE-SIX-HUNDRED SECONDS)**

The Level/Streets of Brighton

This is the third outdoor work I've seen by Boilerhouse (here in collaboration with French 'industrial street poets' Metalvoice). All have combined intense physical performance with film/video presented on large screens, with mixed success: the potential of *Sister, Sister* wasn't realised in *The Bridge*, which was spectacular but ultimately disappointing due to its over-reliance on a text that did little more than illustrate the physical action. *3600"* is a positive development – the spectacle is pared down, and the visual/physical/verbal elements co-exist more harmoniously than in the previous pieces. A long walkway (lined by spectators either side) is book-ended by two platforms with rigged screens above. Four performers progress along the walkways; walking, stumbling, dancing, dragging chairs, creating a rhythmic and percussive dialogue that counterpoints the recorded text, live-mixed music and screened video. The time/space continuum is played out in numerous combinations of elements, on screen and live: relentless journeys from A to B and back again; the measurement of time within space – beats, meters, pounding footsteps; two slightly different versions of the same film of a car journey; sounds and movement motifs echoed, repeated, rephrased; actions revisited. In the space of a real-time hour, *3600"* pulls apart the myriad stories contained within a given hour. An ominous melancholy pervades the whole piece – there's an 'if only' sense of a desire to stop the clock, to go back to a previous innocence, to avoid disaster or undesirable outcomes. Restless and noisy audiences are a perennial problem for 'serious' outdoor productions – although I suppose Shakespeare managed, boisterous yardies and all. The irritating close presence of talkative drunken teenagers (not mine, I hasten to add) who were obviously wondering when the fireworks would start, were a minor disruption to what was otherwise a 'good night out at the theatre'.

*Dorothy Max Prior***NO TEARS**

Nightingale Theatre/Brighton Festival Fringe

*Circle X Arts***IF CASSANDRA**

The Argus Lofts/Brighton Festival Fringe

No Tears is a three-part movement piece based around the theme of cultural displacement, each part created by a different choreographer of a different nationality. The first piece, by choreographer Kaya Kitani from Japan, presents us with one almost silent-footed perpetual jogger; three other performers in the space, suitcases – eventually music breezes in. Games of dressing and undressing; down to underwear, one man swamped under an avalanche of clothing. The jogger pauses for a moment, and continues, anchoring the space. The second piece, by choreographer Hans Fors of Sweden (whose company Igemon also performed at the Festival) gives us two men, each 'rooted' in a red cube – like two strange plants. Growing and lifting the bottomless cubes, music creeps in and they, with a third counterpart, attempt to find their place in the world.

The final piece, by Italian choreographer Cecilia Bertoni also utilises open cubes. Four characters in white suits live their lives within and around wooden tunnels, exploring each other like lava insects, tender and exploitative. What to do, where to go? Now like lost souls, now open and soft, now strong and focused – a fabulous dance theatre, enhanced by an extraordinary original soundscape.

Cecilia Bertoni's choreography was seen again, in a more theatrical context, in her company's *If Cassandra* (Circle X Arts).

In *Cassandra*'s home three women meet for dinner. With repetitions, surprises within repetitions, and exquisite, extraordinary movement, each character is solidly believable – in a cartoon-esque way. Images remind me of Magritte, Chagall and the perpetual bride... Highly enjoyable absurdities illuminate the tragic situations of the trio, Helena, Cassandra and Medea, who have wandered from Greek mythology into a sort of contemporary, surreal parallel universe.

With the sound person/composer present down stage left, this four-strong ensemble investigate a dialogue between absurdist character acting, movement and live sound composition. For example, when Cassandra opens and throws a table-cloth across the table we hear the flutter of bird wings, and there's an ominous physically-enacted exaggeration to the sound of knives and forks being laid. This is high quality work; intense and playful impressions of life, full of gut-wrenching moments, exquisitely performed.

*Miriam King**The Freds***AVATAR**

Nightingale Theatre/ Brighton Festival Fringe

Nightingale Theatre is a perfect space for a focus on the small-scale visual theatre/dance show. Here was a double bill of two very different pieces. The Freds created a movement-based duet show I couldn't take my eyes away from. Bizarre, cartoon aliens; lost beings bound together in a world of their own making, which both we and they attempt to fathom. One character looks like a tomato ketchup splodge with a face in the middle, the other has pipecleaner-possibility arms. Waiting for messages, attending to the moment, receiving impulses from the other and from selected audience members... Moving surprisingly and superbly, they are not afraid of stillness, and their oddities are not overplayed. Although they look humorous this is not, as you might expect, a humorous show, it's a riveting and brave show, no props, no sets, just themselves and their side-by-side harmony, with an excellent soundscape to boot.

Avatar is a unique improvisational performance between a dancer, a light animator and a sound designer. Rajyashree Ramamurthi dances with perfect grace, prompting the question what is it that we see when we are watching dance? An essence? A life-source flowing? The only light source is the animator, from which lines are traced and laced, streaming whitewashing over her form, from which she moves, leaving a fading residue behind of where she has been, with a fade so slow you don't notice it gone. How fleeting is a moment – present and gone. A residue, imprinted, fades to memory, and the dance moves on. A performance of unified beauty.

Miriam King

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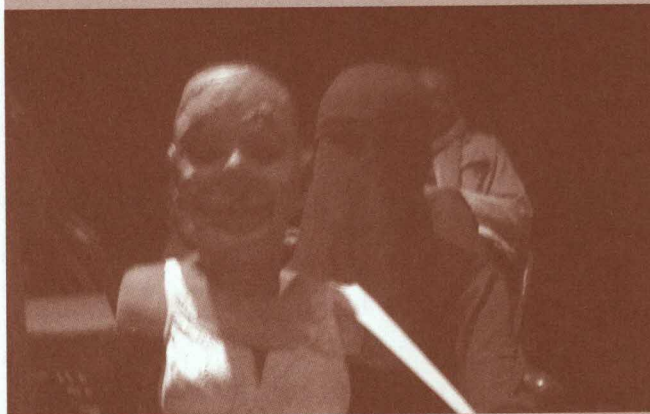
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THE PEOPLE SHOW ALL STARS – JUANITA



BURLESQUE AT BRIGHTON FESTIVAL MAY 2005

PEOPLE SHOW ALL STARS

The Famous Spiegeltent

LA CLIQUE

The Famous Spiegeltent

PIN UPS UNPINNED

Komedia

The burlesque boom has always been strongly rooted in Brighton – what with Vavavavoom, Voodoo Vaudeville, Lost Vagueness et al. The arrival of the Famous Spiegeltent brought an opportunity for even more variety (in both senses) than usual – with festival specials adding to the regular nights at venues like Komedia.

Not to be outdone, Komedia hosted a few specials at the home base – including Pin Ups Unpinned, which featured the Grrrlesque troupe – an all-female all-dancing comedy burlesque outfit whose deliciously kitsch routines include stripping housewives, stripping moustachioed commuters and stripping – well, you name it. They're bold, they're brash, they're beautiful... and they'll use any excuse to get down to the red pvc panties, it would seem. The few interspersed other acts (which included Miss Heidi Heelz, who fed the audience cake, and the Perverted Turkies' racy Handbags at Dawn cat-fight) complemented the Grrrles well – the only complaint being that the evening was let down a little by the jazz combo Drei who played over-long sets and should know better than to attempt Peggy Lee medleys. But it was great to have an all-woman bill, avoiding the usual burlesque divide of male musician/ female dancer, male comic/female showgirl.

Are you or have you ever been a member of The People Show? The Spiegeltent People Show All Stars was an early evening event that brought together an eclectic mix of folks from past, present and (we presume) future Shows, all doing their party pieces. Even before it all started, you could tell irony was high on the agenda, with the promise of acts like Bunny Girls of the Apocalypse and Lady Jaunita's transsexual puppet striptease – this latter saw the lovely Juanita brought right down to her bare-wood essentials, a true grotesque. The acts were all good fun (in a strictly postmodern tongue-in-cheek sort of way), but the compere was weak and the energy slipped and dragged occasionally. When the evening's headliners, John Hegley and Andrew Bailey, came on the ante was well and truly upped – Bailey's dementedly cathartic gurning-and-howling portrayal of Medusa; Hegley's loopy poems – a good time was had by all, despite the rather odd feeling of being decadent in daylight.

Also at the Spiegeltent was La Clique – which was the hot ticket at last year's Edinburgh Fringe and similarly took Brighton Festival by storm. Its runaway success is due to an unbeatable combination of the best quality acts, a great sense of pace and flow, and the producers' willingness to always leave us begging for a little more as we ricochet from silky-voiced cabaret chanteuse to luscious red-headed trapeze artiste to ultra-camp boy acrobats. These last are The Caesar Twins, blond bombshells who describe themselves as 'double trouble'; here seen snaking up ropes and trading back flips with muscular ease, their finale a re-enactment of Jaws in a water tank. Ursula Martinez striptease-cum-magic act gives a new twist to the disappearing hankie conundrum, and Miss Behave takes the cake for her superbly skilled sword-swallowing played with an I Love Lucy female comedienne vibe. Guest artist Paul Zenon looked around and wondered what he was doing here: 'a magic act in the round, with the audience close up, and in a tent lined with mirrors', before somehow pulling off the famous spinning beer trick. Superb, no postmodern pussyfooting here: La Clique is hard-core sassy and slick contemporary Burlesque at its best.

Dorothy Max Prior



Maly Drama Theatre of St Petersburg

UNCLE VANYA

Corn Exchange

Golden light on a wooden floor, three huge hay bales teetering on rafters above. A distant clock. A white teapot on the eternal samovar. Characters in beiges and browns and one woman animated in her gentle tones of blue. Space, time, interactions. Without action, belief means nothing... Something is wrong in this house, a man is haunted by the fact he may have wasted his life. Twilight, night, a storm. Grumpy old men and poetic lives; when one has no life, one makes do with dreams. Aspirations of complete beauty. Perpetual rain streaming at the window, the sound of relentless raindrops – what glorious rain – time drawn out, lives in suspension. I love the sound of Russian: hear it and feel the soul. These actors live and breathe their parts. Tenderness and desperation, futility and eternal hope. As the hay bales finally lower, my eyes are brimming. We will find rest, we will find rest, we will find rest.

Miriam King



Circle X Arts

STEINER GRAFFITI

Brighton Fringe/ Argus Lofts

Under the auspices of his company, Circle X Arts, Christopher Markus presents a solo piece that is part autobiographical performance and part performative lecture – an homage to Rudolf Steiner and a reflection on his influence on Markus' life. It is an inspiring and impassioned performance that is at its best when he is most physically embodied in his exploration of self: marking out movement pathways across the space with fluid ease, words and gestures blending harmoniously, creating circles of salt on the ground or scribbling furiously on the blackboard – reaching the metaphysical through the physical, as both Artaud and Steiner would have it. The performance is less effective when he switches from his own journey to engage in character acting to explain Steiner's philosophy and the impact it had on those experiencing it first-hand.

Dorothy Max Prior



STREETS OF BRIGHTON 2005

On/Off Programme – Various Artists

The evening programme for this year's Streets of Brighton was something of a mixed bag. Many of the shows were premieres – which sounds exciting, but with much street arts production 'premiere' often means 'not yet tried and tested' – how one rehearses and develops this sort of work is an ongoing issue for the sector...

The best of the bunch were **Desperate Men's The Miracle Show** and **The Boilerhouse/Metalvoice collaboration 3600" (Three-Six-Hundred Seconds)**, both reviewed elsewhere in this magazine.

Radiator – Creation to Cessation was a disappointment. When I reviewed their 2003 production, *Dreams and Demons*, I tipped Radiator as a young company to watch, with their ability to create interesting visual imagery and an obvious talent for making fantastical – in all senses of the word – costumes and sets. The missing element then was a sense of performance – who or what is holding the space? Unfortunately, two years on, nothing has changed. A beautiful setting, Queens Park late evening; gorgeous lanterns by the lake; strange and beautiful creatures in sculptural dresses, bedecked with leaves; an odd IOU-type large pod thing with waving tendrils; an ominous and enveloping soundscape – yes, all the elements – but what? We arrive, we watch, we wait, we go home. No shape to the piece, no dramatic unfolding, no sense of a meaningful shared experience, I'm afraid.

Bangditos (formerly Scharlatan Allee) – The Guardian Angels continued the company's obsession with terrorising audiences with motor vehicles – they have now graduated from a Citroen 2CV to a Fire Engine manned by an anarchic crew who seem more keen on fire-starting than fire-fighting. There's plenty of bangs and whooshes – and a bit of Full Monty meets Village People play-acting with the fireman stereotype – but it feels a little tamer than the last show. I have it on reliable evidence that when previously performed 'sur le

continent', where health and safety regs are perhaps a little looser, it had more oomph. I did, though, enjoy the arrival of the real East Sussex Fire Brigade at the end – a nice touch.

The daytime programme was even more erratic in quality, as can be expected I suppose from a mixed 'On/Off programme' showcase festival. Much of the Walkabout was of dubious quality – the exceptions were old favourites like **Dot Comedy** who leave most of their situation-led comic street theatre competitors at the starting gate. Butch men dressed as angels are usually good for a laugh – viz. Artizani's Cupids for example – and I was amused by the new **Larkin' About – Electroglide Angels**, which twirl and glide Dalek-like through the streets and are only slightly less other-worldly.

Of the static shows, there were a few gems but a good few disappointments. **Faceless – Puppet Café** had gentle charm and very nicely-crafted puppets and masks, but lacked an engaging narrative. The **Cercle de la Titote/Ragroof Theatre** collaboration **Unbinding Lives**, on the other hand, had tons of narrative, being a reminiscence theatre piece based on an inter-weaving collection of stories from local communities in Normandy and Sussex. Each story was told in a rather lovely sort of wooden open-sided confessional booth, with the simplest of props (a teapot, an umbrella) as accompaniment. I really wanted to like this – but somehow wasn't as engaged as I should have been. Perhaps there are some shows that really do need the intimate holding space that an indoor venue provides? Mike Martin (of Martinez and Fabrega) has a new venture: **3 Monkey Productions**. The premiere of **The Shop** gave us the blueprint for a very successful street show – but is not quite there yet. It's the classic three-man clown set-up; here, barbers with no customers who spend the day listening to the local radio station. The predictable games with brooms, wigs and gowns turn more surreal as they get drawn into a ludicrous War of the Worlds radio-news scenario. The slapstick physical comedy is lacking in pace at times (the show needs some serious cutting and tidying – snip,

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snip, snip, lads!) but the relentless-radio idea is a brilliant use of recorded sound, and there is some lovely object animation, including a crafty puppet-cat who wanders in and out of the action and a row of dancing hairdressing-heads.

The best-realised and most enjoyable daytime show that I saw at this year's Streets of Brighton was **Bash Street Theatre's Frankenstein – A Comic Tale of Magic and Adventure**, which has come a long way since I first saw it at the Garden of Delights in Manchester 2004. The action has been tightened up, so that we now have a well-paced mock-melodrama that brings the Frankenstein story into the context of a Victorian travelling sideshow. The centrepiece of the set is a sort of Caractacus Potts inventor's windmill that buzzes, whirrs and whizzes. There's real magic – a sawn-up Zig-Zag lady (the lovely and nimble Jojo Pickering) and a sword-pierced Human Pincushion (the delightful and equally nimble Simon Pullum). These two play all the characters except for the hair-tossing Goth Dr Frankenstein (Russell Hurd). There's oodles of exciting action and sackloads of grotesque humour – small children and adults alike were delighted by the sawing-off of an audience member's leg to provide a body part for the fiendish Dr F. After the exhausting search for a satisfying show, it

was a relief to be able to sit down on the grass of Brighton's Pavilion Gardens and enjoy a well-crafted, well-performed, funny and engaging street theatre show. Please can we have some more, sir?

Dorothy Max Prior

MUSIC THEATRE & NEW OPERA

Teatr Piesn Kozla

(Song of the Goat Theatre)

CHRONICLES – A LAMENTATION

Barbican, London

May 2005

Royal Opera/Ex Machina

1984

Royal Opera House, London

May 2005

One week, two major international venues, two pieces of music theatre, two deeply disappointing productions. *Chronicles – A Lamentation*, a retelling of a fragment of the epic narrative poem *Gilgamesh*, is the latest performance by the Polish company *Teatr Piesn Kozla*. Under the direction of Grzegorz Bral, the company of seven sing, tumble and play their way through a forty-minute whirl of polyphonic song and impressive physicality. The programme states that the piece developed from an interest in those elements of *Gilgamesh* that are about the negation of death, about the futility of evading it, and about the profound understanding that can arise from its acceptance. Meaty stuff, and I arrived at the Barbican full of an expectation to be challenged, moved and hopefully even transformed by this piece. The performers certainly appeared to be deeply connected to the

material, and seemed to be full of emotion and feeling as they wailed and whirled their way through the forty minutes of the show. This is certainly how it appeared, but the emotion in the performers didn't manage to make any kind of bridge through the auditorium and to me. This performance was a spectacle of grieving and suffering, but it didn't help me to engage with how I might experience grief, how I might suffer, how I might contemplate my own inevitable death. It very much felt like one of those nights out where the performers are very highly trained, and so technically secure, so in touch with their darkest feelings, so in control of their voices, so confident and impressive in their physicality, that the whole thing turned into a demonstration of what it all meant to them. Whilst I'm sure this kind of approach makes for a fabulous actor training programme, I'm not convinced that it translates very well into a basis for public performance, and it left me cold. I left the theatre feeling deeply irritated at the piece and at the performers, and absolutely not feeling as though I'd been on some kind of spiritual journey, and the few images that had genuinely struck a chord in my heart were soon forgotten when I remembered the overblown over-emoting that had

characterised the rest of the piece. Meanwhile, over at the Opera... pre-eminent visual theatre maker Robert Lepage makes his directorial debut at Covent Garden with a production of Lorin Maazel's new opera based on Orwell's terrifying novel *1984*. Opera itself is not a form that Total Theatre normally concerns itself with – an odd fact perhaps when remembering Wagner's hopes for opera as *Gesamtkunstwerk* – as total work of art – but Lepage's involvement promised to be an exciting one. In writing about his early work, Lepage has said that his brilliant visual and technical inventiveness stemmed from a lack of funding, from the necessity of finding transformations and unexpected possibilities in simple and everyday objects and images. In this production, the need for inventiveness seemed to have been replaced by good hard cash (*1984* has won notoriety for its cost of the best part of a million pounds for just ten performances), and only towards the very end when Winston Smith cowers in the corner of his Room 101 was there any sense of Lepage's visual aesthetic: three sides of a padded white cube revolving on the arm of a terrible instrument of torture made for a frightening perspectival shift and a thrilling realisation of Smith's fear. Although there were moments when other Lepage motifs – the simultaneous scene, the use of multiple narratives, the collision

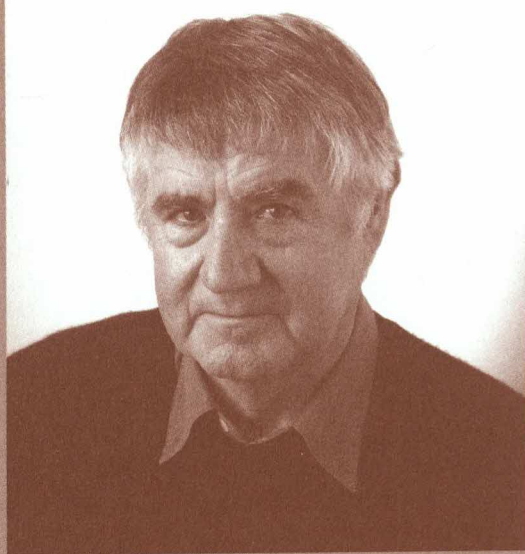
of the fleeting and personal with the public and permissible – were visible, the piece rarely carried his signature. In fact, the staging was surprisingly conventional, and Maazel's music made the characterisations much more of the world of opera than of the world Orwell imagined. This was a production created by a wonderful director limited by the form in which he was working, by the weaknesses of the score, and by the limitations of the performers. Despite a miraculous set that managed to be both metallic and transparent, and Simon Keenlyside's robust and physical performance as Smith, I left this performance – very much as I had left the Barbican two nights before – longing to be back in a little, under-funded venue somewhere, where I might be genuinely engaged by the work, where I might be dazzled by real inventiveness, and where the work might genuinely nourish my mind, my heart and my soul.

David Harradine



1984 PHOTO BILL COOPER

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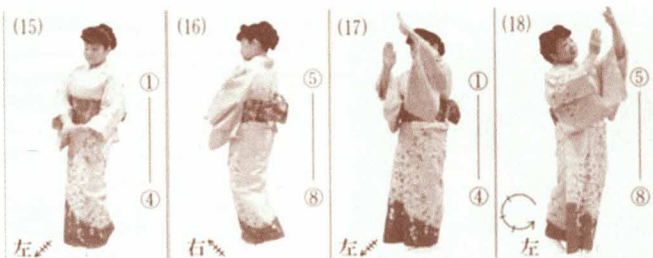
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BOB KARPEN - BIG IN JAPAN



Laurie Anderson

THE END OF THE MOON

RITF Barbican Theatre, London

May 2005

Bob Karper

BIG IN JAPAN

Brighton Fringe/ Nightingale Theatre

May 2005

How to review a Laurie Anderson show? What was she like, what did she do? Well, she was like Laurie Anderson and she did what she does – softly spoken storytelling in that gorgeous NYC drawl mixing and matching the personal and the political, merging philosophical reflection and modern myth-making with wit and irony, her stories punctuated by energetic bursts on her electric violin. The performance ebbs and flows like a piece of music; melody, harmony, rhythm, counterpoint; each 'movement' fitting with the last, building to conclusion.

She's alone on a stage furnished with a Jackanory wing-chair, a screen and a constellation of night-light candles turning the floor into a sky of stars – appropriately enough for a piece that was made in response to being NASA's first (and only, as Anderson points out with a typical take-it-which-way-you-will twinkle) artist-in-residence. The End of the Moon is the resulting work – and inevitably it includes reflection on the residency process itself. We hear about the telephone call that starts the journey – perhaps a cruel trickster has discovered her innermost desire and has decided to tease her, but no, it is a real invitation. We understand the relevance to the baby-boom generation; space travel, the final frontier, dreams and hopes of a new age that have now faded – the 1969 moonwalk sandwiched in time between Kennedy's assassination and the events of September 11th 2001. The plane-bombing of the twin towers is reflected on through a story about Anderson's dog. Accompanying her on an expedition into the wilds, the dog is attacked by birds of prey. He survives, but he can no longer look up to the sky without experiencing the fear of the approaching wings.

Airborne terrorists, depleted ozone layer, shuttle disasters – the sky's more of a limit than it used to be; but there's still the eternal past-present-future in the twinkling stars lull-lull-lullabying us to sleep to the sound of a violin and a soft voice.

So to Bob Karper: one man, a keyboard, an accordion, a screen and a projector – and a bucketload of stories. Bob Karper's beating his own path, but there's something about him that reminds me of Laurie Anderson; perhaps it's the engaging and melodic American voice but more I think it's because his musicianship informs his performance in every way; the poetic lilt to the spoken text; the way the rhythms build as he flows from one tale to another – stories about friends called Steve and time spent teaching in Japan. I'm unsure about the projected slides – the screen feels too far back, too large, the images lacking sharpness and colour. A smaller screen would perhaps be more appropriate to capture the desired home-spun effect. But this is more than compensated for by Karper's engaging presence.

Dorothy Max Prior

NEEHIGH - WAGSTAFFE



Kneehigh Theatre

WAGSTAFFE: THE WIND-UP BOY

BAC, London

April 2005

Kneehigh are a very good example of a theatre company that straddles the gap between 'fringe' and 'mainstream' – showing that there is little currency left in those terms as exclusive divides. With Tristan and Yseult at the National, Wagstaffe tours the village halls and scout huts of south-west England, ending in a run at BAC (which at a stretch we could think of as Battersea's village hall). Billed as 'the only show this year starring a clockwork boy and an articulated lorry', it's about a boy so bad his parents run away from home to join the circus. This is an unashamedly populist family show – with a typical Kneehigh mix of beefy physical performances (air guitar, circus tricks and karaoke), quirky visuals (including Wagstaffe's stunning transformation to cyborg then angel) and ironic humour. Much of this humour revolves around Wagstaffe's reputation as 'bad' – he is of course a delightful young person, whilst his parents are seen as being so tied up in themselves that they can't manage to work out that he has needs. This inversion of what is presented as truth is explored with a lack of polemic so that the message – that each individual is a unique wonder – can be discovered by the audience in their own way. As in all Kneehigh productions, music plays an important part, in this case some very fetching rock classics from Led Zep and Meat Loaf. It's great fun, it's good theatre – and despite (or even because of) the constant high level of humour, it is, in the end, profoundly moving. But there again, I'm the girl who cried when Champion the Wonderhorse died, so I've always been a sucker for corny, popular drama that tugs at the heart-strings.

Dorothy Max Prior

THEATRE ALIBI - CLOSE TO HOME. PHOTO TIM CUFF



Theatre Alibi

CLOSE TO HOME

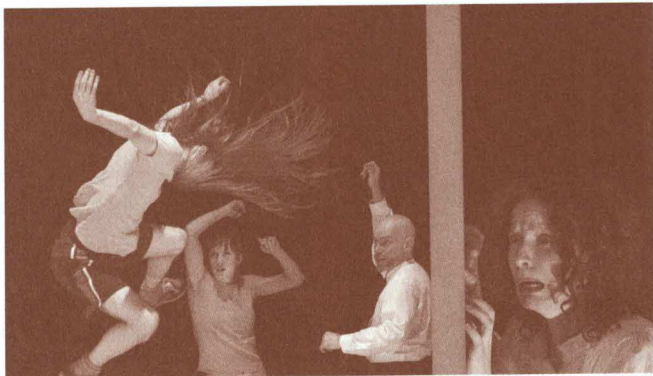
Komedia, Brighton

March 2005

Reminiscence, verbatim and other forms of theatre that use true-life stories are certainly flavour of the moment. The challenge for a 'total theatre' company is to enable the resulting text generated from these stories to be 'cooked' into something other than documentary. This Theatre Alibi does admirably in Close to Home, bringing their twenty-one years experience of theatre-making to the task in hand: finding ways for the various elements of spoken word, visual image, physical expression and music to work harmoniously together.

Just what do we mean by 'home'? This is the question Theatre Alibi asked of a number of people born in the UK but with roots elsewhere. The resulting answers, as explored in Close to Home, are many and various: banned books thrown from the house by a zealous father; the taste of fish fingers; singing Kookaburras; memories of the Muppets on TV. In the time-honoured physical theatre tradition, three performers play all the characters evoked in the three stories told. We hear the voices of (amongst many others) a Turkish grandfather, an Australian mother and a half-Bengali child brought up in an English orphanage. This last gives rise to a very lovely use of puppetry, as Muppet character Ernie plays out the hopes, fears and innermost feelings of that child. The human performers are equally engaging – I wouldn't have thought, before seeing this show, that two grown men could transform so credibly into eight-year old girls! In the only section that I felt didn't quite work we had a sudden switch to film – interesting enough footage of the streets of Calcutta, but purely illustrative, mirroring the related story. But even this section redeemed itself as the live performers faded to black in front of screen images that dissolve into a tapestry of colour – another magic moment in an enchanting show.

Dorothy Max Prior



DVB - JUST FOR SHOW. PHOTO JIRI VOLEK

*Chunky Move***TENSE DAVE***Dance Theater Workshop, New York City**May 2005*

It has been a long time since I heard a performance set applauded, but the one that Chunky Move developed for this piece probably deserved it. Virtually all of Tense Dave takes place on a huge creaking wooden disc that rotates continuously throughout the show. Upon this circular stage, fragmentary walls are wheeled around by the performers, so that a whole string of spaces and places are assembled and inhabited. What they are inhabited by is a dizzyingly various sequence of events, some obviously narrative, some scarcely so, some apparently entirely abstract, and some even recognizable as dance. The only constant character throughout all this is the eponymous Dave, and with a dream-life like this (for that is what the conclusion of this show suggests that it is) no wonder the poor chap is tense. A be-suited man barks nervously into a telephone and then takes lascivious photographs of his shoes; a young woman dresses in a deep red velvet gown and enacts a whole romantic adventure straight out of Jane Austen; a juicily over-amplified sci-fi bloodbath occurs; and Dave finds himself the star of a cheesy musical show and lip-synching to Judy Garland. Indeed, there is actually too much happening here, and some of the admirable discipline that the company brought to the practical and technical aspects of this show would have benefited the development of its performance content. Perhaps then the much darker performance that lay within Tense Dave might have made it to the surface.

*Robert Ayers**Volcano Theatre Company***THE MOST EXCELLENT AND LAMENTABLE TRAGEDY OF ROMEO AND JULIET***Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Wales**April 2005*

Oh my, I really do seem to be collecting new interpretations of Romeo and Juliet! Volcano's 'newly corrected, augmented and amended' version uses the company's trademark 'filming performers while they're performing live' thing that everyone does nowadays. They play the Peeping Tom card, and I appreciate the artistic intention of displacement of the gaze and re-evaluation of the performers' actions, but am never comfortable with the way women are objectified in their productions. But it is a neat way of portraying Friar Laurence's confessional box as an ongoing theme. The programme notes claim proudly that the directors find the play 'unnecessary' and 'problematic'. The response could be 'well, leave it to those of us who don't' but I shall try to avoid cruelty. But I don't think I can avoid saying that Volcano seem, on the evidence of this and other productions, to have a bit of a problem with sex and love. They decide to challenge the one thing in the play that usually remains sacrosanct, no matter how 'contemporary' the interpretation – namely, the love the protagonists have for each other and their fidelity. Does this add an interesting new twist? Well no, it's a different story altogether – less deconstruction than demolition. There are redeeming features: most notably a great set (a teen-dream play-house with a miniature doll's house version manipulated by the Friar) and the energetic and skilled performances, particularly from the two young women in the four-strong cast, Niamh McGrady and newcomer Caryl Morgan (Juliet), whose gorgeously tentative walk around the furniture of the set was a lovely metaphor for teenage trembling-on-the-brink – we really could have done with more of these sort of well-realised theatrical moments.

*Dorothy Max Prior**DVB***JUST FOR SHOW***O'Reilly Theatre, Dublin**April 2005*

Visually stunning, Just For Show could perhaps be best described as live cinema, albeit a strange hybrid of arthouse and advertising. Use of projections, lighting and set, combined with slick performances, created a confusing orgy of image. In the opening sequences the effect was so strong I feared I would be ill. It was often difficult to discern what was live and what film – the boundaries of the proscenium stage were constantly questioned and confused in dream-like and playful ways. The picture might extend beyond the frame of the stage, creating frames within frames, where live, filmed, and shadow dancers interacted; appearing and disappearing, casually coming up out of the floor, or extending the performance into the audience. I felt it was in this territory of pure image that the production had its greatest success. The emotional effect of this, combined with music, and even smells, was very powerful. However, when they attempted to critique our obsession with image, using a magazine-like format, and sloganistic, albeit often hilarious, language, I fear the show slipped into its own trap, becoming too successfully what it attempted to parody. At the end of the evening, I came away with the impression that I had somehow gorged on nothing. Perhaps this was the intention, but I can't help but feel they should have had the courage to let us feed on the beauty they could produce, without trying to be clever and force easy meanings that ultimately negated their achievements.

*Niamh Lawlor**Pants on Fire***TOSSED!***People Show Studios, London**April 2005*

Two unforgettable strengths of this version of The Tempest: first the soundscape composed by Lucy Egger – self-effacing, beguiling, live – and next the staging. With the poorest of means, the director Peter Bramley dreamed up a setting of power and invention to underpin the marvellous text: walls of slashed black cloth enclosing the action, an intricate choreography of black and white screens hiding and revealing a dream of six almost identical Ariels, eerily costumed (by Tracey Cliffe) in matching black and white.

The action swept buoyantly along, without an interval. The initial storm was played in miniature, the ship represented first by a tilting, swaying platform for the deck, then by the model of a whole galleon, from which cut-out effigies of the passengers fell gracefully into the deep. Clever and effective, if shoestring simple.

Some of the acting was strong, some poor, some uncontrolled, out of sync with the style. Most of the players played several roles: the small spaces backstage must have been frantic. Prospero (Jonathan Tanner) was casual, almost laid-back, but obviously super-intelligent. At the end, when he appeared in a ridiculous wig, he managed to convey self-deprecation as well as dignity. Miranda's physicality was like that of an untamed colt, charming but in need of restraint (Dawn Fleming). The six Ariels stole the show: through them shone the director's talent. They echoed and melted into each other, their movements disciplined to the same extent as many of the other performances were not. I'd say Peter Bramley was a director to watch.

Penny Francis

SITE LINES

*Punchdrunk***THE FIREBIRD BALL**

The Offley Buildings, London

March 2005

*Frantic Assembly***DIRTY WONDERLAND**

Brighton Festival/ Ocean Hotel, Saltdean

May 2005

*Dreamthinkspeak***UNDERGROUND**

Brighton Festival/ Theatre Royal

May 2005

*Station House Opera***LIVE IN PARADISE**

London/ Birmingham/ Colchester

June 2005

Four very different examples of site-responsive performance...

The Firebird Ball (inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Stravinsky's Firebird) starts in a cabaret bar. In twos and threes we are taken off to be masked and let loose in the labyrinth. In the cavernous basement we roam through abandoned rooms populated by wandering ghosts; I am seized by the hand, led up staircases to a ballroom where I am drawn into a demented jive, then left abandoned on the dance floor – in the sea of white masks, it is hard to tell audience from performers. Further onwards and upwards... Narnia-like alternate worlds nest inside each other like Russian dolls. There is more than a hint of decadence in the heady mix of sensual experiences and masked voyeurism. On the top floor is Friar Lawrence's gloomy domain, drenched in incense, a stained glass window separating pews and gravestones. I venture into a confessional box and find myself sharing the tiny space with a terrifying Lord Capulet – Juliet's father and her supposed ally the Friar are both portrayed as dangerous characters who, consciously or unconsciously,

engineer her death. Elsewhere, in a stark concrete room, the death-of-Mercutio fight scene is acted out with a breathtaking intensity, bodies crashing and flying and slamming down – it's a perfect example of physical performance and site interacting to make thrilling theatre. The masking (a device used regularly by Punchdrunk) is a brilliant move. We each retain our own separate experiences and it discourages the audience chatting that happens so often at promenade performance events.

Frantic Assembly's Dirty Wonderland starts with a coach journey to the site (a gloriously wasted beauty of a hotel) in the company of an Alan Partridge type tour guide. It's an unnecessary framing device that is, in any case, illogically abandoned once the piece gets going. The lobby opening scene is a creaky mix of naturalistic dialogue and choreographed movement – and I start to worry. But as the main characters (boy-girl checking in for a dirty weekend) get separated and we are beckoned to follow the boy, we get drawn into a hectic race around the building that is full of thrills. The dirty weekend turns into a lost weekend as boy is set upon by foxy ladies and drawn into hotel staff scenes of power-broking and humiliation, as explorations of sexual and social power become intermingled. We are herded around at a fair pace; there is a continuing feeling of slight panic as we hurry along, encountering room-swapping guests running naked in corridors lit with ultra-violet light, being squashed up against gyrating disco dancers or trudging up staircases as 'guests' in underwear push past. There are any number of great visual moments: a sea-view dining room resplendent with shimmering neon-coloured jellies; a mannequin that changes clothes to match the missing girl's wardrobe; a hanged

man on the stairwell that we are rushed past. In a breathtaking finale, we glimpse blood-soaked scenes of slaughter, encounter the Hotel manager's basement room in which the autocrat sits on a bed set amongst a forest of real trees, and finally arrive in a ballroom in which waves of dancers move towards us across the great length of the room. The shaky start ends as a magical experience.

Dreamthinkspeak take a very different strategy with their audience, who are left unguided to experience Underground, an exploration of Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment set on, around and under the stage of Brighton's Theatre Royal. At first, I keep missing the set-piece scenes, but then cotton on to following one character around rather than wandering the theatre like a lost soul. I pick on Sonia, innocent-flower-turned-prostitute. I first encounter her parasol, placed in a dark bricked corner. Then she's on film, waiting on a street under the parasol. Next, I find her in live representation in the (real!) bar. When she runs out distressed, I follow her to her room, furnished with a little shrine to the Virgin Mary, in which she sobs uncontrollably with shame and despair. One of the pleasures of the piece is encountering spaces like this little room (created in one of the theatre's balcony boxes) first as installations then animated by the performer – although I have mixed feelings about the power this site exerts on the audience, full as it is of associations, and am interested to see how the piece will work elsewhere. But in Underground, dreamthinkspeak have created a treasure-trove of theatrical experiences; films of city streets and railway tunnels projected onto walls or doorways; ghosts outside windows; a mirror with no reflection; an ensemble chorus who flock and de-flock around the building, sitting

grouped around suitcases or criss-crossing the stage. So ultimately a rich and rewarding experience that relies on a bit of work on the audience's part!

Station House Opera's Live in Paradise is a rather different kettle of fish – an exploration of the possibilities of live and screen performance that takes place in three different sites simultaneously. So – and check out the mathematical possibilities here – three performers in each of three locations, plus cameraman, so that at any given time we are witnessing action live on-stage from our site, filmed from our site, filmed off-stage at our site or filmed on or off stage at either of the other sites. Add to this a deliberate blurring of characters of similar physical characteristics dressed in similar outfits – and it becomes almost impossible at times to work out what you are witnessing where. We are presented with a dream-like Alice Through the Looking Glass world in which the characters are deliberately two-dimensional representations of stereotypes, their actions ritualistic and their conversations cut-ups of naturalistic exchanges. Small domestic incidences morph into a more troubling (although never really disturbing) mix of provocations, sexual games and cartoon violence. The effect is of a Bunuel film scripted by Gertrude Stein. There are a few gimmicky ideas – such as clothing removed in one location tossed off-stage to apparently reappear in another – which wear thin after a while, but taken as a whole it is a well-realised and provocative piece which raises all sorts of interesting questions on the nature of 'reality', the inter-relationship of memory and imagination, and the response one affords something perceived to be happening on screen rather than live in the next room.

Dorothy Max Prior



PRINT PUBLICATIONS

**THE SHAKESPEARE FOLIOS
KING LEAR/THE TRAGEDIE OF KING
LEAR. THE FIRST FOLIO OF 1623 AND
A PARALLEL MODERN EDITION**

Edited by Nick de Somogyi with
Simon Trussler
Nick Hern Books
www.nickhernbooks.co.uk

Folio or Quarto? That is the question. Or perhaps aye, there's the point. Anyway – what you will – here's another brand-new edition of those famous texts. But with all those Ardens, Oxfords, Swans and Penguins old and new vying for space on our bookshelves, do we need another version of Shakespeare's plays? Yes, we do – for the very able Nick de Somogyi (writer, editor, researcher and visiting curator at Shakespeare's Globe) has come up with what Peter Hall has described as 'a wonderful idea: I can't understand why nobody has thought of it before.' What he does is present the first folio of 1623 – the plays as gathered and published after Shakespeare's death by his close friends and colleagues from the King's Men – just as given, punctuation and spelling intact, but (this is the important bit!) in modern type, thus removing the gloomy 'accumulated varnish' of antiquity that has to date made the Folio inaccessible to modern readers. Hey presto – we can read and make up our own minds! And as an added bonus, we have a parallel text of a modern edition of each play. These editions are the general series introduction, in which no claims to be promoting a 'definitive version' are made – on the contrary, the notion of Shakespeare as a 'playwright' (rather than a 'play-write') – a writing/devising theatre-maker whose plays would no doubt have shifted and changed from one production to another – is mooted. And the introduction to King Lear is worth reading for its learned but amusing investigation of the word 'flibbertigibbet' amongst numerous other joys.

DRAMA/THEATRE/PERFORMANCE

Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis
Routledge/ The New Critical
Idiom Series

No matter what is said about definitions not being important to artists, or about the terminology being an unnecessary restriction or divide, when it comes to the crunch we all know that the terms 'drama', 'theatre' and 'performance' do have different meanings and connotations that raise different expectations in the student, audience member or critic – and which artists will use in various ways to denote subtly different ways of working. So the differences are worth discussing – hence this book, which offers 'no definitions; rather, it sets out maps and narratives' although of course that mapping includes a fair amount of investigation of other people's definitions, from Aristotle to Brecht and beyond. The very first chapter of Part One: A Genealogy is called 'Drama and Theatre as University Subjects' which gives a clue as to who this book is primarily aimed at! This first part is all good sound stuff – a useful pulling together of various historical strands. Part Two: Keywords is a bit of a Cook's Tour through the usual suspects: performativity, presence and representation, catharsis et al. It's a handy quick reference, but nothing new and rather too much of a short-stop trip to be of much value to anyone other than someone encountering drama/theatre/performance studies for the first time.


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Copy deadline for the next issue is **1st September 2005**, publication date is **1st November 2005**. The next issue will cover the period November 2005 – January 2006.

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sophie@totaltheatre.com.au
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Training for performers and directors. Summer school and artists in residence programme - see website for full details.



The School of Physical Theatre

Founded in 1978

London, England

"The School offers a carefully structured set of themes from the tragic to the comedic providing the technical ability and theatrical skills necessary to develop professional standards of expertise"

full-time professional programme October - June
summer Intensive August
part time classes

The School Of Physical Theatre, Three Mills Film Centre, Three Mills Lane, Bromley-by-Bow, London, E3 3DU, England
tel +44 (0)20 8215 3350 fax +44 (0)20 8215 3482 e-mail school@physicaltheatre.com web www.physicaltheatre.com



Director: Ron East



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.

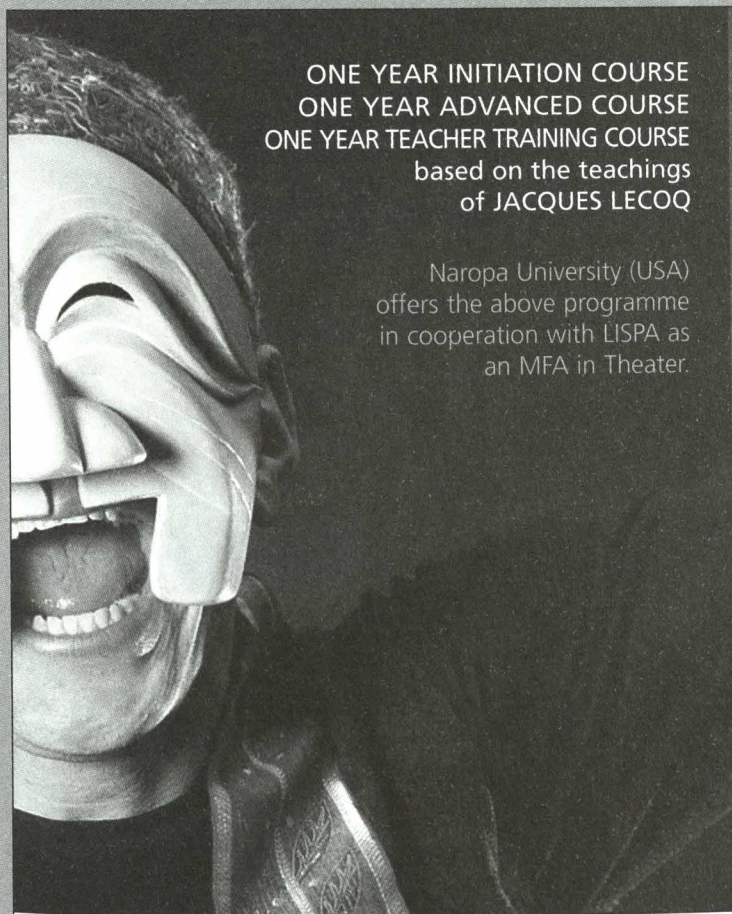
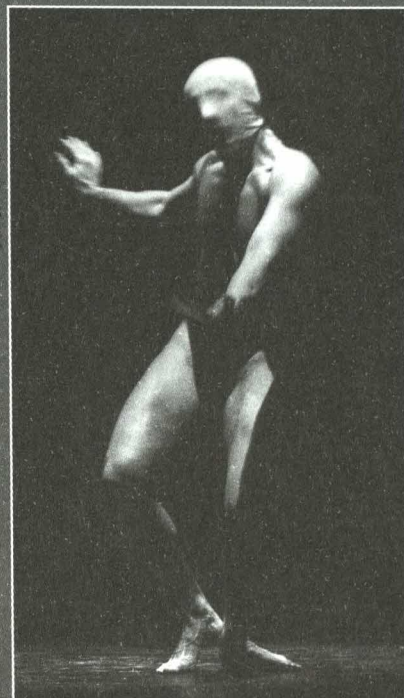
CLASS SCHEDULE:

- 3 year, full time, professional diploma programme: Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm (October to June)
- Evening Classes: Tues. & Thurs.: 6:30pm - 8pm, Sat.: 11am - 1pm
- Summer school in July

Enrolment is open throughout the year



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"Our aim is to foster a never ending curiosity in life as it is; a strong vision of life as it could be and a fully alive body through which to express creative visions."

Thomas Prattki,
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