

# TOTALTHEATRE

## MAGAZINE

VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 04 | WINTER 2005/2006 | [TOTALTHEATRE.ORG.UK](http://TOTALTHEATRE.ORG.UK)  
TOTAL THEATRE NETWORK CELEBRATING PHYSICAL + VISUAL PERFORMANCE

TOTAL THEATRE GOES WALKABOUT...  
DON VAGABOND SHOES IN NEW YORK, NEW YORK AND MAP A GEOGRAPHY OF STRANGENESS IN DEVON  
GO ON AN EXPLORATORY EXCURSION WITH POLAND'S TEATR PLESN KOZLA  
MEANWHILE BACK AT THE LAB - PERFORMANCE MEETS MEDICAL HISTORY IN BODY STATES  
HAIL THE PEOPLE SHOW WHO ARE STILL HERE  
LOOK FORWARD TO THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL 2006  
LOOK BACK ON THE TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS AT EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2005  
NEWS REVIEWS FEATURES TRAINING AND MORE - THE BEST IN PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE





## EDITORIAL

We're drawing to the end of 2005, so it's an apt time to reflect on the past year of physical and visual theatre and performance. It's a year that has seen a number of interesting developments.

We've witnessed the artform that we have supported for the past two decades – called variously mime, physical theatre, visual theatre, multi-discipline performance or total theatre depending who you speak to – move ever more firmly into mainstream practice. Shunt are now supported by the National Theatre, who have also presented Improbable, Complicite and Kneehigh Theatre over the past year – and it is interesting to note that shunt are continuing to operate from their 'shunt vaults' railway arches base with the support of NT – so the notion of a National Theatre that is not exclusively shackled to a building has emerged.

And this is how it should be. Theatre outside of theatre buildings has been one of the strongest strands of practice in 2005, as seen at the British Council Showcase at Edinburgh Festival Fringe that included work presented in a house (Curious On The Scent), a car (Hush Productions A Mobile Thriller), Debenhams department store (Grid Iron The Devil's Larder) and the City Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (dreamthinkspeak Don't look Back).

Many of this year's Total Theatre Award winners (including the aforementioned dreamthinkspeak and Grid Iron productions) were shows presented outside of regular theatre spaces – or in the case of fellow Award-winners Kazuko Hohki's Evidence for the Existence of Borrowers and Station House Opera's Roadmetal Sweetbread, presented inside a venue but investigating the hidden corners backstage rather than confining themselves to the stage area. See our feature on the Awards in this issue for full details of these and other Award-winning shows.

The ever-growing body of work in 'non-theatre' sites has been documented in the past year's issues of Total Theatre, and this continues in this issue (the last of 2005) with a batch of features which in their very different ways highlight performance work that mostly takes place outside dedicated theatre and art spaces. As these features cover work in the UK, in mainland Europe and in America, we can see this as a world-wide movement.

But this is not to say that a good old fashioned trip to the theatre can't provide the best in experimental contemporary physical and visual performance, as can be seen at the London International Mime Festival in January, which will kick off 2006 with a programme that proves that good theatre can happen anywhere – even on a stage.

*Dorothy Max Prior, Editor*

*Comments on anything in this issue of  
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COVER: TOTAL THEATRE AWARD WINNER ANDREW DAWSON - ABSENCE AND PRESENCE / LIMP 2006. PHOTO BY STEVEN SMITH





Snuggle up, we've lots to keep you entertained and informed as the nights draw in. The Total Theatre Best of British series continues with a look at The People Show who are forty years young in 2006

**WE ARE STILL HERE** DOROTHY MAX PRIOR **P8**. Across the big pond, our Man in America has been tackling the multitude of new directions in performance art practice in New York – as reported in **A CITY OF AMBITIOUS DREAMING** ROBERT AYERS **P10**.

More international coverage, this time of Poland's lamenting and lachrymose Teatr Piesn Kozla (Song of the Goat Theatre) in

**THE CRYING GAME** CASSIE WERBER **P14**. Closer to home, the common concerns of performance and medicine, as witnessed at a public event in Coventry, are flagged up in **BODY STATES: THE PILOT PROJECT**

FRANC CHAMBERLAIN **P16**. Hotfoot from Edinburgh Festival Fringe, here's the **TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2005** **P17**. The winners, the shortlist, the longlist – it's all there. Our front cover star Andrew Dawson is a 2005 Award-winner and he can next be seen at LIMF, now in its 28th year, which

we preview in **LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL – THEN AND NOW** MIRIAM KING **P21** in which Mim confesses that she was a **TEENAGE MIME**

**FAN**. Meanwhile, out in the countryside, we encounter the overlaps between walking and performing in **WALK THIS WAY** PHIL SMITH **P22**.

And in our regular sections: catch up with the **NEWS & PREVIEWS** **P4** and find out who is doing what in the **PERFORMER & COMPANY**

**UPDATES** **P6**. **REVIEWS** **P24** reports from those long-gone summer festival nights in Edinburgh, Avignon and Winchester amongst others.

There's an interesting selection of new publications in

**MEDIA** **P31**. Looking for a course, a workshop, a class or a symposium?

See the listings and ads in **TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL**

**DEVELOPMENT** **P32** onwards.





LOSER

**LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL** The 28th Mime Fest promises 'eye popping visual theatre for the digital age' and features a truly eclectic range of work, including multi-media performance, puppetry and animation, aerial, physical theatre, virtual juggling – and perhaps even some mime, whatever that might be. See the feature in this magazine's editorial section for more details on the wonderful selection of shows on offer. For full listings (from early December) visit [www.mimefest.co.uk](http://www.mimefest.co.uk) or request a brochure on 020 7637 5661.

**TOTAL THEATRE/ LIMF LECTURE - EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN** Total Theatre and London International Mime Festival will be looking at the way in which the current resurgence in variety and burlesque techniques was prefigured by music hall and variety artists in the nineteenth and twentieth century, at the second Total Theatre Lecture in January 2006. Full details will be posted on [www.totaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.totaltheatre.org.uk) and [www.mimefest.co.uk](http://www.mimefest.co.uk)

**PEOPLE SHOW 40TH BIRTHDAY PLANS** In 2006 People Show will 40 years old. The celebration plans are well underway and will not be a retrospective or a resurrected piece; instead, it will be something big, bold, beautiful and new and involve many of the artists who have been involved with the People Show over its 40 years. In addition to live projects, a People Show 40th Anniversary Book will be published to mark this point in the company's history. This will be a kind of scrapbook collection of writings, ideas, images and anecdotes from past and present associates. Anyone interested in contributing should contact Emma Haughton on [emma@peopleshows.co.uk](mailto:emma@peopleshows.co.uk) See [www.peopleshows.co.uk](http://www.peopleshows.co.uk)

**NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY** Natural Theatre Company are pleased to announce the launch of their revamped, restructured and reinvigorated website. Since 1970 the remarkable street theatre company have been making people laugh all over the world – as can now be witnessed by all in the Video Gallery section Showreels. See how jolly and smart the lost tourists with the Pink Suitcases really are, why there's nothing wrong with trying to make friends with the alien Coneheads and how Nanny really does know best! Included are performances in their home town of Bath, around the UK, at the Millennium Dome and in Pakistan. See [www.naturaltheatre.co.uk](http://www.naturaltheatre.co.uk)

**VOODOO VAUDEVILLE** As a result of Arts Council England funding, Voodoo Vaudeville completed a successful first tour during 2005 and are now researching material for the next project. Meanwhile they will present their Fantasmagoria show at Komedia, Brighton on 15,16,17 December. Interested performers can contact via the website: [www.voodoo-vaudeville.com](http://www.voodoo-vaudeville.com)

**JONATHAN KAY NEEDS YOUR HOME** This summer bought with it another bout of superbly entertaining performances by Jonathan at Glastonbury, Big Green Gathering and Buddha Fields. Jonathan Kay is now involved in an exciting new project: creating a theatre company of fools in collaboration with the BAC. The company will be formed of artists from different disciplines – actors, musicians, dancers, opera singers – who wish to develop their work in the direction of fooling and interested in Jonathan Kay's unique improvisational style. The Foolin House Tour will be returning to Brighton with workshops and performances, November – December 2005. If you would like a fool in your living room please call 07707 058 820. Email [info@jonathankay.co.uk](mailto:info@jonathankay.co.uk) or visit [www.jonathankay.co.uk](http://www.jonathankay.co.uk)

**LIGHTING UP IN WINCHESTER** David Harradine, Fevered Sleep's artistic director, has been appointed Research Fellow in Performance at the University of Winchester, and will be developing performance and installation work around themes of photography and light. Winchester (formerly King Alfred's) have also announced the honorary degree awards of their first term as 'University of Winchester'. Lucy Neal, co-founder/co-director of London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) receives the award of Doctor of Letters (DLitt) in recognition of the enormous impact her work has had on UK theatre practice over the past 25 years. See [www.winchester.ac.uk](http://www.winchester.ac.uk)

## EAST OF ENGLAND ESCALATOR SCHEME

Calling artists who make live art or performance work: Escalator Visual Arts is an Arts Council England, East initiative led by Commissions East in partnership with the region's visual arts organisations and galleries. It aims to discover, support and invest in talent. In 2005/06 Escalator Visual Arts will enable thirteen artists to benefit from a tailored programme of support. Submissions deadline is 10 November 2005. See [www.commissionseast.org.uk](http://www.commissionseast.org.uk)

## THE CORN EXCHANGE & NEW GREENHAM ARTS

**- PRIDE BY ASSOCIATION** These Newbury-based venues support some of the most exciting companies working in the UK today, through creative commissioning and through Cultivating Ideas, a ground-breaking artist development programme. The outcome of these two packages was seen at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival at which a total of five productions were directly assisted by the organisation. These included Company F.Z's Loser, which played in Edinburgh to great critical acclaim; Plested and Brown, who debuted their latest production Hot Pursuit; and Unlimited Theatre who previewed their brand new show, Tangle. Unlimited will be developing the piece further throughout a residency at New Greenham Arts early in 2006. For more information visit [www.cornexchangenew.com](http://www.cornexchangenew.com). To learn more about Cultivating Ideas contact Martin Sutherland on 01635 582666 ext214 or e-mail [programming@cornexchangenew.co.uk](mailto:programming@cornexchangenew.co.uk)

**RULES AND REGS** Rules and Regs is currently presenting its 2005-06 season of Live Art. Each event is curated by a different organisation, featuring different artists creating new work in response to unique Rules designed to challenge habits and stimulate creativity. Current partners: A Space in Southampton presented a tour of site-specific performance by five artists in medieval vaults around Southampton's old town. At Farnham Maltings in Surrey, 3-4 November 2005 eight artists will create a series of inter-related performances and installations. At Milton Keynes Gallery, 20-27 March 2006, three artists will present new work both on- and off-site, in response to the unique context of the city of Milton Keynes. Building on its 2005/06 season, Rules and Regs is seeking partner organisations for 2006/07. Partners must be committed to fostering artists' development and presenting new work. For more information please contact [info@rulesandregs.org](mailto:info@rulesandregs.org). See [www.rulesandregs.org](http://www.rulesandregs.org)

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT NEWS OR LISTINGS OR TO ADVERTISE IN THE NEXT ISSUE, PLEASE NOTE THAT THE COPY DEADLINE IS 7TH DECEMBER 2005





**TIEBREAK THEATRE SEEK SUPPORT** Following Arts Council England East's decision to divert core and project funding for Young People's Theatre to one new organisation, the Board of Tiebreak Theatre Company has been exploring its options for the future. The company feels that the scale of the new Beacon operation and its multi-county focus and cross-age range provision (0-25 year olds) would require an organisation whose ethos and way of working with young people was substantially different to Tiebreak's. As a Regularly Funded Organisation, the grant from ACEE forms a substantial part of Tiebreak's funding and its loss will have a significant impact on the work of the company. Tiebreak is therefore looking for alternative sources of funding. For further information contact Kaja Holloway on 01603 665899.

See [www.tiebreak-theatre.com](http://www.tiebreak-theatre.com)

**THEATRE ROYAL BATH – TEENAGE KICKS** The Egg theatre at the Theatre Royal Bath (opened in October) is a dedicated space for children and young people aged 0-25. In the first season, the following companies are some that will appear in the Egg: Les Witloof, Theatre de la Guimbarde, Fevered Sleep, Flying Gorillas, Lyngo Theatre Company, TPO and Lyric Hammersmith, Bongo Bolero, Flame Oz, Whalley Range All Stars, Oily Cart, Storybox, Shikisha, Objects Dart, Tara Arts. Alongside this programme of live performance runs a fully inclusive programme of Young People's Theatre, workshops, festivals, projects, training and outreach. We are currently programming for our Teenage Kicks Season (three weeks in February 2006) and are seeking relevant performances and projects. For info, a visit or a chat please contact Kate Cross on 01225 823435 or [kate.cross@theatreroyal.org.uk](mailto:kate.cross@theatreroyal.org.uk)

**CROYDON CLOCKTOWER – AN EVENING WITH DRACULA** Following on from last year's Hitchcock spectacular, Company F.Z return to Croydon with their new circus and physical exploration of the dark, seductive themes found in Bram Stoker's thrilling gothic classic, Dracula. Croydon Clocktower has commissioned Company F.Z (John-Paul Zaccarini and Flick Ferdinando) to create An Evening with Dracula, 7 - 10 December 2005. Ticket Office 020 8253 1030.

#### **METRO CIRCUS 2006 SEEKS CIRCUS ARTISTS**

Metro Circus 2006 Seeks Circus Artists Croydon Clocktower want to hear from small-scale new circus companies and circus artists, for 'Metro Circus 2006 - new circus like you've never seen before'. Please contact Jonathan Kennedy by 27 January 2006 on [jonathan.kennedy@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.kennedy@croydon.gov.uk). See [www.assitej.com](http://www.assitej.com)

#### **THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (ASSITEJ)**

ASSITEJ are setting up an initiative to raise the profile of Theatre for Children and Young People and are keen to develop contacts with practitioners and educators. They intend to promote the range of work actively - this will include resources and contacts for the HE sector. Contact Stuart Bennett - co-ordinator on [assitej@bennethhouse.org.uk](mailto:assitej@bennethhouse.org.uk)

#### **THE NIGHTINGALE THEATRE – INTEGRITY, TIME, SPACE**

The Nightingale go from strength to strength this Autumn/Winter with a season including: the Aurora Nova in the South programme of workshops with Derevo, Family Floez, Teatr Piesn Kozla and Wolfgang Hoffmann; Clock Works Unwound Live Art Forum and other artists' professional development initiatives; bringing the legendary Odin Teatret to Brighton for two performances - demonstrations; presenting an exciting range of theatre and performance work including Prodigal Theatre's three-part marathon The Tragedian in full (on 6 Nov from 4.00pm). They also launch their own BAC-inspired version of Scratch nights, with an artist mentoring scheme embodied in the process. For full details call 01273 702563 or see [www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk](http://www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk)

#### **WARWICK'S SHORT FESTIVAL OF IMPROVISATION**

SHIFTI - A Short Festival of Improvisation takes place 5-8 January 2006 at Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick and Coventry Centre for Media, Arts & Performance. It is a mixed art form event involving performances, workshops and discussions. Actors, dancers and musicians collaborate in a range of combined work. The Festival features Art & Shock from Kazakhstan, Julyen Hamilton from Spain, Impromptu Theatre from Holland, Forced Entertainment, Fluxx, E.S.P. and the 30-strong London Improvisers Orchestra from the UK. Andy Eninger and Adrienne Frost visit from the USA. All performances are improvised. Running up to the event, Fluxx is organising a series of mixed art form improvisation events. See [www.fluxx.co.uk](http://www.fluxx.co.uk) Current programme now available on [www.shifti.co.uk](http://www.shifti.co.uk)

**WANTED: FUNNY PEOPLE!** Individuals and organisations with a sense of humour are being encouraged to get in touch with the organisers of the annual Leicester Comedy Festival which takes place 10-19 February 2006. The Festival are very keen to extend the boundaries of comedy beyond the stand-up format and would like to hear from physical comedy companies and others. For further information see [www.comedy-festival.co.uk](http://www.comedy-festival.co.uk) or call 0116 261 6812.

#### **CREATIVE LAB - CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

CCA would like to announce the next Creative Lab opportunities to begin in April 2006. Artists working in the live art, contemporary performance, new theatre, time-based media and interdisciplinary arts sectors are invited to submit proposals to be considered for a CCA Creative Lab. The creative lab opportunity will run April 2006 - March 2007 and offers space, technical support and facilities, administrative and development advice and support. They offer four Labs to Scottish-based artists and two labs for artists outside Scotland; an opportunity for emergent and established artists to have time for process, rather than focusing on final product. Deadline for proposals: Monday 14 November 2005. See [www.cca-glasgow.com](http://www.cca-glasgow.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.



# PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATES

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BLIND SUMMIT



FAULTY OPTIC



**1157 PERFORMANCEGROUP** Theatrical innovators 1157performancegroup will be touring Ha Ha Ha – a camp theatrical mixed media romp through the hilarious lives of Coward, Leigh and Olivier, throughout the UK and Ireland in the Autumn 2005 and Spring 2006. In December the company will be starting work on a major new theatre piece to be presented late 2006 early 2007: Cul-De-Sac, a suburban mockumentary. The work will bring life to previously uninhabited newly built dwellings. Tel: 01628 682556 email: [1157@nordenfarm.org](mailto:1157@nordenfarm.org) [www.1157.org](http://www.1157.org)

**BARABBAS** Dublin-based theatre company Barabbas, who specialise in total theatre and theatre of clown, have produced two pieces in 2005. The first, .tanks a lot! is a one-man clown show performed by Joint Artistic Director and founding member, Raymond Keane, which toured to seven venues around Ireland to critical acclaim. The company is now in production with bouffon-inspired LUCA, which is performed by Raymond Keane and Barabbas regulars Eoin Lynch and Amy Conroy, and directed by Barabbas Joint Artistic Director and founding member, Veronica Coburn. Performances take place at Project Arts Centre, Dublin 1-19 November 2005. Both .tanks a lot! and LUCA are available for international touring in 2006.

**BLIND SUMMIT** Following a very successful run at the Edinburgh Fringe, Low Life (shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award), will run for three weeks in the London International Mime Festival (at Studio 2 in BAC from 16 Jan) attempting to repeat the intimate atmosphere of the Edinburgh show at the Underbelly. They will then tour Low Life in Spring 2006. In the meantime, the company are working on Madame Butterfly for ENO at the Coliseum, November - December 2005. Contact details: Tel 020 7582 6814 [info@blindsummit.com](mailto:info@blindsummit.com) [www.blindsummit.com](http://www.blindsummit.com)

**BUREAU OF SILLY IDEAS** We have answered the age-old question of how many aerialists it takes to change a light bulb. We worked it out during our last new semi-large-scale piece that was commissioned by Val Wilson for Camden Spotlight 2005. The feedback from punters has included 'Better than free view' and 'This is the first time I have felt so wonderful with my boyfriend at an event. Thank you!! was magical.' The projections were fantastic... Find out more about the company via [www.continentaldrifts.co.uk](http://www.continentaldrifts.co.uk)

**CHRIS GOODE** Since leaving Camden People's Theatre at the end of 2004, Chris has mostly been working with his company Signal to Noise on a new devised show for domestic performance, Homemade, which was developed with Notts STAGES this spring and visited the Cork and Edinburgh festivals. As one half of Exit Strategy, with performer Theron Schmidt, he is developing a series of fugitive works, called 'crowd studies', in advance of their next full-length piece Crowd Scenes, scheduled for spring 2006; the partnership is currently supported by an Artsadmin Artists' Bursary. Other ongoing projects include a third solo show (for New Greenham Arts), and a text performance developed from Christopher Knowles's TYPINGS 1974-77. Chris can be contacted at [chris\\_goode@graffiti.net](mailto:chris_goode@graffiti.net)

**COCOLOCO** After a very successful tour around Australia in 2005, Cocoloco has been invited back for 2006! They will be performing at Perth Festival, Womadelaide, Melbourne Commonwealth Games and Sydney Royal Show. Check out the current favourite acts on the website: [www.cocoloco.co.uk](http://www.cocoloco.co.uk)

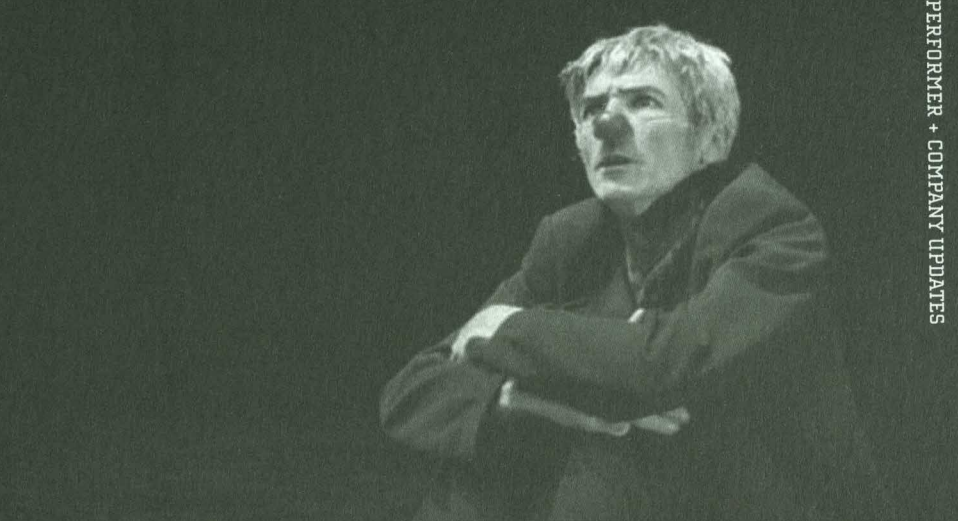
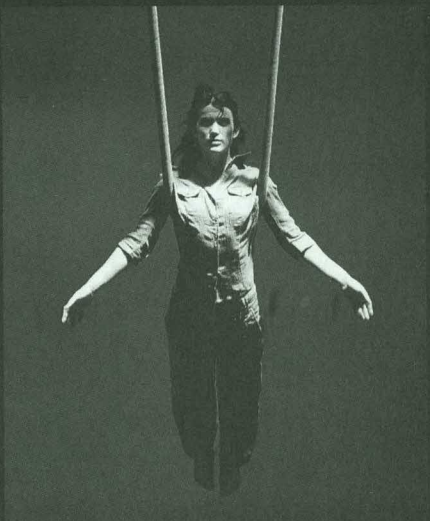
**DYNAMIC NEW ANIMATION** DNA's current touring production Baba Yaga Boney Legs has a short run at the Phoenix, Leicester December 2005 and (also in December) the Courtyard, Hereford hosts DNA's classic children's performance Chicken Licken. From February 2006, DNA are touring Puss in Boots - suitable for small-scale venues and street theatre festivals. Directed by Steve Tiplady, Associate Director of The Little Angel, this production will be an enjoyable romp for families about a moggy helping a man up the social ladder to find food, fortune and love. DNA are now concentrating on early years work, audience development through national touring, artistic collaborations and professional training opportunities in puppetry. Contact details t: 01772 253 100 [DNA@dynamicnewanimation.co.uk](mailto:DNA@dynamicnewanimation.co.uk) [www.dynamicnewanimation.co.uk](http://www.dynamicnewanimation.co.uk)

**FAULTYOPTIC** A beetle infested skull, a desolate Sanatorium, a pint sized porter, a clown with a bayonet and a ghostly amputee are some of the horrors in Faulty Optic's latest - 'Like a Greek comic/tragedy without being Greek'. Horsehead is a cruel world of charm and burlesque but spiked with wicked humour, puppet nudity and some very strange noises. Using pre-recorded and live video, specially composed music and sounds, animated figures and mechanical sets, FaultyOptic are world renowned for their haunting tales, bizarre visual theatre and live miniature video installations. Touring the UK until January at the London Mime Festival. For more details see gigs page on FaultyOptic's website [www.faultyoptic.co.uk](http://www.faultyoptic.co.uk)

**FEVERED SLEEP** Fevered Sleep continue to widen the scope of their work with a number of new commissions and projects in development. In October, they opened The Egg, the new purpose built theatre for children at the Theatre Royal, Bath. From November 2005 until April 2006, their installation piece Fleet will be at The Lowry in Salford, as part of a large-scale gallery exhibition The Art of White. They are also working on The Light Lights the Lights, a new performance/installation for the Brighton Festival, and projects with Contact, Manchester and the Polka Theatre. In Autumn 2006, they will be creating and touring The Water Project, a performance for children under 3, and are continuing to develop a new site-specific music theatre piece based on the paintings of Edward Hopper. [www.feveredsleep.co.uk](http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk)

**FOURSIGHT THEATRE** Foursight Theatre turns its attention to one of the world's most influential, most loved and most hated figures: Margaret Thatcher. Drawing on the traditions of West End musical, stand-up and the grotesque, the Thatcher: The Musical! promises to be an all-singing, all-dancing bonanza hosted by the Iron Lady herself. From the miners' strike to the Falklands War, from the Brighton bomb to the knife in the back, Foursight will re-visit, dig deep and uncover the impact this woman had on the world, exploding the personal and the political and revealing the contents of the most famous handbag in history! Directed by Naomi Cooke and Deb Barnard, the show premieres 9-11 February 2006 at Warwick Arts Centre. Contact Emma Beale. T: 01902 714257 [foursight.theatre@boltblue.com](mailto:foursight.theatre@boltblue.com)





**HEART** 'The hole in the universe stands before the mind...before you think of "I" and "thing" ...' These words by Adi Da Samraj are the inspiration behind the current multi-media production *The Hole in the Universe* by HeArt, which was first shown during the Spice Festival in July this year at the Hackney Empire. This production is fuelled by a creative investigation into the ecstasy and beauty that only occurs when the mind loses its grip and when we forget for a moment who we think we are. How bizarre is the ordinary? Expect the profound and the unexpected. An expanded version of this piece will be performed at Oxford House in Bethnal Green, London on 19 November 2005. For more information go to [www.heartlivemedia.org](http://www.heartlivemedia.org)

**JAMBOREE** Jamboree is a circus arts and entertainment company specialising in Circus and Cabaret performance. Jamboree provide performers, performances, walkabout artists, circus and theatrical workshops, theatrical and aerial rigging services and marquee and performance equipment hire. Having performed at Glastonbury and many other festivals and events in 2005, they are currently touring a 1920s style Circus Cabaret show entitled *The Good Ship Splendid* in which the audience become passengers on a magnificent cruise through the era of flappers and ragtime, with aerial and acrobatic performances, music and dancers. Contact Details: Tel: 0114 2618600 [info@jamboreearts.co.uk](mailto:info@jamboreearts.co.uk) See [www.jamboreearts.co.uk](http://www.jamboreearts.co.uk)

**MATILDA LEYSER** Aerial artist Matilda Leyser will tour her new full-length solo show *Line, Point, Plane* in January and February 2006. Collaborators on the piece include directors Annabel Arden and Annie Castledine, choreographer Rosemary Lee and writer Bryony Lavery. It will be performed at the London International Mime Festival. Other dates confirmed include South Hill Park, Bracknell on 14 Jan, Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury on 18 Jan, Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton 31 Jan and Oxford Playhouse 2-3 Feb. Lifeline, the first part of *Line, Point, Plane* recently won critical praise in Edinburgh where it was shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award. For more information see [www.matildaleyser.co.uk](http://www.matildaleyser.co.uk). For bookings contact Simon Chatterton on 01865 767830 or email [simon@simonchatterton.co.uk](mailto:simon@simonchatterton.co.uk)

**METRO-BOULOT-DODO** Metro-Boulot-Dodo have come to the end of an exhausting three months. The company have just created their first outdoor installation *Spring* which was presented at the EXPO festival in Leicester, The National Theatre in London and Arts Fresco in Market Harborough and most recently at the NOW Festival. *Spring* is the first phase of a 4-year artistic programme which will see the company create two outdoor projects and two Gallery Installations. *Spring* was commissioned by The National Theatre, Phoenix Arts, Leicester Haymarket Theatre, NOW Festival, Stockton International Riverside Festival and Arts Fresco with financial support from Arts Council England. See: [www.metro-boulot-dodo.com](http://www.metro-boulot-dodo.com)

**NOLA RAE** During the winter period Nola Rae will be researching a new show, provisionally titled *Cabaret Grimm*. She will be exploring the cabaret potential of characters from folk stories and fairy tales, the grimmer the better! Meanwhile, she is still booking *Exit Napoleon Pursued by Rabbits*, *Mozart Preposterous* (for the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth!) and *Elizabeth's Last Stand*.

**PARA ACTIVE** Para Active's new theatrical offering *The Sword of a 1001 Cuts* will be on tour from November 2005. Each tale written on Scheherazade's body is like a scar – every word splintering the mind. Princesses, prostitutes and rabid dogs pursue the key to the mysteries and misfortunes of life in a striking collection of tales – physically told, boldly staged and narrated from a pierced heart. A penetrating work of classic nouveau punk theatre from the makers of *Zoo-oid* and *Onion Bar*. At the Tobacco Factory 24th – 26th November 2005. See [www.para-active.com](http://www.para-active.com)

**THE SHYSTERS** The Shysters are a Coventry based ensemble of actors with learning disabilities whose work is led by artistic director Richard Hayhow, associate director Kathy Joyce and a team of artists. The Shysters have created their three major touring productions, *Scary Antics*, *Fallen Angels* and *Tango Apocalypso* over the past seven years. Their next production *SHARDS!* will tour for two weeks at the end of November and early December 2005. Contact details t 024 7684 6747 <mailto:sue@opentheatre.co.uk> [www.TheShysters.co.uk](http://www.TheShysters.co.uk)

**TALL STORIES** *The Snow Dragon* and *Them With Tails* both went well at the Edinburgh Fringe, with sell-out audiences and a couple of 5 star reviews each. *The Gruffalo* continues its tour, following a successful run at London's Criterion Theatre. The company's next show will be *The Gruffalo's Child* – based on the sequel to the original book. It premieres at Polka in the autumn and has an Xmas run at Norden Farm. *The Snow Dragon* heads to Soho Theatre for Xmas, and *The Gruffalo* to Hampstead Theatre. Following Caroline Beckman's departure, Lucy Atkinson becomes company administrator. See [www.tallstories.org.uk](http://www.tallstories.org.uk)

**THEATRE OF WIDDERSHINS** Theatre of Widdershins new show *The King's Got Donkey's Ears!* based on the story of King Midas premieres at The Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead on 5 November. It is then available for bookings by theatres, village halls and schools. They have recently returned from Dublin International Puppet Festival where they performed *Rumpelstiltskin* in the Lambert Puppet Theatre to packed audiences and then took it on a tour of local schools. This is the second year running that they have been included in this fantastically friendly and diverse festival, having been well received last year with *Three Billy Goats Gruff & Other Furry Tails*. All three shows will be kept in repertoire. See [www.widdershins.co.uk](http://www.widdershins.co.uk)

**THEATRE MODO** Theatre Modo are touring until December with a new version of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, an interactive show for 4 – 7 year olds. Following a successful tour of their highly physical production of *Jerry's Ubu* this year, Theatre Modo will be touring *Don Quixote* from April 2006. Contact details t +44 141 429 8428 <mailto:martin@theatremodo.com> [www.theatremodo.com](http://www.theatremodo.com)

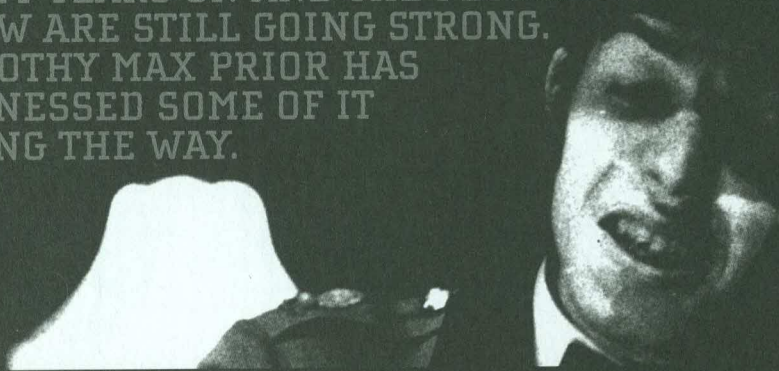
**THIRD ANGEL** Having recovered from the mayhem that was Edinburgh, and dealt with the good but time-consuming consequences (more performances of *The Lad Lit Project* plus some international leads), Third Angel is looking forward to the prospect of making a new theatre piece through the winter. Never ones to be caught having a day or two off, we're also fitting in a week in Paris (*Where Have They Hidden All The Answers?* from 21 – 27 November), some teaching, and continuing to develop two other performance projects, destined to see the light of day in autumn 06/spring 07. Get up to date news at [www.thirdangel.co.uk](http://www.thirdangel.co.uk)



BEST OF BRITISH

## WE ARE STILL HERE

FORTY YEARS ON AND THE PEOPLE SHOW ARE STILL GOING STRONG. DOROTHY MAX PRIOR HAS WITNESSED SOME OF IT ALONG THE WAY.



PEOPLE SHOW 29

**MOMENTS IN TIME 1 – 1976** I've dropped out of college and find myself working at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. It's a point in time when the ICA is presenting a challenging mish-mash of ground-breaking art, courting outrage from all and sundry. Mary Kelly's dirty nappies; an 'anti-fashion' day that flags up the new McLaren/Westwood shop Sex; an ethnographic film festival that shows the Katie Oxo ads as a main feature with Andy Warhol's Empire as the ad breaks; the Coum Transmissions exhibition Prostitution that sparks the Daily Mail headline 'These People are the Wreckers of Civilization'. And in the theatre, shows by companies like Lumiere and Son, Crystal Theatre of the Saint and Hot Peaches are followed by late-night gigs by new bands like The Clash. Right in the middle of all this are a company who are – astonishingly – already ten years old. The People Show's Tenth Anniversary Show changed my whole view of what theatre could be – it was like animated sculpture meets vaudeville meets stand-up meets performance art. It was what would later be called postmodern performance: borrowing from any source, throwing high and low artforms together, juxtaposing ideas and images to create new meanings.

**MOMENTS IN TIME 2 – 1993** Liz Aggiss – Diva, Wild Wiggler and convener of the Dance with Visual Art degree at University of Brighton where I teach occasionally – has had a phone call from the People Show, who want someone to choreograph some ballroom and popular dance sequences for a show they are making for Brighton Festival; would I do it? It's called For One Night Only. The main character is a smarmy, jaded dance-hall manager (Mark Long, often cast in this sort of role) and he's seen it all – from foxtrot to samba, twist to disco. The audience are seated like wallflowers round the edges of the luscious Ship Hotel Ballroom. There's live music, flashing lights, a bar. A couple (refugees from They Shoot Horses, Don't They?)

stagger around in an everlasting waltz, covered in cobwebs, numbers still pinned to their backs. A manic Latin American dance troupe line-dance, congo and mambo in and out of scenes. In 1993, the world has caught up, and we are in the heyday of postmodern performance: the People Show share their ongoing obsession with 'low' artforms like vaudeville, popular dance and cabaret with other contemporary performance makers (such as Lea Anderson's Cholmondeleys and Forced Entertainment). But the way the elements get mixed marks the production with the People Show brand – and the playing with performer-audience divides, creating theatrical environments that audiences walk into and become part of, is an ongoing aspect of the company's work that keeps them ahead of the game.

**MOMENTS IN TIME 3 – 2004** It's the People Show Studios in East London and the company are in the process of making a Building Show. Evolving from one-off and site-specific strands of work, these events sit alongside the core work of the company: 'performance, installation, music, frivolity and absurdity create a total theatre experience full of magic and surprise.' This one is called We Are Here.

*They've never bothered themselves with what theatre should be, feeling free to do anything they fancy*

As I wander around, just two days before the opening, the building is in the process of transformation. Wood is being sawed to create a labyrinth for the audience to walk through; little dens pasted with photos and cabinets of curiosities emerging. In one room, an oasis of calm, a saxophonist teases soulful notes from his instrument. The People Show Studios is a thriving hub – rehearsal rooms, venue and home to the company. By 2004, the

company has expanded to include a large number of artists under the umbrella, with many different sorts of shows going out under their name, some good, some not so good... It is not quite so clear who The People Show are and what they stand for.

**REBIRTH** So what next? In 2006, the company will be forty years old. The past year has seen some major shifts and changes in working practice. It's not exactly out with the old, in with the new – more a search for the heart of the company, a re-evaluation. Time for regeneration – making new from old, transformation...

Appropriately enough, the new production for 2005 is called The Obituary Show – and the consensus at the Bush Theatre premiere is that it is a return to form for the company, bringing Mark Long, George Khan and Chahine Yavroyan back together on stage. Felicity Hall, now director of Total Theatre Network, worked for the People Show from 1994 to 1996, and knows the company's work well. She says: 'with detailed design, song and dance routines, ensemble performances, melancholy sweetness and a layered narrative arc, The Obituary Show is an example of The People Show at their best – asking big questions lightly.'

A few months earlier, I had met with the company to find out more about where they've been, where they are now and where they are heading...

People Show was the name of their first show – performed in 1966 in the basement of Better Books in Charing Cross Road by Jeff Nuttall, John Darling, Syd Palmer, Laura Gilbert and Mark Long. Four decades later, Mark is still very much involved in the company – and is performing in the Obituary Show: 'and if you'd told me then I'd still be doing this now, I'd have said you were off your trolley'. The company took its name from that first show – and the shows have henceforth been numbered – we are now, in 2005, up to People Show 114. 'Saved us thinking up titles' says Mark.





THE OBITUARY SHOW/ PHOTO BY SHEILA BURNETT



WE ARE STILL HERE DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



Although the company started with scripts, they abandoned them after the first few shows, turning instead to a devising process – common enough now, but unheard of then. They made their mark quickly, were embraced by Joan Littlewood who brought People Show 9 to Stratford East and in 1970 were invited to Come Together, the Royal Court's festival of avant-garde theatre. Their work was (and is) performer-centred with shared ownership, no outside writers or directors, and image-led. Space has always been of paramount importance, with the company often working in unusual sites that have included nightclubs, telephone boxes, parks, rivers and an ex-Nazi HQ in Ghent. If working in a regular theatre venue, ideas of 'set' and 'staging' have been challenged by using cages or boxing rings, or (pre-empting the famous shunt coup de theatre) by dividing the audience into two halves.

## *The Obituary Show is an example of The People Show at their best – asking big questions lightly*

They've never bothered themselves with what theatre 'should' be, feeling free to do anything they fancy, be it making a Luke Rhinehart-inspired show based around the roll of a dice or (also in the early 70s) mixing the new-fangled invention 'video' with live action. Music has always been important: from experimental tape mixing in the early Better Books days to the soundtracks by Mike Figgis (who jumped ship to do other things like be a famous film director) and the distinctive saxophone of George Khan, who debuted with the legendary People Band in People Show 3 and is still on board. Musicians have often been the subject for shows – Bix Beiderbecke, Billie Holiday, Chet Baker and Elvis all having received the People Show treatment; The Obituary Show has a dead anonymous musician as its subject.

For many years George Khan, Mark Long and Chahine Yavroyan provided the artistic continuity in the company, with

regular appearances from performers like Emil Wolk and Jose Navarro. Throughout the 90s there was a shift to less of a 'boys' thing', with more women artists (including Jessica Worrall, Josette Bushell-Mingo, Fiona Creese and Amelia Pimlott) coming on board.

Mark insists People Show is 'a collaboration not a collective'. There has recently been something of a reining in, and although the company haven't succumbed to the usual hierarchical pattern of one artistic director, it is now headed by a four-strong steering group of Sadie Cook, Mark Long, Jessica Worrall and Chahine Yavroyan. And, Chahine says, everything that goes out into the wider world under the People Show name needs, from now on, to be subject to a bit of quality control. There remains a core of ten artists, who come together in different combinations for different projects – and as Sadie points out, having the opportunity to try out ideas and make smaller-scale pieces is an important part of the company's work.

Coming soon – Jessica says that there's a series of events planned throughout 2006 that will reflect the different strands of company practice: devised theatre shows, site-specific work, street or outdoor pieces, and cabarets.

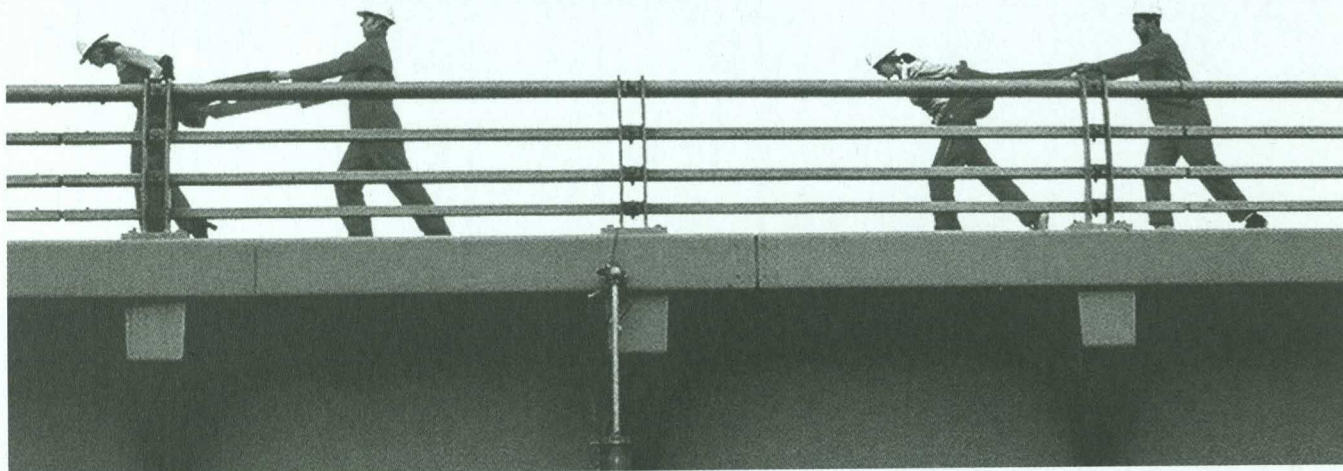
What are the company's aspirations for the future? 'More money to pay the core artists' says producer Emma Haughton. Directions for the future get summed up as 'more choices and more control'. 'A pension' says Mark – and after forty years of service, he's surely earned a gold watch.

*The Obituary Show is touring the UK throughout autumn/winter 2005. Dates include: 1-5 Nov Bristol Tobacco Factory; 8-9 Nov Lighthouse, Poole; 12-13 Nov Riverside, London. For full tour dates and further information on the company see [www.peopleshow.co.uk](http://www.peopleshow.co.uk)*



ROBERT AYERS WAKES UP IN  
THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS.

# A CITY OF AMBITIOUS DREAMING – PERFORMANCE ART IN NEW YORK



RED DIVE'S PERIPHERAL CITY

*Rather than an artistic  
community having evaporated,  
it has actually just changed*

New York City enjoys a special status in any history of performance art. Whether one takes one's bearings from Happenings, or from Warhol's Factory, or from the 'Dematerialisation of the Art Object', these developments all seem inexorably linked to this city. But despite this honourable tradition, in 2005 there is a pessimistic sense that something of the legacy has been lost. Key venues have vanished. Funding is scarce both for artists and promoters, which is exacerbated by sky-high property prices and costs of living. Artists often complain that the artistic community is terminally fragmented and that they feel isolated. So, to test the reputation against the reality, I sought the opinions of key individuals on the New York performance scene to get their perspectives.

I immediately realised that the picture is far from entirely gloomy. Vallejo Gantner is the new artistic director at Performance Space 122, and he puts it like this: 'It's extraordinary that what happens does happen, in the end, that amazing things still do happen.' Because, despite these difficulties, people still bring an enormous enthusiasm to their work here. In his six months in the job Gantner has been struck by a change of mood: 'The economic situation and the election of President Bush and other things sapped the energy and the get-up-and-go out of a lot of the New York performance scene. And to be frank the scene in New York had become a little bit static. That has changed pretty radically in the last two years with changes at The Kitchen, at Dance Theater

Workshop, at PS122, and at The Public Theater. There's been that transition, that change of blood, as it were, so there's quite a different scenario happening at the moment.' It appears that part of the difference actually began when financial pressures during the 80s and 90s saw venues closing, because of course, this didn't prevent artists from working: quite the reverse. When I asked Martha Wilson, Founding Director of Franklin Furnace, how artists responded to having to 'work to other people's schedules', as she had put it, she responded simply, 'I think the first thing that artists have done in order to continue to do weird or durational work is to just do it outside and not worry about the venues. For example, of the artists that Franklin Furnace has given money to in the last year, Nicolás Dumit Estévez is doing pilgrimages to various art museums (they're based on religious pilgrimages in Spain, and he's doing them outside) the Red Dive group is doing guided tours of Lower Manhattan, and Alexander Komlosi did his The Professional Human Being interviews with members of the public in a tent at a County Fair in upstate New York.' Although performance artists have always done some of their work outside the confines of venues, the range and proliferation of such work in New York is remarkable. From work that you might find in street fairs – like Marjorie Kouns' Body as Canvas, that she staged at Howl festival's Art Around the Park in Tompkins Square Park August 2005 – to William Pope L's now celebrated crawl up Broadway ten blocks at a time; to the elaborate underground





PRAXIS FORGET ME NOT AT PS 122



social interventions of a remarkable troupe called Improv Everywhere; to the 'guerilla consulting' of the Nsumi collective.

What becomes obvious when you're considering work like Nsumi's is that, to quote Wilson again, 'It seems like the outlines of performance as we knew it are gone to hell, they're starting to bleed in all directions.' And one of the reasons that this has happened is because in New York City, like everywhere else, one of the major changes that has affected not only how performance art is made, but also how it is communicated, discussed and promoted, is the emergence of the internet. Franklin Furnace was one of the first arts organisations anywhere to embrace it wholeheartedly – 'going virtual' when it gave up its Franklin Street venue in 1997 – and Wilson is more aware than most of how it has shifted the ways in which an artistic community, or indeed a community of any sort, functions: 'Well, gossip was the way that information used to be passed around. Gossip is not efficient at all; the internet is efficient. That really gets the news to travel, and it's making mass actions possible.' Such 'mass actions' include Flash Mobs and the more obviously politicised Critical Mass and Move On manifestations – which, though none are a New York invention, seem to have found a particularly fertile soil here. Wilson's enthusiasm is obvious when she says, 'Performance used to be the preserve of artists who knew what they were doing in an art historical context. Now there are these actions that are going on that are not related to art.' As well as Franklin

Furnace, organisations that are exploiting the internet as a performance context are EYEBEAM and Rhizome; and among the many sites that promote performance in various ways, one of the more persevering is Culturebot, which is actually a Performance Space 122 project, edited by Andy Horwitz, their associate producer, and which describes itself as 'part weblog, part gossip column, part arts journal, part lifestyle magazine'.

This breakdown of performance boundaries is in itself an exciting state of affairs, and one that everyone that I spoke to felt energized about responding to.

*The outlines of performance as we knew it are gone to hell, they're starting to bleed in all directions*

Indeed Vallejo Gantner sees it as framing his ambitions for PS122: 'We are trying to reopen the questions about what performance can be, and we want those questions to be occupying not only the downtown theatre companies, but also to start trying to push theatre and dance and performance of all kinds back into a broader social dialogue – so that you need to see what's happening at PS122, or at Dance Theater Workshop, or at Danspace, or at The Kitchen, or wherever, to be informed, and to be a participant in the dialogue in the society, in the same way as you need to read a newspaper, or watch CNN. And that's not to say that we are going to focus more on political work or have more people ranting about social issues – quite the opposite in some ways. I think we are looking for work that asks questions in new ways. We're throwing down a gauntlet and saying, "How can you ask these questions and how can you



NICOLÁS DUMIT ESTÉVEZ - FIRST PILGRIMAGE/ PHOTO RYAN BARGER



*The first thing that artists have done in order to continue to do weird or durational work is to just do it outside and not worry about the venues*

RED DIVE'S PERIPHERAL CITY



answer these questions in more interesting ways?" "How can you speak to people who aren't expecting it and to try and get performance to do this?" The questions are still absolutely relevant, but we need to reframe them, we need to come at them from a different angle, we need to come at them with new people and we need to articulate and support the conversation that these questions are important and you need to be looking at them.'

Debra Singer, executive director and chief curator of The Kitchen for just over a year, is equally enthusiastic, and like Gantner, recognises her obligation in responding not only to the character of new work, but to the circumstances which have brought it about: 'Our job is to help artists create and present new

work. So one thing we have been doing at The Kitchen is to expand the residency aspect of what we can offer artists when they are here because it's no longer easy for artists to get rehearsal space. I know it sounds quite basic but really it is very difficult. So when we commit to someone – either commissioning their work, or presenting their work – we are trying to make sure that at each stage in the development of that piece we offer them access to our space, to physically work in our space.' The more you listen to these people, the more it becomes apparent that, rather than an artistic community having evaporated, it has actually just changed. These changes are significant, in nature, in locations, and in methods of operation, but the community is clearly

still here. Gantner became aware of it as soon as he arrived at PS122: 'One of the things that I think is an enormous strength is that there is an amazing supportiveness among the community. Everybody was at our [fundraising] benefit. Every other programmer in town. Artists gave up their time, six companies worked for free. People put back; they understand that they need to put back, which is a fantastic thing to feel in the middle of.' Singer is conscious of it at The Kitchen as well, and clearly feels a responsibility to stimulate not only a sense of community, but the practical means by which it might prosper. 'What's special about The Kitchen,' she told me, 'Is that, unlike larger venues, it's very much by artists for artists, and by that I mean that on any given evening, a large



MARJORIE KOUNS - BODY AS CANVAS/ PHOTO ROBERT AYERS



*It has always been in the nature of performance art to reinvent itself*

RED DIVE'S PERIPHERAL CITY



percentage of the audience are artists themselves, and those are the people that come again and again and again. And so for that reason – it seems rather obvious – we lowered all our ticket prices.’ She goes on, ‘Another change is that we are trying to offer emerging curators a chance to have their perspectives heard. In New York it’s not easy to be a visual arts or a performance curator. When you are starting out, how do you get your ideas presented? So we are presenting events of emerging curators doing things with emerging artists: several artists sharing one evening, with a very low ticket price. It’s very much that feel of a community of artists for artists, so it’s part of a scene that you might find now in Bushwick [Brooklyn], for example, but we’re bringing that experience both for the curators and for the artists into The Kitchen.’

The scene that Singer refers to is thriving, and one that we are all familiar with. Performances of all sorts often share bills with music or video or stand-up, and the venues themselves come and go, but, when I asked Martha Wilson where she went to see new performance nowadays, she replied, ‘Oh, there are tons out there. Not in Manhattan any more, but in Williamsburg or Red Hook [Brooklyn] there are venues that show underground theatre, I guess you’d call it. It’s not always real good but sometimes it’s really good. In Williamsburg there’s The Flux Factory and The Cave and The Brick.’ The sort of work that happens in these places might be different to what happened at Franklin Furnace when it was a physical venue, but it has always been in the nature of performance art to reinvent itself, and, once again, this reinvention might be traced back to

the disappearance of some of the older dedicated performance art spaces. As Wilson realised, ‘I believed it was a serious philosophical problem to be dealt with so that the artists would not have to adapt, but in fact what the artists did was just adapt their work to deal with the fact that the venues are now theatrical venues.’ Indeed, this adaptation has provided not only the basis of this scene, it has also led to the success of the far more mainstream New York International Fringe Festival. Though much of the work that it presents is nearer to what one might expect of a theatre festival fringe, of the more than 1,300 performances that it presented in August 2005, there was certainly stuff that was clearly identifiable as performance art.

Like the work that Dan McKereghan has been presenting in his Currency international festival of performance at Chashama since 2002. Like new festival PERFORMA05, curated by RoseLee Goldberg, longtime supporter of performance art here. Like what Marina Abramovic will be offering coincidentally at The Guggenheim Museum: re-stagings of what she, presumably ironically, calls *Seven Easy Pieces*.

So, rather than the situation looking pessimistic in New York in 2005, Mark Russell, newly appointed guest director of the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art Time Based Arts Festival, sums it up like this: ‘Whatever you call it – performance art, live art, time based art – I think it is alive and kicking. Performance art continues and will always continue as long as the primal desires underpinning theater and dance and a live action in front of people has contemporary relevance. I think

that need is even more necessary now than ever before.’

*Find out more about performance in New York and about the artists, venues and organizations mentioned in this feature:*

Performance Space 122: [www.psl122.org](http://www.psl122.org)  
 The Kitchen: [www.thekitchen.org](http://www.thekitchen.org)  
 Dance Theater Workshop: [www.dtw.org](http://www.dtw.org)  
 The Public Theater: [www.publictheater.org](http://www.publictheater.org)  
 Franklin Furnace: [www.franklinfurnace.org](http://www.franklinfurnace.org)  
 Red Dive: [www.reddive.freesevers.com](http://www.reddive.freesevers.com)  
 Marjorie Kouns: [www.marjoriekouns.com](http://www.marjoriekouns.com)  
 Improv Everywhere: <http://improveverywhere.com/home.php>  
 nsumi: [www.nsumi.net](http://www.nsumi.net)  
 Critical Mass: [www.critical-mass.org](http://www.critical-mass.org)  
 Move On: [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org)  
 EYEBEAM: [www.eyebcam.org](http://www.eyebcam.org)  
 Rhizome: [www.rhizome.org](http://www.rhizome.org)  
 Culturebot: [www.culturebot.org](http://www.culturebot.org)  
 Danspace Project: [www.danspaceproject.org](http://www.danspaceproject.org)  
 Flux Factory: [www.fluxfactory.org](http://www.fluxfactory.org)  
 New York International Fringe Festival: [www.fringenyc.org](http://www.fringenyc.org)  
 Currency international festival of performance: [www.chashama.org/currency/c0xindex.htm](http://www.chashama.org/currency/c0xindex.htm)  
 Chashama: [www.chashama.org/home.php](http://www.chashama.org/home.php)  
 PERFORMA05: [www.performa-arts.org](http://www.performa-arts.org)  
 Guggenheim Museum: [www.guggenheim.org/new\\_york\\_index.shtml](http://www.guggenheim.org/new_york_index.shtml)  
 Portland Institute for Contemporary Art: [www.pica.org/index\\_fl.html](http://www.pica.org/index_fl.html)

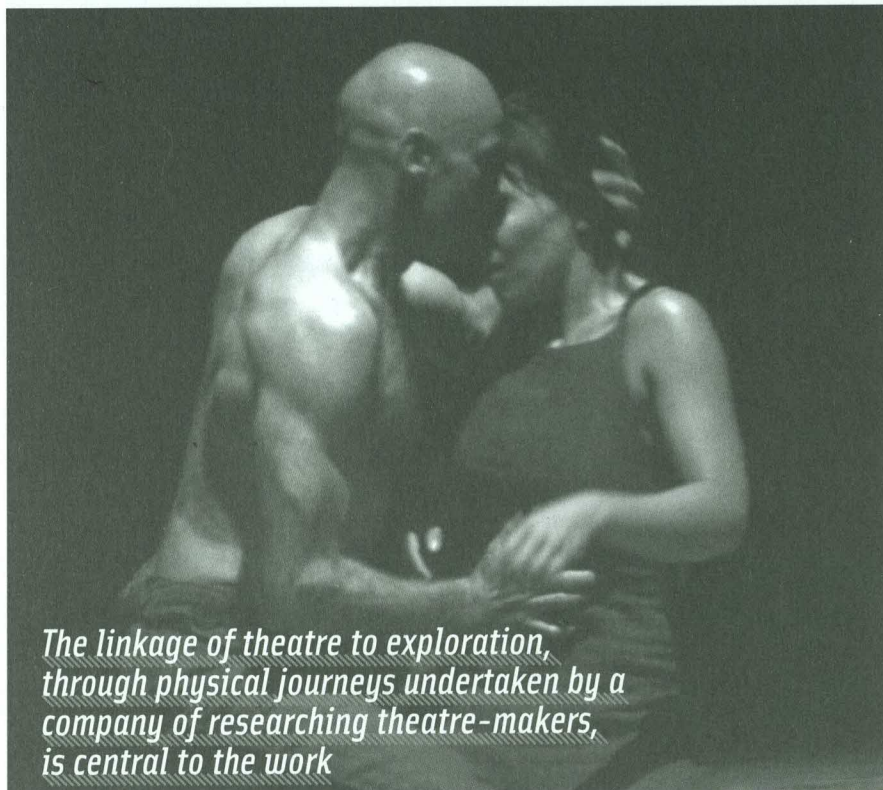
*All quotations taken directly from conversations or email correspondence with the persons involved, and used with their approval. ‘A City of Ambitious Dreaming’ is an expression of Vallejo Gantner’s. See the next issue of Total Theatre for Robert Ayers’s discussion of PERFORMA05, Currency, and Seven Easy Pieces.*



# THE CRYING GAME

TEATR PIESN KOZLA (SONG OF THE GOAT THEATRE) HAS MADE WAVES IN THE UK WITH CHRONICLES - A LAMENTATION. CASSIE WERBER GOES TO POLAND TO MEET UP WITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR GRZEGORZ BRAL

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*The linkage of theatre to exploration, through physical journeys undertaken by a company of researching theatre-makers, is central to the work*

Earlier this year, I met with Grzegorz Bral at the company's base in Wrocław, Poland – asking him about Piesn Kozla's approach to the creative process, the relationship of the work to its audience, and future plans.

I am keen to ask about the new work, Lacrimosa. We meet a couple of months before the show's premiere, when the piece is at a particularly fragile point; the transition from private construct to shared experience. Having worked for so long that detachment is scarcely possible, Bral is ready for the alchemy of performance to render a new substance, with which the company will then work: 'Whether I like it or whether I dislike it, whether I feel it may work or may not, it doesn't really matter... Until we share this experience with the audience.' The presence and energy of an audience will, Bral hopes, move the work forward, 'give a sense of the gap, of the space, of the loss, of the lack, what's missing.'

The earlier work Kroniki (known in the UK as Chronicles – A Lamentation) was first performed in 2001, and it has evolved through performance over several years. While retaining an edge and rawness, it is extremely precise and polished, raising the question of whether there really is room for development, purposive or accidental changes, deviation from the rules. Bral

affirms that there is; that the rigour of the actors' training and the depth of their complicity (they prefer the words 'co-ordination' and 'synchronicity') make them continually adaptable, sensitive to the needs of the audience and of their fellow artists. At a performance in Wrocław in July 2004, I witnessed such a moment of spontaneous development; as Rafał Habel, playing Gilgamesh, began his final speech in a slowly darkening room, the lights



failed, flickering between brightness and blackout. Habel, ready and responsive, transformed the scene into a dialogue between himself and the faltering glow, a moment of theatrical purity.

Lacrimosa's diverse stimuli reveal both a continuity with past work, and some new departures. Music, key to Piesn Kozla's process, is here inspired by Mozart's Requiem, broken down and built again into the fabric of the piece. The Requiem, as 'a mass for death', maintains links with the visceral songs of Kroniki, sourced from expedition to Albania, carrying forward 'the motif of crying, lamenting'. Where the 5,000 year old Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh the King informed Kroniki, a more modern text is selected for Lacrimosa: Andrzej Szczypiorski's The Mass for Arras, examining the decimation by plague of a 15th-century French community, and subsequent waves of reactive guilt and violence. Without attempting a narrative recreation of the book, characters and ideas are excised and explored, with racial persecution as a key, and relevant, theme: 'racism', Bral points out, 'still exists, and is very hidden, in Poland.'

The final element is, as for Kroniki, expedition. Preparation for Lacrimosa took the company to Greece, to observe the rituals of the Anastenaria, a private (as distinct from religious) cult; female-centred, and organised around a final ritual of walking on fire. The linkage of theatre to exploration, through physical journeys undertaken by a company of researching theatre-makers, is central to the way in which Piesn Kozla work, and here especially the links with other Polish groups such as Gardzienice, and before that to Grotowski, can be most clearly seen. When Peter Brook's Ensemble first began journeying in the 1970s, the idea had barely penetrated British theatre; even now, when ease of communication and travel make cross-fertilisation of ideas and International touring easier than ever, the necessity for expeditions to form any part of theatre research seems not to have filtered into the British system.

Bral asserts the importance of undertaking such a journey with genuine engagement: 'If you just go and voyeur, this is not an expedition, this is just consuming, tourist information. The real expedition is the courage to go somewhere, because maybe something will change

TEATR PIESNA KOZLA CHRONICLES/ PHOTO ARKADIUSZ CHRUSCIEL

TEATR PIESNA KOZLA CHRONICLES/ PHOTO ARKADIUSZ CHRUSCIEL



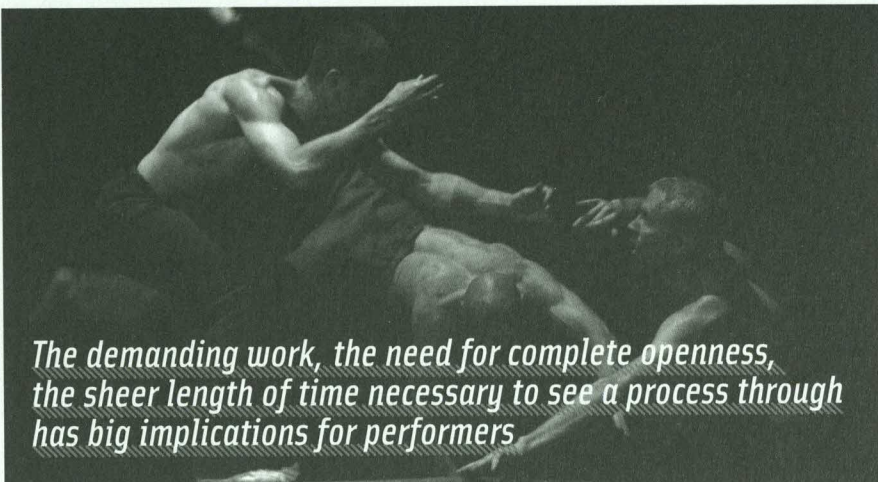
inside you. And that is also a danger... if I want to treat it seriously, if I want to learn from it, I have to be ready to change, inside'. For Bral, this links quickly and clearly into the experience of making theatre as a process, each new piece an exploration undertaken in the knowledge that there may be no going back: 'this, to me, is the perfect example of making a performance. Not because you want to have a product but because maybe this will change you forever.'

Grotowski and his group relocated from Opole to Wrocław in 1965, establishing the Theatre Laboratory, and creating *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris*; a performance which marked Bral's first encounter with theatre. Now the Grotowski Centre for Theatre Culture and Research, this building, just off Wrocław's main square, formed *Piesn Kozla*'s base when they began work in 1997. In 2002, they relocated to the nearby refectory of a 14th-century monastery. Prior to the founding of their own company, both Bral and Anna Zubrzycki spent several years with the Association of Theatrical Practices 'Gardzienice', established in 1976 by Włodzimierz Staniewski as both a theatre company and a training ground for practitioners, running workshops to which company members return.

*Piesn Kozla* itself runs an extensive programme of workshops taking place throughout the year, and involving the whole company in teaching. This year, the first students will also graduate from the new MA programme, established in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University, which has seen a group of international students spend six months in Wrocław and on expedition to Greece, before performing in Poland and Britain. While *Gardzienice* and Grotowski are clearly a part of how *Piesn Kozla* has formed and developed, the company does not intend to develop along the same lines as the latter: becoming increasingly private, conducting hermetic and ever more specific research. Bral is clear in affirming that *Piesn Kozla*'s ultimate aim is performance, not research. Sharing the techniques, through teaching, and the work through performance are key, co-ordinated goals: 'Audience, from some moment, starts to participate. It's like one of my partners.'

If stimulus, as a creative starting point, and engagement with an audience as a litmus test are important marker points in the process, the time spent on preparation is the company's powerhouse, and one of the areas in which *Piesn Kozla*'s practice is most fascinating. Creative work centres on the development of a new form of training – physical, vocal, rigorous and unique – intimately connected to the final

TEATR PIESNA KOZLA CHRONICLES/ PHOTO ARKADIUSZ CHRUSCIEL



*The demanding work, the need for complete openness, the sheer length of time necessary to see a process through has big implications for performers*

'product'. Bral asserts that this is both challenging and necessary: 'That's why it takes time, that's why it's so difficult, that's why it's such a challenging process. Because you have to build a real training, and real training means you have to give up your assumptions'. For *Kroniki*, polyphonic song formed a nucleus from which the development of both process and piece radiated. For *Lacrimosa*, a training based on physical movement, 'One Hour Training', was developed. The demanding work, the need for complete openness, the sheer length of time necessary to see a process through, has big implications for performers, necessitating complete dedication to both group and work.

*Make a performance not because you want to have a product, but because maybe this will change you forever.*

Several have been with the company from the beginning; others have relocated to Wrocław from France, Sweden and Britain. Required to engage with complete commitment, the group devotes itself, bodily and mentally, to the process, for as long as it takes. Bral is keen to emphasise the performers' centrality to each part of the process: 'I'm nothing without actors, I'm really nobody... This is not me saying, "you do this, you do this, you go there, you pick up this": no. I'm just establishing a training.' It is a training which seeks technical virtuosity as well as emotional engagement, a combination which the work of *Piesn Kozla* seeks constantly to perfect.

The constant, sustained work towards a common goal, the very active exploration, which takes place in a company like *Piesn Kozla*, has its foundation in the tradition of ensemble practice. For pre-written plays produced in Britain, four-week rehearsal periods are normal; devising processes, though often spanning several months,

tend to be characterised by short bursts of intensive activity, separated by long periods in which participants write, think, research, pursue other projects, or fill out applications for funding. The length of time which Bral suggests necessary for a performance to achieve its full potential would make some actors balk, and raise many UK producers' eyebrows. Two years? Three, even four, if we begin counting from the early ideas and continue to the point of readiness. And this, though broken up by periods of teaching, rest, other performances, is not dictated by the programmes of theatres or financial concerns; it is necessary for the work. *Gardzienice* state on their website, not without a hint of pride, that 'during these [last] twenty-five years, the company has created only five performances'. *Lacrimosa* will be *Piesn Kozla*'s third performance in eight years. The drive towards productivity, and specifically quantity, which perhaps takes its impetus from a business model rather than an artistic perspective, can keep theatre vibrant through the constant turnover of ideas and people; the discovery of unexpected, fresh forms. But it can also create an atmosphere of voracity, rushed creations consumed by audiences both tired and hungry, and subsumed into an industry that does not fully respect or support them.

In such a context, it is not difficult to see why the intensity, commitment and extraordinary co-ordination of *Piesn Kozla*'s practice stands out.

*Teatr Piesn Kozla (Song of the Goat Theatre) is touring Chronicles – A Lamentation this Autumn as part of the Aurora Nova in the South programme. See [www.auranova.org](http://www.auranova.org) For more information on the company see [www.piesnkozla.art.pl](http://www.piesnkozla.art.pl) Grotowski Centre for Theatre Culture and Research, Wrocław: [www.grotcentre.art.pl](http://www.grotcentre.art.pl) Association of Theatrical Practices 'Gardzienice': [www.gardzienice.art.pl](http://www.gardzienice.art.pl)*



FRANC CHAMBERLAIN WITNESSES A PUBLIC EVENT  
EXPLORING THE COMMON CONCERNS OF THE DISCIPLINES  
OF PERFORMANCE AND MEDICAL HISTORY.

# BODY STATES: THE PILOT PROJECT

In the centre of the darkened studio space the artist lay naked upon a table, brilliantly lit. The first spectators into the room followed the wall until they came to some seating, keeping a comfortable distance from the displayed body. I went with them. Some of those coming afterwards entered more confidently into the space, drawing close to the table. Some people stayed seated, at a distance, whilst others moved around viewing from different angles, levels and distances. The space was quiet apart from occasional soft footfalls, the hum of the air conditioning and the occasional click of my camera shutter. A body alive and healthy, relaxed but not etherized, not a corpse as depicted in Rembrandt's anatomy lessons or Mantegna's Lamentation but recalling the stillness of the bodies at the centre of those paintings, Nor was this a whitened bleeding body as in Franko B's Still Life, yet still there as a body; vulnerable, exposed, and sacred.

Body States: The Pilot Project was the first of a series of events organised by the Centre for the History of Medicine and the School of Theatre, Performance and Cultural Policy Studies at the University of Warwick in order to explore relationships between live art and medicine. Ansuman Biswas' auto-exhibition, which opened the event, eloquently drew attention to the body as an object of wonder and curiosity in both art and medicine, with his body seemingly suspended in both space and time, pre-, post-, or above intervention, leaving unspoken questions hanging...

Our lived experience of our own bodies and our sense of the living bodies of others is very different from having a visual experience of the intimate internal workings of our bodies, something which, until very recently, would have been almost impossible. Phillip Warnell's Host resulted from his swallowing a miniature camera and recording its journey through his gastro-intestinal tract. Four large video projections of his face with the images of his internal processes filling his stretched-open mouth, took up one wall of the space, whilst along the facing wall there was an industrial laser which was regularly misted with water to enhance its visibility, indicating another means by which technology enables micro-medical

interventions. There was a combination of technical precision and grotesque humour in Host, as well as a sense of experimentation which was heightened by Warnell's vocal presence together with the live mixing of the soundtrack, and suggested an intertwining of laboratory, workshop, and studio.

Whilst Warnell as artist was both the experimenter and the subject of experimentation, Louise K Wilson's Notes from an Unconscious Subject was based on her experiences as a volunteer subject in medical research experiments. Using documentary footage from some of the experiments she had been involved in, Wilson spoke from the too infrequently articulated experience of a human guinea pig whilst allowing silent moments where the filmed body was witnessed by both herself and spectators. This witnessing of the recorded experiment in association with the person who was the experimental

ANSUMAN BISWAS / PHOTO FRANC CHAMBERLAIN



subject, foregrounded the experiential and human dimension which always exists alongside a quantitative and statistical study, but which is not reducible to it.

The piece I found the most disturbing was Anna Dimitriu's film Sanguine Humour, which was a video of a cupping session. The camera is still and focuses on the naked back of the client lying face down on a table. The body is headless and legless in the frame. The cupping practitioner, wearing latex glove and a white coat, places the 'cups', pumps out the air so that the flesh is drawn up and almost immediately begins to look bruised. More cups are added, others, as they begin to fill with blood are removed and the blood wiped from the skin. I'm not sure what was disturbing about this for me. I am much less troubled by Franko B's work, for example, or by Ron Athey's recent Judas Cradle. Perhaps it was to do with the client

being unable to see what was happening, but it could also be because of a sense that this is something to be felt rather than seen. The issue of voyeurism, which was present in most of the pieces, was perhaps at its strongest here for me. There was also a sense that, in all of the other pieces the 'subjects' had both a voice and a face. There was a technical coolness and distance in Sanguine Humour, for me, which amplified a sense of the absence of the person in the medicalised body. Whilst Wilson as subject spoke, and both Franko B and Ron Athey are clearly agents, here I had a sense of body as depersonalised object, and the tension between that and my sense of a person whose responses to the situation I couldn't access, was one aspect of what disturbed me.

Ju Gosling (aka Ju90) was very directly personal in her Wheels On Fire piece, a combination of live performance, video and digital imagery. Challenging assumptions and perceptions held of wheelchair users, Gosling asked why, although we view technology as empowering, we see the wheelchair-user as an object of pity? In a culture where the more we walk the lower our status, why is it that the person using a wheelchair is seen as tragic? Why is it that we say people are 'wheelchair bound' or 'confined to a wheelchair', language associated with bondage and punishment? Wheels On Fire was the most overtly political of the pieces and raised, for me, the issue of the relationship between any technology which extends our range of operational possibilities, and medicine. The wheelchair, it could be argued, is no more an item of medical technology than a bicycle. We may need medical intervention to enable us to use either, but it's not a prerequisite.

*Body States: The Pilot Project took place in June 2005 at the Ellen Terry Building in Coventry city centre.*

*See <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/chm/activities/other/bodystates/>*

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# TOTALTHEATRE

## AWARDS 2005

REPORT BY: DOROTHY MAX PRIOR WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY  
RICHARD CUMING, MARIGOLD HUGHES, MIRIAM KING AND MISCHA TWITCHIN

Presiding Judges for the Awards were Total Theatre Magazine editor Dorothy Max Prior and Total Theatre Network board representative Professor Anthony Dean (Dean of Faculty, Performing Arts, University of Winchester). Judging meetings facilitated and overseen by Total Theatre Network director Felicity Hall. Awards project manager: Tansy Lihou.

Total Theatre Awards Judges Advisory Panel: Louise Blackwell, (producer, Fuel and formerly BAC), Chenine Bhatena (circus-physical theatre producer and manager/co-producer of Circelation), Mary Brennan (live art/dance critic, The Herald), Richard Cuming (Head of Performing Arts, University of Winchester/ Total Theatre Magazine editorial group), Marigold Hughes (performer/director and Total Theatre Magazine contributor), Donald Hutera (dance critic, The Times), Miriam King (freelance artist/filmmaker and Total Theatre Magazine editorial group), Helen Lannaghan and Joseph Seelig, (joint directors, London International Mime Festival), Martin Sutherland (Director of The Corn Exchange and New Greenham Arts Newbury), Mischa Twitchin (a founder-member of shunt performance collective/ Total Theatre Magazine editorial group).

Our thanks go to all our Advisory Panel, to John Daniel from British Council (former editor of Total Theatre Magazine) for all his help and support, to our reviewer/assessors, to Aurora Nova who hosted the Awards ceremony, to compere Miss Behave and Awards presenters Jonathan Holloway (chair of Total Theatre Network board) and Nelson Fernandez (director of Visiting Arts), to the participating venues, and to all the artists and companies who entered the Total Theatre Awards 2005.

Last but not least, a big thank you to our sponsors, University of Winchester, without whose generous support the Total Theatre Awards 2003 - 2005 would not have been possible. Sponsorship is now being sought for 2006. To talk to us about sponsorship packages and relationships, please contact Felicity Hall on 020 7729 7944 or at [awards@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:awards@totaltheatre.org.uk)

Total Theatre Awards are made to the artists or companies presenting work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe deemed to be the best examples of physical and visual theatre/performance. In 2005, for the first time, the winners' list was an all-UK line-up. The winners' list demonstrates the range and quality of physical and visual theatre and performance work that has emerged from the UK in recent years. The line-up includes a high number of artists who work across boundaries of theatre, live art and multi-discipline performance, which gives a good indication of the direction in which experimental theatre/performance practice is moving currently. Interestingly, many of the winning shows are site-responsive works set outside regular theatre spaces - another indicator of significant current trends.'

The six winning shows were announced at an exuberant and lively ceremony held at Aurora Nova St Stephen's on 26th August, compered by female sword-swallower extraordinary Miss Behave (see Missing Link's website at [www.circusperformers.com](http://www.circusperformers.com) to book her!).

The full list of winning shows is as follows:

**ARTIST/COMPANY: ANDREW DAWSON**  
**SHOW: ABSENCE AND PRESENCE**

Awarded for a moving and memorable one-person show with quiet gravitas by a performer who has developed the art of mime into a total theatre experience.  
[www.andrewdawson.info](http://www.andrewdawson.info)

**ARTIST/COMPANY: DREAMTHINKSPEAK**  
**SHOW: DON'T LOOK BACK**

Awarded for a dreamy and reflective site-responsive piece that is so harmoniously attuned to its setting that in each site in which it is presented, it is hard to believe it could exist anywhere else.  
[www.dreamthinkspeak.com](http://www.dreamthinkspeak.com)

**ARTIST/COMPANY: STATION HOUSE OPERA**  
**SHOW: ROADMETAL SWEETBREAD**

Awarded for a visionary and challenging performance work that has stood the test of time, merging live and filmed action with a skill and artistic integrity that bears the mark of experience, from a company that has led the field in mixed-media performance for the past 25 years.  
[www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/sho](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/sho)

**ARTIST/COMPANY: KAZUKO HOHKI**

**SHOW: EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF BORROWERS**

Awarded for the creation of a delightful alternative world filled with unusual objects and artefacts, quirky songs and tall tales about small people.  
[www.yourimagination.org](http://www.yourimagination.org)  
[www.kazukohohki.com](http://www.kazukohohki.com)

**ARTIST/COMPANY: GECKO**  
**SHOW: THE RACE**

Awarded for an exuberant and energetic physical theatre piece presented by a young company who have already made their mark.  
[www.fueltheatre.com/gecko/therace](http://www.fueltheatre.com/gecko/therace)

**ARTIST/COMPANY: GRID IRON**  
**SHOW: THE DEVIL'S LARDER**

Awarded for a show that successfully marries the elements of text, physicality, music and sensitivity to site: if anything is total theatre, this is it!  
[www.gridiron.org.uk](http://www.gridiron.org.uk)

Congratulations also go to the other shortlisted artists, who battled through a nominations list of hundreds to reach the final twelve:

**SOMA** Cabaret Decadance; **MATILDA LEYSER** Lifeline; **WALK THE PLANK/MARK MURPHY SWALK**; **NOFIT STATE CIRCUS** Immortal 2; **RAINPAN 43** All Wear Bowlers; **BLIND SUMMIT** Low Life. All of these artists and companies presented excellent work.

Longlisted shows (other than the above) considered for the Awards 2005 were: **LOST DOG** The Drowner; **SORCERER BAKLAVA COMPANY** A World in your Shell-Like; **DARREN JOHNSON** REN-SA; **PEEPOLYKUS** All In The Timing; **GAMARJOBAT** A Shut Up Comedy from Japan; **SOUND AND FURY IN COLLABORATION WITH SHUNT ARTISTS** Ether Frolics; **7K THEATRE** Shadows; **JO STROMGREN KOMPANI** The Hospital; **DOTHEATRE** Sleep...less...ness; **COMPANY FZ** Loser

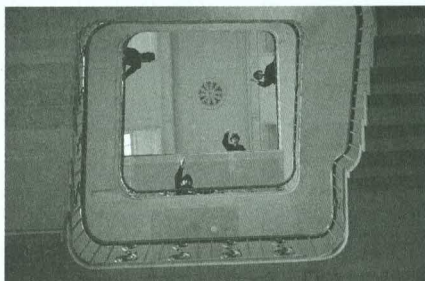
Special mention also to our two 'Wild Cards' who entered the race at a late stage after being highly commended by members of the advisory panel: **CURIOUS** On the Scent and **VANISHING POINT** The Lost Ones.

More on the winning shows over the page  
- see also Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2005  
in the reviews section.



# TOTAL THEATRE

## AWARDS 2005



DREAMTHINKSPEAK

*dreamthinkspeak*

### ***Don't Look Back***

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, *Don't Look Back* is a moving exploration of love and death. It is a truly site-responsive piece: seen first in a dilapidated manor house in Sussex, it has since transferred to numerous other places, and although many elements remain constant, the piece is transformed in response to each new site in which it is placed and from which it gains new meaning. The constant elements include visual set-pieces: a deserted wedding banquet; a doll's house peopled by projected images (director Tristan Sharps is fond of the metaphor of filmed character as ghost); video of a funeral journey across water. There's the melancholic sound of a violin emanating from an empty music stand and the occasional appearance of a live performer, including a bride who magically fades away in front of our eyes. In the Edinburgh Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, dreamthinkspeak take full advantage of the given environment. Audience members enter in twos and threes and it is easy to find yourself alone, listening to the echoing footsteps from another part of the building as you make your way through seemingly endless corridors filled with entry books, and traipse up echoing metal staircases, until you reach a viewing point from the top of the well of the building from which you experience a sort of theatre of geometry, watching black-suited clerks progress along walkways which spiral dizzily from our bird's-eye viewpoint to a ground far below. This is not theatre for passive audiences but theatre in which the audience is actively engaged in interaction with the work.

DMP



ANDREW DAWSON

*Andrew Dawson*

### ***Absence and Presence***

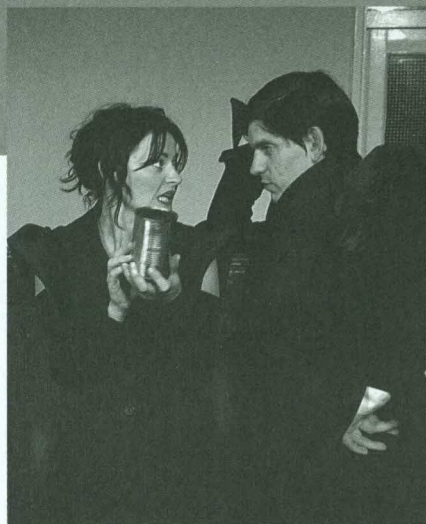
Aurora Nova St Stephen's

In a stark white space sits a television, three chairs and a wire figure. The television plays footage of a man – a man we learn is the deceased father of the solo performer. By seeing this man on screen in the midst of a live space, he is at once present yet indefinitely detached. Similar snatches of this dead father's presence, and absence, are woven delicately together as the piece builds slowly.

In the closing section, Dawson unites the forces of absence and presence with unparalleled humanity. Walking towards the wire figure, Dawson gently lifts it up and places it on his shoulders. The care with which he handles it suggest that he could be both cradling the fragile bones of a dying man and also trying to touch that which is now untouchable. Reaching out towards an imagined body of presence – he is attempting to visualise emptiness, give it a form and brush against the boundaries of a void. He is allowing the weight of his grief to melt into lightness. His shadow is cast onto the white screen behind him. Dawson walks away from his shadow. His shadow remains. Every step is a step closer to the point of departure: a point where presence leaves absence, a point where the dead are altogether gone.

Honest, humble and genuinely moving, Dawson's memorial to his father is a visual poem of what it means to live and to lose: of what it means to be human.

MH



GRID IRON

*Grid Iron*

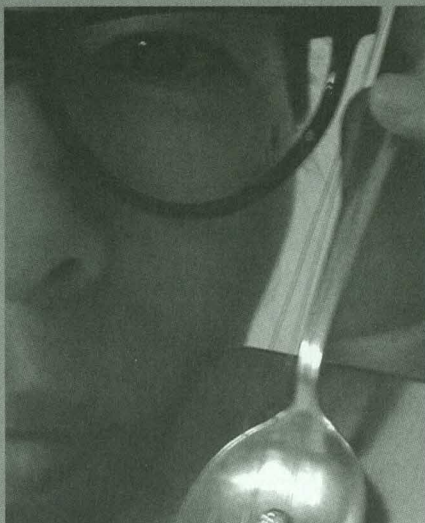
### ***The Devil's Larder***

Traverse/ Debenhams

Director Ben Harrison has said of his company that 'Grid Iron aims to seek the perfect marriage of site and subject... we seek the alignment of text and space as a way of heightening the visual power and emotional resonance of both'. *The Devil's Larder* is a promenade piece examining how food can act as a catalyst for unleashing our fears, desires and taboos. It is inspired by Jim Crace's book of modern fairy tales of the same name and is an excellent example of how text can work with other theatrical elements in the creation of a piece of 'total theatre'. Thus, in a series of set-pieces enacted within the bizarre and rather spooky environment of Debenhams department store after hours, we encounter entrancing story-telling, breathtaking visual installation, robust physical performance and glorious song. Crace's magic-realist text is used as a starting point for a series of extraordinary set-pieces: the story of the search for ever more exotic meat in a secret diner's club in foreign lands is enacted on a miniature set with animated objects; in Homeware we encounter an unusual use for a husband's ashes and witness a very physically embodied kinky dinner party where soufflé meets seared flesh; in Bedware the raft on which a couple tossed out to sea discover the piss-obvious secrets of survival morphs into the honeymoon bed of a reluctant bride who finds an aphrodisiac that sets her on a path to new sexual adventures; and in a panelled room with the illuminated Edinburgh castle framed in the window behind, an old woman kneading bread summons angels. Real magic indeed.

DMP





*Kazuko Hohki*

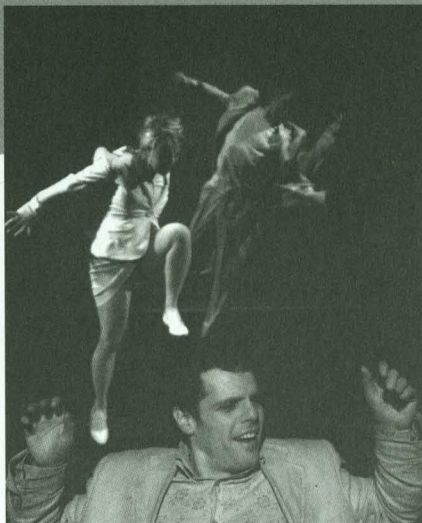
***Evidence for the Existence of Borrowers***

*Theatre Workshop*

Happiness for Everyone! is the catchphrase of the Borrowers International Network, which (we are led to believe by Hohki and her collaborators, Andy Cox and Mervyn Millar) was set up to promote cultural exchange between Borrowers and Human Beans. Evidence for the Existence of Borrowers takes the audience on a journey through the out-of-sight areas of a theatre venue, in the search for evidence of those extraordinary little beings.

And we are not disappointed! This promenade piece is a delight – particularly for anyone familiar with Mary Norton's stories of tiny people who live beneath the floorboards. We start with an introductory lecture on the organisation's valuable work, then are taken on a backstage tour of the Theatre Workshop as Hohki shares with us the story of her communication with Bob, a borrower who contacts her via email; much easier than the telephone, as he can jump up and down on computer keys! She shows us the precious Bobjects that he leaves for her, culminating in a concert played on Bistruments – mini instruments made from spoons, pins, rubber bands and teeny metal tins. With an ingenious artistic concept, delicate music and meticulous making skills, this enchanting, direct, moving, and completely engaging performance brings the audience into its alternative reality. At the end, as Hohki asks individually of each audience member 'are you Bob?' it feels an honour to have been invited into this intimate and precious world.

MK/DMP



*Gecko*

***The Race***

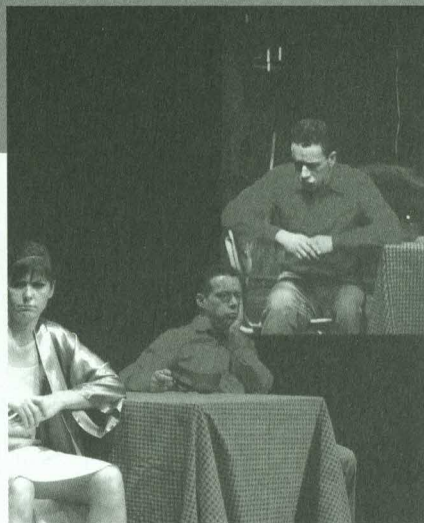
*Aurora Nova St Stephens*

The Race is an inventive and thrilling piece of physical theatre. Taking impending fatherhood as its starting point, the cast of five play with and explore the contemporary yet timeless issues around this subject. The linear curve of the piece allows for changes of pace and emotion, as well as creating a meditation on life-changing events.

All these themes are held together by stunning performances which are highly visual and extremely physical, but which display a subtlety of tone and a complexity of expression. What in lesser hands could become purely sensation is here affecting and ultimately moving. There is a strong sense of company collaboration throughout and of decisions about content, design, style and effect being thoroughly worked. The opening scene of the soon-to-be-father on a treadmill literally racing to keep up provides a very satisfying metaphor for our lives in 2005. Similarly, at the end the cast create a stunning image by simply running on the spot until they are exhausted. Yet also imaginative and subtle visual images abound; the umbilical cord of the baby being transposed to snipping of a telephone cord for example.

What ultimately makes The Race such a strong piece of theatre is that all the disparate elements combine together to make a satisfying, appealing and powerful piece.

RC



*Station House Opera*

***Roadmetal Sweetbread***

*Theatre Workshop*

Roadmetal Sweetbread, which is re-filmed for each new site in which the piece is performed, creates a mesmeric play between live and filmed action; a complicated psychological game that tests the audience's powers of perception, memory and imagination. There are many companies nowadays using the device of having live performers and their screen alter-egos in the same space – but Station House Opera bring the weight of experience to the game, making work that requires the audience to really engage with what is being presented. Roadmetal Sweetbread is an exploration of male-female power games in which the two performers compete (with each other and with their own video images) for survival. Love and hate become synonymous as every-day irritations escalate into no-holds-barred warfare in what is a deeply, darkly humorous satire on relationships – enforcing the old maxim 'can't live with you, can't live without you'. The onstage screen presents a parallel universe which is sometimes almost identical to the live action, sometimes with minor discrepancies, sometimes radically differing; augmented by snatches of filmed action from off-stage areas of the Theatre Workshop and the street outside. By the end of an hour, it becomes hard to say what was witnessed 'for real', what was experienced on screen and what was imagined in this Theatre of Images – in all senses of that word.

DMP



# THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

IS THE EDINBURGH FRINGE THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THE TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS?



DREAMTHINKSPEAK - DON'T LOOK BACK

Total Theatre Awards were set up in 1997 to support the 'flourishing range and diversity of physical and visual theatre on the Fringe'. The decision to set up Total Theatre Awards was in part a challenge to the Scotsman Fringe First long-standing dismissal of physical and visual performance – as an example, mime had previously been excluded as eligible for Fringe Firsts which were seen as existing principally to support new writing. Theatre without words was no theatre at all, they felt. Of course, things move on – and we have in recent years seen both Fringe Firsts and Herald Angels going to many of the same companies winning Total Theatre Awards; artists who we have supported consistently over the years, such as Andrew Dawson, winner of a Total Theatre Award 2005 for *Absence and Presence* and director of a previous winner, *Pandora 88* by Fabrik, which returned triumphantly to this year's Fringe. This now raises the question of whether it is still vital for us to be there supporting this work when it is acknowledged by the wider world.

The case for is that a Total Theatre Award has a life beyond Edinburgh – it is a mark of excellence and, particularly within the physical/visual theatre sector, is highly valued as a promotional tool. Do the Awards then need to be given at Edinburgh Fringe? Couldn't they be held at any point in the year? Yes maybe – but the current consensus is that the Fringe sees a coming together of national and international artists, companies, promoters and presenters that doesn't occur at any other point in the

theatre calendar. There is a buzz around work which many people are seeing at around the same time – very different to trying to create a shortlist or have a judging meeting about things seen by some people but not others at scattered times over the past twelve months.

On the other hand, there is the ongoing concern that the Fringe is geared up mostly for stand-up or for theatre with small casts, no sets and simple props; shows that can fit happily into a converted cupboard. Mischa Twitchin was one of the Total Theatre Awards 2005 advisory panel members. He is a founder-member of *shunt*, who were recipients of a Total Theatre Award in 2000 for their site-informed piece *The Ballad of Bobby Francois*:

'The fact that the Awards 2005 shortlist consisted overwhelmingly of work presented by the British Council Showcase and Aurora Nova... seems to suggest that the Fringe generally offers poor conditions for presenting total theatre work. There might be an issue then for the Awards concerning the material conditions for presenting work... The Assembly Rooms, for instance, offers space... with raked seating and a stage shoehorned into opulent rooms, the architecture of which is supposed to be ignored. This then already signifies an indifference to the work to be shown on the stage – the epitome of which is the huge chandelier that dominates the Ballroom stage...'

It is interesting, in the light of the above, to note that this very chandelier

was the reason why, in 2003, Derevo moved *Islands in the Stream* (currently touring as part of *Aurora Nova* in the South) from Assembly Rooms Ballroom to Aurora Nova St Stephen's, where Derevo could come closer to achieving the total visual environment that the piece aspires to. OK, we know that there is no such thing as a neutral space – but let's just say that some places are more neutral than others – and St Stephen's is without doubt a far friendlier environment for movement-based and visual theatre than most spaces in Edinburgh. This is reflected in the continuous appearance of *Aurora Nova* in longlists, shortlists and winners for Total Theatre Awards. Two of our winners (Andrew Dawson and Gecko) were presented at Aurora Nova this year, as well as shortlisted artists Rainpan 43 and Matilda Leyser.

We didn't give a venue award this year as we felt that it has become a rather pointless exercise – there's no competition to Aurora Nova when it comes to physical spaces, unless you step outside the venues – and then we are into issues of creative production and presenting work rather than 'being a venue' per se. In 2005, the main refuge for site-responsive work and for theatre set outside of venue spaces was the British Council Showcase, which this year was an extremely high-quality programme which included Total Theatre Award winners *dreamthinkspeak*, *Grid Iron*, *Station House Opera* and *Kazuko Hohki*.

Mischa reflects that 'This year, the British Council seems, indeed, to have offered a kind of "Total Theatre" showcase – bringing together work from across the year to the international meeting of the Festival (specifically, Aurora Nova). Perhaps this would be something to explore more deliberately in future years?'

*Dorothy Max Prior with additional reporting by Mischa Twitchin. For further details on the Total Theatre Awards see [www.totaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.totaltheatre.org.uk)*



# LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL – THEN AND NOW

## TEENAGE MIME FAN MIRIAM KING RELIVES LIMF'S EARLY DAYS

As a teenager I'd cycle regularly from my council estate home, near the Scrubs in East Acton, to the world of inspiration that was The Cockpit Theatre, near the Edgware Road. I was a member of the Cockpit Youth Theatre, and to my delight, 1978 heralded the first London Mime Festival, housed and hosted there at The Cockpit by a dapper and gloriously corkscrew-haired Joseph Seelig. To be exact, the first festival was really in 1977, called the Cockpit Festival of Mime & Visual Theatre, in which the artists were all British apart from one Swiss performer. Yet 1978 saw the name change and an international line-up. It was 1984 when the name changed again to the one we know today – London International Mime Festival.

But back to the 70s – being a huge David Bowie fan, I'd originally discovered mime via Ziggy Stardust. David Bowie had trained in the late 1960s with Lindsay Kemp, who in turn had trained with Marcel Marceau. Going to see or becoming involved in anything that had something to do with Bowie, I'd taken myself off to see Lindsay Kemp's decadently sumptuous shows (like *Flowers*) in the mid-70s. Also adoring old movies, I'd loved the film *Les Enfants du Paradis* which I saw for the first time at The Academy in Oxford Street. This cinema had a wonderful programme of black and white and silent movies, including a Buster Keaton season with live piano accompaniment!

My appetite was whetted and satiated by discovering in 1978 what more mime could be at that first London Mime Festival. I remember tearing tickets at the doors of the Cockpit Theatre that first season in return for seeing shows for free. I first heard the name Jacques Lecoq via artists in the programme that had trained with him. Mime could be the fast, comic book and cartoonish antics of the all-male Moving Picture Mime Show, or the white-faced silent mime of Nola Rae (my first experience of a female clown), or the downright bizarre – and neither silent nor costumed

– Jango Edwards! I discovered Desmond Jones for the first time, particularly enjoyed the visual comedy of Justin Case and came across the work of Katie Duck. There were also artists from Switzerland, Germany and Argentina.

Leaving behind a crowded house, little conversation, no books and constant TV, my creative and imaginative self was nourished by this early experience of visual theatre – a living, breathing communication. My lost artistic soul found a home, thanks to LIMF showing me a path to that front door. LIMF's now approaching its 28th year. Older, yet certainly not jaded, I continue to look forward with bated breath to the programme of Europe's longest established annual focus on contemporary visual theatre. Joseph may have lost his corkscrew curls, but certainly not his dynamic flair for co-directing – with Helen Lannaghan – an inspired programme which sustains yet progresses the possibilities of this exciting, limitless artform – mime.



CIRCUS RONALDO / PHOTO BENNY DE GROVE

London International Mime Festival  
11–29 January 2006

For full details see [www.mimefest.co.uk](http://www.mimefest.co.uk)

**COMPAGNIE 111** (France) UK Premiere  
*More Or Less Infinity*  
QEH/ South Bank Wed 11–Fri 13 Jan  
Circus skills, movement and extraordinary video imagery.

**COMPAGNIE MOSSOUX BONTE** (Belgium)  
*Twin Houses*  
Purcell Room/South Bank Sat 14–Tue 17 Jan  
Eerie and sinister wordless monologue for one performer and five mannequin alter egos.

**FAULTY OPTIC** (UK) London Premiere  
*Horsehead or The Rise and Fall of the Back and Front*  
ICA Sun 15–Thur 19 Jan  
Animated figures and mechanical sets mixed with video, music and sounds – all spiked with wicked humour.

**CIRCUS RONALDO** (Belgium) UK Premiere  
*Cucina dell'Arte*  
Barbican Pit Tue 17–Sat 21 Jan  
Culinary, clowning and pizza-flipping skills from this famous circus family.

**COMPAGNIE ADRIEN M** (France) UK Premiere  
*Convergence*  
Purcell Room/South Bank Thur 19–Sun 22 Jan  
A spectacular mix of actual and virtual juggling, light and sound.

**ANDREW DAWSON** (UK)  
*Absence and Presence*  
ICA Fri 20–Sat 21 Jan  
Using movement, music, mime, sculpture and much wry humour – an intimate exploration of loss and guilt. Winner of 2005 Total Theatre Award and Herald Angel.

**MATILDA LEYSER** (UK) London Premiere  
*Line, Point, Plane*  
Linbury at the Royal Opera House Fri 20–Sat 21 Jan  
Powerfully demonstrating the ability of aerial skills to subtly and poignantly dramatise metaphor. Shortlisted Total Theatre Awards 2005

**GAMARJOBAT** (Japan) London Premiere  
Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer Sat 21–Sun 22 Jan, 1pm. Free.  
Two mohicaned Japanese street entertainers – funky, free-wheeling silent physical comedy.

**CLAIRE HEGGEN/THEATRE DU MOUVEMENT** (France)  
UK Premiere  
*Life's What You Make It*  
Purcell Room/South Bank Mon 23–Tue 24 Jan  
Performed in French, with film, a fascinating portrait of Heggen's own life and experiences as a performer.

**PIERRE RIGAL/COMPAGNIE DERNIERE MINUTE** (France)  
UK Premiere  
*Erection*  
ICA Mon 23–Wed 25 Jan  
Stunning sound and lightscapes, and a performance of extraordinary power and grace.

**FAMILIE FLOEZ** (Germany) London Premiere  
*Ristorante Immortale*  
Purcell Room/South Bank Wed 25–Sun 29 Jan  
Berlin based Familie Floez blend masks, movement and music.

**STEPHEN MOTTRAM'S ANIMATA – RETROSPECTIVE** (UK)  
BAC Tue 24–Sun 29 January  
Artist, craftsman and puppeteer Stephen Mottram's renowned trilogy.  
Tue–Thur: The Seed Carriers  
Fri–Sat: The Seas of Organillo  
Sun: In Suspension

**LES MARCHES DE L'ETE** (France) UK Premiere  
*Le Modèle de Molinier or The Narcissist's Ceremony*  
ICA Fri 27–Sun 29 Jan  
Solo performance inspired by Molinier's auto-erotic art exploring gender ambiguity, fantasy and illusion.

**BLIND SUMMIT** (UK) London Premiere  
*Lowlife*  
BAC Tue 10 Jan–Sun 7 Feb  
An alcohol-soaked adult puppetry cabaret of deadbeats and losers. Shortlisted Total Theatre Awards 2005.



# WALK THIS WAY

## CRAB-WALKING PHIL SMITH TAKES US ON A COASTAL JOURNEY

I'm halfway into my new show *Crab Steps Aside* and the audience are beginning to look out of the window: to the flat-green bowlers rolling their woods on one side of me, to the sea churning on the other. And it suddenly strikes me that this is an odd kind of performance – where you take it as a compliment that the audience isn't watching the 'stage'.

*Crab Steps* is a follow up to last year's *The Crab Walks* that I performed in beach huts. This time I'm in a hotel, on a veranda, in a walled garden, in tea-rooms, a bar, a lido... all along the South Devon coast, sites that became part of the 'mytho-geography' of that first show. Once again, the show is made up of narratives and snatched moments from walks that I've taken, alone and with others. And again, the show is evangelical and rhetorical – aiming to provoke its audiences into making their own walkings rather just consume an entertainment about mine.

But this is not some health-drive. This is about walking that encourages excess and waste. That seeks to walk away from the norms, rejecting the recent official enthusiasm for walking just as much as it resists 'rambling'. This is a walking that refuses to be a function of something else (travel, leisure, fitness, shopping) and stumbles into performance (and

performance of itself), meeting performers – staggering from the rigours of site-specificity – coming the other way.

Never before have the overlaps between walking and performance been so thickly and differently layered (well, not since the Nazca Lines were in operation). From the visual arts, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton are the wilderness prophets of this layering, while *Groundwork* is at present advertising for performance makers to create 'Art Walks' in a project due to last for years. John Davies, a vicar from Liverpool, uses walking as a performative means to explore and understand his parish. Mike Pearson (formerly of *Brith Gof*) explored his autobiography in *Bubbling Tom* and Dee Heddon has re-walked it for him. Carl Lavery re-traces a route his father took. Simon Whitehead walks a drovers' route with a stuffed goose, tracked on the web. From architecture, the Stalker group in Rome have developed post-situationist explorations. *Walk 21*, begun as a rather staid international event for pedestrians, has now developed a healthy 'fringe' for its 2005 Zurich conference. Not to mention Kate Armstrong's recent *Pre-Amble* festival in Vancouver and *Glowlab's* annual events in New York. My contact in the Ramblers Association says he receives ever-increasing communications about art/walking crossovers.

It is into this seething and growing variegation that I've inserted my *Crab* performances, perversely provincial because it's a geography of strangeness

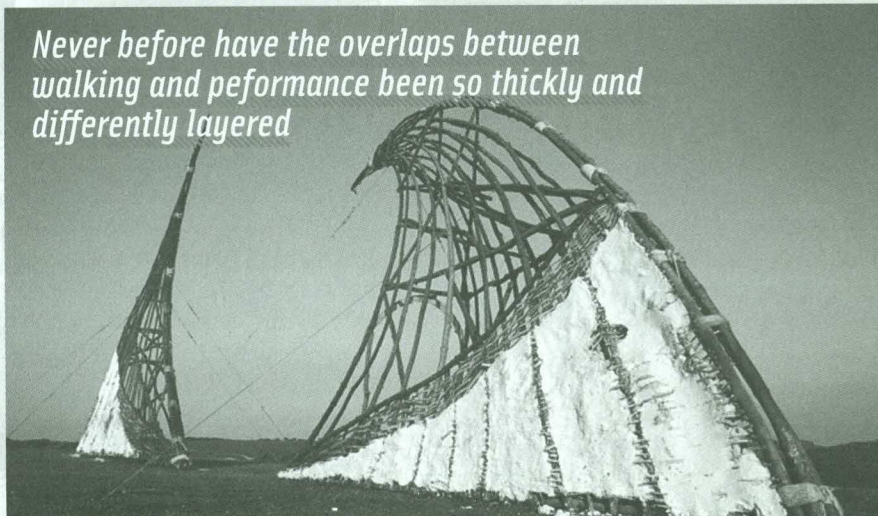
rather than cultural authority that I'm mapping. Walking a set of narratives that are continually added to by discoveries, research and by the new people that I walk with – adding layers of mathematics, stories of prehistoric humans incarcerated in local hospitals, unstable geology, bodies delivered by post, miniature navies in attics... the opposite of heritage, these are (to steal a term from Charles Fort, inspiration for the *Fortean Times*) 'damned' facts that don't fit into official narratives, bits of grit in the eye of the tourist gaze. I put them together in performance with the intention of handing over a translucent map that will alternately sharpen and haze expectations. There's nothing localist about the *Crab* performances; they are full of wormholes to faraway. The new show takes narratives from walks in the Channel Islands, Munich, Narnia, San Gimignano and Prangins.

*This is a walking that  
refuses to be a function  
of something else and  
stumbles into performance*

As important as the performances are the maps and cards given away at the end of the show – provocations for the audience's own exploring. The performance is not a linear event that is closed by applause. There is something like an



SIMON WHITEHEAD'S WALKS TO ILLUMINATE / PHOTO JONTY LILLEY



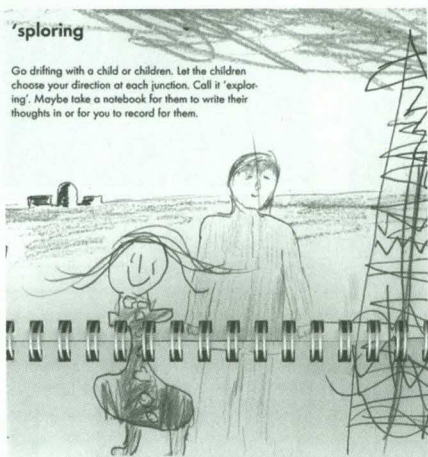
RED EARTH INSTALLATION FROM VANISHING POINT

*Never before have the overlaps between  
walking and performance been so thickly and  
differently layered*



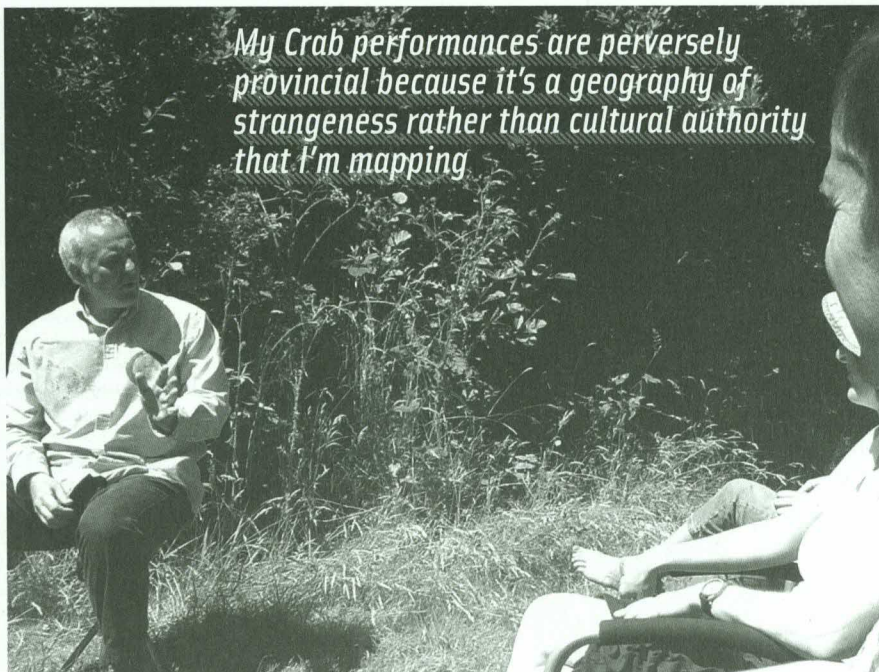
## 'sploring

Go drifting with a child or children. Let the children choose your direction at each junction. Call it 'exploring'. Maybe take a notebook for them to write their thoughts in or for you to record for them.



## Dog-leg

Borrow a dog from a friend.  
Let it take you for a walk.



*My Crab performances are perversely provincial because it's a geography of strangeness rather than cultural authority that I'm mapping*

expanding geography to it – I felt this when once I couldn't think what came next... I flashed up a map of the whole performance in my head and chose somewhere further on to set down, then as I related this strand I was able to see a point ahead where I could turn back, insert the missed passage and then weave it into the part I had jumped back from – I was 'walking' the two strands in my head, just like the sliding of two planes of feeling or geography that the walks themselves aim to provoke. Forgetting a line reminded me that the performance is not the 'point' in this work; that the structure is there not to promote itself, but rather to set the audience off on their own structure-making. Many people have said at the end of the show 'I went on a journey' or 'I was in a dream' – and it is this 'drifting off' that might be experienced as a failure for one kind of performance that is a test of success for mine. Because it is the imagining of the audience's own future 'drifts' through their own worlds.

The Crab performances have also set out to express something about a particular kind of walking in general. This might be called 'disrupted walking' – because it relies on getting away from walking that is 'for' anything: going to work, going to the shops, etc. – or even 'exploratory walking', but the most popular term is going to be that borrowed from the situationists – 'drifting'.

The growing activity around these exploratory, disrupted and performative walkings undoubtedly owes a great deal to the situationists of the 1950s and 1960s, wandering through (mainly) Paris seeking out ambient places that might be transformed into disruptive, even revolutionary, situations. Their legacy is evident (and profitably to be experienced) in the writings of Iain Sinclair, the films

of Patrick Keiller and in performance-maker Anna Best's wonderful 'guidebook' – Occasional Sights... But there are other traditions to draw from too – from adventurous early 20th – century trampers like Stephen Graham (his practice of drawing a straight line on a map and seeing what happened when you tried to walk it was echoed in the performance Totem by Lone Twin who sought to carry a telegraph pole in a straight line across Colchester), a whole neo-romantic movement exemplified by Arthur Machen, neo-pagan flirtations with ancient nomadic architecture described by Francesco Careri in his essential handbook Walkscapes and an ecological understanding of perception exemplified by the work of Eleanor and James J. Gibson.

Putting these influences together, mingling and sliding together in unexpected combinations, one can begin to walk a landscape in such a way that one can trigger its own performances. So, performative walking does not always require the walker to themselves 'perform', but rather to provoke the sites around them to. Recently, I left some enigmatic red and white painted sticks in a large shopping site about to be demolished, these were first removed and then returned by the contractors, confused by what historical, technical or superstitious meaning they might have... 'Yes, we never did work out what they were,' a security guard told me. Sites become more geometrical, more rumourful, more unstable, more dreadful, more changeable. Sometimes something like a conventional performance can trigger the sites – Drew Mulholland of Vernon Arts Lab fame walking Glasgow in 18th – century costume conjuring de Quincey.

So, crab walking is a sideways, performative walking that triggers the

performative in the landscape itself, rendering its signs and symbols as actors, as questionable and codified, as conspiratorial, that finds the connected and the far-away in the local, that can read the hieroglyphs of now redundant mass-productions, that understands that the pleasure of ruins is that they make us consider our own futures, that can draw on the resources of drama. The crab walker/performer is conscious that we 'make' the meaning of spaces by our use of them, just as much as the workers who build or the planners who design them. In Wrights & Sites' Mis-Guide Project this has become known as 'mytho-geography': a pseudo-scientific theatre that anyone can practice, perhaps even the Tourist Information Office one day.

Walk on...

*Phil Smith is a member of Wrights & Sites, writes for theatre and performance and is a visiting lecturer at Exeter, Plymouth and Winchester Universities and Dartington College of Arts. [perform.smith@ukgateway.net](mailto:perform.smith@ukgateway.net)*

*Wrights & Sites, An Exeter Mis-Guide (Exeter: Wrights & Sites, 2003) is available from [www.mis-guide.com](http://www.mis-guide.com) where there are also links to many of the projects/artists cited in this article*

*Other books referenced: Anna Best 'Occasional Sights – a London guidebook of missed opportunities and things that aren't always there' (London: The Photographers' Gallery, 2003)*

*Francesco Careri, 'Walkscapes: Walking as an aesthetic practice' (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2002)*

*Red Earth image is of Vanishing Point, a site-specific sculpture/installation on the South Downs which formed part of Geograph – Drawing the Landscape, a public arts project which included a number of walking/art events May to September 2005. [www.redearth.co.uk](http://www.redearth.co.uk)*



REVIEWS FROM EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE  
AUGUST 2005

NoFit State Circus

**IMMORTAL 2**

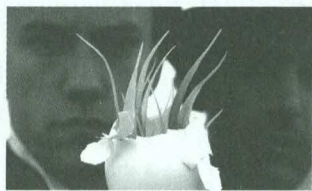
Big Top/ The Out of the Blue Tramworks

It's been a long wait for a UK contemporary circus company to hit the jackpot with a highly successful touring show – but NoFit State have done just that. For a while, the race seemed to be between two London-based companies, The Generating Company and Mamaloucos. Meantime, Cardiff-based NoFit State have got on with it: building a solid base, creating an integrated programme of professional and community work and bringing in writer/director Firenza Guidi for a long devising process. The result: ImMortal, an upbeat new promenade show, slightly re-worked for 2005 and on the road as ImMortal 2.

So where did it all go right? The tent first of all. Say what you like, but circus and tents are made for each other: the complete control over production makes touring technically challenging work easier and this particular tent is a beauty, a silver spaceship in which the audience move around freely, surrounded on all sides by high-energy performance. Then there's the performers: whilst the skills are a little less than we'd get from top-notch companies like Oz or Eloise, everything is performed with great gusto; there's a lot of good ensemble work, particularly some of the ground-based rough-and-tumble scenes, and there's a couple of really exceptional performers – the hula hoop girl is fabulous – and a cross-dressing juggler wins the kookiest character prize. Live music is another crucial element, the good-time jazzy-klezmer style hits the right note, and the availability of organic ginger beer helps to make this into a very satisfying 'total circus' experience!

Dorothy Max Prior

NOFIT STATE CIRCUS



Rainpan 43

**ALL WEAR BOWLERS**

Aurora Nova St Stephen's

At the beginning of the show the two bowlers on the stage do a little dance before disappearing. This sets the tone for 80 minutes of strongly performed clowning, reminiscent of both the American tradition of vaudeville and silent movies, and the absurdist world of Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*. Along the way the two performers, Geoff Sobelle and Matt Lyford, play with eggs, steal two of the audience's chairs, move in and out of the opening film, and, as clown duos will, bicker amongst themselves before eventually making up.

The show is highly comic and the two performers display physical and verbal virtuosity. There is also the added delight of seeing well-worn clown routines brought up to date and given a new spin. In this case, the dummy in the standard clown ventriloquist act becomes a threatening psychopath. Whilst this reveals the subversive violence at the centre of clowning, the act goes on for too long, and there is a sense that the performers are trying too hard for significance. It feels as though they don't believe in it themselves.

Nevertheless the first hour of this show is an unalloyed pleasure, which entertains and awes.

Richard Cuming

RAINPAN 43



Gamarijobat

**A SHUT UP COMEDY FROM JAPAN**

C Electric

Gamarijobat are a highly popular mohawked marvel of a physical comedy duo from Japan. This show opens in a typical street theatre performance style of entering and re-entering, enthusing the audience to clap more loudly each time, and continues in this vein – for example, with orange balls being re-gurgitated by one of the duo attempting to upstage the antics of the other. A later and longer part of the show jumps into a comic book version of *Rocky*, Japanese style, with rapid-fire visual gags and huge physical dexterity. They're dynamic, they're cute, they're skilled, fun and funky and charm the audience into enthusiastic standing ovations.

Miriam King

7K

**SHADOWS**

Hill Street Theatre

Shadows takes root in the tinkles of a picture-perfect music-box world: a world wherein two strapping men woo one delicate woman-in-white. Vying for her affection, slapstick and physical trickery become their main weapons. As the music-box world is a game unto itself, every trick and stunt is extremely well placed. Playfulness is the order of the day.

Contrasting ideas of fantasy emerge as another woman creeps into this spotless sphere. A sinister counterpart feminine presence, she introduces us to the cabinet of dreams. Here, the music-box inhabitants of music box see their own dreams and nightmares as they are plunged into the imagination of the night.

Fluttering across our open eyes dances an array of vivid images, which are both the subject and form of expression. No mode of imagery stands extraneous in the illusory scope of dreaming. Music-box lady seeks her absent lover – the image of whom is projected, but whom she cannot access. Fleeting, his body meets hers on stage. In the contrast between the 3-D sphere of the body and the stage and the 2-D image, the nature of dreaming and its talent to tease and torment the solidity of reality is vividly clear.

7K know exactly how to draw upon the different tools of stage language in order to tell their story expressively; *Shadows* is a hauntingly beautiful piece that illustrates the imaginative power of collective dreaming.

Marigold Hughes

GAMARIJOBAT



Curious

**ON THE SCENT**

Smirnoff Underbelly/ An Edinburgh Flat

We all know the sensation of smelling something – a perfume, a food, the odour of someone's body left on their clothes – that hurtles us right back into the memory of a person or the heart of an experience. Smell is a time-travel machine and a shortcut to our innermost desires, often by-passing our conscious thought processes. *On the Scent*, rather than merely referencing this idea, uses it (in real time and real space) to create an all-encompassing theatre-of-the-senses: smell is crucial, yes, but also our taste, touch, sight, sound and kinetic senses are evoked.

Audience members in small groups enter a home occupied by three female characters (Helen Paris, Leslie Hill and Lois Weaver) with stories to tell and experiences to invite us into. At the heart of the piece are the questions: 'what is our identity and where is 'home'? A sizzling chop, a slug of tequila, Parma violet creams, smoke curling up from the ashtray, cookies devoured under the bedcovers. Voices soft, harsh, seductive, insidious. Is that Chanel or Dior? Soft sofa or straight-back chair? Carpet or coir mat underfoot? This home is a sculpted environment; the artists have framed a landscape for us, and everything we experience is an opportunity for us to re-evaluate our sensory perceptions, and our interpretations of those perceptions in relation to our likes and dislikes, our memories and desires. We leave with our senses sated, our hearts and minds opened. What more could you want?

Dorothy Max Prior

7K - SHADOWS





*Vanishing Point*

**LOST ONES**

Pleasance Grand

In *Lost Ones*, Glasgow based *Vanishing Point* creates their own theatrical world, in which the audience feels that almost anything can happen. The story is a surreal piece about the aftermath of a tragic school trip to a mountain, in which only one child returns. Using a variety of means and techniques including live music, surreal physicality, and excellent set and lighting, the company manage to make the familiar unfamiliar and the unfamiliar familiar. For example, the strange creatures which appear from the protagonist's body to reclaim what is theirs before disappearing into the skirting board is simply and beautifully done. In the context it is totally believable.

Throughout there is a delightful element of dark and twisted humour skilfully woven into the story and the clever marrying of stylised production, bold physicality and surreal invention makes for an innovative and affecting show.

*Richard Cuming*

*Lost Dog*

**THE DROWNER**

Roman Eagle Lodge

Rarely has the treadmill of everyday life been jammed so forcibly and with such genuine emotion.

A jogger is running. Fast. It is important to stay fit. A girl lies unconscious on a beach. He speaks of how he stops when he sees this girl – the Drowner, calls an ambulance and of how – when it doesn't come, he takes the girl home and puts her in the bath. She says she will stay until her dress is dry. He pours cups of water over it.

Fastening both the audience and the girl to the bathroom, the drying dress intensifies the scope of action. All he wants is to spend time with her, watch television with her, kiss her, tend to her, take her in his arms. But he has already run past her. The Drowner is a sharp dive into what could have been; might have been; should have been. One sequence out of a million is chosen and animated.

As the two characters, performed by Ben Duke and Raquel Mesequer with total commitment and taut skill, compatibly watch television together – the guitar is halted and waves crash in: the drowner has already drowned and probably died. Invisible facets of reality underscore more solidly surface aspects. Stylistically, it is as much dance as it is theatre – as much theatre as it is dance. Words are used when they are needed and when the body can tell the story more effectively, it does. End of story.

End of story? The man walks everyday, not runs. It is better for his knees.

*Marigold Hughes*

DARREN JOHNSTON - REN SA



*Ren-sa*

**DARREN JOHNSTON**

Aurora Nova St Stephen's

Everything surrounding Darren Johnston's *Ren-sa* encouraged expectation: the premise of exploring Japanese horror through live performance, and speculation into what form this would take; the journey to an unknown space in blacked-out buses.

There were impressive aspects to the production – the main performance arena viewed through gauze walls, the floor carpeted with white dust. Intriguing use of animation heightened an already charged atmosphere, and some stunning lighting effectively transformed the space, inhabited by performers moving through subtle, unsettling sequences.

Having created such an environment, however, the material actually performed within it was not as fully explored as I had hoped for. Intense moments, and haunting images, punctuated a piece which as a whole was not hugely surprising. Intriguing as an installation and as an experience, as a performance it could have gone further; a work of inspiration, which does not yet feel fully imagined. I look forward to seeing more work by this company, and perhaps further incarnations of this piece, in the future.

*Cassie Werber*

*Do Theatre*

**SLEEP...LESS...NESS**

Aurora Nova St Stephen's

A sensual exploration of the restless days and nights of the insomniac: more specifically, a pair of female insomniacs white clad and wandering within the confines of a medical ward. Severe mattress-less beds offer little comfort in a half-asleep dream-weary world: a world of drizzle seen through the haze of semi-conscious life. I especially enjoyed the black and white film projections on transparent gauze across the front of the stage, imprinting a second image beyond of water, rain, dark and light clouds – nuances of Tarkovsky – that wrapped and veiled the fragile patients within their harsh hospital haunt. There were sinister scenes with suited men as sleep disturbing shadows, and lighter moments such as dances with tin potties. Currently, *Sleep...less...ness* feels a touch too drawn out. Yet it's beautiful, has a time-less-ness – and the final image of faces at the window looking in on rest-ful-ness particularly haunting.

*Miriam King*

JO STROMGREN KOMPANI - THE HOSPITAL



*The Hospital*

**JO STROMGREN KOMPANI**

Aurora Nova St Stephen's

In a lonely environment of stained green walls, bare electric bulbs and dirty sheets, three women wait, their time punctuated by the whine of passing aircraft, and divided into a system of games, tasks and increasingly bizarre rituals. *The Hospital* by the Norwegian Jo Stromgren Kompani combines movement, dance and partially invented language with consummate skill, while the three performers brilliantly convey the fluctuations in the relationships between the characters – the real subject matter of the piece – with gutsy, powerful physicality and acutely observed acting. A simple, subtle set forms a background for the complex, defined characters to perform their absurd functions. Quirky choreography is supported by a confident relationship with text, and the dark, more sadistic aspects of the narrative are deftly shot through with wicked humour. The result is a moving, thoughtful performance, atmospheric to the point where we can smell the ether, and taste the anaesthetic despair.

*Cassie Werber*



Theatre Modo

UBU

Smirnoff Underbelly/Baby Belly Caves

The deep recesses of the Baby Belly Caves are a more than fitting location for Ubu. Revelling in darkness, the performance brings a grotesquely painted white face and a sardonic smile to all that is morally prescribed and politically correct. Excess is the new Ecstasy. We too, get a taste of the pill.

Plotting treacherous deeds against the King, Pa Ubu, Ma Ubu and Fuquhar hand out tomatoes to be hurled at the Royal couple; at Pa Ubu's coronation Ubu sets up a race for the 'gold' – a tenner, with some beer for the losers – that is to be given to the peasants: us. As the volunteer competitors from the audience line up, their eyes sparkle. If this isn't a Kodak moment, what is? Ubu comments. Greed is no illusion.

Swelled full of sex and sauciness, Ubu sticks its large and phallic oar – a bicycle pump with a big, black erection on the end – into the heart of, well, anything worth sticking it into. Both Pa Ubu (Robert Jack) and Ma Ubu (Louise Allan) deliver robust and charged performances, exulting in their underdog status prior to their monarchical overturn and following it – flinging their power around with as much loose abandon as they do their genitals.

Theatre Modo succeeds in building a modern farce that stems not from hoodies or Atkins diets, rather from drawing upon shared associations; sometimes contemporary, sometimes not. In Moulin-Rouge type montage, Macbeth remains the ultimate timeless tyrant; gorging on McDonald's conjures up a zeitgeist of gluttonous instant gratification. Theatre Modo intelligently balances facets of timelessness with contemporary cultural icons to generate relevance and wit.

Stylistically sleek, sumptuously sexual, voluptuously vulgar and as it says on the flyers, \*\*\*\*ing funny, Ubu – in all its putrid glory – is a breath of fresh air that makes you gag.

Marigold Hughes

Peter Reder

GUIDED TOUR

Clod Ensemble

THE SILVER SWAN

Traverse 5/McEwen Hall

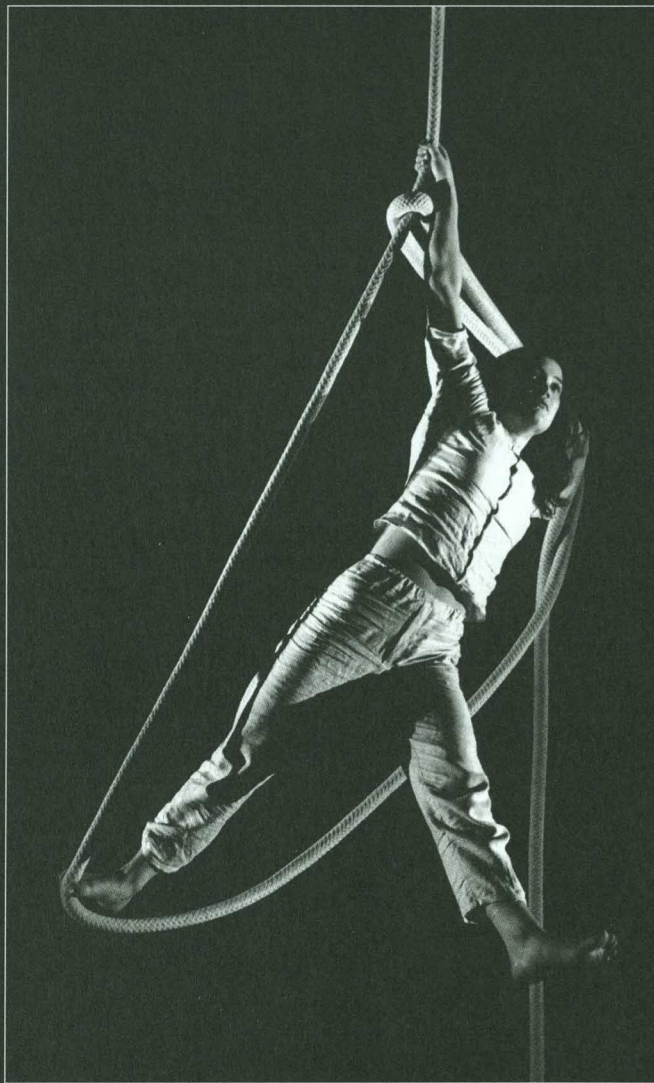
Two very different pieces set in the University of Edinburgh's McEwen Hall, an extraordinary Victorian building never before used as a Fringe venue.

Reder's Guided Tour allows us a glimpse at the terrifyingly Grand Hall – then takes us into the dimly lit and rather dull passages that are around and below it. The Tour purports to 'draw the audience into a shared contemplation of the nature of architectural spaces and the memories and feelings they evoke' but begs the question – why here? The most vital and interesting sections of the piece are a slide show of family snaps accompanied by thoughts, reflections and reminiscences that question our notions of 'real' histories and memories, and a final film of Reder's mother, cast wonderfully as The Angel of History. The architectural spaces we are truly drawn into are those on the screen: the seaside family home, the gardens, the suburban streets, the mother's kitchen. Peter Reder, like William Ylang and Joshua Sofaer, is an excellent monologist using family history captured in 'true-life' images as a springboard for exploring identity, history and the 'inventing the truth' that is autobiography. Although there were some local references, these were the least interesting aspects of the piece, and it felt as if the placing in McEwen Hall was a tacked-on afterthought – a merging together of two very different intentions.

The Silver Swan, by contrast, felt entirely at home in McEwen Hall. It wasn't created for this space, but like all good site-responsive work, it appropriated the space in a way that made you feel that it really belonged here. The ludicrously ornate circular hall is so enormous and imposing that it is hard at first to imagine how a handful of performers can take that space and make it theirs – then in float a flock of glorious creatures, enormous swathes of moonlight-white material billowing around, trailing along the floor. They have the voices of angels, and they sing a selection of madrigals. That actually would have been enough, but Clod, one supposes, felt a need to make the piece more theatrical, so as we sit up in the gods, we witness, directly opposite, a power game between a woman and a man played out as an action/reaction movement duet. She sits, he sits; he walks, she walks. It makes for an interesting use of the balcony spaces, adding another dimension to the piece and the echoing sound of footsteps provide a percussive counterpoint to the resonant voices of the singers – but the witnessed game grows a little tiresome after a while. Sometimes less is more.

Dorothy Max Prior

MATILDA LEYSER – LIFELINE



Prodigal Theatre

THE TRAGEDIAN – PART TWO

Komedia Southside

Though it is perhaps unfair to base a review on the central section of a three-part production, if Part Two of Prodigal Theatre's Tragedian triptych can be used as a guide, the whole is a splendid accomplishment. Telling the story of the Shakespearean performer Edmund Keane demands a commitment to the exploration of acting – as a craft, a profession and a concept – which Prodigal has accepted and realised.

The audience, directly and honestly addressed, are quickly gripped by charismatic storytelling, communicated using a fluid and deft physicality. It was the densely, beautifully written text, however, which made the deepest impression in this, apparently the most text-weighted part of the three; it is rare, in British 'alternative' theatre, to hear language explored so confidently and variously. Performed with assurance and directed with equal confidence, the piece perhaps lacked only playfulness, which could have brought more lightness to a great achievement.

Cassie Werber

Lazzi

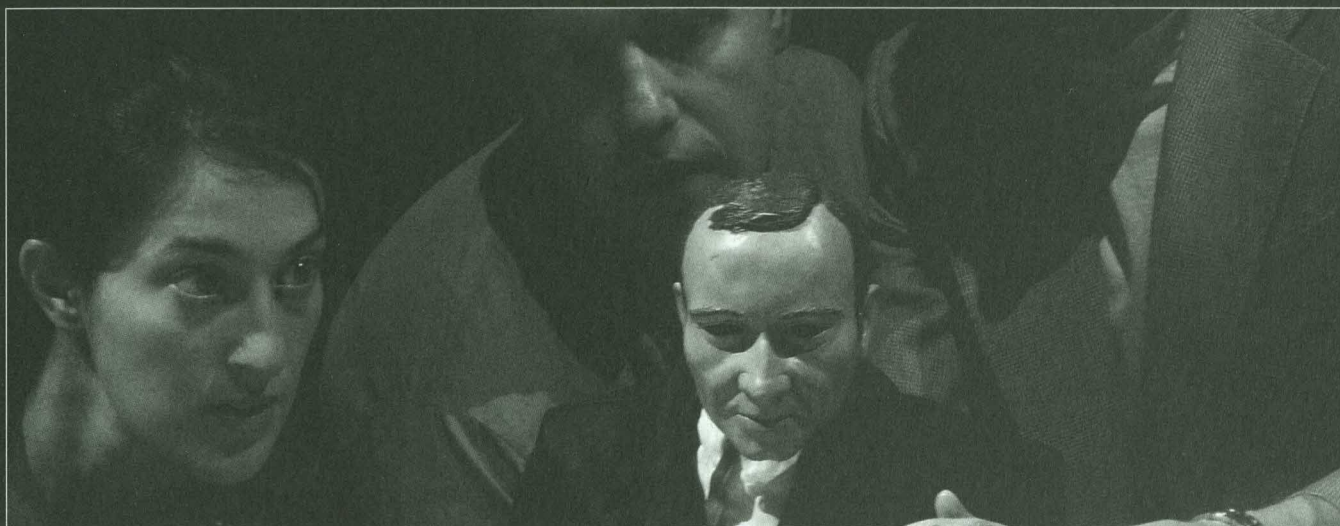
WITKACY IDIOTA

The Roxy Art House

Playing simply with a clock, maracas and a pair of Hawaiian shirts, Lazzi presented the life of Polish 'total' artist Stanislaw Witkiewicz ('Witkacy') as a metaphysical double act. Drawing on both his biography and characters from his plays, the show began and ended with an image of his suicide in 1939, caught between the invading Nazi and Soviet armies. In between, the performance moved from an expository 'act one', with the expressionist couple of madman and doctor, to a wordless hallucination ('act three') of Witkacy as portraitist of the audience, with an engaging if disconcerting eye contact. For all the commitment and energy of the performers, though, I couldn't help wondering whether the real challenge might not have been to stage one of the plays, exploring the possibilities of Witkacy's poetics of 'pure form' against their demands, rather than simply reciting them. Not that this is a criticism of Lazzi, but rather of the conditions for presenting work at the Fringe – increasingly limiting for both companies and audiences.

Mischa Twitchin



*Theatr Nowy***FAUST**

Assembly Rooms

What makes a show disappointing? Is it meaningful – or even possible – to identify, as it were, an 'objective correlative' to such a feeling? Winner of a Herald Angel Award, Theatr Nowy's *Faust* was rapturously reviewed, and yet this is the show that prompts my questions and my doubts. Does a review testify simply to the determination of experience by prejudice, I wonder? But to play the game of describing how I felt in seeing this show as though I was describing what I saw, I could not fathom why it was being performed. Where – to my perception – every gesture on stage was borrowed from work created by someone else, what could be the motive for presenting this work now? In what did the particularity of this work consist, when from the initial disposition of objects on the stage to the rhythm of group entrances and exits, from the presence on stage of the director to the grotesque style of the performers, it all appeared simply derivative of the work of Kantor's *Criote*? Except, that is, in the use of text – which was the very element the award-giving reviewers acknowledged to be inaccessible (one of the distinctions between the 'International Festival' and the 'Fringe' being the availability of surtitles). Where the visual and gestural vocabulary was so clichéd, the significance of the spoken dialogues to animate the experience became all the more important. Experience may teach us what theory would have us understand – that there is nothing 'new' under the sun. But the anticipation with which one attends a performance is surely that of seeing anew what one goes to see, some quality in and of a performance that makes it singular, that makes it this rather than simply 'any other' performance – at least in one's own experience.

*Mischa Twitchin**Tall Stories***THEM WITH TAILS**

C Too, Columbia by the Castle

Two merry men bounce around the auditorium – tripping over handbags and seats as they go – pretending to be members of the audience, until the lights dim and one little voice pipes up, 'Mammy, they're doing it! They're the ones doing it!' Andrew Papton and Felix Hayes are naturals in sparking the interest of their bright-eyed audience. Children and adults alike thrive off this initial engagement and are clearly left hungry for more. They are not disappointed. All four of these tail-inspired tales gain their life-blood from the input of their vivacious audiences. From the story of the greedy lion who, after devouring most of the tailed population of his nearby territory is tricked by a death-defying rabbit into diving into his own reflection (soundscapes and character intentions stemming from audience suggestions) Papton and Hayes energetically gurn, grimace, grin and squirm their way through the piece to an end story that is created entirely from the audience and its suggestions.

Live theatre has rarely been so live or so lively. Though the characters that Papton and Hayes inhabit are wonderfully presented – it is the performers themselves that spread such glee and remind us what storytelling in theatre is all about.

*Marigold Hughes**Blind Summit***LOW LIFE**

Smirnoff Underbelly

Now, this is a real Edinburgh moment: it is 10.30 in the morning and here in the heart of the Underbelly, the Jelly Belly bar is full of folks queuing to see their first show of the day – a sell-out adult puppetry cabaret which takes its inspiration from boozy late-Beat poet and original Dirty Old Man Charles Bukowski. In *Low Life* we meet a motley crew of puppet characters – including a Kevin Spacey look-alike who needs just one more drink, a gold-lame clad diva who's seen it all, and a Chinese cleaner with a penchant for literary criticism. The puppets are beautifully crafted and the sketches delivered very much in the post-Burkett new puppetry style of intimate interaction between animator and puppet. The master-slave relationship between puppets and humans is played to the max – the puppets croon, confess, cajole, but ultimately they are at the mercy of their operators. There's still work to be done on *Low Life* – it has the feel of a show put together a little rapidly and some of the sketches feel out-of-place. But with a bit of gluing together here and there, we won't even see the joins. And fabulous to see UK puppetry for grown-ups take the Fringe by storm!

*Dorothy Max Prior**Matilda Leyser***LIFELINE**

Aurora Nova St Stephen's

It is sometimes said that the problem with circus skills used in a theatre context is that it is difficult for these to represent anything metaphorically – after all, a rope is a rope is a rope. Well, not in Matilda Leyser's world. If you thought that the limits to human/rope interaction were just variations on climbing and dropping you'd be mistaken. Here, in this short piece that charts the pleasures and pains of growing up, the rope is set, props and even characters (childhood friend, lover). And we see that a rope can be a vehicle to express strength, vulnerability, enthusiasm, disappointment: an angle of the body, a tug on the rope or a change of pace is enough. Leyser's physical characterisation of the early stages of life is great: from unsteady, adventurous toddlerhood to running, tumbling girlhood to the petulance of early adolescence to the first pains of young adulthood. Her body shifts into each new phase with elegant ease, creating a series of animated pictures that are clear-cut, convincing and often extremely moving. This piece is to form part of a performance triptych called *Line, Point, Plane*, commissioned by London International Mime Festival, the Royal Opera House and Pegasus Theatre. On the strength of what we have seen so far, this looks to be one of the highlights of 2006.

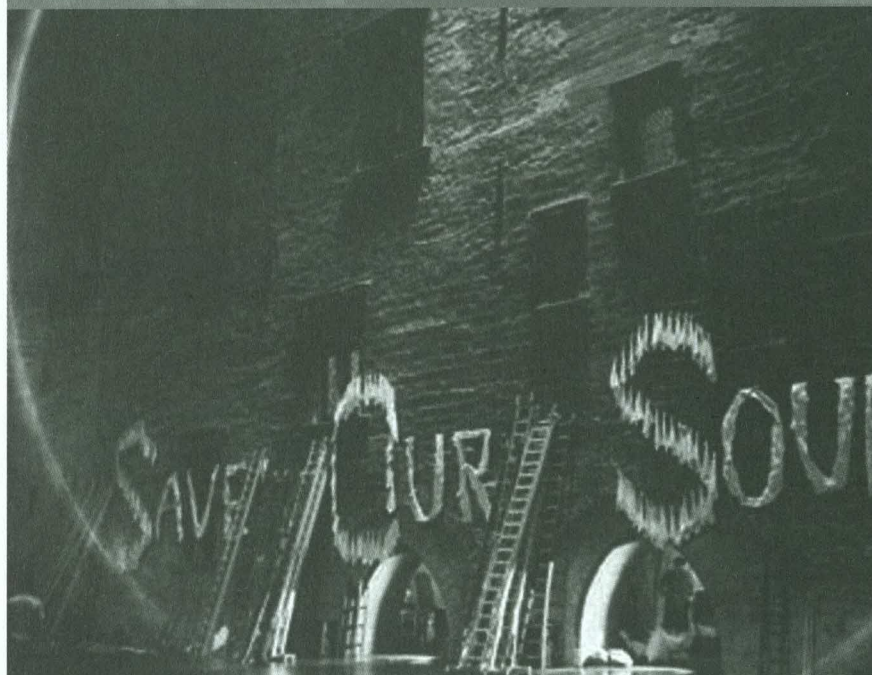
*Dorothy Max Prior*



**BLOOD AND GUTS AT THE 59TH AVIGNON FESTIVAL**  
**JULY 2005**  
**JAN FABRE/MARINA ABRAMOVIC/GISELLE VIENNE**

MARINA ABRAMOVIC/ PHOTO FRED NAUCZYCIEL

JAN FABRE/ PHOTO FRED NAUCZYCIEL



The main Avignon Festival – the ON – hosts the experimental, the provocative – and this year it really did provoke.

My hook for making it to this year's Festival was Jan Fabre's piece *Histoire des Larmes*. It was the main show this year, as Fabre was 'artiste associée' – the curator of the programme. Each year a different artist is invited – next year it's performer-choreographer Josef Nadj.

*Histoire des Larmes* was billed as the large-scale version of his earlier *Crying Body*, which I'd seen at De Singel in Antwerp last September. De Singel is a 200-seat civic theatre and I thought then that the leap from that space to Avignon's 1600 seat open-air courtyard in the Palais des Papes was going to be difficult.

General opinion, public and press, was that it didn't quite work. Fabre's strength is in physicality and imagery. For some reason in *Histoire des Larmes* he introduced a narrator figure, the 'chevalier', who had long speeches talking about the future of man, and rather more obscure narration about knights, battles and souls. There were some great grand-opera scale sequences of manic physical action, with four huge kettledrums, a harp and over twenty performers. Glass containers were everywhere, literally. In one sequence the naked performers hold this glassware under their arms, between their legs, on their heads, while others wipe the sweat from their skin before replacing the glass again. Each of these cloths was gradually pinned high up on the back wall of the courtyard creating a kind of pointillist tapestry. But towards the end of the piece the tapestry began to spell out the letters SOS, and right at the end, filled in the words to read: Save Our Souls. What I presume Fabre intended as some kind of desperately charged manifesto turned instead into something disappointingly literal. Je Suis

Sang [I Am Blood], the piece he made for an earlier Avignon Festival, was also performed here, and this was altogether more assured, more chaotic, and, without all the words, so much more powerful. There is a great Dionysian moment with large containers of wine spilling everywhere while naked (again) performers run, slide, hurl themselves all over the Courtyard stage. For Fabre, liquids and the body are an obsession – blood, sweat, urine, tears. When he talks about the interior of the body he means the visceral, not mental, sinews.

Marina Abramovic presented *Brutal Education*, a selection of solo work by students from her International Performance Group, a lecture, and, at the Salle Benoit XII, her own show *Biography Remix*, directed by Michael Laub. This is a touring spectacle, which she updates for each showing. It begins with her standing suspended thirty feet or so above the stage floor, holding two live snakes. After a while some chunks of meat are thrown from the wings and two very large Doberman dogs pad on and start to eat. It is physically unnerving; an amazing piece of theatre. She re-enacts some of her well-known moments live, including the bow and arrow performance. To watch this, let alone perform it, is an exercise in mind-body control. A man (the son of former lover and collaborator Ulay, it turns out) is literally holding Abramovic's life in his hands. If this isn't enough, she brings on one of her student performers to take her place, and a girl has the tip of a metal arrow inches from her throat (she is smaller than Marina so it doesn't aim at her heart). To feel the tension you have to be there, which is the whole point, of course. Abramovic never speaks, but a text narrates the piece on a scrolling LED screen at each side of the stage (one in French and the other in English). At the end, she is sitting

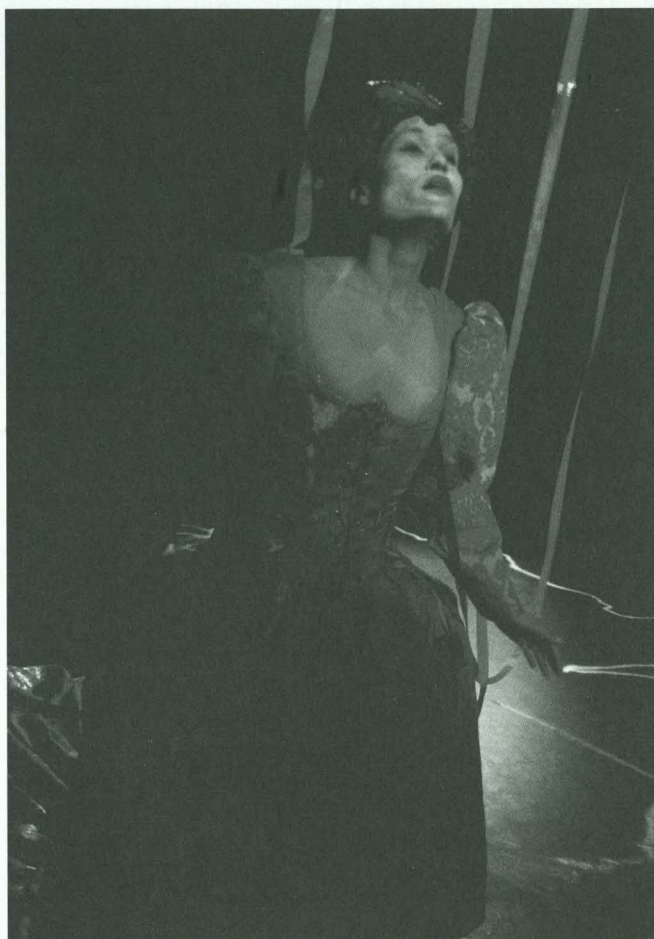
alone, and the words are running by some of her life events, and finally 'Avignon July 2005' appears – she looks at the audience, smiles and it ends. Sounds sentimental, but for some reason it was extremely moving. A virtuoso moment of theatre – presence and performance.

Giselle Vienne, at 29 one of the youngest artists in the main Festival, presented *Une Belle Enfant Blonde / A Young Beautiful Blonde Girl*. It was performed at another of Avignon's lush theatre spaces, the Chapelle des Penitents Blancs (a 14th-century chapel converted into a state-of-the-art performance space). In it, Catherine Robbe-Grillet, better known as a creator of erotic spectacle or 'théâtre intime', plays a dominant Madame figure that hints at a range of sado-masochistic goings on behind gauze drapes. Meanwhile on stage are five life-size girl dolls. Dancer Anja Rottgerkamp performs naked and blindfold. Again more tension, but this time somehow neither in the head or the body, but in the space itself. Understated and kept as taut as possible, it all got a bit too much for some of the (sell-out) audience.

Barry Edwards



RAJNI SHAH - MR QUIVER



*Rajni Shah*  
**MR QUIVER**

*Chopped Logic*  
**PARAMOUR**

Sprint Festival's opener is a double-bill that honours the role of the scenographer in contemporary performance...

Rajni Shah's solo show sets out to 'explore themes of identity, theatricality, and our relationship to the land we live on'. It is presented here at cpt, in a theatre context – to be subsequently developed as a live art installation. We meet three characters: Rajni as herself, a young British Indian; as Queen Elizabeth the First (epitome of Empire and active 'masculine' womanhood) and as a traditional Indian Bride (epitome of the exotic, colonised land and passive 'feminine' womanhood); All three characters contain elements of historical fact and imagined fiction – and the piece could be said to be a reflection on the balance between the constructed self and that given self which is composed of everything that can be thrown into the catch-all bag of culture.

It's a beautiful piece – a living work of art created in collaboration with designer Lucille Acevedo-Jones; a show that sees costume not as an embellishment of performance, but integral to the performance – in the driving seat so to speak. The rich tapestry skirt and gorgeously sculpted bodice and ruff of the Elizabeth persona are present on stage as 'set', and entering into a fusion with these objects, Shah becomes a sort of dancing sculpture, an inheritor of Oskar Schlemmer's mantle. The soft red silks of the Bride's costume dictate a softer choreography, as veiling and unveiling are explored to the accompaniment of live and recorded song and text.

The companion piece Paramour has an altogether different aesthetic, yet one in which visual imagery is also key. It is the first piece created by ChoppedLogic, all graduates of the Central School of Speech and Drama. Their stated aim is a theatre in which scenography and text interact – and Paramour could be said to take that premise very literally, with its central visual image a wonderful scattering of inky letters which carpet the stage floor. This is a story about stories, about the constant dialogue between truth and fiction, memory and imagination; the two actors performing several characters create an inter-weaving, multi-layered narrative as stories tumble from their lips and topple into each other like leaves dropping from trees. Performers Gilbert Taylor and Cassie Werber work well together, and on the strength of Paramour, the company is one to look out for, bridging as they do the (ever-shortening) gap between devised theatre and new writing.

*Dorothy Max Prior*

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*Rotozaza*  
**OOFF!**

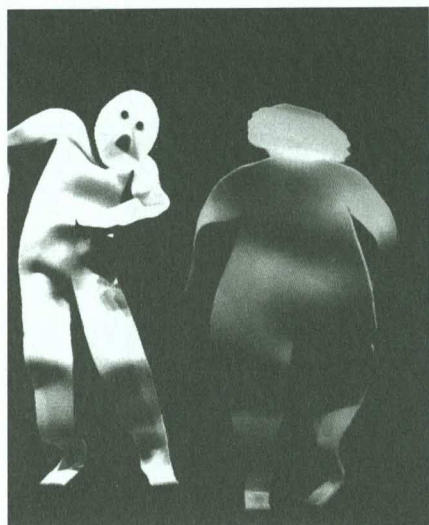
Ooff's 'performance experiment' approach to theatre holds your attention, but is ultimately uninspiring. It is an intellectual experience that looks like fun for the participants but leaves us, the audience, feeling – well, nothing much.

Short and energetic, the piece revolves around a sporty character, Mini, who gives pre-recorded instructions to two performers who have not heard them previously. They perform actions on the part of the stage that relates to a grid-reference. Her voice could say, for example, 'D2. Make boxing movements.' Mini's live personification does not speak, but directs the two others around in a referee-like fashion: she controls the space. The whole concept is well thought through and meticulously constructed. The level of difficulty that the unrehearsed performers experience has been controlled to a subtle degree. But on the night I saw it, the guest performers did not commit enough to their actions to make an interesting show of it, nor were they grappling hard enough with the instructions for their humanity to be exposed. I wasn't bored, but it wasn't exciting. It needs emotion.

The alleged subtext of Mini's psychological space, her dreams of sporting competence that flip into nightmares of physical inadequacy, doesn't touch us at all. The symbols are so closely controlled, our unconscious doesn't have space to elaborate and find its own significance. But nor is a meaning clearly there to be read, so we just watch the formula. Rotozaza's approach to making the games and patterns of events on stage explicit is intriguing, but it doesn't make you feel that you are watching genuine self-exposure amongst the performers: this show needs more risk, more vulnerability, more humanity, more extremes – more ooff!

*Laura Eades*



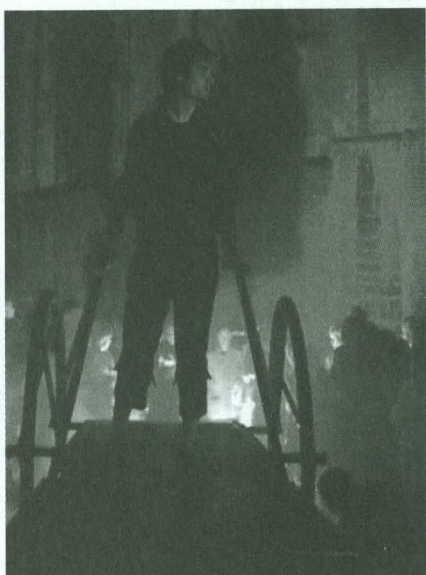


MUMMENSCHANZ - NEXT

Mummenschanz**NEXT**O'Reilly Theatre, DublinAugust 2005

Meaning 'masquerade' or 'mummery', Mummenschanz was formed in the 70s expressly to create 'image-based, wordless theatre'. At the matinee my seven year-old companion and I attended, the audience were not, conversely, at a loss for words. Perhaps invited by the performer's silence, they wondered aloud about what they saw. This added a vital, often inadvertently comic, dimension to the performance, and was clearly an expression of the audience's enjoyment. The children's interpretations were often quicker than mine as if the show's playful nature was tuned to their perception of the world.

Made up of a series of short sketches (presented in a puppetry black-theatre style), it began with abstract characters with hidden operators, but gradually became more figurative, until the performers' bodies emerged, becoming part of the images. The results were often beautiful, frequently funny, and wisely stayed on stage only as long as they were interesting. A clever use of materials was evident throughout, from flying fabric to wobbling foam, with a happy marriage of form and colour, and masterful use of lights. I loved the more abstract pieces, but missed what music might have added to their performance. My niece preferred when wire shapes, worn over the performers heads, drew changing expressions, although in one exchange when the mimed conversation became laborious, she whispered 'Why don't they just talk?', showing, in this instance, a failure of their brief. Reservations were rare, however; it was a magical experience, vociferously enjoyed by its audience of all ages.

*Niamh Lawlor*

PERIPLUM - ARQUIEM

Teatr Biuro Podrozy**PIGS**Periplum**ARQUIEM**Hat Fair, WinchesterJuly 2005

Two evening events that prove (should any proof be needed) that outdoor street theatre is an appropriate medium for dark, disturbing and thought-provoking work. These are very different pieces, but both companies (one Polish, one British) use stilt-work – more associated with jolly-good-fun walkabout but in these two shows used to chilling effect.

First the Polish company, Teatr Biuro Podrozy. Pigs, in their similarity to humans, are an obvious choice of metaphor to explore man's inhumanity to man (Orwell's *Animal Farm* springs to mind) – and the exploitation of other men and other creatures. We start innocently enough with a children's playground; actors in very effective little piggy ears romp, climb and tumble around a great set – a giant metal slide and climbing frame. We then have a wonderful example of the dramatic potential of stilts, as the adults enter – towering high above the little piggies in grown-pig whole-head masks. The gradual slide from slightly unnerving seen-from-the-eyes-of-a-child 'ordinary' adult authority of parent or teacher to horrifying oppression by authoritarian despots is dealt with extremely convincingly; the robust physical performance skills of the actors, the set that morphs into whatever is needed, the use of fire at key moments; the integration of visual and sonic elements. The climactic ending is, if anything, a bit too much to take; we are left overwhelmed, gasping. Some sort of coda – a tail to the tale – would have been welcome.

Arquiem is Periplum's first outdoor show. The company have a healthy track record indoors with shadowy and disturbing productions like *Artaud*, and director Claire Raftery has another life as a stilt performer, so this is an obvious (if risky) next step. It's a risk that pays off: *Arquiem*, seen here on one of its first outings, is a piece crackling with moon-time dark energy, an investigation of the eternal marriage of Eros and Thanatos. It takes as its starting point Robert Browning's poem *Porphyria's Lover*, which, pre-empting Eminem by more than a century, is a spooky first-person confessional musing on murder.

The piece starts dramatically, with the ominous sound of chanting voices, and a big-wheeled medieval cart bearing a prisoner emerges from a tunnel, pulled across Winchester Cathedral Green as the sun sets. The audience follows, drawn into the action. The company take chances, risking the fast

movement through the crowd of flare-bearers and wheeled tripods, but their psychology is sound, and light and noise signals create pathways and provide focus without the need for heavy-handed stewarding. Lighting has always been a strong feature of Periplum's work; in particular hand-held or non-rigged light sources as an essential element of the staging. *Arquiem* is no exception – from the timing of the entrance to make use of the changing natural light, to the sudden intense searchlight, to the erupting fire flares, to the shadow play of figures inside the moving tripods. The site is also used to full advantage – one of many stunning visual moments realised as faceless black-robed stilt creatures stand illuminated against Winchester Cathedral.

Still in its early days, the piece could do with some development work – there could perhaps be a bit more Eros to add a little more contrast of tone. But this is already a good piece of street theatre and looks to evolve into a truly great outdoor piece.

*Dorothy Max Prior*Footsbarn Travelling Theatre**PERCHANCE TO DREAM AND THE TEMPEST**George's Dock, DublinJune/July 2005

It has been several years since I saw Footsbarn, and I was eager to be re-acquainted. I found their strengths still considerable: energetic use of their special space, the circus tent, clever light and shadow play with huge swathes of fabric, playful use of 'silent movies' and comic borrowing from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition. Those new to their work clearly find much to delight and surprise – there were standing ovations at both performances (although at *Perchance's* opening some left before the end), but I felt disappointed at the little development in their work over the years. Their puppets, while beautiful, are underused, remaining wooden, and seeming just another trick in the bag. But the root of my reservation is the poor ability of some performers to tackle the text. Footsbarn's strength is in the visual, and while edited, long tracts of text were recited poorly and handicapped by strong accents which, I felt, dragged the pace. Exploiting their international nature, the cast often spoke their own language also, and I found this more successful, although it could be overused. In *Perchance to Dream*, a medley of shows which read as a kind of 'greatest hits' at times, the large number of leading roles required, meant performers weak at this kind of work had roles they were unfit for. Perhaps at the end of a long international tour the playing was also deadened by exhaustion? Unfortunately, while I came away with many beautiful images, I also felt exhausted rather than inspired.

*Niamh Lawlor*



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Manchester University Press  
www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk

Staging the UK looks at performance in Britain from the mid-1980s into the new millennium – and its author takes a rather interesting decision to do this through examining cultural structures and contexts such as the British Council, The Edinburgh Festivals, site-specific performance and Bollywood in Britain. Political and social factors that help to define a ‘culture’ – such as national identities, globalisation and diaspora, the election of New Labour, and European unification – are allowed to enter into the equation, making it a book of broader interest than most performance studies tomes. It is truly eclectic in its approach, merrily swinging from Tinderbox to DV8, Complicite to Andrew Lloyd Webber. In the final chapter ‘re-imagining the imperial metropolis’ Harvie states ‘this book aims in part to challenge the metropolitan dominance of British cultural practices...’ It feels that this is a key to the intention of the book, and that this chapter could have come much earlier. As it is, it is a fascinating but frustrating book – it covers so much that a lot of detail is missing, stories are half-told and alleyways entered that prove to be dead-ends, but it must be admired for its shift of focus from the usual theatre stages onto a broader stage (which could just as likely be a street or a field). It would have been better with a narrower focus but is nevertheless full of ideas and information, and deserving of a place on any bookshelf.

THEATRE AND CONSCIOUSNESS  
EXPLANATORY SCOPE AND FUTURE  
POTENTIAL

Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe  
Intellect  
www.intellectbooks.com

The introduction to Theatre and Consciousness speaks of the Indian philosophical notions of theatre aesthetics in the Natyashastra treatise, which tells us of the birth of theatre as a means to restore human beings to a golden age of enlightenment. It is indeed an enlightening book – with the constant hum of Vedic thought providing a grounding for the exploration of theatre within consciousness studies. Questions that the author attempts to answer include: What is the nature of the creative process; what were the new ideas that theatre makers such as Artaud, Grotowski, Barba, and Brook introduced; should actors be personally involved with the emotions they have to portray? are puppets or marionettes superior to actors?; How does theatre affect the spectator? Why do spectators react as they do? How do distance and suspension of disbelief ‘work’? The author hopes that ‘an improved and expanded understanding of theatre, resulting from answering the questions above in the context of consciousness studies, should inspire new developments in theatre practice’. By placing theatre at the centre of human experience, a vital contributor to our mental, emotional and spiritual health rather than mere mindless entertainment, Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe does a vital service to the artform.

WHY IS THAT SO FUNNY?

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PHYSICAL COMEDY

John Wright  
Nick Hern Books  
www.nickhernbooks.co.uk

‘Comedy has always been the poor relation in theatre’ says John Wright in his introduction to this new book full of playful insights and useful theatre games. But rather than see comedy and tragedy as distinct, he argues, it is more helpful to see them as two sides of the same coin. In the days before literary theatre got its stranglehold on our culture, the parodic and the comic, the aesthetic, the erotic, the dramatic and eventually the tragic were all part of one great whole. Ultimately, it is laughter that interests John Wright rather than comedy, and he uses four categories of laughter as his kick-off points: the recognised laugh, the visceral laugh, the bizarre laugh and the surprise laugh. Wright is well-known and well-loved as a theatre deviser (founder member of Trestle and Told By An Idiot) director and teacher. Eclectic in approach – ‘I’ll take anything from anywhere’ – his book is a welcome relief from the flood of performance studies theory, being firmly based in a lifetime of a practice informed by commedia dell’arte, clowning and Shakespeare amongst many other influences. This one is a must for any budding physical comedy performers – and will be an inspiration for everyone who treads the boards, whether they think of themselves as ‘comedic’ or not.

WEBSITE LISTINGS

www.totaltheatre.org.uk

Total Theatre Subscribers can now add their own directory information and listings e.g. for training, funding, performance dates and notice board via the website. This information is available to view by all visitors to the website. Existing TTN members/subscribers who have an email address but have not yet received an activation code, please visit www.totaltheatre.org.uk and click on the activation link on the home page to access your subscription and benefits online. Contact admin@totaltheatre.org.uk for website or subscription queries.

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The following items can be submitted to Total Theatre Magazine: **PERFORMER AND COMPANY UPDATES; NEWS FROM VENUES/FESTIVALS/OTHER ARTS ORGANISATIONS; INFORMATION ON TRAINING/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIA; INFORMATION ON FUNDING, BURSARIES AND GRANTS; INFORMATION ON PUBLICATIONS, EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, WEBSITES AND OTHER MEDIA.**

Copy deadline for the next issue is **7th December 2005**, publication date is **1st February 2006**. The next issue will cover the period February 2006 – April 2006.

Send items to:  
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[www.thecpr.org.uk](http://www.thecpr.org.uk)  
aop@aber.ac.uk  
See website for full details of events/workshops for 2005-2006

### CIRCELTION 06

Leeds  
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info@circelation.co.uk  
What's the Story will be the theme of the laboratory programme in Leeds for circus artists and directors which will run 27 March - 9 April 2006. Applications forms can be downloaded from the website. There is also a DVD, full report and photos available from the 2004 & 2005 programmes.

### CIRCUMEDIA

Bristol  
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### THE CHANGING BODY WORKSHOPS

University of Exeter January 3 - 5 2006  
[www.ex.ac.uk/drama/research/changingbody/sym\\_prework.html](http://www.ex.ac.uk/drama/research/changingbody/sym_prework.html)  
G.Simons@exeter.ac.uk  
J.J.Daboo@exeter.ac.uk  
Niamh Dowling (Manchester Metropolitan University): 'Moving Into Change'. Bella Merlin (University of Exeter): 'The Psychological Space and the Changing Physical Place'. Phillip Zarrilli (University of Exeter): 'Making the body all eyes: body, breath, activation, image'. David Zinder (formerly Tel Aviv University): 'From ImageWork to the Chekhov Technique'

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Dates: 26-27 November 2005, 10am - 6pm  
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### FELDENKRAIS CLASSES

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### INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FESTIVAL NOV 2005 - TRANSFORMING THEATRE

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mail@workshopfestival.co.uk  
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Fri 4 Nov: PARTICIPATORY DAY (aimed at Tutors/Practitioners/MA students)  
Cost £60  
9.00-11.00: Masterclass Participation Workshop  
11.30-13.00: Workshop Demonstration 'Paths of Thought'  
14.00-16.00: Masterclass Participation Workshop  
16.15-18.00 Eugenio Barba Lecture  
19.30: Performance  
There will also be a Student Day and an option to attend just the performances. For more information or to book your place, please contact Josie Cartwright on [j.m.cartwright@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.cartwright@mmu.ac.uk)

### PARE ACTIVE

Stratford Circus, East London  
[www.para-active.com/](http://www.para-active.com/)  
[www.zoo-oid.com](http://www.zoo-oid.com)  
e: info@para-active.com  
t: 0208 279 1007/1084  
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[p.a.allain@ukc.ac.uk](mailto:p.a.allain@ukc.ac.uk)  
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For full details see the website or contact Dr. Paul Allain.

### MA IN PRACTISING PERFORMANCE

University of Wales, Aberystwyth  
[www.aber.ac.uk/tfts](http://www.aber.ac.uk/tfts)  
New course at the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies which combines both practical and critical approaches to the study of a broad range of performance forms and methodologies, with particular attention to devised performance, physical theatre, site-specific work and time-based art. For informal discussion, further information about the course and how to apply, please contact Course Convenor Dr Heike Roms: Tel: +44 (0) 1970 621911 or email: [hph@aber.ac.uk](mailto:hph@aber.ac.uk)



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University of Exeter, January 6 - 8 2006  
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For booking form and details, please go to: [www.ex.ac.uk/drama/research/changingbody/booking\\_form.html](http://www.ex.ac.uk/drama/research/changingbody/booking_form.html)  
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[www.nica.com.au](http://www.nica.com.au)  
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# ECOLE DE MIME CORPOREL DRAMATIQUE AND THEATRE DE L'ANGE FOU

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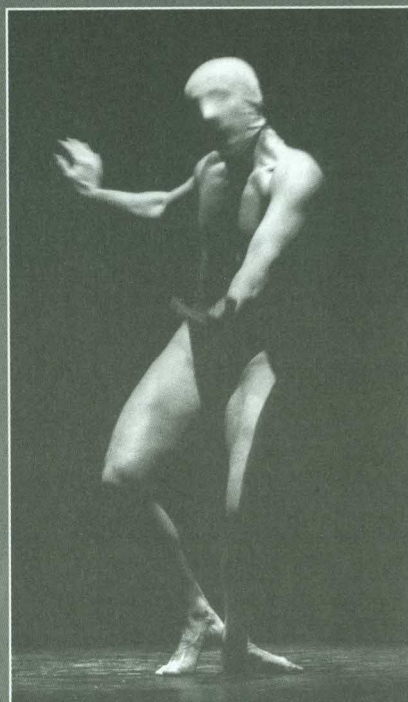
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To receive Guidelines and an Application Form, email [pct@puppetcentre.demon.co.uk](mailto:pct@puppetcentre.demon.co.uk).  
Application deadline is 5pm January 9th 2006.

You can join PCT's e-mailing list to receive regular updates by emailing [SUBSCRIBE@pct@puppetcentre.demon.co.uk](mailto:SUBSCRIBE@pct@puppetcentre.demon.co.uk)

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the puppet centre trust

## CIRCOMEDIA

Centre for Contemporary Circus & Physical Performance



- One Year Diploma Course
- Two Year Professional Training Programme
- Three Month Introductory Course
- Act Creation Course
- Teacher Training Course
- Two Year BTEC National Diploma in Performance
- Evening Classes

T: 0117 947 7288  
E: [info@circomedia.com](mailto:info@circomedia.com)  
[www.circomedia.com](http://www.circomedia.com)

Photo: Andre Pattenden



# circelation

27 March - 9 April 2006, Leeds

## What's The Story?

Circelation is designed for British circus artists and directors creating cutting-edge, live, contemporary circus performance.

### Programme

Eight laboratories over 14 days. Led by internationally acclaimed tutors including:

- ◆ Nigel Charnock
- ◆ People Show
- ◆ Lucy Bailey
- ◆ Lee Simpson
- ◆ Lemn Sissay

Following on from previous themes 'space' and 'risk', the third programme will concentrate on narrative. Through a series of performance laboratories, Circelation will enable and inspire artists to incorporate storytelling and text into their working process.

Circelation will support and encourage the exploration of narrative, bringing some of the leading artists and directors from around the world to Leeds to experiment, play and inspire...

### Booking now open

To receive your FREE brochure join our mailing list by emailing your details to [info@circelation.co.uk](mailto:info@circelation.co.uk)

**'Unmissable, a great opportunity for networking, life-changing'**

Circelation participant

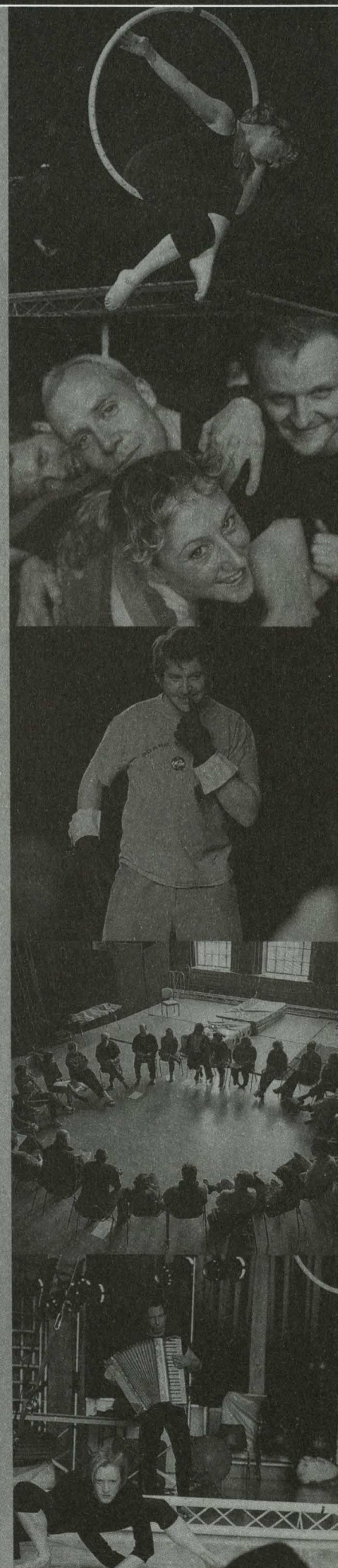
**'The value of Circelation has been phenomenal - as an opportunity to expand, to grow in confidence, to go on and do other things, to network and perform with other groups, to make changes in my life I'd been wanting to do for years!'**

**'It was a great networking opportunity and I went away with a real cross disciplinary sense of community, like I had found a virtual home for many of the things that guide my decisions and excite my senses.'**

Circelation participants



**JERWOOD**  
CHARITY



Photos: Circelation 2004/5 © Paul Floyd Blake

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





# EYE-POPPING VISUAL THEATRE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

FAULTY OPTIC



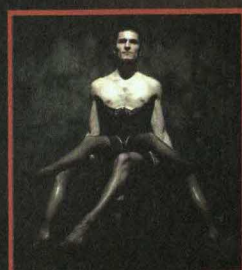
CIRCUS RONALDO



BLIND SUMMIT



MARCHES DE L'ETE



COMPAGNIE 111 : More Or Less Infinity

## LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL WED 11 - SUN 29 JANUARY 2006

ANDREW DAWSON Absence and Presence

BLIND SUMMIT Lowlife

CIRCUS RONALDO Cucina dell'Arte

CLAIRE HEGGEN Life's What You Make It

COMPAGNIE 111 More Or Less Infinity

COMPAGNIE ADRIEN M Convergence

FAMILIE FLOEZ Ristorante Immortale

FAULTY OPTIC Horsehead

GAMARJOBAT

MARCHES DE L'ETE Le Modele de Molinier

MATILDA LEYSER Line, Point, Plane

MOSSOUX BONTE Twin Houses

PIERRE RIGAL Erection

STEPHEN MOTTRAM Retrospective

THEATRE MOMZIT Empty Hands

WORKSHOPS : TALKS

Brochure: 020 7637 5661 Online from end November:

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

'A BREATHTAKING  
RANGE OF WORK  
THAT REMINDS US  
JUST ONCE A YEAR  
THAT THEATRE  
SHOULD ENGAGE  
ALL THE SENSES'

THE GUARDIAN

main photo: Aglae Bory

ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND