

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE

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TOTALTHEATRE - DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE



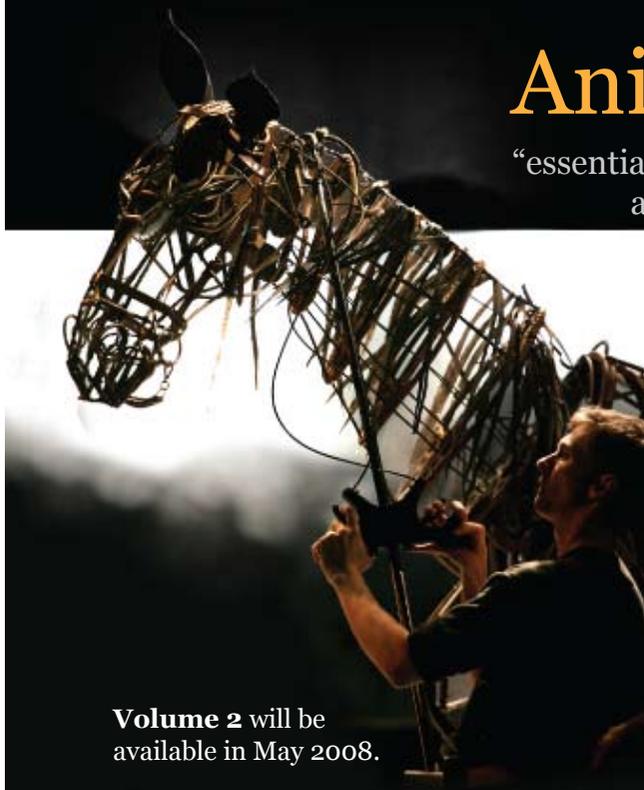
COME INSIDE TO FIND:
QUEER THEATRE – JOIN THE NEVER-ENDING REVOLUTION OF ENDLESS BECOMING MEET COUNTRY AND WESTERN SINGER TURNED LESBIAN
PERFORMANCE ARTIST TAMMY WHYNOT AKA LOIS WEAVER SURPRISE YOURSELF WITH TOM MORRIS AT THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME
FESTIVAL BE THERE AT MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH WITH PUNCHDRUNK THEATRE HELPI AN ABSOLUTE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE ROLE OF
CREATIVE PRODUCER REVIEWS OF COMPLICITE, FORKBEARD FANTASY, TOLD BY AN IDIOT, LIMF 2008 AND MORE
TOTAL THEATRE: FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT IN THE STREETS AND ON THE BEACHES

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As the influence of puppetry on theatre practice grows ever more prevalent, from the stages of the National Theatre to the packed houses of Improbable, **Animations In Print** explores the state of the art in the UK.

Volume 1 of the series, *Animated Encounters*, includes articles by John Fox and Ken Campbell and an interview with Anthony Minghella, and is available now for just £15 plus £2.50 p&p. **To order your copy** please send your name, address and a cheque for **£17.50** payable to Puppet Centre Trust to **PCT, BAC, Lavender Hill, London. SW11 5TN.**

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This issue of Total Theatre brings you a special focus on queer theatre. Chris Goode, in his article *Endless Becoming*, beautifully sums up what we might think of as 'queer': 'Queer exceeds any and all of the standardised options for describing sexuality, to touch on much wider questions of identity, power and difference'.

An investigation of identity, power and difference is at the heart of the work of our *Voices* artist, Lois Weaver, co-founder of lesbian feminist theatre company Split Britches.

Also within these pages you'll find features on performance in shop windows; the New York marathon that was Performa07; a professional development project on the streets and seaside promenades of Aberystwyth; and a meeting with the toast of London town, Punchdrunk.

Talking of Punchdrunk, we also bring you a different approach to 'reviewing', with our reflection on Punchdrunk's *Masque of the Red Death* placed with three other responses from the same night, written by producer Colin Marsh and two company cast members.

More regular-style reviews include a selection from this year's London International Mime Festival. And this seems an opportune moment to draw attention to our elegant new website, which brings you news, listings and a great deal more reviews than we are able to fit into these pages. See www.totaltheatre.org.uk

Total Theatre Magazine as always features an eclectic mix from the world of contemporary theatre & performance, including physical & devised theatre, performance art, new circus, and street arts. Work we believe is not properly represented, documented or reflected on in the mainstream media – in contrast to Arts Council England which feels that there is no need to support Total Theatre any longer as, apparently, the job is done (see Pippa Bailey's Out & About column for more on this).

On that topic I'd like to cite a few examples of the massive ignorance still to be overcome. Item one, Toby Young's assertion in the Independent on Sunday that 'physical comedy... no longer works on stage. It is simply too unrealistic.' Apparently, we are too used to TV and film to be willing to suspend disbelief in a theatre unless what we see on stage is seamless naturalism. Item two: the endless commentary on the new 'wordless play' *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* at the National Theatre that expresses open-mouthed surprise that theatre can be without words – where have these cultural commentators been for the past twenty years? Item three: the ongoing inability of most of the mainstream media to review physical/visual theatre, circus, street arts, live art or anything that is sited outside of a regular theatre venue – unless, as is the case with Punchdrunk, the audience take the initiative and provide such a phenomenal sell-out that it becomes impossible to ignore.

The job is far from done. As, with Total Theatre Volume 20, we enter our third decade of fighting the good cause, let it be known: Honey, we ain't even hardly started. Watch this space.

Dorothy Max Prior

Comments on this or anything else in this issue of Total Theatre Magazine welcome:

magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk

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London International Mime Festival

Complicité's A Disappearing Number & Peter Brook's Fragments

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THE SHOUT & PROTEIN DANCE WITH HAPPY TOGETHER, A BRIGHTON FESTIVAL COMMISSION



BRIGHTON FESTIVAL 3-25 MAY 2008

The Brighton Festival is a multi-artform, curated event which is now under the wing of theatre producer Jane McMorrow – good news for Total Theatre as she has a long history of dedication to experimental, devised and site-responsive work. Sites for theatre and performance in the 2008 festival include a graveyard, a nightclub, and numerous parks – as well as major venues like Brighton Dome, Theatre Royal Brighton, Fabrica gallery and The Basement. Highlights of the theatre/performance programme include: *Happy Together*, a Festival commission for composer Orlando Gough and his vocal group The Shout who join forces with choreographer Luca Silvestrini (Protein Dance) in a highly entertaining promenade performance inspired by the city's reputation as the perfect hen and stag party destination; *An Infinite Line*, a commissioned installation-performance from Fevered Sleep written/directed by David Harradine and inspired by the quality of light in Brighton; *So Close to Home*, written by Mark Wheatley, whose background includes writing for *Complicite*, an explosive story of migration, sited in a disused pizza restaurant; *Norman*, a mesmerising new show from mixed-media masters Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon (aka 4D Art) about filmmaker Norman McLaren, featuring dancer and choreographer Peter Trosztmer who will literally inhabit McLaren's cinematic universe. See www.brightonfestival.org

The Brighton Festival Fringe, which runs concurrently with the main festival, is an open-access non-curated event, with a plethora of performances and events in all genres, embracing both professional and community work. Full details available at www.brightonfestivalfringe.org.uk

WIRED AREAL THEATRE'S WENDY HESKETH, COURSE LEADER AT CIRCELTION



CIRCELTION

Circelation's season of Performance Laboratories for 2008 will inspire and enable artists to explore storyboarding, new narratives and aerial dance. There are three courses: 'Visualising narrative: telling stories through bodies in space', led by Lee Simpson (Improbable) and Gavin Marshall (New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich), 2-6 March; 'Harnessing performance: exploring dancing in the air', led by Brenda Angiel (Brenda Angiel Aerial Dance, Argentina) and developed with Wendy Hesketh (Contact, Manchester), 10-15 March; and 'Pushing boundaries: building content into circus', led by Hilary Westlake, 16-20 April. Cost is £250 per week (includes course only), but with discounted rates for double and triple booking (£400 for two courses; £600 for three). To apply download an application form from www.circelation.co.uk or email labs@circelation.co.uk Circelation will also be holding an 'In Conversation' event 11 March with a panel discussion exploring the nature of aerial dance.

AUDITIONS WITH STYX THÉÂTRE COMPANY

The Styx Theatre Company is seeking multi-skilled circus artists under 30 for a new European circus project, *Les NoNo font leur Cirque!*, to be put on in March 2009, co-produced by the Cirque Jules Verne of Amiens and the City of Marseille. The company is interested in hearing from trapeze artists, aerial acrobats, jugglers, equestrian acrobats, general acrobats, and other artists performing original or unusual routines. Auditions will take place from 31 March until 15 April 2008 in Amiens, France. Applications (video, DVDs, photos, etc.) to be sent to Styx Théâtre, Serge Noyelle, 4, rue Sainte, 13001 Marseille, France. Email serge.noyelle@tiscali.fr



CARAVAN

Caravan is a new initiative that aims to strengthen the international networks and expand the range of opportunities for performing artists and companies in South East England to work abroad – supported by Arts Council England, SEEDA, Brighton & Hove City Council and UKTI. There are two strands to the work of Caravan. The dialogue programme is a series of conversations that prepares companies for working internationally. This is followed by an international assembly scheduled for 11–13 May 2008 in partnership with the Brighton Festival. The assembly will provide opportunities for the region's artists to show work, share ideas, present new material and explore possibilities for collaboration and touring with international promoters and producers. SE based artists involved include: Gravity & Levity, Blast Theory, Periplum, The World Famous, Strangeface, Lone Twin and Spymonkey. Caravan is managed by Farnham Maltings through its Supporting Artists Programme. Email caravan@farnhammaltings.com See www.farnhammaltings.com/caravan

BAPSE promotes new work, experimental live art and the professional development of new and emerging artists in the South East, offering supported artists mentoring and professional development, administrative support, production and rehearsal space. The new venue has emerged resplendent after completion of a £250k redevelopment which has created four workable arts spaces for devising, rehearsal, and production of live art, experimental theatre and performance. For more information please contact info@thebasement.uk.com See www.thebasement.uk.com

THE GENERATING COMPANY

From January 2008, the Generating Company will be running evening classes, training courses, artist development programmes, and a summer school. They are also recruiting teachers/trainers for various contracts with P&O Cruises, starting March. Contracts with P&O run 2-4 months (Mediterranean) and 6 months (Caribbean), with teachers needed in flying trapeze, trapeze, Chinese pole, hoop, bungees, acrobatics/acrobalance, hula-hoop, juggling, comedy slapstick, acting, tightwire and breakdancing. Generating Company evening classes, held in East London, are offered in trapeze, hoop, rope, acrobatics, contact dance, Chinese pole and Pilates. Email admin@generatingcompany.co.uk see www.generatingcompany.co.uk or call 020 70933204 for more info.

TONIC AT CPT

Camden People's Theatre are delighted to announce that, thanks to GFA funding from ACE, they are able to re-launch their TONIC scheme and expand the Sprint festival. Alongside this, CPT have also been able to appoint a new part-time member of staff, with Freya Elliot joining the company from January '08 as Director's Assistant. This spring CPT will continue to support new work and emerging companies, presenting pieces from Split Soul Dance Theatre, Pan Intercultural Arts, and Mercurial Productions, as well as an immersive installation from Orley & Brass. For full details of all the above see www.cpttheatre.co.uk

PROCESS

Process is an exhibition of work by IOU, Hoodwink and the Whalley Range All Stars taking place at the IOU Studio in Halifax. It explores the ways in which three highly visual theatre companies approach the making of their work. Drawings, photographs, video, soundscapes, costume, objects and text combine to reveal how Hoodwink, IOU and Whalley Range All Stars have evolved specific productions. Open Monday – Friday, 2 February – 30 May, by appointment. Entrance free; please contact IOU to arrange a visit. See www.ioutheatre.org or email info@ioutheatre.org

DAVID GALE'S PEACHY COOCHY NIGHTS

Just a projector and 20 images. Just 20 seconds per image. During those 20 seconds the Presenter talks about the image. So simple. So precise. So demanding. This is the Peachy Coochy way. David Gale curates, comperes and presents a new regular Peachy Coochy event in Artsadmin's Arts Bar & Café on the last Thursday of each month. Each event features five Coochers (or presenters) drawn from many walks of life. Each Coocher will compose a verbal response to 20 images of their choice. The images need not be narratively linked but randomness is frowned upon. Thematic associations are embraced. Each presentation lasts six minutes and 40 seconds. There will be gaps between presentations for drinking and light conversation. Dates from January to June. See www.artsadmin.co.uk

BASEMENT ARTS PRODUCTION, SOUTH EAST LAUNCHED

After a period of capital redevelopment in 2007, Basement Arts Production, South East (formerly Brighton Fringe Arts Production) have launched their new name, new venue The Basement at Argus Lofts, Kensington St in Brighton, and a new website.



ANALOGUE MILE END AT THE ARCHES

ARCHES BRICK AWARD

The Arches Brick Award is the latest addition to the Glasgow theatre's mentoring programme for emergent talent. During the Edinburgh Fringe last year, the Arches tirelessly hunted out the companies it felt most deserving of the chance to restage their piece at the theatre. The winners were 1927 with *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* and Analogue for *Mile End*, who present their work at the Arches March 11-13. 1927 won the Total Theatre Awards Best Newcomer accolade at Fringe 2007, with Analogue's *Mile End* Shortlisted in that category. See www.thearches.co.uk

PAUL LUCAS PRODUCTIONS

Taylor Mac's new show *The Ladies Of...* (which premiered in New York in September 2007 to great acclaim) will be going to Sweden in April for a four-city tour. Paul Lucas will be presenting Taylor Mac in cabaret with Justin Bond (Kiki) at queerupnorth in May. Meanwhile Miss Coco can be seen in Brighton in May along with Meow Meow (our wonderful hostess from last August's Total Theatre Awards ceremony). Woody Sez (a great success at last year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe) is off to the Croydon Clocktower and then to Germany in early June. For updates see www.paulucasproductions.com

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS



DELL'ARTE

DELL'ARTE

Continuing its 30-year tradition of creating dynamic, physical ensemble theatre, the Dell'Arte Company makes a rare Los Angeles appearance with *The Golden State*, a raucous, sexy farce inspired by Molière's comic gem *The Miser*. This is Molière with the heat turned up, the stops pulled out and the women on top. In the spring, Dell'Arte will team up with the Canadian ensemble Caos to create *Crawdaddy*, a tragedy centred around a travelling freak show during the 1930s. The 2008 Dell'Arte Mad River Festival will run 19 June – 26 July. See the new website at www.dellarte.com or email info@dellarte.com

38TH CHILDREN'S THEATRE FESTIVAL

6–13 April, Denmark

The town of Naestved is this year's host for the world's largest festival of professional theatre for children and young people. Around 90 Danish professional theatre groups present more than 450 shows in a single week. See www.teatercentrum.dk/festival/uk/



MISS COCO PERU

BOGOTA THEATRE FESTIVAL

7–23 March, Columbia

The Latin American Bogotá Theatre Festival takes place every two years. The event features every kind of performance, and hosts 142 theatre companies from 45 countries as far afield as Asia and Africa, along with many from the Americas and Europe. See www.festivaldeteatro.com.



ARENA INVITES APPLICATIONS

ARENA is an international theatre festival for physical theatre, dance and performance – but with other artforms also making up an important part of its wide-ranging programme. The festival particularly promotes young artists and is renowned for its professionalism, excellent artist liaison and support, and for its highly regarded intimate atmosphere. This year ARENA will take place in Germany 24–29 June, 2008 with the theme of Open Space. Applications can be submitted until 1 March, 2008. Application forms and further information can be found at www.arena-festival.de ARENA takes care of all travel, board and accommodation costs for participating groups. Representatives coming to promote other festivals and venues are also warmly invited.

PUPPETSTATE IN TAKE ART LIVE



TAKE ART: LIVE

The Take Art: Live Village Performance Scheme brings over 65 performances by 15 different companies to rural venues in Somerset for its January–July 2008 season. Performances include Rogue Theatre's *Madame Lucinda's Wonder Show*, a show based on poems and text written by Anna Maria Murphy (Kneehigh Theatre) that follows the unusual stories of the three circus acts, Sirius (The Man Who Knows), Svetlana (The Living Doll) and Lo-Lo (The Clown); Pip Utton's solo exploration of the private life behind the world's most famous slapstick comedian, *Charlie Chaplin*; and Puppetstate's *The Man Who Planted Trees*, an adaptation of Jean Giono's well-loved environmental story.

See www.takeart.org

LAS FALLAS

17–20 March, Valencia

Undoubtedly one of the most unique and crazy festivals in Spain (a country known for unique and crazy festivals). What started as a feast day for St. Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters, has evolved into a five-day, multifaceted celebration of fire. Valencia is usually a quiet city with a population of a half-million, but the town swells to an estimated three million flame-loving revellers during Las Fallas. See www.fallas.com

THE GOLDEN MASK

27 March–14 April, Moscow

A National Theatre Award which was founded in 1994 by the Theatre Union of Russia, and is given to productions in all genres of theatre art: drama, opera, ballet, operetta and musical, and puppet theatre. The Golden Mask is also an All-Russian Theatre Festival that, in the spring of each year, presents to the capital the most significant performances from all over Russia. See www.theatre.ru/maska/eindex.html

ANNAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

April, Jordan

This annual festival is the only one in the Middle East and North Africa to be organised by an independent theatre company. Performances are mainly in Arabic and English. First held in 1994, and initiated by members of Amman's Al Fawanees (meaning Lantern) theatre company, the festival provides a venue for artistic exchange among independent and experimental Arab troupes. It aims to encourage alternatives to the present environment in which artists work in the Arab world, as well as increasing their exposure to a more global spectrum of artistic activity.

4X4 DAYS IN MOTION

23–30 May, Prague

This festival presents contemporary innovative theatre projects, unique site-specific work, exhibitions, projections, and concerts. Every year the festival presents twenty groups from all over the world. Its special focus is to enliven Prague architecture through theatre and the presentation of international projects co-produced by Four Days. See www.ctyridny.cz/intro.htm

EXPRESSIVE FEAT



BOOTWORKS THEATRE

Bootworks Theatre present *The Black Box*, a five-minute piece of theatre performed for an audience of one by a cast of ten, in the smallest theatre in the world. Having travelled to the moon, defeated invading Martians, wrestled giant rubber sharks and fought 'bullet time' with Agent Smith, Bootworks are about to embark on their most surreal adventure yet: a reworking of Dali and Bunuel's masterpiece, *Un Chien Andalou*, an eyeball slicing, horse-dragging treat, ideal for film and mixed-arts festivals. The company are taking bookings for the coming year. To contact them email bootworks@gmail.com or see www.myspace.com/bootworks

BOTTLEFED

For their next long-term project – an exploration into the area of interdisciplinary art between physical theatre, dance, live music and text – Bottlefed have expanded their ensemble to collaborate with six new performers, as well as the musical improvisation collective Kobayashi (double bass, viola and tenor sax). The R&D phase researches improvisation methods that enable the ensemble to fully integrate live music with a physical theatre process and performance. What happens if you apply the principles of free music improvisation to movement/physical theatre improvisation and vice versa – and how far can you push this dialogue? See www.bottlefed.org or email info@bottlefed.org

DAEDALUS THEATRE COMPANY

Following a successful Arts Council supported programme at Camden People's Theatre in Autumn 2007 that combined performances of a new version of an old show, *Selfish*, with a period of research and development, Daedalus is moving ahead with the development of its project on Burundi and the Great Lakes region. This is the company's first attempt to marry experiments with theatrical form to the complexities of politics and recent history. One aspect of this is building a network of potential collaborators, so anyone with a genuine interest in the region should get in touch. Daedalus is also planning further performances of the new version of *Selfish*. See www.daedalus theatre.co.uk

EXPRESSIVE FEAT

Expressive Feat have two shows on offer for 2008. *Park Life* depicts the cat-and-mouse tale of four bizarre, bowler-hatted characters performed outdoors on the company's unique spiralling aerial rig. *Return Journey* is a solo aerial dance depicting one woman's emotional struggle through the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, and is suitable for black box theatres. Both pieces can be accompanied by workshops, masterclasses and discussions. Expressive Feat's Kent based Airhedz clubs continue to thrive with adults and young people participating regularly in aerial and circus skills at all levels. See www.exfeat.com

LEFT LUGGAGE THEATRE

Emerging company Left Luggage Theatre will be performing at The Space, E14, London 18-20 March as part of the Enterprise '08 Festival. This site-responsive performance will be in research and development towards a larger production in the autumn. Left Luggage respond to the remembered and forgotten; the historical and imagined; the wished and dreamt; and the stories whispered by objects and spaces. The audience are enveloped in a theatrical experience that embraces puppetry, soundscape, and installation – live performance with delicately beautiful scenography. Left Luggage are currently residents at The Puppet Centre at BAC. See www.leftluggage theatre.co.uk or to book for Enterprise '08 go to www.space.org.uk

MERCURIAL PRODUCTIONS

Mercurial Productions, seven theatre-makers fresh from two years at L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq, will be at Camden People's Theatre 8-26 April with *Briefing*, their debut show in London. Using objects, bodies and imagination, as well as original music and a modern chorus, *Briefing* explores the story of a man who, after losing his memory, starts to see a very different world behind the world. See www.mercurialproductions.net

METAPHYSIQUE

Drawing on themes of *The Hero's Journey* by Joseph Campbell and *The Divine Comedy* by Dante, Metaphysique's new show, *Cupid's Strongest Bow*, tells of the journey through life and love, embracing pleasure and pain, the profound and the profane, the ethereal and the mundane. This piece has been created and is performed by Jane Sutcliffe with clown work by John Wright, aerial work by Mike Wright, and original music by Peter Williams. Available to tour small-scale arts centre venues. This show opens as part of the Moving Parts Festival at The Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham on Valentine's Day, 14 February 2008 and finishes at Universal Hall in Findhorn, Scotland 27 June. See www.metaphysique.co.uk

MIMBRE

Mimbre has received the great news that it is staying on as one of Arts Council England's portfolio of revenue funded companies – and has a range of exciting projects and plans for the next three years. Right now mimbre is preparing and taking bookings for their summer tour of *The Bridge*, as well as of *sprung*, *memento* (walkabout) and their new cabaret acts. For more information on current shows or future plans contact the company on info@mimbre.co.uk or see www.mimbre.co.uk



SPIKE THEATRE

MOMENTUM THEATRE

In spring 2008, Momentum tour nationally with their third production, *Anima*, a commission from the Liverpool Capital of Culture. Following the international success of previous shows *Tmesis* and *Memento Mori*, *Anima* is an exploration of the world of dreams. Highly visual, physical and deeply evocative, Momentum investigate the world of the conscious and subconscious, revealing the conflict and harmony within us all. By turns deeply disturbing, humorous and moving *Anima* takes you on a surreal, thought provoking journey. For more information and tour dates see www.momentumtheatre.com

NIE

NIE are performing their new show *My Life with the Dogs* at BAC April – May; a wild romp through the Moscow back streets, in a world populated by strange and dangerous characters, raucous music and a very nervous policeman. Also at BAC, 21 & 23 April, the company will be performing *Instant Epic*, an improvised piece which creates epic stories that have been guided, shaped and inspired by audience interaction. NIE would also like to welcome their new general manager/producer Cat Moore. See www.nie-theatre.com

PRECARIOUS

Precarious are off on tour April-May 2008, taking their award-winning physical theatre and multimedia show *Druthers* to a dozen different cities. Check out www.precarious.org.uk for dates and venues. Precarious are also beginning the development of a new show, *The Factory*, which will debut at the Tobacco Factory in July, and welcomes four additional performers. Exploring ideas around consumerism, *The Factory* will offer Precarious' trademark combination of highly physical and visual theatre alongside cutting-edge technology.

SHAMS THEATRE

Shams are currently completing production of *Black Stuff*, a wicked comedy about the end of oil. Supported by Arts Council England and the Unity Theatre Trust, the show will tour across Eastern England in March before going to Edinburgh in August. Jonathan Young is also developing an experimental interdisciplinary piece, *Reykjavik*, to be developed/scratched in late spring. For more info and tour dates: www.shamstheatre.org.uk or call +44 (0)7740 475 879

SPIKE THEATRE

Spike Theatre is 10 years old! The company is celebrating with a UK tour of a brand new show entitled *Gin and Tonic and Passing Trains*. Spike's latest show was created in co-production with Ramesh Meyyappan and commissioned and premiered at the Tramway theatre, Glasgow. Influenced by the classic Charles Dickens ghost story 'The Signalman', this visual comic tale of loneliness, boredom and a few ghostly visitors will leave you in no doubt that Gin and Trains do not make the perfect tonic! For more info call +44 (0)151 709 8554 or email mail@spiketheatre.com or see www.spiketheatre.com and www.rameshmeyyappan.com



PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATES

STRANGEFACE MASK THEATRE COMPANY

This quarter StrangeFace will be touring *The Last Resort*, a Faustian folk tale fusing their distinctive half masks, puppetry and live music into a colourfully grotesque black comedy. *The Last Resort* can be seen at venues across the South East from the beginning of March and has been selected for the Pride of Place Festival in Northumberland in April and the Caravan International Showcase as part of the Brighton Festival in May. For more information email info@strangeface.co.uk or see www.strangeface.co.uk

THE PAPER BIRDS

Having just returned from Poland where the company spent a week working alongside Teatr Piesn Kozla (Song of the Goat Theatre) The Paper Birds, with the support of ACE, are beginning preparations for devising their fifth production. The company plan to scratch regionally and nationally in March/ April and premiere the new show at The Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2008. The Paper Birds are also about to embark on their spring tour of their current show *40 Feathered Winks* and will finish the tour with a run at The Prague Fringe Festival in May 2008. See www.thepaperbirds.com

TRAVELLING LIGHT THEATRE COMPANY

Travelling Light have been incredibly busy recently – *The Ugly Duckling*, co-produced with Tobacco Factory Productions, will be followed by *Shadow Play*, for 2–6 year olds and their families. Through a vibrant mix of music, dance, mime and design, this show is a celebration of the natural creativity of children. As part of its development, the company have also been working with Somerset's Take Art on *Sticky Fingers*, a project which links nurseries with Somerset venues. The show tours from February to late June, ending at the Unicorn Theatre. See www.travlight.co.uk

UNPACKED

Unpacked tour two shows this spring, *No Obvious Trauma* and *Funeral Games*, before heading to the English speaking theatre in Poland in May and Barcelona in June to develop their current show directed by Clare Dunn. They continue to work on *Jumping Mouse*, their first children's show, as well as leading workshops for schools around the country. For more info and tour dates see www.unpacked.org

OUT & ABOUT

PIPPA BAILEY REFLECTS ON THE ARTS COUNCIL'S RECENT DECISIONS



I have to admit that come winter I would often rather stay in than venture out. Even, dare I say, the lure of bad telly can tempt me away from theatre. It's a time for creature comforts and taking stock. Out and About becomes stay home and tune in. This winter gone has been no exception, made more severe by the Arts Council recommendations to cut 195 regularly-funded companies from their portfolio. I am disappointed to have to report that Total Theatre is one of them.

Our letter arrived on 13 December casting a shadow of gloom over the traditionally cheerful Christmas period. Flurries of phone calls followed as many tried to ascertain who else had had their lives and livelihoods threatened. This was made more painful in the knowledge that some companies were being offered substantial uplifts and new artists are being brought into the Arts Council fold. In principle this is great news, but nobody knew exactly who was being affected and the lucky ones have largely hidden their joy. Once again the artists were left in a school yard playing Chinese whispers while the 'teachers' stayed safe indoors tucked up and unavailable with their knowledge.

I could rant on (as I and many others have at numerous meetings and functions) about the appalling decision-making process, about the intrinsic lack of respect for artists, about how little Arts Council England seem to understand public relations and how badly the ensuing media coverage reflects on both their actions and the arts community more widely as this drama is played out in public.. And in Total Theatre's case, about how little interest they have taken in the process of renewal we have instigated.

Instead, here is part of our response to ACE:

'We are particularly disappointed that ACE has not formally engaged in our process to change direction embarked upon by Total Theatre in 2007. We have repeatedly acknowledged our failure to manage a particularly difficult situation in 2005/6 but took decisive action in February 2007....

There has not been any formal response to the new ideas and radical change of direction that is emerging, and your recommendation appears to have been made without any consideration of these ideas. This is despite verbal assurances that the Arts Council understands that organisations have difficult years and that your primary interest is in innovative new ideas. We are curious to know why Arts Council England is not interested in retaining and developing Total Theatre Magazine and the Total Theatre Awards or exploring the role that

this theatre development agency could play at a time when excellence is a key focus, when there is an identified need to develop new forms of, and platforms for, theatre criticism and our activity offers tremendous scope to develop excellence. Although you state that 'Physical, visual and devised theatre is now well funded and understood within the portfolio'; we would argue that it is not well understood by the media or the public, particularly outside the cultural centres such as London, Manchester, etc.

...

Having undertaken a revision of the organisation, Total Theatre is in the middle of a valuable process and - despite the ACE proposal to disinvest - this process and the organisation will continue.'

Amidst all the sound and fury there has been too little talk about the process of change, how artists and arts companies find mechanisms for creative renewal. Almost every creative person can and will espouse the virtues of change; how it drives the work and is essential to new life and growth. So if there is need for the bushfire to cleanse and germinate, doesn't that naturally imply some devastation? The questions are: Whose devastation? And by whose hand? Change implies unexpected situations and perhaps no-one can ever be truly empowered and ready for it.

Luckily Total Theatre has engaged in a process, expecting unpredictable outcomes and opportunities that will help us transform. The good news is that there is a future and through this painful process, we will overcome.

Pippa Bailey is creative director of Total Theatre, the UK development agency for contemporary theatre. For further updates on the future of the organisation, see www.totaltheatre.org.uk



SURPRISE!

RICHARD CUMING FINDS MUCH UNEXPECTED DELIGHT AT THE TOTAL THEATRE LECTURE BY TOM MORRIS AT THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL 2008

All these referenced artists, Tom pointed out, had been championed by the London International Mime Festival in its illustrious history, spanning more than three decades.

Tom then treated the audience to a reconstruction of the first scratch tryout of Complicite's *Mnemonic*. We were instructed to close our eyes, and were taken on an imaginative voyage of discovery. For Tom, all these artists take both audience and artist on a journey into the unknown, which allows you to both feel and think. Theatre only means something, he said, when the audience start imagining what they can't see. Tom then proposed that the scene in *King Lear* where the blind Gloucester is persuaded to jump from Beachy Head but is, in reality, merely jumping on the stage demonstrates this. In Tom's reading, the audience believes in the dramatic reality that he is jumping to his death, although they can see that in reality he is not. Shakespeare plays with our ability to enter into the complicity of theatrical illusion, which is then revealed as illusion. This infusion of reality into illusion is for Tom at the heart of good theatre. His sly conclusion was that it returns us to the relationship between public execution and theatre.

This oblique, nuanced and wide-ranging lecture was playful, interesting and provocative. The lecture as story with its constant turns and circularity of incidents was itself surprising and unexpected, and challenged us to wonder whether they were real or fictional. It revealed the importance of placing theatre in a dialogue with other disciplines as a means of constant renewal. The question and answer session afterwards was provocative and Tom's response to the question, 'What has been your journey at The National Theatre?' was, in effect, that he sees himself as the outsider who is occasionally permitted to put on something which appears foolish but proves to be successful. This seemed to sum up his lecture perfectly.

The Total Theatre Lecture took place at the ICA on 19 January 2008 and was organised and presented by the 30th London International Mime Festival (directors Joseph Seelig and Helen Lannaghan). For more information on the festival, and to access the archive, see www.mimefest.co.uk

For details of the ICA talks programme, see www.ica.org.uk For War Horse and other shows at the National Theatre see www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

See this issue of Total Theatre for a selection of reviews from the 30th London International Mime Festival. There are further reviews from LIMF 2008 on the website at www.totaltheatre.org.uk

A table and two chairs... occupying one chair is Tom Morris, who will deliver the Total Theatre Lecture at LIMF 2008.

Joseph Seelig, co-director and founder of the London International Mime Festival, opens the session with a short resume of Tom Morris's work. He is currently associate director at the National Theatre, and co-director of the hit show *War Horse*, which is returning to the NT later in 2008. Morris was previously artistic director of Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) from 1995-2004, where he was responsible for setting up the support system for practitioners called the Ladder of Development (which includes the legendary Scratch Nights), as well as fostering innovative and contemporary performances including *Jerry Springer: The Opera*. Tom then invited Joseph to sit with him at the table, and handed him a whistle. He was instructed to blow it after thirty minutes as a warning that he had ten minutes left and at forty to stop him talking – he would be giving a 'Scratch' lecture, and he would only know what the lecture was about after he had given it. Clearly, this was not going to be a standard lecture.

And so it proved, for Tom embarked upon a shaggy dog story which creatively and yet concisely pinpointed his interest in what he termed the 'Theatre of the Unexpected'. He extended this term by saying that the key interest for him was when companies played with both form and content finding new ways of surprising and interacting with their audience. The story he told reflexively epitomised many of these twists and turns of narrative, whilst delivering a sly dig at the concept of a lecture itself. It began with Tom in a tutorial with a venerable academic, 'the man with long white hair' who was supervising his plausible yet abandoned thesis on 'Theatre and Public Execution in Elizabethan England', and moved on from there to include the beginning of a fairy tale told by a fictitious caretaker 'Mr. Bigadyke', which developed into a dark area in which the King had to marry his own daughter, confounding our expectations of the genre. This fractured narrative allowed him to shift into a discourse on the ways in which metre in poetry surprises us since the broken rhythm plays with the disjunction between 'what you imagine you'd get and what you do get'.

This theme of disjunction continued with allusive mention of companies that had inspired Tom, including David Glass, *Improbable*, whose *70 Hill Lane*'s imaginative use of sellotape he discussed in some depth, *Faulty Optic*, and *Complicite*.

ROBERT LEPAGE THE ANDERSON PROJECT. PHOTO ERICK LABBE.



ENDLESS BECOMING

THERE'S MORE TO QUEER THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE THAN ISSUE-BASED DRAMA, SAYS CHRIS GOODE



CHRIS GOODE.
PHOTO FINLAY ROBERTSON.

Anyone with the chutzpah to call a play *Shopping and Fucking* can be reckoned to have a provocative streak: and when Mark Ravenhill wrote a column for the *Guardian* last November headed 'My pink fountain pen has run dry', it was hard not to see it as merely a bit of impish chain-yanking. 'Every time I try to write "gay", I start yawning,' he reported, describing gay-focused work as 'a project that is now totally over'.

Even someone with the privileged and prestigious status of Ravenhill surely knows that for millions of lesbian / gay / bisexual / transgender people all over the world, that project has barely begun, or is still impossible; that even in Britain, countless isolated people outside the big metropolitan centres, and who knows how many scared and bullied schoolkids, don't have the luxury of his ennui. But at the time his complacency seemed worthier of dismissal than anxious engagement.

Just four weeks later, however, Ravenhill's sense of gay work being 'over' was entirely reframed, when Arts Council England's proposed withdrawal of support from 194 of its regularly funded organisations suddenly threatened the existence of, arguably, the UK's two most important producing bases for LGBT and queer performance: the Drill Hall in London, and queerupnorth in Manchester. That these two internationally significant organisations should both be endangered at one moment has rightly provoked a furious response from artists and audiences alike: and while a charge of institutional homophobia seems unsustainable, it's compelling to consider the regional Arts Councils' assessment of these key producers' dispensability in the light of Ravenhill's remarks.

Could it perhaps be that, after a decade of progressive legislation on the mainstream lesbian and gay equality agenda, the 'distinctiveness' (to borrow a current ACE buzzword) of gay theatre and performance has consequently been diluted? If gay voices are no longer marginal, gay stories no longer hidden, gay artists no longer disenfranchised – in every case, that's a big 'if', but that may be the prevailing perception – then why should organisations which exist to create sympathetic spaces and relevant opportunities be worthy of continued support?

Obviously, this question immediately reveals itself to be based on assumptions not only about LGBT lives as they are now lived, but also about what theatre and performance more generally are actually for. The model being evoked here (and described by Ravenhill) is one built around representation, around issue-driven drama. It's the model of much of Gay Sweatshop's pioneering work over twenty years, for example: and as such it commands respect. But it accounts in fact for relatively little of the current programme at the Drill Hall or queerupnorth.

In its stead has emerged work of greater complexity (both aesthetic and political) and variousness, with somewhat different ambitions. Work whose aims are scarcely reflected in the exhausted narratives limned by Ravenhill, and largely incomprehensible within our arts bureaucracy's tick-box culture. This is a tendency with which I strongly identify, and my absolute opposition to the Arts Council's idiotic proposals is tinged with excitement, given that the case for funding needs to be made partly in relation to this new model. Could this finally be the moment that queer moves into the political foreground?

Defining 'queer' as it relates to 'queer theatre' is tricky not merely because of the concept's relatively short history as part of our critical apparatus, but also because evading the definitive and problematising the categorical is partly what 'queer' does.

From the start, though, let's assert that queerness is important to all theatre makers regardless of sexual orientation. 'Queer' exceeds any and all of the standardised options for describing sexuality, to touch on much wider questions of identity, power and difference: and as such, it's almost impossible to talk about what it is without seeming to describe theatre too.

For example: queer takes two (or more). It's a way of looking, an attitude of questioning. It's not a quality of the individual; like theatre, it's a socially construed relationship, held in the heat of a curious, inquisitive attention. So queer theatre depends on a certain level of self-awareness, not only in performers but in audiences too. In that sense, all queer theatre is interactive: no spectator can be entirely passive.

In its rejection of assumption and normativity, 'queer' echoes Peter Brook's 'empty space', or LeRoy Leatherman's beautiful description of choreographer Martha Graham, in his *Portrait of the Lady as an Artist*: 'She took to the stage as if nothing had ever happened on it before.' But it's also acutely aware of the cultural and historical pressures that mean no space is ever 'empty' before it is occupied. It knows, as every theatre-maker should, that all conventions (including those of the avant garde) are fictions, with human authors; it may love to play with those conventions, or preserve or destroy them, but they must not go unexamined.

Queerness promotes movement over stability, mutability over stasis. It's propelled by the restless contingency of the relationships it creates and describes. So it is itself a kind of liveness. One common queer trope is the idea of 'endless becoming': which evokes for me the kind of fluidly metaphoric theatrical field of Complicite's *Street of Crocodiles* or Filter's *Water* just as much as the overtly queer-identified performance of Taylor Mac, say, or Lee Adams.

Perhaps above all we might think of Robert Lepage, whose theatre practice is steeped in queerness: his topical consideration of the volatility of identity in postmodern society (even when his ostensible narratives have pre-contemporary settings); his extension of the flux of rehearsal and the playfulness of collaboration into a signature style that always seems radically unresolved; his refusal to arrive at a 'definitive' version of his perpetually evolving pieces; and only finally and incidentally his (quietly stated) identification as a gay man.

Lepage's work also exhibits a vigilant anxiety about language, and a trust in the pre-linguistic expressivity of the body, that is absolutely queer as well as being fundamental to most conceptions of 'total theatre'. In this model, the events that constitute theatre dare not speak their name, for fear of being contained or determined by words. Of course, many important queer artists are, contrarily, virtuosic writers or great storytellers: Tony Kushner, Neil Bartlett, Claire Dowie, Tim Miller come immediately to mind. But their queerness can be located partly in their close concern for the complicity of language in the inequitable distribution of power and authority.

Whether or not it's explicitly stated, that kind of concern with the invisible systems and unexamined structures that shape our various relationships, and the way that artistic innovation at the level of form and structure can challenge and experimentally reconfigure those forces, is a vital tenet of queer practice.

This focus on the unorthodox and the exploratory means that queer theatre and performance generally flourishes in marginal spaces, on the fringe or in club venues, and any upscale movement tends to be seen as transitory. Which is not to say that queerness is incompatible with mainstream visibility: as countless examples show, from elements of Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* or Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*, to the concerted sexual ambivalence of boybands and the vertiginously ironic choreographies of pro-wrestling. What's key is that these presentations depend on dissonance, whether that tension is anarchic or dissenting or merely titillating: the movement is not towards assimilation, but away from it.

Queer theatre is wholly dependent on that inbuilt dissidence, on its difference from what surrounds it; but also on its insistence on theatre as public space, and on a politics of identity that privileges the civic complex over the self-regarding individual. So, clearly, queerness and site-specificity go hand-in-hand: both explore the movement between conceptual space and the phenomenology of real places — a tricky negotiation that is nonetheless exemplarily achieved in the queering interventions of skateboarding and parkour, for example, into urban spaces.

This return always to the contested physical and conceptual sites that shape our thinking — the street, the home, the body, and, not least, the theatre space — is a crucial feature of my own work. So too is the work of other queer figures. In one current project I'm using the writings of the all-but-forgotten American essayist and Living Theatre associate Paul Goodman as the basis for an exploration of (literal and metaphorical) room-spaces and the limits by which the body is constrained; in another, I'll be working on a performance adaptation of a notably dissident blog — that of the novelist and poet Dennis Cooper, himself a collaborator on a series of extraordinary theatre works with French choreographer Gisèle Vienne, including *Kindertotenlieder*, recently seen in the UK at Nottdance, and the upcoming *Jerk*, scheduled for queerupnorth — to see how a queer online space might be translated into its theatrical equivalent. In both cases, questions about sexuality and eroticism are central, but the scope of these avowedly queer projects is far wider than that.

The lineage of queer theatre in Britain is long and complex but it feels as though only in the last few years is its promise finally being realised. Some critics have persuasively argued that the 1950s theatrical revolution spearheaded by John Osborne (with *Look Back in Anger*) was decisively motivated by — not homophobia, exactly, but — a strong distaste for the queerness of the status quo, the world of Coward and Rattigan and Binkie Beaumont; a sense that that culture was estranged from real life and social change. And so, perhaps, it was — it had disastrously *become* the establishment, and inevitably its queerness stultified.

But the new playwriting culture that Osborne and his peers instituted, and which remains dominant fifty years on, has become equally stale in its established status, and equally frustrating to many theatre artists (and a massive audience) in the last two decades; it will persist, but the centre of gravity is finally shifting. A theatre of endless becoming, of perpetual self-renewal and critical liveness, seems only now to be becoming possible, driven by the total theatrical principles that pulsate in the heart of queerness.

'No artist is ever pleased,' Martha Graham told Agnes deMille: 'There is only a queer divine dissatisfaction; a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others.'

Director, writer and performance maker Chris Goode is an associate researcher at Rose Bruford College, and an Artsadmin associate artist. He blogs about theatre at Thompson's Bank of Communicable Desire (<http://beescope.blogspot.com>), where details of his current and upcoming projects can also be found.

Stop press! Queerupnorth has won a reprieve from execution and has ACE funding in place for this year's festival in May 2008, with negotiations taking place for 2009 onwards. For full programme details see www.queerupnorth.com



CLAIRE DOWIE ON...

... ACTING

You know tarot cards? I use those a lot, just trying to create human beings rather than people who have affectations and are full of holes. I hate pretence. Every show I've done, everybody thought it was autobiographical. If that's me, what I life I've had!

... QUEER THEATRE

I don't see myself as gay. The queer mould is neither here nor there, but just something else. Most of my plays are about somebody who doesn't 'fit'. I hate the separatism of people, I hate all that crap. When I was doing lesbian stand up comedy it was in straight clubs. Why just do it to lesbians? Watching the audience change, then you can see the point.

... POLITICS

I'm definitely political. And feminist because that makes me angry. I would never join any party. Doing this show [Death and Dancing] years ago, people used to argue with me. It was really quite 'radical'. People have said to me since, "oh, you must have changed the second half", but I didn't, people have caught up.

... COMMUNICATING

I'm one of those idiot people that can't actually speak. Off the top of their heads. I do my show, because I've got something to say. If I haven't got lines that I've learnt ... I LOVE the smoking ban. You go to parties and you can't really smoke inside people's houses cos they've gone all funny like that. But if you go into the garden, there's just one person, and you can talk about smoking.

... BEING NORMAL

Hippies! Why did they become mainstream? We had this brilliant opportunity to change the world. "No, we wanna be like the normal people". What's the 'normal people', the establishment? Who wants to be like the establishment?

... VOCATION

It doesn't make sense to me as a person, to go to work, get paid for doing a job you don't particularly want to do: getting a mortgage; being in debt. There's some fabulous human beings doing some fabulous things. There are people who are coming home and they do their allotment. And they love their allotment. And you're thinking, 'Why don't they do that all the time?' I got this theory, that if you got rid of wages the world would carry on turning. People would still enjoy being sewer workers I bet ya, because some people just love shit.

Claire Dowie is a writer and performer of 'stand-up theatre', and has several plays in print including *Death and Dancing*, *Why is John Lennon Wearing a Skirt?*, *Leaking from Every Orifice* and *Adult Child/Dead Child*. Her new script, *What Shall We Do With Mother?* Was given a rehearsed reading at The Drill Hall in November 2007.

Laura Lloyd interviewed Claire Dowie at Drill Hall during the run of *Death and Dancing*, November 2007.



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE DRILL HALL

TOTAL THEATRE TALKS TO
THE VENUE'S CHARISMATIC
DIRECTOR, JULIE PARKER

Where would you take the family to an all-female pantomime? Or to 'hear' a diva 'sing' in sign language? The Drill Hall of course! For the last 30 years, The Drill Hall has been London's home of lesbian, gay and bisexual theatre: nurturing gay artists, producing their work and providing a springboard for these shows to tour nationally.

What is 'gay theatre', exactly? The Drill Hall's programme shows it to be a broad church: whilst some gay artists make work directly about their lives and sexuality, there are other theatre-makers for whom their sexual identity simply forms an implicit part of their world view. Julie Parker, the Drill Hall's artistic director, uses the example of the artist and sculptor Maggi Hambling, whose paintings of waves "peak and crash, with the force and splendour of orgasm", to use the phrase of Andrew Lambirth, who's just written a book about her. Hambling's sexuality is embedded within her perception and finds its way into her art. In the same way, not all gay theatre is about hitting gay issues on the nose. Parker talks about work "sharing a sensibility", and the Drill Hall's audience, from young to old, whoever they are, can expect comedies, tragedies, stories of all sorts ... it's obvious to say it, but gay theatre is theatre, and as with all theatre the creators present their perception of humanity in their search for the universal. In 30 years, there has been much to celebrate. Parker paints a picture of the 70s when agit-prop was burgeoning.

For those of us who weren't yet of theatre-going age, hearing descriptions of that kind of activity and activism seem like a fantasy. Venues were reacting against the racism, sexism and homophobia that were pervading the established theatre scene. "We actually heckled plays at The Royal Court for their prejudice!" she exclaims with disbelief. If the picture seems outlandish now, then it illustrates how much attitudes have improved. Clause 28 has been abolished, civil partnerships are available to those who want them and inclusion of gay work and gay characters in theatre and TV are now de rigeur. The difference, Parker is quick to qualify, is that theatre's fringe offers gay artists the space to visit

their own vision, even if it's edgy and their gay characters are complicated or compromised. The portrayal of homosexuality in the mainstream is squeaky clean and lacks dimension - "somebody's going to turn around to me and say 'Shopping and Fucking' which is the obvious exception", Parker adds hastily.

But homophobia has changed rather than disappeared, asserts Parker. "It's more subtle, but do not assume for a moment that it is not there. You only have to look at the suicide levels for teenagers who are the victims of homophobic bullying". The Drill Hall's education programme which includes 'lesbian gay bisexual transsexual history month' as well as a play on the subject of bullying, *Fit*, for secondary schools, is possibly the greatest testament to how far the theatre's work has progressed: "I'd never have thought we'd be doing it", Parker adds.

The Drill Hall faces serious funding challenges after the Arts Council have withdrawn their quarter-of-a-million revenue funding. This threatens not just the Drill Hall, but other festivals within the national network of queer theatre that have come to respect the venue for its high co-production standards - queerupnorth, Glasgay and Homotopia among them.

So what does the future hold for gay and lesbian theatre? There will be gay theatre, of course, and people will put on gay plays as part of their programme. Parker thinks lesbian artists will have to work hardest to overcome not just from homophobia but also misogyny: "It's the last acceptable face of prejudice". There's work to be done to gain visibility. After all, she says, "We're all brought up assuming we're straight".

*Julie Parker was interviewed by Laura Lloyd
See www.drillhall.co.uk*

LOIS WEAVER AS TAMMY WHYNOT.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.



LOIS WEAVER, SOLO PERFORMANCE ARTIST & CO-FOUNDER OF SPLIT BRITCHES, IN HER OWN WORDS

Tammy Whynot is preparing her new show for the Chelsea Theatre in May. Tammy's byline is: 'I used to be a country singer and now I'm a lesbian performance artist.'

It's called *What Tammy Needs to Know about Growing Old and Having Sex*.

I want to find out how older women feel about sex, love, life. The research includes workshops and interviews with older women, placing personal ads in newspapers, attending Tea Dances and other events where older women gather.

The evening will be in a TV talk-show format, with magazine-style features, probably some of the video documentation. Like Oprah, Tammy will interview one or two invited guests.

Tammy's attitude is one of kindness and wonder. The show title reflects an interest in sex and ageing but is also about power: older women need to conquer the invisibility barrier; to be able to manifest desire, and be seen as desirable.

One advantage to getting older is that you don't care! It's about productivity compared to reproductivity. I'm watching my own sexuality and need for sex change with age. I'm interested in intimacy and touch in relation to sex. I'm 58 now. We'll be the first generation of older women to express our sexuality and desire.

When I say desire, I mean desire in the broadest sense: What do I want? What do you want?

I bring my life process to my work. I've always made work that is based on what's going on. The personal and mundane is as important to me as the universal and the exquisite.

I'm anti-assimilation, I like to encourage difference. My solo work and my work with Peggy Shaw in Split Britches celebrates a love of the eccentric, the story of the 'queer', tells stories not told, reveals the hidden.

There's been positive change over the years. Gay, lesbian, queer experiences are no longer invisible. The words are spoken. But homophobia and sexism are still rampant just below the surface.

I want to reclaim the word 'feminist' – it's time.

In Split Britches the work has never been about being queer: we took the queer as given and worked on whatever subject we were investigating. There was never a need for Split Britches to do a 'coming out' play: others were doing that and we were never really interested in making 'plays' anyway. As artists we were interested in a wider range of subjects and styles, and as activists we thought it was a stronger position to take the identity of the lesbian as the norm rather than the exception.

Peggy and I continue to work together even when on different continents. I spend six months of the year in London and six months in New York.

I first came to London in the mid-70s. I was with Spiderwoman, touring *Women in Violence*. Peggy was here with Hot Peaches (the seminal New York-based gay cabaret-theatre company) who were playing at the ICA. We started working together not long after, first with Peggy joining Spiderwoman for *An Evening of Disgusting Songs and Pukey Images*, then forming Split Britches in 1980. Our first show was called *Split Britches*, too.

Split Britches takes its name from a garment worn by my ancestors in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. It's an undergarment that is split so the women could pee standing up in the fields. It's a good metaphor for our work: independent and personal bordering on the private. And it's funny - you could split your britches laughing!

The next Split Britches show is called *Miss America*. Peggy had a dream she was 80 years old and wearing a bikini and being crowned Miss America – and everyone was happy. The show will be about the feminine ideal and how a butch lesbian in her 60s can relate to that. One image we're using is of being a giant and not fitting in.

For me, the title will have a different meaning as in 'I Miss America', and will be about what it means to miss America, in the sense of not being there but also in the sense of a lost American dream: the catastrophe that America has turned into, despised worldwide.

Our focus has shifted over the years from identity-based politics/art to human rights issues. But throughout runs the question of women's issues, and a celebration of women's sexuality.

Lois Weaver is one of a group of artists supported by the Total Theatre peer-mentoring project, Renegotiations. She is an independent performance artist, director, activist and lecturer in Contemporary Performance at Queen Mary University of London. Her performance alter-ego Tammy Whynot takes to the stage at Chelsea Theatre on the 4th and 9th May 2008, presented in collaboration with International Workshop Festival as part of the Sacred season. See www.chelseatheatre.org.uk

*Split Britches Lesbian Feminist Theatre Company was founded 27 years ago by Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver and Deb Margolin. Since 1980 they have transformed the landscape of queer performance with their vaudevillian satirical gender-bending performance. Split Britches' *Miss America* will premiere at LaMaMa in New York City in 2008. See www.splitbritches.com*

*Dorothy Max Prior spoke to Lois Weaver at Space, Mare St Hackney, January 2008, where she was taking part in a group exhibition called *The Not Quite Yet: on the margins of technology, which included her solo performance 'If I could do one thing...'* See www.spacestudios.org.uk*

ABERYSTWYTH MON AMOUR

PUBLIC SPACE CAN BE EVERYBODY'S THEATRE, BRIAN POPAY AND RIC JERROM TELL A GROUP OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, BEFORE NUDGING THEM OUT OF THE DOORS OF THE CENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE RESEARCH AND INTO THE WELSH SEASIDE TOWN OF ABERYSTWYTH.

Both of us cut our teeth with the Natural Theatre Company, creating street theatre work that is interactive, improvisatory and often unannounced.

In this type of work we are invariably, in some sense, 'site-specific', in that performances change, adapt and respond to the environment in which they are presented. We chose therefore to include the geography of Aberystwyth as a central element of our workshop.

So we started with a walk around the town in a large tight-knit group, with all participants wearing dog masks. This simple process had the dual effect of everyone experiencing – *feeling* – the geography of the town as well as the sudden awareness of being an instant public spectacle. Thus prepared, the workshopers split into sub-groups to create three separate outdoor presentations, each inspired by Aberystwyth itself...

Appropriately enough, Friday the 13th July 2007 turned out to be the wettest day of the year so far; rain poured down all day, and consequently all the pieces and performers were completely drenched. This did not seem to deter the performers and actually gave an added edge to each work presented.



WHO NEEDS THE SUN TO SUNBATHE?

Team 1 were three 1950s sunbathers kitted out in period swimwear, sprayed with fake suntan, and carrying a giant beach ball. They pranced through the town in the torrential rain, stopping to strike the occasional long pose or 'sunbathe' on their beach mats, (which they then had to wring out before moving on!). Deliberately, they turned their back on the sea (as Aberystwyth has perhaps done?). Instead they disported themselves, with well-rehearsed beach ball routines, tableaux a la postcard, and choreographed movement – through the centre of town. They looked wonderful. Traffic stopped, bus queues gawked. This piece was valiantly counter to the weather, the built environment, even the mood of the dank discouraged shoppers, a slash of vivid colour against the grey: verve among the moribund!



SEASIDE PROMENADE

Team 2: A family group of five Victorians proceeded with extreme deliberation along the wind- and rain-swept promenade. Their funereal speed, their studied formality, their rich but muted colour palette gave them the haunting quality of an almost imperceptibly changing tableau: a Magic Lantern Show in real time and space. Elegiac, simple, it was a deeply poignant piece that created an almost tangible sense of mourning for a place and its people long gone. Passers-by stood and stared in the rain in complete silence, mesmerised. This was visual poetry: beauty and meaning inchoate.

LADDER OF SUCCESS

Team 3 presented something quite different; they employed that well-known symbol of bad luck – a ladder – as a tool to gauge how superstitious the residents of the town might turn out to be. Encouraging passers-by to walk beneath it, they conducted an 'official' survey of personal superstitions, and – employing the ladder for its real purpose – even climbed up to elicit the views of surprised occupants of first-floor windows. The group worked out a striking and elaborate choreography of ladder movement and management, including the loud repetition of all instructions, directions, etc, so that the piece presented a comedic, rather enigmatic spectacle to the passer-by, whilst intimately engaging and amusing a close-up audience.

Every place has a genius locus: we can use the tools of interactive theatre to unlock it and play with it. Let 'place' call performance into being!

Ric Jerrom has given a number of Master Class workshops for the CPR Summer School over the last few years. Brian Popay was his assistant for this workshop, held July 2007. Ric is a performer, writer, director and broadcaster and Brian is director of Fine Artistes.

For further information on the Centre for Performance Research and its courses see: www.theopr.org.uk

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU



ROYAL DE LUXE LA REVOLTE DES MANNEQUINS.

PINK PARTS ON A PLATTER, IMPASSIVE MANNEQUINS OR A 24-HOUR-LONG PEEK INTO SOMEONE'S LIFE... WHAT MAKES SHOP WINDOWS SO COMPELLING? EDWARD TAYLOR EXPLORES THEATRE BEHIND GLASS

It's always intriguing to watch a window dresser at work. It's like watching actors on stage, except that these actors are so focussed on their work that they have ceased being self-conscious. The way they handle mannequins in such a matter-of-fact way offers many opportunities for unforced humour, and you can get quite close to them without it seeming pushy or unpleasant. It's no wonder that many artists have explored the possibilities of performing in shop windows.

In fact, we find shop windows so compelling that we are prepared to gaze through them even when little is happening behind...

Neil Thomas is a Melbourne-based artist. His first shop window show was called *Blueboys* and featured him and four look-alike dummies all with hands and faces painted blue and all wearing the same pristine clothes. They all sat impassively in the window and the audience knocked themselves out trying to guess which ones were alive and which ones weren't. The odd thing was that Neil never really bothered with that mime statue stuff and would often break 'character' but the audience still played the game.

In fact they continued to stare at the mannequins even when he wasn't in the window, convinced that one would suddenly move at any minute. It was a simple idea which provoked some fascinating exchanges with the public.

He developed this idea into the *Urban Dream Capsule* where four people lived in a shop window for two weeks. The artists built living quarters which were on full view to anyone passing by (except the toilet of course) and the performance ran 24/7. The psychology explored in *Blueboys* was magnified to an extraordinary effect. People changed their daily routines so they could pass by the windows and see what was happening, in Montreal a local choir came and sang to the inhabitants of the window, in London a woman came by daily to show them progress on a jumper she was knitting and in the process taught one of them how to knit and people whose birthday it was came with birthday cakes to celebrate on the pavement.

If the basic concept (four people with their lives on show every minute) sounds like *Big Brother*, it's anything but – it's very much a performance and there's none of the bear-baiting or gladiatorial aspects you get on that show. The four get on with each other rather than dissolving into conflict. In fact the same four appear in every performance of this piece – it's important to stick together in what must be a draining experience to undergo. This performance has travelled the world and appeared to huge success in many leading arts festivals. It seems the public's curiosity with what's going on in a window knows no national borders. Each show also had its own web-site where people could communicate more directly with the performers.

If Neil Thomas' work is like a giant love-in, French company Cacahuete set out to provoke. They have two shop window projects. The first involves the five performers in the company and the second involves expanding this line-up with local artists and interested parties. No joke is too cheap or too shocking for Cacahuete! I saw them in Montreal – Pascal (the artistic leader of the company) was sitting cross-legged in the window of quite a chi-chi restaurant. He was naked and had tucked his bits in between his legs so they were out of view. He was holding a silver platter which contained what can only be described as a sausage casserole in tomatoey gravy. The gravy was smeared all over the window and there was a lot of it between his legs. He had a horrible vacant expression as he idly pushed the sausage about with a fork. Funny? Shocking? Disgusting? It was all these things and the surprise at seeing such an arresting image literally stopped people in their tracks.

The imagery the company uses is a carnivalesque mixture of sex and commerce. They are very good at creating images that get to the nub of things and which rummage about in our more basic thoughts. In Manchester, in the expanded version of the show, it seemed several windows were populated by the homeless rather than comic exaggerations of shop mannequins thus bringing another perspective to life on the street. By using normally-shaped people rather than the idealised forms we are used to they poked fun at the fantasies that advertised life promotes. A drunken couch potato watched the footie in the window of a shop selling TV's and a florist had a naked Eve offering an apple to people passing by.

Cacahuete have a splendid book about 20 years of their activity, *L'Aventure Scandaleuse*, and in it you can read of the many times their shop window performances have been shut down by the police with an arrest or two thrown into the bargain. In Stockport I saw the manager of a shopping centre discuss Pascal's performance in a sportswear shop with a policeman. He had a sock over his cock and every time anyone got close to the window a piece of fishing wire allowed him to display an enormous erection in double quick time. Despite the crowds of people laughing at his antics, the manager was furious – but in her annoyance she completely failed to spot a nearby vegetable barrow containing a nude, sleeping woman covered by strategically placed vegetables.

URBAN DREAM CAPSULE.



Funnily enough all the shops in Manchester that hosted the performance in 1997 wanted them back, despite all the nudity and bad taste (one window was shut down as people found the image of Lady Di leaping out of a coffin a bit hard to swallow) so have them back they did in 1998, with the number of participating shops expanded from the original 20 or so. Liverpool City of Culture will host a large version of the project in May 2008.

Royal de Luxe (the company that gave us *The Sultan's Elephant*) have recently created a show about mannequins – there's no live performers although the installation is very much a performance: eight shops will feature tableaux which will change and develop like a cartoon strip over eight days. They've created their own versions of mannequins so that they can play with expression and body posture. A mannequin of a small boy is eating soup from a bowl – next to him a sign says 'Eat your soup and you'll get bigger'. Each day you go back and the boy has doubled, trebled in size until he can no longer fit in the window. This performance/installation, *La Revolte des Mannequins*, will be in Nantes in February 2008.

My own company Whalley Range All Stars created a shop window show in 1997, called *The Secret Life of the Shop Dummy*. We looked at shop windows as if they were cages in a zoo, and if they were cages then the animals in them would be shop dummies. So we created three different scenes in the lifecycle of a mannequin. We made a couple of headless dummies of the sort you see regularly in shops and our collaborator extraordinaire Greville White made a series of mannequin heads each fitted with a different capability. One could flutter its eyelashes, one could move its eyes up and down to read, one could wiggle its ears, one could open its mouth, and one could communicate by spewing till-roll out its mouth. These effects were created by using cycle-brake mechanisms.

The dummies would arrive for work (one through the shop and the other on a bike), get in position in the window and the audience could then watch the behaviour of these exotic animals safely behind glass. They would eat kapok and polystyrene chips to keep their shape, they would attempt to find a face that fits, they would indulge in courtship behaviour, they would squabble and finally one would give birth – in a very tasteful manner.

It's always interesting to have an audience in your face when you perform but unable to touch you. It meant we could create some very delicate props and effects without them running the risk of getting mauled when they were put down.

The best of both worlds really: the proximity of street arts performance but with the fourth (glass) wall in place as protection!

Find out more about Cacahuete in their publication *L'Aventure Scandaleuse* by Turbo Cacahuete. Les Editions de Rachid ISBN 2-9523717-0-9

For Liverpool City of Culture events see: www.liverpool08.com

For more on Whalley Range All Stars see: www.wras.org.uk

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

ROBERT AYERS, RACHEL LOIS CLAPHAM AND MARY PATERSON SHARE AND SWAP A MULTITUDE OF VIEWING POINTS AT PERFORMA07, NEW YORK CITY'S BIENNIAL OF NEW VISUAL ART PERFORMANCE

Performa, New York City's biennial of 'new visual art performance', first took place in 2005 and caused quite a stir when it happened again in 2007. Conceived and organized by art historian and performance art champion RoseLee Goldberg, Performa has swiftly established itself as one of the key events in the international new performance calendar. This time around it comprised not only live events – at venues as different as hair salons, the Guggenheim Museum, and a beautiful midtown proscenium theatre – but also a radio station, an online television channel, a writers' forum, and a critical writing blog called *Writing Live*. Highlights included new commissions from Kelly Nipper, Yvonne Rainer and Isaac Julien & Russell Maliphant, as well as a 'Dance After Choreography' programme and restagings of several Allan Kaprow's happenings. Reflecting Performa's importance, Total Theatre had three correspondents on the ground throughout the festival, Robert Ayers, Rachel Lois Clapham and Mary Paterson.

We present their Performa reflections as commentary on an interview that Robert conducted with RoseLee Goldberg just as the festival was getting going.

Robert Ayers (RA): RoseLee, this is the second Performa biennial. Was there ever a moment when you thought you wouldn't make it past the first?

Rachel Lois Clapham (RLC): Performance history, and history itself, were definitely at stake in Performa. By 're-doing' Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts (1959)*, *Fluids (1967)*, *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann (1963)* and John Cage's *33 1/3 (1969)*, and staging online performances in Second Life of Chris Burden's *Shoot (1971)*, Vito Acconci's *Seedbed (1972)*, Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastkino (1968-71)*, Performa situated these rarely witnessed, relatively underground and now mythical moments in the history of performance art firmly in the non marginal, mainstream and technological and so strategically staked performance's claim to a Visual Art historical canon.

Performa also displayed an openly interrogative approach to that same history by refreshing narratives of originality, abstraction and 'the experimental' and analysing their validity for twenty first century audiences. Attitudes are indeed changing and Performa are certainly creating a new future past for performance, one in which we can categorically say 'we were there' and so judge for ourselves whether or not these works really are as important as the history books say they are.

RoseLee Goldberg (RLG): The day after we finished in '05, I took my organising group for lunch. When I said, "I can't wait for '07!" they all rolled their eyes. Honestly, I'm already on to '09. Somehow I can't help myself. I get so excited.

RA: You call Performa a biennial of 'new visual art performance.' Is that different from the more familiar term 'performance art'?

RLG: Good question. I am trying to avoid the term 'performance art.' We used that expression in the '70s, but it doesn't really apply now. If you mention performance art to most people today they start thinking of people cutting themselves and doing the heavy endurance-type performances that we all know from the '70s. We're way past that now.

RA: Nowadays most artists seem to feel at liberty to use whatever forms and media they choose, and in whatever combinations suit them. Isn't it a little old-fashioned to isolate performance in its own festival?

RLG: I don't separate these things. The whole history of 20th-century art is predicated on live performance. Part of my job is to constantly explain that performance is so much more than what we think of under the term performance art. It's not this thing that pops up every now and then. It's always present. It's inside the history of art. It is the history of art.



RLG: I started Performa because I felt it was time to straighten out this history. We need to rethink the 20th century, because so much of it starts in performance, from the Dadaists and Futurists all the way to Maurizio Cattelan, Cindy Sherman, and Pierre Huyghe.

Mary Paterson (MP): RoseLee Goldberg wants Performa to put live art centre stage. It certainly opened with a bang. At Franco Vezzoli's *Cose E (Si Vi Pare)*, held at the Guggenheim Museum, visitors were kept in a bad tempered queue as A-Listers from the worlds of art and celebrity stepped inside.

Did all this glitz and glamour generate interest for Performa? Definitely – the event was covered in fashion and celebrity magazines as well as by the art press. But, annoyed at the queue, and dissatisfied with her second-class view once inside, the New York Times critic left early and rated the performance a stunt. So did Performa put live art on the right stage? Or did the New York Times critic look in the wrong places?

RA: But what makes you think that there's room for another art biennial?

RLG: What's exciting about Performa is that this is a new, 21st-century way of thinking about a biennial. It's not a single institution, it's not a single point of view, it's not a single curator. About 20 curators are working on this. There's a lot of input. I see myself as almost like the editor of a book or a newspaper. All of my colleagues are my ears and my eyes, and I'm always asking questions like, "What's the best performance in Korea? What's going on in Japan?"



MP: Standing on a stranger's rooftop, watching thirty hula-hoopers bring the cityscape to life, is a great way to experience New York. In Christian Jankowski's *Rooftop Routine*, viewers were invited into his private apartment to do just that. New York was curated into Performa – venues were dotted around the city, and the programming reflected its history as an artistic centre. But it was younger artists like Jankowski, also Dave McKenzie and Pablo Bronstein, who used New York as subject as well as stage. Talking on benches (McKenzie), ballet on Wall Street (Bronstein), hula-hooping on rooftops – these artists toyed with the difference between New York's public and private faces, and integrated their audience into the fabric of the city.

RLG: But there are no rules to Performa. It's not a biennial that says, "This is what's happened in the last two years," or "This is what's happened in America," or "This is made by artists under 40." There are no rules. I would rather look at history the way that it affects real life: there's the newest, the latest, but then there's somebody from 20 years ago who's suddenly reinventing themselves, and then somebody like Allan Kaprow passes away. All of us living in the present are looking at such a range of things. It's a question of when history is relevant. I take history as my inspiration.

MP: If history was Performa's inspiration, it's also its legacy. Re-enactments of previous works – Alan Kaprow's 'happenings', for example – acknowledged a debt to performance history, and RoseLee Goldberg's status as an art historian linked the festival to her own history of performance. (Goldberg's book *Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present* is often regarded as the only history of performance.) But as a Biennial dedicated to the genre, Performa stressed the importance of live art now; and, curated with a true internationalism, it embraced artists from a range of backgrounds and cultures – including work that doesn't slide easily into a version of the Euro-American avant-garde. Given this breadth of scope, it's tempting to read the Performa programme as a first draft for a future history. More accurately, it's a champion for the existence of an account at all. Performa's high profile and inclusiveness (as well as the consequences of its exclusions) will not provide a template for history, but a reason for it.

RA: The Performance Studies International academic conference *Happening/Performance/Event* is taking place at NYU during Performa. What sort of academic study does performance require?

RLG: Do you remember the old days when we talked about the sociology and politics of art? That's what performance demands. It has so many layers. The PSI conference normally happens in the summer, but I said, "Put it in the middle of Performa and we can work together." The classic problem of academia is that everyone's into theory and history, but they don't actually see things, so we've designed a program that all those captive academics will see live. To me, education is everything. I'm a great believer that the more information there is, the more pleasure. Or the more reward.

RA: The conference sat there right in the middle of Performa. There was an obvious synergy: Performa's audience was swollen, the delegates got the chance to actually see some of the work they were talking about, and people have gone home to spread the word about Performa. I briefly took part in the conference, alongside Anna Furse and Mary Oliver, both enormously impressive artist-teachers. Hanging out with the conferees however, it occurred to me that for academics, a conference is about as interesting as their work gets, whereas for artists, it's probably the least interesting thing you can find yourself doing.



RA: Is that why this year's audience can buy a book documenting the first Performa?

RLG: Absolutely. I'm a book person. From day one I was determined that we were doing the book, because there's not enough information. The reality is that we can never do a book until afterwards, so we don't even try to do a booklet or a short guide. I don't even want to tell people in advance, because until the day a performance opens we don't even know what it's going to be. It's all about stepping off the precipice. So there's nothing to say about the work before we've seen it.

MP: A light box. Some photos. 8 minutes flat. Tris Vonna Michell's *Tall Tales*, in which the audience sets the restraints and the artist brings the story, says a lot about how events find their way into history. The question isn't just What happened? but Who decides how to talk about it?

The same is true for live art. At a panel discussion Marina Abramovic acknowledged that performance *will* be documented – the tale will be told – whether the artist likes it or not, but she was reluctant to give too much credit to documentation itself, in case it eclipses the live event. In fact, the danger lies in interpretation. As long as Vonna Michell keeps changing the parameters, you can't forget his story is malleable. Likewise, as long as there are enough people thinking, talking and writing about performance, you can't forget that the documentation (or the press coverage) is just one way of looking at it.

RA: You're highlighting connections between performance and dance this year. Is Performa about to mutate into a dance festival?

RLG: No. And it can't, not even if I wanted it to. The first one really focused on visual art. So for '07 I wanted to open the doors and windows between the art and dance worlds again, and let air move between them.

RLC: Earlier in the week I'd seen a screening of Choreographer Jerome Bell's *Veronique Doisneau, 2005* at the Anthology of Film Archives. And when I went to see *Pichet Klunchen and Myself* at the Dance Theater Workshop, I really hoped Bell was going to do something similarly and spectacularly irreverent with classical dance and its Academy. I wasn't disappointed. When classical Thai Dancer Klunchen asked Bell to show us 'what kind of dance he did' Bell put on David Bowie's 1983 hit 'Let's Dance' and casually got his middle-aged groove on in a genuine dad-style disco shuffle. And that was it. Bell's renegade dad-dance on the grave of the tradition, skill and training of modern and classical dance. It was one of my favourite moments in Performa and a piece of 'Dance After Choreography' joy.

RLG: It's very much about dance that sits on the edge between the dance world and the art world, so that's why it can't be a festival of dance.

RA: Cool and Balducci performed in a bare room. The audience hung around in groups or sat on a platform in the center of the room. Marie Cool appeared and began to perform: right next to some of the audience, but behind some others. As she moved from one brief performance to another, the audience must move as well. Some to get a better look, some simply to get out of the way. It took them a while to get the hang of this, and this seems an odd thing to experience at a performance: lessons in how to look at it.

RLG: And it's not the "theme" of Performa; it's one thread running through it.

RA: Before I saw Xavier Le Roy's performance, Performa's publicity had told me just about everything that I could know about it in advance. It was a solo dance based on a video of Simon Rattle conducting *The Rite of Spring*; Xavier would 'conduct' a phantom orchestra whose recording of the Stravinsky would play through loudspeakers located beneath the audience's seats. Despite this knowledge, I was quite unprepared for the delightful, remarkable work that Xavier conjured. At once expressive and witty, full of eye contact and fantasized gestures, it was the best thing that I saw in Performa this year.

03



04



RLG: The biennial is more than three weeks long, with 30 collaborating organizations and over 100 artists. Will visitors be able to see everything? Will you?

RA: I had joked with RoseLee Goldberg about whether even she would be able to see everything in this year's Performa. Within days of the programme beginning, I realized that I had missed the point. Performa has already moved a long way from the short festival where visitors might attempt to see pretty much everything. It now has the character of a season of events that are added to the range of options in this already culturally overloaded city. You'll choose to see some things, but not necessarily be interested in others.

RLG: Performa is very rich, but I also think it's manageable. It's bigger in scale than last time, but I'm trying to make sure that I can get to everything – if I have a rest during the day! I don't want people to have to exhaust themselves running from event to event. The idea is to do something that people can enjoy, not feel overwhelmed by. You shouldn't feel a need to get to everything. You shouldn't just be walking around exhausting yourself; there has to be a real engagement.

RA: I have the sense that attitudes towards performance in New York City are genuinely changing, and that Performa is at least partly responsible. RoseLee Goldberg has always taken the position that unless performance succeeds in the art mainstream, then its achievements are negligible. By involving galleries, museums, and private and public collectors not only in the staging of Performa, but in its organization, financing, and curation, she has nudged performance that much further into their world. This is a reflection of the mix-and-match attitudes of many contemporary 'post-medium' artists, but at practical and structural levels it is enormously significant.

RLC: The extended Biennial format of Performa was itself subversive; its reach was pervasive and seemed to say Performance, moreover Visual Art Performance, is part of life and you can't escape it. Once in its clutches the challenges the biennial asked of its audience were also personal and real; *Why* is your ego smoothed by being privy to an exclusive performance by Cate Blanchett? *Are you* brave enough to set off to Harlem and have an unscripted, unsupervised meeting with a stranger on a bench? Do you dare enter Harlem's Studio Museum and be part of a public and silent dance with that same stranger? And last but not least, will you allow your hair to be cut by an untrained 12-year-old Chinese stylist? If not, *why*? Personally, I felt compelled to meet these challenges and am left with lasting mental and physical scars; I still have blisters on both feet from trying to find McKenzie. I still feel shame at the visitors to *Private Dancer* who refused to dance, and instead chose to watch me dance in embarrassed silence. I also have a devastatingly bad haircut. All in all it will take me a while to recover from Performa.

Robert Ayers is Total Theatre's New York correspondent. From the outset his relationship with the city has been tied up with his passion for performance: he first travelled there in 1979 to research a Ph.D. on happenings, and he remained there until 1981 as an apprentice to Robert Whitman. He was based in the UK until 2001, making performances, writing prolifically, and working as artistic director of Nottingham Trent University. He lives in Manhattan where he is a senior editor of Artinfo.com.

Rachel Lois Clapham and Mary Paterson are writers/curators supported by Live Art UK's Writing From Live Art, and both are Writing Live Fellows for Performa 07. The Writing Live Fellows co-ordinated a critical writing blog for Performa and led workshops and discussion groups on writing for performance. Some material from the interview with RoseLee Goldberg originally appeared on Artinfo.com

01 | GALIA EIBENSCHUTZ IN CARLOS AMORALE'S SPIDER GALAXY, 2007. PHOTO PAULA COURT. COURTESY OF PERFORMA AND FUNDACIÓN / COLECCIÓN JURNEX.
02 | MEREDITH MONK, 16 MILLIMETER EARRINGS, 1966. FILM STILL. PHOTO BY KENNETH VAN SICKLE.
03 | CHRISTIAN JANKOWSKI, ROOFTOP ROUTINE, 2007. PHOTO PAULA COURT. COURTESY OF PERFORMA.
04 | ALLAN KAPROW'S 18 HAPPENINGS IN 6 PARTS (RE-DOING), 2007. PHOTO © PAULA COURT. COURTESY OF PERFORMA, ALLAN KAPROW ESTATE, AND HAUSER & WIRTH ZURICH / LONDON.



EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY



PHYSICAL, VISUAL, TOTAL – DOROTHY MAX PRIOR MEETS PUNCHDRUNK, THE COMPANY WHO’VE TAKEN THEATRE INTO ANOTHER SPACE ALTOGETHER

Sitting in BAC’s café on a sunny afternoon awaiting Punchdrunk is a rather odd experience. The venue is a working building; yet meetings are taking place, coffees drunk and deals struck in the midst of – well, normally one would say ‘the set’ but this word is insufficient – the carefully-built environment of Punchdrunk’s *Masque of the Red Death*, a show which has been running at – or more correctly in, through, and around – South London’s prime fringe theatre venue for the past six months.

And, as director and designer Felix Barrett later puts it, this isn’t a case of the illusion of theatre exposed to the daylight – I’m sitting here within a ‘heightened reality’. The paintings I am looking at are real paintings, lovingly created by associate artists (‘120 people have contributed to this show’ says Felix). The lazured paint on the walls, the metal fireplaces, the lanterns, the tables, and upstairs the beds, the wardrobes, the clothes in the wardrobes, the desks, the letters in the drawers in the desk, the perfumes in the glass vials, the wine in the bottles, the sumptuous silk cushions – it is all ‘real’. When you ‘see’ the show, you also touch, smell and feel the show. The level of detail is astonishing, and ‘in the atmosphere whether you notice it or not’ as Punchdrunk producer Colin Marsh says. Which is why even bits of the rooms that can’t be properly seen are still painted and decorated.

There’s no ‘backstage’ here – except for backstage at the Palais Royale (a show-within-the-show that is a delightful centrepiece of the production) and of course that backstage is as real as everything else: feathered fans and ballet pumps discarded by dancing ladies, Pierrot costumes awaiting their owners, and gentlemen magicians awaiting their cues.

No surprise then to learn that Felix Barrett’s early work included both installation and performance: it was just that he saw these as separate paths he could take as an artist. Studying drama at Exeter, he was fortuitous to have Steven Hodge as his tutor. Hodge is a founding member of the revered site-specific company Wrights & Sites, and it was he who allowed, nay, encouraged Barrett to see that ‘real’ environments, installation and theatre could all work hand-in-hand. He thus created a version of *Woyzeck* (a text popular with visual theatre-makers!), and a ‘show’ that involved driving audience members off into the forest alone... It was this early work that set the scene for the model of practice that Punchdrunk have made their own: a model in which the audience are ‘immersed – plunge them in!’ as Felix says gleefully.



When Felix moved to London, the next major phase for Punchdrunk started when a producer working for dance agency Independance (Colin Marsh) was on the lookout for an interesting collaboration for one of his artists, choreographer Maxine Doyle. He had a 'tiny pot of money' for this work, and it was he who brought Doyle and Barrett together. 'I spent a lot of time watching her' says Felix, 'even though I'd done some dance classes in the past, I felt completely out of my comfort zone. We both spent time observing each other; when we started to work together, it was straight in on the rehearsal floor. It is a genuine collaboration; we bounce off each other, have a shared vision but different paths. It was clear from day one that we both believed that the light is as important as the sound, which is as important as the architecture, which is as important as the movement.'

Even when the work starts from text – and in fact most of the company's work takes its inspiration from classic texts: Shakespeare numerous times over, Marlowe for *Faust*, Edgar Allan Poe for *Masque* – the company start with action. I learn that their usual starting point is a game of hide and seek in whatever building or space they have chosen to site their work – a disused factory for *The Firebird Ball*, an empty warehouse in Wapping for *Faust*, a Victorian old town hall (BAC) for *Masque*. Felix talks of the thrill of allowing the building to dictate the evolution of the show: *Masque* is 'back to the purest form of how I want to 'write': get a place, get a date and let the place create the show'. At BAC on that very first devising session with the cast it was lights off and off you go... apparently some cast members were so spooked by that first experience that there are still corners and hidey-holes they avoid. 'Plenty of ghosts in that building' says Felix.

WHEN YOU SEE THE SHOW YOU ALSO TOUCH,
SMELL AND FEEL THE SHOW.

So in their initial devising process, the cast kind of pre-figure the audience's experience of entering the space expectantly but with some trepidation, wondering what they will find. How then do the company feel about the very unusual relationship that is fostered between the cast, the audience and the environment they share?

'We've learnt so much over these past few shows that we feel confident we can really play with it' says Maxine. Although it is a crude assessment of their roles in the company, we could say that Felix is more involved with the creation of and placing of objects in the work; Maxine with the physical dynamics between the cast, and the movement of bodies – cast or audience – around the space. 'The cast of *Masque* have become really good at moving people around' she says. And talking of the structure and pace of the show, 'We learnt from *The Firebird Ball* that a show needs to have a crescendo, so for *Masque* we worked on the ending first (as Poe did).'

Despite *Masque* being in some ways a continuation of models established in other productions, it is constructed in a fundamentally different way, with each main cast member given an Edgar Allan Poe story to make their own. Everyone has a mission, everyone their own separate story to tell within the bigger picture. Poe's tale of the decadent Prince Prospero and his cohorts, who hole themselves up in a castle to escape the plague rampaging outside, forms the nucleus of the show, but audience members familiar with his work will take pleasure in discovering characters from *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell Tale Heart* and *The Black Cat*, to name but a few. 'It was challenging to dig into Poe, to go to the darkness at heart,' says Maxine.

At this point, we talk about the company's earlier show at BAC, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, based on the book of the same name by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Maxine describes it as 'an epic in a tiny space' (it was set in BAC's attic). This story of misogyny, loneliness and creeping insanity was presented for one audience member at a time. Maxine says that the experience of developing such an intimate performance piece, and the 'microscopic attention to detail' this involved really informed their large-scale work: 'In *Faust* we learnt to get the balance between individual experiences and manipulating the space'.

THE LIGHT IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE SOUND,
WHICH IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE ARCHITECTURE,
WHICH IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE MOVEMENT.

After the experience of being in a massive, empty five-floor warehouse for *Faust*, setting *Masque* in BAC has meant learning to use a more contained space for a nightly audience of 250 visitors – and to make good use of the things which can't be moved, and which tell stories of their own: fireplaces, marble staircases, skylights, rickety attic stairs and all. Yet it was a challenge they very much embraced. They were helped in the initial devising stage by architect Steve Tompkins, who is working with BAC in an ongoing collaboration called 'The Playground Projects' which, BAC director David Jubb says, 'seek to invent the future of theatre spaces through the collaboration between artist, staff, audience and architect.' So collaboration has been at the essence of the making of the work: the collaboration between Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, the two artistic directors of the company; with their creative producer Colin Marsh; with BAC producer/director David Jubb; with architect Steve Tompkins; with the 120 associate artists, makers and cast members; and last but not least – with the audience.

The fruits of that collaborative process are paying off: *Masque* goes from strength to strength, with the BAC run now extended to April. *Punchdrunk* are taking *Faust* over to New York later this year, and have plans to re-create this and other works at various places worldwide (including Australia 2009). So they are more than happy with way things are going.

But at the same time, there's a desire to challenge expectations and try something radically different with the next show. What might that be? 'An opera!' says Felix. And who knows, that might just happen. Watch this space, as they say.

The Masque of the Red Death continues at Battersea Arts Centre, London until April 2008. See www.bac.org.uk

For more on the company, including the plans for New York and other new ventures for 2008–2009, see www.punchdrunk.org.uk

BEING THERE

PUNCHDRUNK'S MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOL. 20 | ISSUE 01 | SPRING 2008



**A NEW APPROACH
TO DOCUMENTING
CONTEMPORARY
PERFORMANCE: A TOTAL
THEATRE REVIEWER,
PUNCHDRUNK'S PRODUCER
AND TWO CAST MEMBERS
RE-VIEW MASQUE OF THE
RED DEATH, AS EXPERIENCED
ON 20 NOVEMBER 2007
AT BAC LONDON**



ONE

A group of six or so in a dark and gloomy ante-room. We are each given a sculpted white mask. This, we are instructed, we must wear at all times, except in one place, a place of music and merriment – and that place we will know when we have found it. We are told that we can go anywhere we like, but that we are to take care, for it is dark and there are all sorts of hidden dangers.

The journey begins. I abandon my companion, go through a thick black velvet curtain into... a dark space; through another thick black velvet curtain, then another... Now there's light, and people. An opium den furnished with red silk cushions and Chinese lanterns; a mirrored apothecary housing shelves of extraordinary potions; and an opulent bedroom in which a dance of courtship and death is enacted on an enormous raised bed. The choreography is brutal and beautiful. He looks desperate; she's a ghastly stiff-limbed mannequin, petted then hurled around. The thuds as she hits the deck are terrifying, her staring eyes worse.

Another room, luxurious as the last: there's a fireplace to scramble through – you need to be as light-footed as a (black) cat to move round this building. A rickety staircase takes me to the Palais Royale, a show-within-the-show that is put together with the loving attention to detail characteristic of Punchdrunk: no pastiche here, but quality Music Hall acts; The Mesmerist, Pierrot and Columbine, An Egyptian Dance. I could stay here all night, but move on to discover that there are plenty of the promised dark and dangerous spaces. A sign says 'No Entry'. I peer in and a cloaked man beckons. I'm pulled along a corridor, pushed against a wall, given something I must drink. I know it isn't 'real' but it's real; the force of another body too close, the smell of the drink, the words whispered in my ear. Eventually I'm on the gorgeous marble staircase that is usually the first thing you see when entering BAC. It's populated by the living dead who are walking in a painfully slow procession, heads bowed. There are living statues all around me; a man jumps off a balcony; there's a fight... I get out of the way, it seems only just in time.

I've seen many Punchdrunk shows, and find the differences between each as interesting as the well-documented similarities. In *Masque of the Red Death* there's a new-found layering and interweaving of story, and a deep engagement with the raw material offered by this specific site, taking the work onto a deeper level. Until I came to see this production, I thought that I knew this venue very well, but found myself constantly lost – yet engaged, interested, surprised by what I encountered. But I know that what I have discovered is only a fraction of the whole, and am determined to go back for more – once is not enough.

Dorothy Max Prior

TWO

The lead-up to the show, in the time when the audience start moving into the building, and the performers roam the empty corridors, is when tonight's Madeleine is born. In the words of T. S. Eliot 'Time to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet'. For in this show we do meet the audience, and every night they wear a different collective face. Sometimes they are skittish, sometimes careful, at other times they are irreverent, empathetic, or playful. They fill 'the world' as a single entity - performers working in opposite corners of the building will have a uniform experience of a night.

The building is cold, and Hector (The Narrator) takes me upstairs to what he calls 'the little warm room'. It is a little cold room where *The Tell-Tale Heart* unfolds. It is directly upstairs to Madeleine's bedroom, and I have never been in there. This brief visit makes me feel excited about the wealth of material in this huge show, the stories that unfold all around me to which I am in all ways oblivious.

This is my house – The House of Usher. The only people here are my brother and I (and possibly another guest, an unannounced stranger). Everything else I experience or see is my mind playing tricks on me. But tonight in this 'little warm room' with its own narrative, this distinction blurs. Tonight's Madeleine is concerned with the certainty of her own existence. The masks start pouring in, with their looks and whispers, and Madeleine is horrified to have lost the thread – who is imagining whom?

So the contact with the audience is different. There is no boss tonight. A room full of people will not clear out of my way as in the crossing of the Red Sea. Tonight space, time, focus, is negotiated, acquired, shared.

A woman removes her blindfold, breaking the rules I establish for the game. As she is being admonished a man forces his way in, demanding to know where 'William Moray' is. Later on, in one of the most rewarding moments I have had, a woman whispers to me the closing couplet of a sonnet I am mouthing in her ear.

And ultimately this is the only constant: every night a slightly different Madeleine and a slightly different audience collaborate to create an endless variety of events. They are unique, unrepeatable, and surprising to all involved. I only hope the audience enjoy them as much as I do...

Maya Lubinsky – Madeleine Usher

THREE

We are sent out into the space just as the audience enter the building, so usually it takes about 20 minutes for them to find any performers. In this limbo time I've started watching the House of Usher shadow play, and tonight Usher and Madeleine were watching it too. It feels like a really nice way in to our story, to see the bare bones of the narrative played out to us in such a simple way. In a sense I look at my whole show as a dream or opium trip that my character is having, and the shadow play felt like a good kick-start for this dream.

I'm always half aware of the audience and the other performers that pass by but are not a direct part of my story. Of course the audience are totally visible to us as we perform, and during more physical scenes we have to be very sensitive to their presence in the space so we can use the gaps in between them. But the masks make the audience feel like an invisible presence, a kind of ghostly mass.

Absolutely boiling hot backstage at the Palais Royale. The temperature fluctuates massively from space to space which is hopefully another sensory interest for the audience. I forgot to set the couple of little water bottles I hide around the building, so the Palais is the only place to re-hydrate. Setting props before the show is another nightly ritual that takes place in that strange time before the audience find us, and I guess it's always useful to re-acquaint myself with the building so I can find my way round in the dark!

I noticed the chandelier in the Trophy Room being particularly lively tonight. It shakes and makes tinkling noises when someone walks through the attic above, and the bulbs occasionally pulse with a brighter light, like they're having a power surge (I'm not sure if this is ingenious design or a lucky mistake). But it's great when this happens in my scene with Roderick Usher, because it's the point in my story when the house starts to affect me and get under my skin. I try to think of the House of Usher as a living organism, made up of the ghosts of Roderick's ancestors, and the weird chandelier really helps with that image!

Had a great one-on-one moment with a man who clearly didn't speak a word of English. In this scene I usually use Poe's Annabel Lee poem, and when I started to speak it he apologised for not understanding, but it soon becomes more of a sensory and visual experience as I pour out cups of sand and the lights go out, and I think by the end of it he'd understood the gist, and seemed quite affected by it. I usually draw people out of the little private room so I can reset the scene for the second loop, but he seemed to want to stay there and sit in the dark, so I left instead.

I sense that the entirety of the show, not just the separate 'loops', build towards our final storm scene and Prospero's ball at the end. And I don't see most of the rest of the cast for the whole show, but we are sharing the same audience so we all feel the dramatic build of the piece through them.

Hector Harkness – Narrator, The Fall of the House of Usher

FOUR

7pm: The performers 'go out' into the 'world' of Poe and I go down to the audience entrance. The queue has a different character every night and there's always a buzz. Tonight, the first people waiting on the stairs give off a knowing air, sharing advice, telling one another the jumbled mythology of what Punchdrunk does. "You have to go on your own, I'm going to be so scared!", "They give you a cloak and you can be one of the people in it", "Somebody gets locked in a cupboard", "Shall we go to the bar first and then just wander about?" The overheard snatches are confused but the anticipation is palpable and I love the energy the audience always arrives with (once the evening gets going, watching them is almost as fascinating as watching the show itself). I sneak in ahead and enjoy those delicious few minutes alone with the soundtrack and the dry ice and hardly a thing stirring in Poeland.

I don't have a plan for watching the show. There are some scenes I want to catch up on but I let myself drift. No matter how much I intend to watch a particular thing it's more than likely I'll be diverted by something else, just like the rest of the audience. Opening a door onto a dark corridor, a woman ahead of me suddenly stops dead in her tracks and screams. There's a nervy atmosphere in the backstreets tonight. Through another door and the Opium Den is milling with masked faces, out again and the courtyard swarms with the activity of inquisitive visitors to the perfumery and Bon Bon's wine shop. I go to take the back stairs down as a stream of white-faced ghosts eagerly ascends.

A woman stops me and asks if I can show her the way out. I start to take her. As I look back to check she's there, I catch the back of her coat disappearing into the Tailor's. I look in and see she's now caught up in the ritual of the cloak and seems to have changed her mind.

In the vaults, no sign of life, or so I think. Just about to open a door when a figure slithers out of the darkness in front of me at floor level. I stay and watch her alone, one of those privileged Punchdrunk moments when you are the only person present at some unexplained moment in a character's story. Up in the BAC café, the lunatics have taken over the asylum, the musicians on fine form as the actors transform the room and the audience into a quivering jelly of anarchy. The room is rammed yet one of the most athletic and highly populated bits of the show somehow seems made for the circumstances and there are no casualties!

9.45: After nearly three hours of full-on performance, I never cease to be amazed by the performers' ability to carry through their energy and grace to the closing moments of this marathon. Do the audience appreciate what it takes to be as brilliant as this company of performers are, who also sustain such generosity, integrity and spontaneity in this blind ensemble, random, fluctuating arena night after night? By the end, it feels like they do.

Colin Marsh, Producer



ALL IMAGES FROM MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH AT BAC. © PUNCHDRUNK. PHOTOS BY BENEDICT JOHNSON.

TOTAL THEATRE'S CANNY GRANNY LAURA LLOYD PRESENTS THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES THAT WILL DEMYSTIFY THE JOB TITLES OF CONTEMPORARY THEATRE-MAKING

Once upon a time, long long ago, far away in the land of commercial theatre, the producer scurried around in the shadows, doomed to fundraising and administration. Worse, she or he was kept in the shackles of the pernicious idea that an administrator was not – and could never be – creative.

How things have changed! Producers have become leaders, who instigate things they'd like to curate. They energise and matchmake. This is the 'creative producer', who is more like a commissioning editor is to a newspaper. They are responsible for dreaming up concepts, spotting opportunities, making things happen and packaging the results.

It's a lot of work for one person. How did we live without these amazingly helpful people? The answer is: we struggled. When Tom Morris was director of BAC in 2002 (he's now associate director of the National Theatre), artists complained: "We have no administrative support; we don't know how to write a marketing plan; we don't know how to apply for funds; and when we're in the rehearsal room everything else falls apart because there is no one looking after us". Thank your lucky stars those days are behind us!

So not only has creative producing helped artists and producers to enjoy their work more, but it has also reshuffled that old hierarchy into a more collaborative and 'horizontal' structure. Whereas previously, producing was like paying for your child to go to boarding school with loads of name-taped gym kit, now, creative producing is more like the hands-dirty version of childrearing. Plus, the producers also get to have the nookie and conceive the work. Obviously, we hope that the show won't take 16 years to reach full development.

We can only imagine that creative producers must be incredible multitaskers: one minute they'll be, say, tweaking a script/performance storyboard, and the next ... well, they'll probably be in a meeting about funding. Or collaborating with flower-arrangers. Or in the rehearsal room. Yes, even! Or out watching theatre. But, as David Lan (artistic director of the Young Vic) says, "you absolutely have to be in the moment and the danger is there's so much to do ...

you risk short-changing everything". Being 'in the moment' sounds reassuringly similar to what is expected from the actor, except producers probably play less 'grandmother's footsteps' games to achieve it.

What's the downside? "Too much theatre!" says Shelley Hastings, producer at BAC. I think she means watching it. "It's long hours and late nights which are exhausting and crap for your social life". But the best bit? "Watching an idea fly. Watching work that hits you in the gut".

Why didn't we think of this before? Maybe we did. Not everyone credits BAC with pioneering the role: commercial producer Julius Green suggests that Shakespeare was a creative producer. I suppose there is a certain similarity between A Midsummer Night's Dream and, say, the carnivalesque romping of Lost Vagueness at Glastonbury, and it's warming to imagine the Bard as a collaborative event-maker.

Still, whether it's warranted or not, Shakespeare gets all the credit, whereas creative producers like Michael Morris of Artangel (who had the idea for Shockheaded Peter and commissioned the Tiger Lillies to write the score for it) remain comparatively unacknowledged. "I want it to be everyone's idea. It's important that everyone shares a sense of ownership", he says magnanimously. So it's still about taking the back seat and serving the project and less about the glory of the person motoring the thing.

Andy Lavender (tutor on the producing strand of the MA in Advanced Theatre Practice at Central School of Speech and Drama) suggests that there is something 'of our times' about our elevation of the producer. He sees it as an inevitable derivation of the tireless marketing industry that motors our heavily commodified culture, which is keen to seize upon even counter-cultural ideas and re-produce them for mainstream consumption. So... is theatre becoming more of a 'product': well-packaged, zeitgeisty entertainment concepts pitched at specific buyers? Hush, child, don't worry your pretty little head now, it's time to sleep.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT CREATIVE PRODUCERS?

Here's some leads...

Andy Lavender teaches on the producing strand of MA Advanced Theatre Practice, Central School of Speech and Drama: www.cssd.ac.uk/postgrad.php
 Michael Morris can be found at Artangel: www.artangel.org.uk
 Louise Jeffreys is head of theatre for the Barbican, and programmes the Bite season: www.barbican.org.uk/theatre
 Tom Morris is associate director for National Theatre: www.nationaltheatre.org.uk
 David Jubb is artistic director of Battersea Arts Centre www.bac.org.uk
 Judith Knight is co-founder of Artsadmin and Manick Govinda is head of artists' advisory services at Artsadmin: www.artsadmin.co.uk
 Helen Cole is producer of live art and dance at Arnolfini, Bristol: www.arnolfini.org.uk
 David Lan is artistic director and chief executive of the Young Vic: www.youngvic.org
 Helen Marriage and Nicky Webb are co-founders/directors of Artchoke, which brought The Sultan's Elephant to London: www.artchoke.uk.com
 Simon Casson is the creative producer for Duckie: www.duckie.co.uk
 Richard Kingdom is performance programme manager at The Bluecoat, Liverpool www.thebluecoat.org.uk
 Kate McGrath is a co-founder of Fuel and a producer for the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith: www.fueltheatre.com
 Helen Crocker is creative producer for circus and theatre with Theatre Bristol/CAST: www.theatrebristol.net
 Arts Council England and Scottish Arts Council offer bursaries and other schemes to promote creative producing: www.sac.org.uk and www.artscouncil.org

TWO USEFUL PUBLICATIONS:

Creative Producing: A User's Guide
 ed. Anthony Dean/John Daniel. Published by Central School of Speech and Drama.
 ISBN 0-9537729-34

The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible
 Kate Tyndall. Published by Arts Council England & The Jerwood Charitable Foundation.
 ISBN 978-0-7287-1347-5



BP ZOOM
A WONDERFUL
WORLD
QEH,
South Bank Centre

BP Zoom are Bernie Collins (Mr B) and Philippe Martz (Mr P), a delightful clown duo, whose extended entrees around the theme of flight are joyous, comic, occasionally touching, and frequently hilarious. The duo subvert and develop the classic whiteface/auguste clown relationship, in that although Mr P is clearly the put upon fool, his naivety is tempered with a realistic understanding of the duo's clownish predicaments, whereas the short-sighted, fussy Mr B in his frock coat, smart trousers and carefully combed hair fails to see the obvious.

Using gesture, eccentric dance, slapstick and sound the show opens with a delightful entrée in which both clowns are in large cardboard boxes, pretending that they are ballooning. Deftly they take us into their imaginative world and then in a clever coup de theatre, when opening the celebratory champagne, Mr B's balloon and his reality is punctured, setting up a fierce rivalry between them. This is played out clownishly using the simple device of throwing a paper plane which progressively becomes more competitive until Mr B creates a plane that can apparently fly in a perfect circle round him, itself a wonderful illusion. This finishes with a visually poetic image of a giant paper plane circling majestically around the stage.

The precise use of music – parodying *2001: A Space Odyssey* for example – was inspired, and under the direction of Jos Houben, this was a wonderful piece of contemporary clowning, which was innovative and inventive whilst having a timeless appeal, pleasing adults and children alike.

Richard Cuming

MOUSSOUX-BONTE
NUIT SUR LE MONDE
Purcell Room,
South Bank Centre

Moussoux-Bonte's triptych of ensemble movement theatre pieces was, for me, the unexpected delight of LIMF 2008.

Part one saw a row of six figures against a wall. The movement is Butoh-inspired: slow, often minimal but always charged with intent; movements of arms, heads, legs that stayed in touch with the supporting wall. Cocteau's statues in an enchanted garden; marble carvings on a temple; the trapped bodies of Pompeii – it is easy to construct narratives around the images. Then suddenly, all six slowly sink down to end sitting on the ground, and the stories change. Shaved heads, staring eyes in slumped bodies – refugees, concentration camp inmates, bomb victims huddled underground... A lesson in the power of movement theatre.

Part two is in a rather different mood, with nods in the direction of Pina Bausch's *tanztheater*: a continuous journeying across the stage that is an ironic play on dressing and undressing, exposure and privacy, public and private space.

Part three sees a return to the dimmed lights and dreamy mood of the first piece. A stunning opening shot gives us an ensemble of lit faces moving like seas creatures, tilting and swaying. As we grow accustomed to the low light, we notice that the group are all in party clothes – suits and satin frocks – and are all kneeling. It's somehow a really eerie and unsettling image.

All three pieces remind us that telling stories through pictures creates rich and multi-dimensional narratives – oh, the power of mime!

Dorothy Max Prior

COLLECTIF
PETIT TRAVERS
LE PARTI PRIS
DES CHOSES
Purcell Room,
South Bank Centre

'Nu-circus' in the UK all-to-often seems to mean the conglomeration of an overarching frame to circus skills and turns – invoking the ghost of story but ultimately affirming circus as a non-narrative form. Collectif Petit Travers gloriously explode this stereotype, providing an hour of acutely observed character play executed entirely through performances in juggling, trapeze and dance.



This tight three-hander playfully explored the relationship triangle of a juggler, a dancer and trapeze artist (though with some beautiful skills animating this dynamic). The effortless displays of skill on offer spoke clearly to the character dynamic and were enriched by this – the trapeze as a weapon of defence; juggling balls a hypnotic attraction; dance as the tenderest touch.

Yet whilst emotion, delicately and idiosyncratically drawn, became the engine of the performance, the material – objects, bodies, space, speed – of the 'circus' was given its own weight and presence. The simple pleasure of watching the arc of a ball curve and drop was heightened to an art; high-flying multiple juggling feats giving way to the joy of letting a hundred or so rubber balls bounce wheresoever they wanted across a bare stage. There's a sense of purity here – a Kantor-esque confidence in the virtue of objects (including objectified bodies) to be pleasing in performance simply by being the most like themselves. That the confidence of the company finally allowed them to take an audience largely made up of young people into more abstract presentation of image, object and movement was an astonishing achievement.

Beccy Smith

REVIEWS FROM LONDON INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MIME 2008

GANDINI JUGGLING

REVIEWS

SARAH WRIGHT



**GANDINI JUGGLING
DOWNFALL**
Clare Studio,
Royal Opera House

Sean Gandini is an unsung gem of the British arts scene, awareness of his work hardly extending beyond the contemporary circus world, but with this sell-out show at the Royal Opera House hopefully he will begin to find a wider audience. The choice of a venue more associated with dance/alternative performance firmly contextualises the complexity and delicacy of his work as he continues to reveal the intrinsic beauty of juggling, exploring it as choreography, revelling in its patterns, and in doing so lifting it to a level of this venue's more regular output.

Downfall is a step up in the company's level of execution, having meticulous detail and deftness whilst still retaining the delicate warmth and gentle seriousness of previous shows. It is principally a piece of visual choreography, though permeating it is a gentle whiff of theatricality (coaxed out by John-Paul Zaccarini), creating moments of intense emotional response that somehow remain unquantifiable. These moments emerge through either simple choices of positioning, the rhythmical sound of balls bouncing or through more overt approaches: the magnificent finale built around a pre-programmed illuminated club sequence, performed to Mozart's Symphony 25, stood closer to a *son et lumiere* than a 'juggling show'.

MOUSSOUX-BONTE



My one hesitant thought is that the piece feels like a collection of distinct pieces: different songs in a single gig, if you like. Though, like a good gig, the whole piece entrances its audience and in this Gandini is right at the heart of what great circus can be.

Thomas Wilson

**SARAH WRIGHT
SILENT TIDE
ICA**

A miniature satellite describes an arc through the air. A performer spins a disc onto which the moon is projected. A small winged wooden featureless puppet emerges from the sand. All to the strains of bowed found/made instruments. So began *Silent Tide*, a beguilingly beautiful and misguidedly frustrating show in equal measure.

The ICA is a relatively intimate space, yet we were still given (and needed) opera glasses to have any chance of seeing the actions of this world in miniature. That aside, the piece itself suffers from a lack of coherence and clarity – which is frustrating, as when it worked it produced some dazzling moments: A group partying with fireworks; the rise of an industrial landscape and a cityscape from the dust; an intimate view of the lives of the city's inhabitants – a woman with a wardrobe of red dresses, an old man who's TV is on the blink, and a person vacuuming (with live sound).

Then there's the final coup de theatre as the winged puppet busts into flames and descends Icarus-like, which will live long in the memory; so will the frustration of trying to make sense the soup of sounds and fragments of the world we're watching.

Sometimes it's good to leave it to the audience to piece together disparate elements, but I felt like I was left floundering in the dark, alienated by the red plastic binoculars my aching arm held to my nose.

Beautiful but flawed.

Matt Ball

**O ULTIMO MOMENTO
PEUT-ÊTRE
Laban**

Peut-être plays as a duet between João Paulo dos Santos (a Chinese-pole specialist) and Guillaume Dutrieux (a jazz musician, who, for this performance at least, traverses the stage on roller-skates). The nature of their on-stage relationship is never exactly clear – broadly Guillaume was the aggressor, forcing João up the pole in spite of his fatigue/anxiety, although there were suggestions also of shared dependency. There was a lot of eye-contact between the two, but it was hard to know what was being communicated. I think what kept this show from being quite as great as it could have been was the joy that João finds in his performance, and the pleasure that he takes from his friendship with Guillaume, was never allowed to take charge of the show.

O ULTIMO MOMENTO



Nevertheless, the show was extremely successful in evoking a queer world of distortion and doubling, into which projection and live music slotted perfectly. There wasn't a great deal of technology on display, but its use was always planned within a structure that moved between (visual and sonic) complexity and simplicity and created brilliant instances of focused attention: in particular a silent performance from João which came gradually to be tracked by the amplified sounds of his own movement.

The sweetest and most theatrically affecting moment, though, came near the end when Guillaume gave João a saxophone and the two of them together played the tune that had had its melodic shape sketched throughout the show. João wasn't great at saxophone, but it didn't at all matter.

John Ellingsworth

Further reviews from LIMF 2008 can be found on our website: www.totaltheatre.org.uk



COMPLICITÉ

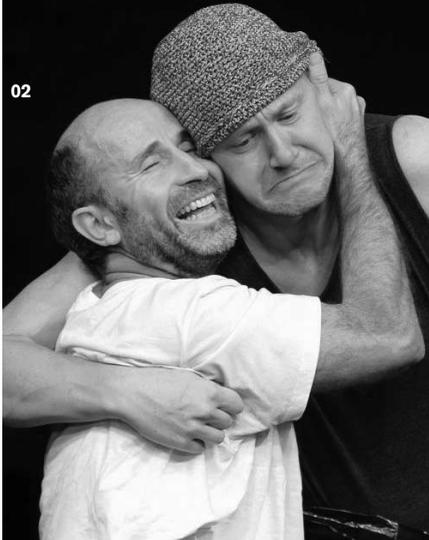
COMPLICITÉ
A DISAPPEARING NUMBER
 Barbican Theatre, BITE,
 September 2007

THEATRE DU
BOUFFES DU NORD/
PETER BROOK
FRAGMENTS
 The Young Vic Theatre,
 September 2007

Seeing *A Disappearing Number*, it is difficult not to feel impressed. The audience comes to Complicité's work, now and in London, eminently receptive. United in its desire to like, and in its expectation, which is so rarely disappointed, the audience gives, and the performance matches expectation with the density of its gift. Auteur/director Simon McBurney takes as stimulus the relationship between Cambridge professor G.H. Hardy and mathematics prodigy Srinivasa Ramanujan. The piece is full of *stuff*: complex ideas, explored, explained and developed; human stories – about the above mathematicians, other mathematicians, other people entirely – well written and played with conviction. There is seamless film projection, original music created by Nitin Sawney, simple theatrical imagery used to brilliant effect. The audience, experiencing the collective energy of a big chunk of marble on a workshop floor, waits, laughs, cries, is delighted; it is in the hands of master craftsmen.

Across London, three of Complicité's founders (Jos Houben, Marcello Magni and Kathryn Hunter) reunite in Peter Brook's *Fragments*, which attracts a similarly hopeful audience, packed into the Young Vic's steeply raked Maria Theatre like pigeons perched on power lines. Here, however, there are no projection screens, no pieces of set sliding silently into place as if they have been freshly buttered. There is nothing, apart from the very minimum: a couple of stools, perhaps; a chair; two large laundry bags. Philippe Vialette's lighting design, playing an installation role of its own, marks the space into geometric shapes, in silence. The three performers, working on Beckett's shorter texts, play with skill and conviction.

02



BOUFFES DU NORD

There are moments when the language, deceptively simple but intricately patterned in its repetition, creeps up gently and then leaps for the throat. Such is the case in Kathryn Hunter's interpretation of *Rockaby*. The character she creates is a bewitched child, and an old woman; comfortably ensconced in a familiar old rocking chair, yet also falling hopelessly into darkness. Hunter's extraordinary oiled-oak voice contains or communicates emotion with consummate fluency.

In the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, which houses Michelangelo's *David*, there are a series of unfinished sculptures, half emerged from blocks of marble with the hack-marks still on them. The *David* itself is a finished masterpiece, but there is something compelling about the attempt unrealised; the abandoned limbs and unsmoothed surfaces. Both *A Disappearing Number* and *Fragments* are lit up by the electricity of experience. But neither piece broke my heart or seared my soul. Of course, an audience which comes expecting to be impressed can also delight in tearing its idols down, and neither piece gives cause for this. Each contains its end within itself, and leaves nothing ragged and perhaps human flapping in the wind. The pieces themselves are so totally different as to be incomparable. But with both we, watching, are blocks of stone, waiting for a master to chip us into form; and both are unveiled, perfect and unimpeachable, and finished before we arrived.

Cassie Werber

03



JANE TURNER

JANE TURNER
TROOP
 Purcell Room,
 South Bank Centre,
 December 2007

Troop, conceived and choreographed by Jane Turner, is an exploration of the modern archetype *The Showgirl*, in which 'dancers create characters who create characters'. It is a show in which that archetype is, in the choreographer's words, less subverted than celebrated. *The Showgirl* is the embodiment of 'being alive' and thus to be invited into our hearts. It's OK to be gazed at, runs the message, as long as we can gaze back: 'I'm watching you, watching me, watching you'. The relationship of the showgirl to the male (and female!) gaze is at the heart of the piece.

Troop takes all the expected tropes and presents them to us beautifully and without irony: the Busby Berkeley line-up, the Tiller Girls circle, the silhouette, the strut, the podium dance. There may be no subversion, but there is commentary – and these more theatrical scenes are the strongest in the piece: in one, a stage-full of dancing girls grooving in their own world each in turn stop to take a telephone call – here, we see clearly, are other people's daughters, mothers, lovers and girlfriends. In another scene, tired feet relinquish dance shoes, which are piled up into one set of arms, then dropped to the floor, creating an instant image of end-of-the-night abandonment. I'm less interested when *Troop* strays too far into an expressive dance territory that become a little too close to parody for comfort. Thankfully, this happens only occasionally. Mostly, an elegant and engaging tribute to that beautiful creature, *The Showgirl*.

Dorothy Max Prior



JAMES THIERRÉE

JAMES THIERRÉE
AU REVOIR PARAPLUIE
 Sadlers Wells,
 November 2007

Cavernous darkness is the background of the sweeping, dreaming images that illuminate the stage, as slippery worlds slide away from each other, into each other and around each other in this dynamic animation of the subconscious. A classic family image is conjured: James Thierree puts his arm around his partner and a hand on the head of his child. But the image dissolves as soon as it is formed, and the chase for his loved ones begins. As worlds slide away and they lose each other through shifting spheres, the reunions are heartrendingly beautiful. Melancholic also. There are times when the black void behind the man seems engulfing: too much is too far out of reach.

Thierree is mesmerising and superlatively talented, pushing his body through and beyond the boundaries of the possible. And his skill is never haughty, laced as it is with that kick of clown-like humility and fallibility. Kaoru Ito is no less brilliant. Yet it is testament to this technical prowess that it is never their skill which seems most prominent. Orbiting the soul, it is the human story that truly strikes a chord: the quest of one man navigating his dreams to find what it is that brings him love, then to hold onto it, believe in it and treasure it, even if he might lose it at any moment.

Au Revoir Parapluie is an intricately woven pattern of the absurd, the sublime and the beautiful. Let's hope he finds his umbrella.

Marigold Hughes



FORKBEARD FANTASY

FORKBEARD FANTASY
INVISIBLE BONFIRES
 Toynbee Studios,
 November 2007

Global warming. An important issue, we're all agreed. How best to spread the message? Enter, stage left, The Brittonioni Brothers, the anarchic alter-egos of Forkbeard mainmen Tim and Chris Britton. They're here to present an awareness-raising roadshow, and thus we are treated to a cabaret-style 'investigation' of the GW problem, cheekily flagging up the terrible muddle of mis-information, not to mention all-round hypocrisy, that surrounds the subject. (This epitomised wonderfully in the central visual motif of the show: a clunky pedal-powered 'energy system' which turns out to be a fake – there's a generator out the back.)

There is actually a great deal of heartfelt agit-prop here: but Forkbeard always hang on to the power of humour (as well as the horsepower) as the saving grace of us poor 'Carbon Weevils', as we are dubbed in a manic animation-cum-talk-over by Timmy B (Carbon Weevils are odd creatures who live in boxes, endlessly reproducing and spending most of their days in their metal shells 'sniffing each other's backsides').

This extraordinary performance pot pourri also includes: a whizz-bang tour of the Death of Magyck, framed around an on screen-off screen search for Prospero's Book; live band the Lotus Pedals who feature a guitarist using potato power; the Big Bang viewed through 3D specs; a groovy shadow-theatre Pan; a toupee'd patio heater salesman; an edible world cake. Oh, and the most beautiful puppet horse you are ever likely to see.

We weevils may be dying, but we shall at least die laughing.

Dorothy Max Prior



TOLD BY AN IDIOT

TOLD BY AN IDIOT
CASANOVA
 Lyric Hammersmith,
 November 2007

This gender bending retelling of the master seducer's story was fun and often funny, even if it was rather uneven. With Casanova recast as a disingenuous but sexually irresistible woman (Hayley Carmichael), the plot gambolled around Europe, its travels punctuated by regional vignettes: a prison break in Italy, a bullfight in Spain, a mountain climb in the Alps.

The dialogue, written by Carol Anne Duffy, sometimes showed a little too much of the poet's touch. Like an eighteenth-century courtesan showing a bit more leg than necessary, it could have left more to the imagination. Then again, the colloquially anachronistic banter during Casanova's jaunt round Northern England was truly inspired.

Carmichael gave a sweet, touching, world-weary performance as the famous lothario, her lowest moments tinged with a heartfelt sadness. Casanova's advancement through the years was competently controlled in Carmichael's physical performance. Aside from Carmichael and the happily exuberant 'kitchen boy' (Tonin Zefi), however, there was a disappointing lack of edge to the performances.

There were satisfying comic touches – the row of spectacularly daft hairstyles lowered onto the heads of some wonderfully foppish courtiers; the bull fight that turned into a dance of love – but they were offset by some extraneous and indulgent dance sequences.

It was a show that never quite knew what it wanted to be, as it shambled along a narrow causeway between bawdiness and sensitivity. But if the result was a bit muddy, it was the kind of mud you wouldn't mind splashing around in.

Harry Werber



30 BIRD PRODUCTIONS
THE PERSIAN REVOLUTION
 Warwick Arts Centre,
 October 2007

This performance declares that it will inform/educate. Does it? What preparation is needed to understand the story of the 1905 Persian Revolution? What references would be needed to see the comedy of the situation and the way it is explored? The promise of such epic work creates expectations about Iran's culture and its mythologies.

I was hoping to come away with a sense of what the revolution was all about and an understanding of this period that might throw light on some of the sources of today's conflicts in the Middle East. I anticipated a performance full of risk and precariousness but instead, overall, I witnessed an outdated physical style of presentation that relied heavily on stereotypical one-dimensional characterisation.

The communication of historical information floundered in technique. Visually, *The Persian Revolution* was initially satisfying. The slickly designed blue backdrop supported a revolving climbing frame and TV aerial on top of a tower. Enter a pristine ensemble of blue-suited players into what promised to be a thought-provoking game of human snakes and ladders. It was all very easy on the eye. But the promising design-led environment became a cumbersome obstacle course rendering the performances self-conscious and disembodied. The performers were struggling to deliver the material. The message missed its mark.

I found myself struggling too: looking for the deeper meanings but not finding them; waiting for an unveiling of information which had been promised but never came. I left the experience feeling frustrated, confused and disappointed.

Carran Waterfield

CHOPPEDLOGIC



CHOPPEDLOGIC
DOUBLE NEGATIVE
 Oval House Theatre,
 London,
 October 2007

The kind of work that falls within Total Theatre's remit often proceeds by conjuring alternate realities — fantastic worlds which reflect our own only obliquely or ironically — while commentary on real lives and headline issues is left to the playwrights. In this quietly intelligent piece, ChoppedLogic seek to switch that around, presenting a multi-layered work which applies its rich theatrical aesthetic to a story about sex trafficking hitting suburbia.

Double Negative plays in the round, with Susannah Henry's assured set and Cis O'Boyle's beautifully weighted array of domestic pendant lights creating an immersive field that Steve Rafter's detailed sound design unites and extends - this sense of cohesiveness and control underwrites the whole piece. Director Dorcas Werber's nuanced text, only occasionally overstretching its lyricism, is a fine example of 'new writing' adapted to equally new methodologies. The performances are excellent, with Lawrence Werber outstanding as the lonely curtain-twitcher whose quiet life is rudely interrupted; the touching sequence in which unexpected visitor Mai confronts a boiled egg for the first time is exquisitely played.

Ultimately, though, the piece is just too cool and collected to really convince. We never confront the horror from which the house-guest has fled. As a poignant culture-clash drama, the piece excels: but it creates little space for anger or argument. The meticulous smoothness of its internal fluidity leaves nothing jagged to stick in the mind once it's over. *Double Negative* absolutely reconfirms the promise of ChoppedLogic, but there's room to be braver and bolder next time out.

Chris Goode

MALHOUSE THEATRE



TOM MARSHMAN

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE & MALHOUSE THEATRE
HONOUR BOUND
 Barbican Theatre,
 November 2007

Six years after it was first established, and despite worldwide condemnation of its appalling human rights violations, the US military detention centre at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba remains open. This new piece from director Nigel Jamieson and choreographer Garry Stewart explores the story of one detainee, Australian national David Hicks, who spent more than five years at the camp.

Set in a giant metal cage, the production fuses contemporary dance-theatre with aerial work and video projection. The biting physicality of the choreography is uncomfortable to watch, each twist and shuddering contortion evoking a new misery inflicted on a helpless prisoner. Scenes of sexual violence perpetrated by the prison's female guards are particularly harrowing.

But there are ellipses here. First that despite the power and strength of the physical performance and visual imagery, the production lacked the unequivocal statements that are so badly needed in the fight to close Guantánamo. At the same time, there was an unnerving lack of balance in the telling of Hicks' tale. Narrated mainly through the testimony of his parents, his story was presented in almost uncompromisingly sympathetic tones. Carefully chosen excerpts from letters, Pentagon documents and news footage support a view of Hicks as an entirely innocent victim. This is perhaps not a wild exaggeration — many prisoners in Guantánamo appear to have committed no crime — but the decision not to tell of how or why Hicks came to be captured with Taliban forces in Afghanistan undermined the production's credibility.

Harry Werber



TOM MARSHMAN
EVERYBODY'S KITCHEN
 Exeter Phoenix,
 November 2007

Tom Marshman serves himself up on a bed of cutlery. This is the beginning of a generous ritual of sharing in which Marshman oscillates between dinner party host and priest of the table.

There is a fulsome ambiguity to Marshman's presence: educator in the finer points of the digestive system, immersed sensual consumer, and our representative as he swallows 'the prawn that poisons you' – an act which is the gateway of the performance, the gear change to something modestly mythic. In the row in front of me, younger members of the audience were shivering with the giggles: testimony that they had been lured into uncertain sweet and sour space.

Tit bits are paraded; poignancy, regret and allergy are cooked up. The opportunity for the knickerbocker glory is gone now. We are nibbling in the 'salad bar of broken dreams'. Crushed Nice biscuits are transformed into a desert of disappointment. Marshman waits, the lonely shaman, for his microwave to ping, and then ends with a glorious conjuring of the twin pillars of wisdom as he makes two columns of flour rise to theatre roof, with whisk and kettle; a fabulous climax to an accessible and hospitable ritual.

Phil Smith

NEIL MACKENZIE,
MOLE WETHERELL &
SPENCER MARSDEN
AFTER DUBROVKA
 Grand Theatre, Lancaster
 October 2007

Five years after the 57-hour siege of the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow in October 2002, in which 129 hostages died along with all of the Chechen hostage takers, this installation is presented not as a theatre event but as an act of remembrance.

Like a tour guide, an usher takes the audience in small groups through the back door of the theatre. Inside, the place is cold. Several speakers hang over the stage or are strapped to seats in the auditorium, where the audience of the previous slot watch the newly-arrived audience standing on the stage. The text, a broad reflection about acting and spectating, standing for something or witnessing, follows subdued familiar rhythmic patterns.

While listening, one wonders whether the hostage takers had the chance to reflect upon their situation. Did they feel they were in costumes and had parts to play? One thinks as well of the kidnapped audience whose every move was watched. But *After Dubrovka* is not an act of witnessing: it is an imaginative reflection. The experience remains cerebral, with nothing of the body's failure or resilience, no smell of latrines from the orchestra. The power of imagination is a great gift, as Hannah Arendt would say – it allows us to represent ourselves in the shoes of others. In this, it is a political power. But isn't the relatively safe experience of this installation-performance sedating the political power of theatre?

FTJ Dalmasso

BIG STATE THEATRE COMPANY
FALLEN ANGELS
 The Rondo, Bath
 November 2007

Still mixing film and live performance, Big State takes us into the cinema with its latest offering. A tiny screen shows film trailers followed by the main feature, *Fallen Angels*, a tale of a modern desert war field hospital. The characters climb out of the cinema screen onto the stage and when their hospital is bombed the surgeons are tossed into a parallel reality where they exist in a sort of crazy film loop. What follows is an intriguing journey as the main character tries to discover who he is and why he's in this particular film. 'He has no back story', one character says, and we realise that this is a tale about the interplay of fantasy and reality.

Our hero is thwarted in bouts of hilarious wordplay with the other characters, who can only respond as the two dimensional beings that they are. Towards the end, he is catapulted into scenes from the aforementioned film trailers: it's certainly an amusing denouement, but I did feel that the writer was possibly hurrying to a conclusion.

Overall, *Fallen Angels* is a brave attempt to investigate big abstract themes and John Nicholson of Peepolykus writes a fascinatingly dense plot. Once again the talented actors of Big State have come up with a unique and daring piece.

Brian Popay

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MEDIA

PRINT PUBLICATIONS

Publications reviewed by Dorothy Max Prior

Physical Thatres: A Critical Introduction
Simon Murray and John Keefe
Taylor & Francis Ltd/Routledge
ISBN 0-415362504

Physical Thatres: A Critical Reader
Eds. Simon Murray and John Keefe
Taylor & Francis Ltd/Routledge
ISBN 0-415362512

£18.99 Paperback / £65 Hardback
www.routledge.com

Two exciting and very welcome new volumes from Routledge. *Physical Thatres: A Critical Introduction*, co-written by Simon Murray and John Keefe, 'synthesises the history, theory and practice of physical theatres'. There are rich pickings to be had in these pages: the book's authors are both highly knowledgeable on their subject, and there is a great deal of material covered, with lines drawn between a myriad of artists and modes of practice.

It's an academically rigorous volume, but written from the perspective of practice, not theory. We are taken, for example, through the intriguing relationship between dance and theatre ('theatre in dance theatre, dance in physical theatres') with examples from the practice of Pina Bausch, Jerome Bel and Liz Aggiss. A section on physicalising narrative tackles the likes of *Complicite* and *Goat Island*. The artist as educator and the role of training in physical theatre(s) is tackled well in a section that highlights the work of Lecoq, Decroux, Barba, Littlewood et al.

The second volume, co-edited by John Keefe and Simon Murray, presents a number of texts by leading artists and writers – contemporary practitioners and others from different times: from Anais Nin to Augusto Boal; Jeff Nuttall to Tim Etchells via Beckett and Brecht. We even get Edward W Said on Orientalism. It's this eclectic mix of cultural commentary, placing 'physical theatre' in a far broader context than is usual, that makes this collection so interesting. Each of four sections starts with a commissioned essay, including contributions by Total Theatre associates Dick McCaw and Franc Chamberlain.

Essential purchases for anyone interested in the rich histories and diverse contemporary practices that are somehow held together under the umbrella of 'physical theatre'.

Dramaturgy & Performance
Cathy Turner and Synne K Behrndt
Theatre and Performance Practices series
Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 978-1-4039-9656-5

£16.99 Paperback / £50 Hardback
www.palgrave.com

At last, a reflection on the practice of dramaturgy in the UK that acknowledges the role as more than a literary manager or developer of the script. The various meanings and forms of 'dramaturgy' are discussed, then we move onto the role, in practice of the dramaturg in UK theatre. The dramaturg's relationship to text is tackled, but so also is the role of the dramaturg in dance and devised theatre, issues around collaboration and the multiple roles that a dramaturg often plays in contemporary theatre. An excellent reflection on dramaturgy and the dramaturg, with the necessary distinction drawn between the process and the person. Just what the doctor ordered!

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