

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE

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TOTALTHEATRE - DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

FIRESTARTER - ROBERT PACITTI SPILLS THE BEANS ABOUT LONDON'S GROOVIEREST PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL
MAD MARCH HATTERS AND APRIL FOOLS - CHRIS CRESSWELL OF VOODOO VAUDEVILLE, JONATHAN KAY, THE ACTORS SPACE
SEND IN THE CLOWNS - AND BOUFFONS! ERIC DAVIS THE RED BASTARD AND BOUFFON GLASS MENAJOREE AT THE DUBLIN FRINGE
FROM STAGE TO SCREEN AND BACK AGAIN WITH KNEEHIGH, 1927, AND THE DANCE FOR CAMERA FESTIVAL
SAY GOODBYE TO GOAT ISLAND AND DOGTROEP AND PLAY GAMES WITH OUR GLAMOROUS GRANNY
VIEWED AND REVIEWED - FORCED ENTERTAINMENT, STATION HOUSE OPERA, ROBERT LEPAGE, LONE TWIN, AND MANY MORE
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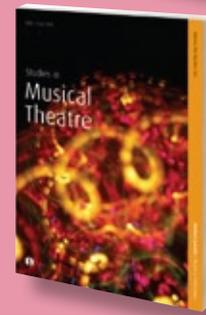
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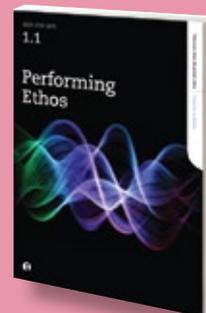
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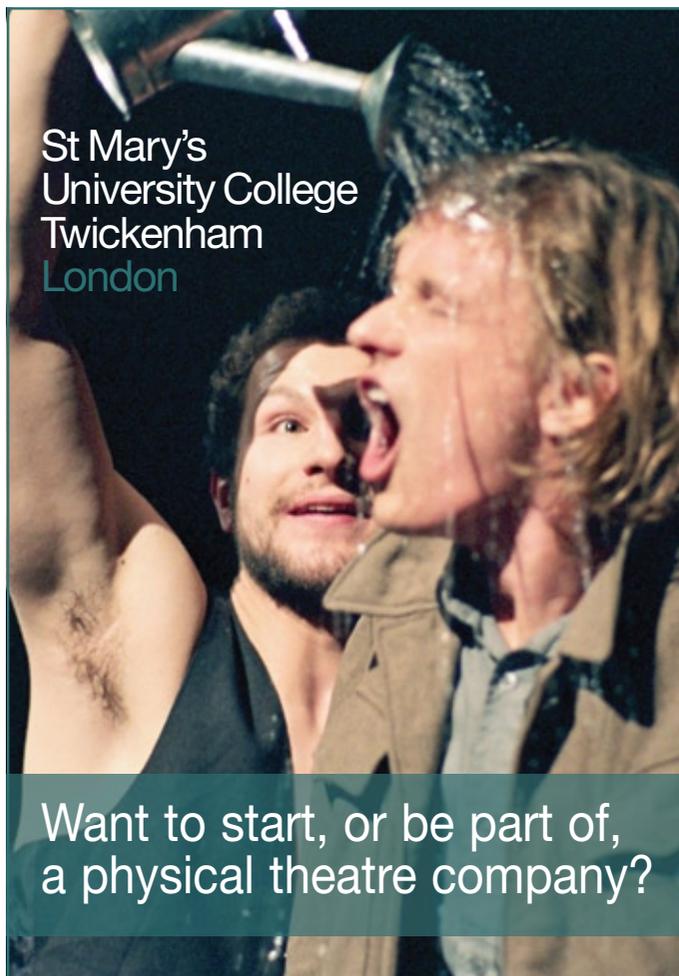
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EDITORIAL

I know spring is the time for beginnings, but let's begin here with some endings. In this edition of Total Theatre Magazine we introduce the first of a new series of articles which pay tribute to companies that are now, sadly, with us no more. We start with the dearly departed Dogtroep, seminal street arts company and a source of inspiration over many decades to artists everywhere – including Edward Taylor, who now offers us his tribute. RIP Dogtroep...

Another goodbye goes to Goat Island, currently touring the world with their last ever work, *The Lastmaker*, seen in New York by Robert Ayers. In his review, Robert reflects that it is rare for a company to choose their moment of departure, making (as Goat Island have) a final piece of work that incorporates the fact that it will be their last into the devising process.

A comparable situation would be Welfare State International's planned exit strategy. WSI were a collective of radical artists and thinkers, led by artistic directors John Fox and Sue Gill, who explored ideas of celebratory art and spectacle. After 38 magnificent years, they bowed out, appropriately enough, on April Fool's Day – 1 April 2006. Their planned exit strategy included a final multi-discipline performance extravaganza; an ending ceremony; and the setting up of a permanent archive, created within the Theatre Collection at Bristol University.

Bristol Uni are also the holders of the recently launched National Review of Live Art archive. The NRLA video collection has, over the years, grown into an archive containing over 1,200 hours of footage, and the entire collection has now been digitised by a project entitled *Capturing the Past, Preserving the Future*, launched at this year's NRLA (February 2009).

The documentation of live performance – by its very nature an ephemeral artform – is an interesting topic. Of course a video/DVD is one vital means of preserving evidence of those fleeting performances. Other 'remains of the day' include online clips on YouTube or MySpace, and personally I'm very grateful for the wealth of material online.

It is crucial, when we are referring to live performance, as opposed to made-for-camera work, that we remember that the documentation is just that; it is not the art itself. There is nothing that can be a substitute for witnessing the live event. Having said that, we can also note that the distinction between 'live' and 'mediated' work is sometimes a complicated one. In articles placed in tandem, we bring you a reflection of *Dance For Camera* work seen at the festival of the same name, in which live performance is not so much 'documented by' as 'created for' the eye of the camera; and a look at recent stage work that is informed or inspired by film.

More traditional ways of documenting work – the accounts in books written by theatre-makers or cultural commentators – are a vital source to anyone wanting to learn more about events from other times or places that they haven't been able to witness. Often, I find written accounts as helpful, in some cases more helpful, than live footage. Our extended Books & Other Media section offers suggestions for your reading and viewing pleasure, including works by or about Edward Gordon-Craig, Robert Lepage, and Bobby Baker.

The reviews section in newspapers and magazines is another valuable documentation resource. In publications such as Total Theatre Magazine, our reviews do not come out in time to have a 'bums-on-seats' marketing effect; that, in any case, is not their purpose. They instead offer a snapshot of the theatre and performance scene over any one quarter; an opportunity to reflect on a variety of different live events that together form a patchwork picture of contemporary performance practice. In this issue, you'll find an extended reviews section that includes reflection on works by Lone Twin, Forced Entertainment, Chi Chi Bunichi, Station House Opera, Robert Lepage, and La Machine in Liverpool, amongst many others.

A challenge to the regular reviewing format is our Being There column, which offers a three-way perspective on one performance. In this case, the subject is *Red Bastard* at the Dublin Fringe, reported on by the artist himself, Eric Davis; his producer Paul Lucas; and reviewer Cassie Werber.

Our features section is also a crucial part of the documentation process. We are always particularly pleased to bring you word direct from the artists who are making and curating contemporary performance work, and are proud to flag up Andrew Haydon's interview with SPILL director Robert Pacitti; artist diaries from Jane Arnfield and Chris Cresswell (the later as part of a special focus on theatre clown that runs as a theme throughout); and a reflection on political theatre by International Workshop director Luke Dixon.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Total Theatre Magazine, and as always we welcome your feedback and suggestions for future content.

Dorothy Max Prior
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FIRESTARTER

ANDREW HAYDON MEETS ROBERT PACITTI, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE SPILL FESTIVAL OF PERFORMANCE

In only its second edition, the SPILL festival of performance – running from the 2nd to the 26th of April in venues across London – already looks set to become one of the most important events in the contemporary theatre and live art calendar.

This year's festival's line-up reads like a who's who of the most important, cutting edge theatre companies in Europe – Romeo Castellucci, Tim Etchells and Victoria, Jan Fabre, Gisele Vienne – supported by an admirable programme of exciting younger, emerging artists.

The festival was founded only two years ago by experimental performance maker Robert Pacitti as an attempt to proactively challenge what he sees as a crisis in British venues: "Currently in Britain the places that show live art and performance are often small, or constantly having to struggle for resources and recognition," he argues, noting that beyond this, "The work tends not to get broadly written about in any informed way. Audiences flock to these types of work whenever they are shown in accessible ways, so this climate of struggle is not created through any lack of public engagement. These difficulties are born out of traditionalism, laziness and fear on the part of venues, coupled with the dominance of the artefact or text in new work. In short, new ephemeral work just isn't so easy to 'own' and its longterm 'value' is potentially hard to determine at the time it is made. These considerations shouldn't be the measures of progressive cultural advancement."

Because the festival is able to provide a frame as to why this work is important and why it is happening, SPILL enables multiple venues to present more leftfield work than usual by helping to break down assumptions about what type of work happens where and for whom. It also provides artists access to increased resources, such as main stages or solid critical writing: "A common misconception around live art performance is that it's elitist, and so in making the invitation to audiences in straightforward language – and creating spaces to discuss the work afterwards – everybody wins." As if to confirm this diagnosis, the 2007 festival had a 91% attendance.

SPILL has set up a whole raft of festival activities that contextualise the live programme and which allow audiences to engage directly with artists: at large dinners, or in small conversational spaces, online, or through participatory events such as the SPILL '07 Future Classic exhibition. Robert admits he is "aware that some people may question the inclusion of my own company in the programme. But the festival is my strategy as an artist to try and make things better for a whole territory of work, and that includes me." Although with venues like the artist-led Forest Fringe at last year's Edinburgh, this more continental model of an artist running a festival is gradually becoming more accepted in Britain.



1

SPILL presents experimental theatre, live art and performance, whilst acknowledging that these terms are broad and should be interpreted as such. With a programme that aims at a 50/50 mix of established artists and lesser-known makers, Robert is "interested in work that takes risks and in prioritising that, although I hasten to qualify that 'risk' is relative and so it is interpreted in a number of ways. I am only interested in putting together a programme which is diverse and, again, I mean this in a multitude of directions." This year's festival is curated around ideas of 'agency', and explores issues of personal power, group potential, and future-forward thinking.

Perhaps the most exciting news is that SPILL is presenting Romeo Castellucci's trilogy *Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, based on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Robert calls it "absolutely monumental... some of the most ambitious performance work I have ever seen." Isabelle Metral describing *Inferno* in *L'Humanité* says, "It is just impossible, so soon after the event, and in so short a space, to give the full list of the specific tableaux born of Castellucci's unparalleled hypnotic imagination... Adultery, infanticide, parricide, love itself (in as much as it is potentially murderous) are summoned in the collective mode, and displayed in a succession of slow, excruciatingly precise gestures." Speaking of another SPILL coup, Robert notes that it is, "very exciting that Jan Fabre will be showing in SPILL. He is an influential maker and hasn't shown in England for seventeen years. To have him and Romeo Castellucci in the same programme – and in only the second edition of the festival – is fantastic. They are both giants in the field."

Also on the bill are Victoria, presenting *That Night Follow Day*, the piece the company made with Tim Etchells which is performed entirely by children: "it's a truly remarkable piece of work and one that will stay with those who see it for many years to come," says Robert. Alison Croggan on her blog *TheatreNotes* describes it as "a quietly revolutionary work which, with immaculate artfulness, strips theatre back to the barest essentials. Performance is the simplest utterance, and the text – a beautifully modulated series of variations on a theme – is a sequence of statements."

"I'M ALSO EXCITED BY LOTS OF THE SMALLER PIECES IN THE PROGRAMME." ROBERT PACITTI

Among these is *Jerk*, once memorably summarised thus by Chris Goode: "the laughter reflex is ruthlessly unzipped into its components of fear, embarrassment, distress and desire, meaning that the early humour... quickly deliquesces, and the rest of the short piece's dance down the knife-edge of what we can bear to laugh at, and what we can stand to confront, is as slippery and confounding as the violated bodies we are asked to encounter..."



2

Or, if you prefer: there's a lot of puppets fistfucking each other and the sound effects are pretty funny, and then there's a lot of stabbing and the sound effects aren't so funny after that." The work, a collaboration between Gisele Vienne, Dennis Cooper, Jonathan Capdeville and Peter Rehberg, promises to be every bit as disturbing and intelligent as the quartet's earlier work together.

SPILL commissions new work too, allowing the festival to create a legacy through new projects and their future distribution. A number of this year's programme will also be touring to various UK venues post-April.

The way in which the SPILL programme is put together aims to challenge how work is often curated in Britain. For both 2007 and this coming April, Robert followed his instincts and "looked sideways at what was currently happening at home and overseas. By 'sideways' I mean that the programme is made up of my artist peers, rather than programmed hierarchically by a presenter gone shopping." By making contact with artists directly SPILL aims at a more collaborative approach to artist involvement with the festival: "From the get-go everybody is aware that there is nothing on the table to begin with. It is essential that this whole process begins with the actual work, and how each artist feels about her or his participation."



4



3

SPILL

verb: to flow from a container

verb: to come out from a confined space in large numbers

noun: a splinter or twist of paper used to ignite something

"AFTER THE FIRST FESTIVAL VARIOUS YOUNGER MAKERS TOLD US THAT SPILL WAS ASPIRATIONAL FOR THEM, BUT WONDERED IF THEY'D HAVE TO WAIT YEARS BEFORE THEY GOT A LOOK IN."
ROBERT PACITTI

In direct response, this year the festival is presenting a weekend of work – the SPILL National Platform - selected from a UK-wide open call-out, to artists with less than three years' professional experience, to be held in the studio of the National Theatre the week after Castellucci is at the Barbican and Fabre is in the Queen Elizabeth Hall – "which pretty much encapsulates my desires for the festival," says Robert.

London has never had a festival quite like SPILL – its whole inception an activist tactic to change the profile of UK work through being in service to artists and audiences, locally, nationally and internationally; with a commitment to homegrown artists being shown with equity next to international presentations; the deliberate mixing of large-scale and small-scale work; the prioritising of experimental performance that has developed from a whole heap of different lineages, be those formal or political; and an artistic director who is a practising artist (certainly more unusual in the UK than elsewhere in the world). Certainly SPILL stands on the shoulders of some great work from before, such as Lois Keidan's visionary live art programming of the ICA or LIFT in its heyday.

Leaving the last word to Robert: "The SPILL Festival is as much about context as it is about the live presentations: SPILL Feasts are one way for people to spend time together, salons are another. Regular writing about the festival is one way we share what's happening, being in a bar after a show with a willingness to speak with anyone is another. The festival is being made by people trying to unravel ideas about the world and share these as conversations with other people. It's really just as simple and as complicated as that."

SPILL Festival of Performance runs 2–26 April 2009 at various London venues. SPILL is a Pacitti Company initiative. For full programme and booking details, see www.spillfestival.com

**IMAGE 1 | A FOREST BY PACITTI COMPANY.
PHOTO PACITTI COMPANY
IMAGE 2 | ORGY OF TOLERANCE BY JAN FABRE.
PHOTO FREDERIK HEYMAN
IMAGES 3 & 4 | PURGATORIO BY ROMEO CASTELLUCCI.
PHOTO LUCA DEL PIA**

SIMON EDWARDS AND MARIAN MASOLIVER OF THE ACTORS SPACE IN THEIR OWN WORDS



We met at Lecoq. We loved, it, got so much out of it that we wanted to share that with others – so we started The Actors Space.

The animals left and the actors came. The school is set in a sixteenth century farmhouse [owned by Marian's family], an hour from Barcelona.

It's been an organic growth. The workshops grew in success through word-of-mouth. People come back year after year. They are both international and local – we have built up a relationship with the Catalonian theatre schools and local artists.

We run workshops in The Clown, in The Creative Actor, and in Acting for Camera. We don't really see a divide between theatre and screen work – this Lecoq-inspired work is the best training for any actor. It really is possible to 'clown' in any performance context – dramatic actor, cabaret turn, circus performer, actor to-camera...

Lecoq is not a 'method'; it's an observation, a way of being. It's not a gospel. If you put it in a box, you might not be able to get it out! What you need is the minimum of set-up, then just let people play. Lecoq is dead, but the work lives on and grows – in the body, in the space.

Clown is many things, and clown includes the tragic clown. Comedy and drama are two sides of the same coin. The whole world is a potential theme for the clown. You play for the feelings, not for the laughs. This way of acting is a challenge to 'psychological drama' – Lecoq said play *the* experience, not your own personal experience.

A clown without an audience doesn't exist. The clown always favours the relationship with the audience. There's a direct contact: the eye contact is 'at' not 'above' the audience. The art is in playing the moment 'in clown with' the audience. Lecoq encouraged us to play 'with' the audience rather than 'for' the audience.

The clown's fragile nature is revealed through doing things. You have to shed a lot of layers to get to a place of vulnerability, of 'ridiculousness'. The clown uses her/his physical attributes: if you have long, skinny legs with bony knees, then that becomes an 'asset' rather than a 'failure'.

Everyone is a success, everyone is OK. The world is currently set up with the 'one gold medallist and the rest are failures' mentality.

Children are natural clowns – but the clown's aim is to be childlike not childish.

It's you, not a funny character! Think of Chaplin, Tati, Laurel & Hardy, the Marx Brothers...

Actors, clowns, performers are human beings. We are not machines. TV comedy, in particular, can become a sausage factory. Think how few episodes there are of *Fawlty Towers*. And there were just two series of *The Office*. Good! That's enough! Tommy Cooper and Eric Morecambe were killed by the strain.

A good director is like a gardener. Let the actor – the creative actor – take power, or you might as well do puppetry. Encourage, find the good, and the actor grows wings.

The mask or costume is a protector.

Neutral Mask work teaches you transposition. You don't have to traumatise an audience. And you don't have to play your inner psychopath! It's a safe approach that allows you to enter dark territory whilst protecting yourself. A good friend and colleague is Sergi Lopez, who played the villainous Capitan Vidal in Del Toro's Oscar-winning film, *Pan's Labyrinth*. He used his Lecoq training to play this role. You can touch people without being devastated yourself by the role you are playing.

Beware the 'dramatic effect' – the lure of the 'impressive actor'. The Neutral Mask asks for the ego-less actor. And the way of working values the ensemble; the co-operative theatre-maker.

The Actors Space is now our full-time home, but we don't want to run a full-time school. We like the idea of it as a jewel, a special place to come for a short while. You can really change and grow, even in just two weeks.

Simon Edwards started out, age 14, as a 'punk clown' in the UK street arts/festival scene, later working as a performer and company trainer for Kneehigh Theatre, and its offshoot, Wildworks. Marian Masoliver worked as a performer with many legendary Catalan companies, including La Fura Del Baus, and with American / Mexican puppetry companies such as Los Titititeros. They met at Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris, and have been partners in work and in life since, founding The Actors Space in 1999 – a school dedicated to the professional training and development of the creative actor.

Simon Edwards, Marian Masoliver and Sergi Lopez are collaborating on making a full-length silent feature film.

The Actors Space 2009 programme:

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Acting for Camera 3–16 August
The Clown 20–31 August*

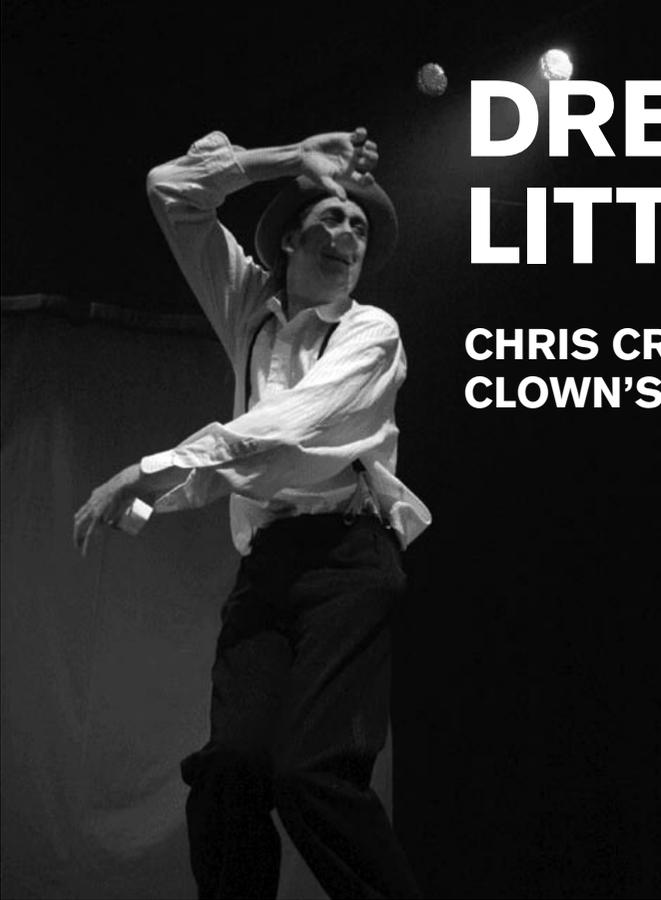
All the above are residential, and dates include arrival and departure dates. Workshops are taught in English. The minimum age to participate is 18 years old. Fees are inclusive of accommodation and meals.

*For full details see
www.actors-space.org*

IMAGE: CLOWN WORKSHOP AT THE ACTORS SPACE. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COMPANY

DREAM A LITTLE DREAM

CHRIS CRESSWELL TAKES US ON HIS CLOWN'S JOURNEY



This is supposed to be an article about making a piece of work, a kind of artist's diary of the journey of a particular kind of clown – but my first problem in writing lies in that word... 'Clown', it's a difficult word, I use it to describe the work I do as a performer but then I always have to follow this up with a disclaimer and a long description of what it *doesn't* mean. It can conjure up so many images that it always seems to need a follow-up explanation.

I make work in a variety of contexts: in theatre shows, in cabaret and sometimes on TV. I've worked in circus, theatre and cabaret, on the street, and in film, and I always have an awareness of a clown's approach. It is a combination of innocent wonder, a sense of play and a delight in improvisation. I am currently working on a project that revolves around the story of a silent clown character that I first worked with about five years ago. I had reached a point in my career where I was really questioning what I was doing and what I wanted from my future work. I have explored and experimented with a variety of fairly extreme characters in recent years, and I wanted to find a character or style of performance that would make me feel at home. My original performance training was rooted in mime and improvisation, and I finally realised that I wanted to revisit the simplicity of a mime-based clown character. There, I have said it, 'mime' and 'clown', both in the same sentence!

Just a little background, I was originally fascinated by the likes of Marcel Marceau, Lindsay Kemp and David Bowie, then inspired by a workshop with Nola Rae, until I was sidetracked by alternative cabaret for a while, getting my equity card by joining Skint Video as a Cryptic Twin. I then met and worked in a mime-theatre company with the inspirational John Mowat, and subsequently found myself running away with the circus when I joined Ra Ra Zoo in the early 90s. This was a wonderful experience, taking me all over the world, and provoking some great friendships as I met other performers and great clowns such as Angela de Castro from Brazil (now resident in the UK), and Natalie Tarlet from France's seminal Circus Archaos. Other inspirations included Chris Lynam, a fantastically energetic shock-haired clown-performer who worked within the cabaret circuit – mainly by scaring the audience into submission. After Ra Ra Zoo I started producing cabarets in London, then moved to Brighton and started Voodoo Vaudeville which provided a wonderful platform for myself and many other performers to experiment with their form and practice.

When I think of clowns I tend not to think first of wild-haired big-footed grotesques, but rather of more subtle performers such as Jacques Tati, Harold Lloyd, Max Wall, even Eric Morecambe. These are the clowns that have inspired me, and this was the basis for this latest project: to find for myself a persona that I would feel comfortable within and that would sit in the kind of show that I have spent the last ten years devising. That is not to discount the place and worth of the traditional circus clown, it's just not a path I have ever felt drawn towards.

There are wild-haired big-footed clowns in Slava Polunin's *Snow Show* and that is a beautiful show, and there are complex suited clowns in most Cirque de Soleil shows – but I still find myself drawn towards the clown in a dark suit, the character that seems to represent the everyman, the bewildered innocent. The plain costume lets the face and body tell the story rather than signalling with bright clothes that this is an eccentric character – the suit is a neutral statement.

Moreover I wanted to find out what I thought about the theatrical clown. Does he have to be funny? Can he be about truth, love and empathy? Can he genuinely tell a story? I decided that I wanted to return to my mimetic roots and see if there was a way a clown could exist in a show in my current performance milieu, in front of a demanding cabaret audience.

So where did this particular journey start? Well, it started with a love affair – a broken heart and a particular song.

As is often the case, life, love, and art had mixed and I found myself with a case of the broken hearts. I was creating a show at the time, and suddenly a character and story emerged from this upset. This was in a show called *Vampires of Variety* which toured the UK in 2005. At the time, people responded to the pathos of the clown, but I wasn't ready to relinquish the slightly more twisted and anarchic characters I was playing, and so left that character behind until I was encouraged to rediscover him when I pulled him out for a guest appearance in the *La Clique* Spiegel tent show in the Brighton Festival. He stayed in the background until last year when I started to feel like I had lost my way as a performer, and needed to reconnect with my original impulse and creative spirit.

So feeling like it was time to throw everything up in the air and turn full circle, I decided to make a show with this clown, based on the original clown characters I had loved – a simple, slightly forlorn character, dark-suited, and ever hopeful, whose physical performance is the storytelling vehicle.

We rehearsed over a three-week period; our very clear objective was to find the story of the clown whilst allowing a show to build around his journey. I rehearsed with director David Lavender on the fine detail of the clown act, whilst letting Kt Simpson (my regular co-director/choreography on Voodoo Vaudeville) direct the integration of the clown into the overall show. It was important that there should be opportunities for the clown to be given his own place in the show, to build in moments of solo performance,



allowing the clown the chance to hold the stage on his own and to see whether this was possible in a cabaret setting before a Friday night audience at Brighton's Komedia venue, which can be a tough crowd! It's a big room, and I would be asking them to watch a show with no words and no MC to rescue the show.

The rehearsal process veers between being a tortuous dialogue with oneself and delight in finding new material as you bounce off other people. I discovered that I simply could not invent material whilst sitting in a rehearsal room on my own, I became more and more morose and distracted, doing anything to avoid facing myself and then suddenly someone would come into the rehearsal room. At last, a reason to live! I then would find some way to entertain them and then that quickly turned into material for the show.

Inspiration also came very much from music: from recorded songs that meant something personally, or a live musician improvising whilst I worked.

I worked closely with Foster and Gilvan, an inspiring musical double act who ended up in the show – we found a beautiful new act, a trombone duet with car horn...

So I had the beginning of the story using my personal history as a source and found whenever we were stuck for the next part of the story we would just look at what was happening in our personal lives and find the clues there, it was a story about love, and everyone has a story about love. As more performers joined the process, so we invented scenarios that the clown could weave in and out of, and this created new material for other performers.

For instance, Kt Simpson and Gil Cohen found the beginnings of a delightful double act when Gil, who is a new performer just discovering her clown, was desperately trying and failing to hoist herself onto the stage. Moments like these, invented in the last days of rehearsal, were what the whole process was about and will form the basis for future material, when we come to make the whole show.

So this phase of the journey has ended at the beginning of a new project. There is a place for this kind of clown! I am still not sure what his name is, or where he exists, but I feel a real sense of freedom – the clown doesn't have to make the audience laugh, it's great if he does, but we are not just looking for laughs, we are looking for the story.

I think that is what I have discovered. Audiences love stories and they want answers. The stories are to be found by sharing oneself. And the clown just loves to dream up stories.

For more on Chris Cresswell and Voodoo Vaudeville, see www.voodooaudeville.com

IMAGES: CHRIS CRESSWELL PERFORMING AT VOODOO VAUDEVILLE. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

SCHOOLS FOR FOOLS

GERRY FLANAGAN

Gerry Flanagan has worked in the UK with Theatre de Complicite, the David Glass Ensemble and Bubble Theatre; and in Italy with Clown Selvaggio. In 1991 he co-founded Commotion, one of the UK's seminal physical theatre companies. He is now director of Shifting Sands. Gerry has taught clown and related subjects for the last twelve years in universities, colleges, and schools, and at Circus Space and the City Literary Institute, London.

Shifting Sands' latest show, *The Devil's Doctor*, is touring extensively throughout spring 2009. Workshops in clown, physical storytelling, and commedia dell'arte (amongst other topics) are available for booking, alongside performances, or as stand-alone events. See www.shiftingsands.co.uk

THE WRIGHT SCHOOL

John Wright, co-founder of both Trestle Theatre and Told By An Idiot, is a renowned director, and author of *Why is That So Funny?* (Nick Hern Books). The Wright School is another roving academy, running regular workshops in clown and other theatre disciplines for professional practitioners, and within schools and other organisations. See www.thewrightschool.co.uk

THE WHY NOT INSTITUTE

The Why Not Institute is an organisation with a passion for the artform of clowning and an obsession for promoting the work of clowns in the UK and beyond. Its leading light is the legendary Brazilian clown, Angela De Castro. De Castro has recently (January 2009) run an intensive two-week workshop called 'How to be a Stupid – or, The Clown's Intelligence' as part of the London International Mime Festival 2009, and later in the year will be running a six-week summer school at The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. In the meantime, she is preparing to perform her new show, *Laughing Matters*. See www.thewhynotinstitute.com

Clowning is also incorporated into the various circus and physical theatre programmes offered by Circomedia in Bristol and The Circus Space in London.

www.circomedia.com

www.thecircusspace.co.uk

Our featured clown, Chris Cresswell, teaches clown, mime, and variety skills. See contact details left.

See also details on The Actors Space summer schools and Jonathan Kay's Nomadic Academy of Fools on other pages in this magazine.

IMAGE: ANGELA DE CASTRO. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

SACRED, SCARED, & SCARRED

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR GOES FOOLING WITH JONATHAN KAY

What seemed familiar was the power of Jonathan as a leader and teacher; his ability to both inspire and to challenge; and the exhilarating pleasure of creating theatre in the moment, out of nothing.

And by nothing, I mean nothing – those of us who work in devised theatre are well versed in the idea of coming to a rehearsal space with the intention of creation there, rather than outside of the room, but in Jonathan's workshops (or in this one, at least), there really is nothing but us. No props, no visual artefacts, no movement motifs, no pre-existing text, no 'ideas', nothing to kick-start the process.

Using various ways in (a group circle in which anyone can take the space and do anything; a line of four of us taking turns to open an invisible window in space and describe what we see; a solo in which we are invited to walk through an imaginary door), we find ways to invent in the moment – an interaction of memory and imagination that constructs narrative, or character, or a sense of place, or a sensation or emotion. It is a great feeling to start with nothing at all and within that 'nothing' find plenty. A truly empty space, in which there is 'no past, no future, only present'.

At one point in the workshop, Jonathan Kay echoes the words of Jacques Copeau when he dismisses the 'theatre of scene-shifters', saying why build a big expensive set representing Paris when you could just say 'Paris!' and each audience member would build their own imaginary set more perfect than anything you could construct.

Sharing the view of many who work with 'clown' and 'fool', Jonathan Kay believes the process is about far more than creating comedy: it is about finding the inter-relationship of all humanity, and thus is as valid in the creation of tragedy as comedy, or indeed any sort of drama.

Ultimately following the path of the Fool is more than a way of performing – it's a spiritual path, in which we 'sacred, scared, and scarred' human beings try to do the best we can with what we've got.

Dorothy Max Prior took part in Jonathan Kay's weekend workshop at The Actors Space, near Barcelona, in November 2008.

The next 'templates' in the current (2008–2009) programme for the Nomadic Academy of Fools take place in Edinburgh (February); Brighton (March); Glastonbury (April) and London (May). Weekend places are available at all these. Each template also includes evening performances from Jonathan Kay and scratch nights, and performances by The Fools Cabaret.

The application process for The Nomadic Academy of Fools 2009–2010 is now open. For an application form and audition dates, please email emlyn@jonathankay.co.uk

For further information see www.jonathankay.co.uk

IMAGE: JONATHAN KAY. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



Jonathan Kay is a '21st century jester for a generation brought up on passive forms of entertainment'. For 35 years he has been charming the world with performances, workshops and interactive events that lead participants down the path of The Fool', which offers to 'free up your mind, [help you to] find inspiration, and see that anything is possible'.

For the last couple of years, Jonathan has been leading something with the intriguing name of 'The Nomadic Academy of Fools', which is very much what that name implies: a school for fools that, rather than be based at any one institution, wanders from venue to venue across the UK – with a few trips to mainland Europe thrown in too.

The Academy is made of a group of participants who audition for, and commit themselves to, the year-round programme. Each of this series of nine-day-long residential training and professional development sessions is augmented by bookended weekend workshops, attended by both Academy members and anyone else who would like to have a taste of the work.

I was honoured to be one of those 'weekend extras' at a workshop which took place at The Actors Space, a farmhouse turned arts centre set in glorious countryside just an hour's journey north of Barcelona in the Catalan hills (see Voices in this magazine for more on The Actors Centre).

I'd worked with Jonathan before, but it had been at least a decade earlier, and it was interesting to see what I perceived to be familiar territory and what seemed new.

What was new for me was the way that Jonathan's working with a regular group on a fixed programme seemed to have honed his teaching work into a methodology. There were terms used and concepts mooted that I remembered from my earlier work with Jonathan – e.g. the 'twin' who is our performing self, our unafraid self – but there were processes that were unfamiliar to me, yet familiar to the regular participants, and which for an 'outsider' were quite a challenge to grasp in one short weekend – for example, the principles of a process called 'Look, See, Be, Fly', and a way of 'acting' (or perhaps better to say 'being') that involved a move from commentate to demonstrate to speculate to judge to (finally) capitulate.

BEING THERE

THREE POINTS OF VIEW ON ERIC DAVIS' RED BASTARD, AT THE METRO BOSCO THEATRE, THE SECRET GARDEN, DUBLIN FRINGE 2008



It is my job as a bouffon to liberate the energy in the room. That's what I do – come hell or high water. As I press slowly onto the stage through the musty curtain of the wooden Bosco tent, my jaws clench and I assume the tension of a trapped animal with a Machiavellian smile. The audience assumes they will be entertained, yet my body language makes them wonder, "Am I in danger?" A web of tension spreads throughout the tent. At the edge of my skin are hundreds of invisible fingers... feelers... filchers. Ha ha! Pluck-Pluck-Plucking. I am feeling for the potential energy of the audience – as individuals and as a whole.

Tonight I find three: The One Who Will Not Stop Laughing. The One Who Is Thrown Out. And The One Who Will Not Be Thrown Out.

The One Who Will Not Stop Laughing is nearly insane. He laughs at everything I do. Everything. I stop the show and wait for him to stop laughing. It takes about three minutes. The tension of him needing to stop makes him laugh more.

The One Who Is Thrown Out has tried to give me a heckling zinger. He is enjoying himself, but is awkward like a clown. I take him by the scruff, as you do a kitten – between the thumb and forefinger – and remove him from the tent. Nervous laughter from the audience. Then a thick, silent tension. I roar out, "Who will fuck with me now?" The audience howls.

The One Who Will Not Leave has two beaming moons for eyes. I tell her she's having too much fun and she must go! She refuses. I insistently demand and we begin a ballet of removal as she grafts her hands to her wooden bench seat, until we are spread diagonally in mid-air in one long line of opposing wills. Everyone is abuzz. The woman, the audience and myself.

She stays. It is no use.
We love each other too much.

ERIC DAVIS
www.redbastard.com

Entering the packed Bosco Theatre, we feel churlish at displacing the people sitting in our reserved seats. How they will smirk when they see what happens to us. When the Red Bastard appears, there is an immediate gasp-grimace from the audience which – along with laughter – will be the predominant response.

What is this creature? Half superhero, half circus freak, he spider-steps across the stage, elegantly carrying his grotesquely bulbous costume. Having encountered bouffon through a myriad textbooks and performative references, I still find my jaw dropping at the audacious reality. Exaggerated, huge, repetitive, and driven by archetypes, the Red Bastard is like a walking tabloid headline: 'Sex! Danger! Outrage!', the performance screams. The crucial difference is the goal of this extremity: to subvert, rather than reaffirm, commonly-held beliefs. There is no escape from participation, except for Carlo, an audience member who is judged unenthusiastic, and summarily ejected. Others are subsequently tested, as the Bastard climbs over us, sits on us, and demands that we join in the 'class'. This includes an episode where I am told to "Sing!" (a screechy version of an actor's voice warm-up). "Very good, now sing into my mouth. Good, now sing with your tongue."

Invasion is a theme of the show, and evasion impossible, especially when the entire audience is told to pose for a picture, then photographed again, and again, and again. Though I leave the theatre not completely sure which of my assumptions have been challenged, the experience as a whole is powerful and lingering. "I'll be back!" yells the comic-book villain as the cops drag him away. So, I expect, will moments of this experience.

CASSIE WERBER
writer / independent theatre-maker

Premiering an artist abroad, particularly one who is comic, is always nerve-wracking. The question of whether material will 'land', whether cultural references will be appreciated, and whether audiences will warm to your performers, a producer can only guess at until the performances actually begin.

So it was, with my breath appropriately bated, that I entered the Bosco tent to watch Eric Davis as Red Bastard take on a slightly liquored up, Saturday-night Dublin audience. I was hopeful, as the numbers were strong, and more people (and a bit of liquor) are always good for comedy.

From the first beat, Red Bastard demands audience interaction. Whether they must count backwards from ten or swap seats on cue, the Bastard is teaching a class and doesn't suffer unwilling students gladly. Tonight, he kicked someone out in the first five minutes, escorting him to the door and telling him not to return.

Bold choices like this immediately shock and sometimes genuinely upset some audience members. Tonight, another patron was obsessed with the expelled 'student' and kept shouting out to let him back in. Of course, this provided another opportunity for the Bastard to improvise, posture, and rile up the audience.

As for me, I knew it was already in the bag. When your average comedian gets a heckler it can go either way, when the Red Bastard gets one, things are going well. The audience is ready to play. Once that happens, I can feel the applause and standing ovation coming.

Exhale.

PAUL LUCAS
producer
www.paullucasproductions.com



OUT & ABOUT

PIPPA BAILEY WAKES UP TO NEW ECONOMIES

Eureka moments are rare. I can certainly count the number of times when I had that feeling of 'waking up', of having my eyes opened, and of my life changing as a result. I had such a moment in November 2008 and it has informed all my thinking over the recent months – and will, I am sure, for several years to come.

It happened quietly and almost by accident: I ran into Charlotte Jones, director of the Independent Theatre Council and she told me about a small event she was hosting with industry lead bodies in the arts such as Equity, The National Campaign for the Arts, and the Musicians Union, to name just a few. She asked me if I would like to come along. And so, one ordinary Thursday afternoon I went along to hear Stewart Wallis speak. Stewart is director of an organisation called the New Economics Foundation (NEF), who describe themselves as "an independent 'think and do' tank who believe in economics as if people and the planet mattered". This was certainly of interest, given the events of recent months when it became apparent that bankers join artists and advertising executives as masters of illusion, with devastating results.

According to Stewart there are nine forces shaping the economy today and they are:

Climate Change – 'a glacial rate of change' used to mean achingly slow, but now means urgent and alarmingly fast

Ecosystems – local natural worlds that inform issues to do with water, fishing, pollination, etc

Global reliance on fossil fuels

Growth of inequity between rich and poor

Population growth (and the misleading notion that the solution to poverty is growth)

Materialism – owning even more stuff

Religious resurgence – which suggests that people everywhere are looking for something to believe in

Changes in power – growth of influence for countries like Brazil, China, India, Russia

Globalisation – we are all so interconnected that there is no independent strength when things go wrong

Stewart went on to say that NEF's key message is that we can't grow our way out of the current economic crisis, and there is an acute need for a change in values. Perhaps the arts can help?

And suddenly I got very excited. I was at the Earth Summit in Kyoto in 1997 and have watched with increasing horror as the decisions taken there have been eroded and ignored. But linking environmental catastrophe to economic disaster in clear simple terms rang true.

So at this time of great change and uncertainty what can we do?

We artists are communicators, practiced risk takers, flexible in approach, used to uncertainty, able to find flecks of gold in the dust, resilient, and led by idealist visions of life as it could be. The illusions we craft have been eclipsed by the extraordinary revelations about the global economy – which many of us suspected, but we had suspended our disbelief in order to exist within a society promising continuous growth and personal gain.

Now that has been exposed, and while people are desperately grappling to restore the status quo, it is time to empower more 'creatives' to think about the future in a new way. For the most part, artists offer alternative value systems in the way we conduct ourselves, our sense of community and idealism, working in parallel to values promoted by mainstream culture. These values, if identified and nurtured could assist in enabling the shifts that need to happen if we are to reduce consumerism and meet the environmental and economic challenges the world currently faces. We can also help manage processes unattached to outcomes: to find out how to get there.

I am deeply concerned that many artists have lost confidence in these abilities. The emphasis on business development has provided a boost to the sector, enabling artists and managers to communicate and operate more productively in the wider world. But the cornerstone of business, the banking sector, has now been exposed as greedy, merciless and completely unethical. I have long been sceptical about the imbalance this business focus has created in the arts, instead creating new layers of arts management which have helped to bury some of the intrinsic values of practising artists. We must champion the tremendous power that artists have, precisely because they choose to work against the status quo, offering different values, methodology and practice. That time is now and the need is urgent. Thank you Stewart Wallis.

For more on Stewart Wallis and the NEF, see www.neweconomics.org

I AM A CAMERA

MIRIAM KING REPORTS ON THE DANCE FOR CAMERA FESTIVAL 2008

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Since the demise of the Dance on Screen Festival at The Place, South East Dance's three-day event, Dance for Camera, is now the premiere 'screen dance' festival in the UK. Established in 1997, it is the longest running festival of its sort in Britain, featuring films from all over the world.

Rather than being part of the yearly Brighton Festival, Dance for Camera Festival has, since 2007, relocated into the excellent CineCity film festival. A great advantage of this move is the linked-up programming, for example with screenings and installations by the Brothers Quay, who were a feature of CineCity 2008. I particularly loved the Quay Brothers' stunning film *The Sandman*, presented under the auspices of Dance for Camera. Choreographed by William Tuckett, it brings together the interests of animation, sound design/music, film and dance. I shuddered (in a good way) at its atmospheric images. At the beginning, a wafting rear curtain, haunting shadows of staircases, silhouettes and scaffolding, and a brittle dancing doll. At the end, I gasped when from the lower frame of the shot, Death, like a darting silent shadow, steals up to smother the central character of the ailing man from behind the backs (literally) of his guardians.

South East Dance, who are now the lead organisation for screen dance in the UK, say that much of the work that they were drawn to this year was 'experimental', with 'a strong visual aesthetic', and 'truly pushing the envelope of what screen dance is'.

A SE Dance curated selection of films titled Experimental Perspectives drew a great crowd – but it was a disappointing selection. In my opinion, as an experienced curator of international festivals, very little of this work was genuinely experimental – notable exceptions being Clara Garcia Fraile's *The Importance of Being an Apple*, and Chirstinn Whyte and Jake Messenger's inspired *Vector Paths*. Indeed, much of the rest veered towards the bland aesthetics and unreconstructed view of the female body of the advertising industry – dull and tedious. Going by responses, this view was shared by many of the more experienced festival attendees, many of whom were artists working in this medium.

Another curated programme was by the Oska Bright Film Festival Selection. Oska Bright is an international film festival managed by (and featuring films by) learning-disabled artists and filmmakers, and their selection of films was popular and hugely enjoyable, as well as being of good quality. There was also a programme of films curated by young people aged 15–22, called Fresh Takes, which aimed to capture the attention of young people with a passion for dance, and anyone new to Dance for Camera.

A film which moved and impressed me was *Veterans*, about five young war veterans attempting to make peace with their military service, made by Margaret Williams and Victoria Marks and performed and co-created by veterans from the West Los Angeles VA combat rehab/post-traumatic stress disorder clinic.

Another memorable film was the documentary *Krishna's Dancer* by Dirk Hilbert and Kasturi Mishra. Personally, I'd have liked to have seen a fuller documentary section.

I appreciated the quiet moments, the space to reflect, as seeing so many films can be such an oversaturation. A comfortable room with a place to sit and view a retrospective of past South East Dance funded films / videos provided this. In a room next door, Billy Cowie's *The Revery Alone*, a projection of a quietly moving body on the ceiling, viewed through 3D specs whilst prostrate on the floor below, was novel and relaxing.

I enjoyed the Screen Dance Expanded Symposium, subtitled Distribution: Finance: Discourse. Distribution is a key issue for artists working in this medium – it's all very well making the work, yet what to do with it, where to show it? I can't help but feel there are more and more artists, dancers, choreographers and filmmakers who want to make Dance for Camera work, yet fewer and fewer opportunities for production and distribution.

I also enjoyed learning that the word 'curate' comes from 'to care': to take care and responsibility for the art you are showing and for how it is being presented (and represented).

IMAGE 1 | *THE FORGOTTEN CIRCUS*, A FILM BY SHELLY LOVE PRODUCED BY MJW PRODUCTIONS. PHOTO SOPHIA SCHORR-KON
IMAGE 2 | *THE REVERY ALONE* BY BILLY COWIE
IMAGE 3 | *VETERANS* - PHOTOGRAPHED, EDITED AND DIRECTED BY MARGARET WILLIAMS

SCREEN TO STAGE

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR LOOKS AT SCREEN WORK THAT INSPIRES OR INFORMS LIVE PERFORMANCE



On the final afternoon, filmmaker Shelly Love's Retrospective was a well-attended and enjoyable event. Her impressive body of work was created through the opportunity to develop her practice afforded by a Fellowship from The Place. How few opportunities there are to really submerge yourself; to follow what you feel passionately about, rather than have to adapt to fulfilling a brief! What an artist truly desires is time, space, facilities and the chance to research and communicate ideas.

So an enjoyable and full event, and plenty of good work seen – but as a well-seasoned Dance for Camera artist, curator and festival attendee, I found this festival had lots to offer newcomers, but could perhaps have offered a little more to established artists.

South East Dance's 11th edition of the annual Dance for Camera festival took place 5–7 December 2008, in partnership with the Lighthouse Digital Lounge, University of Brighton, and CineCity film festival.

For more information about Dance for Camera Festival and South East Dance, see www.southeastdance.org.uk

As I write, Steven Berkoff's *On the Waterfront* opens in London's West End (January 2009). Regardless of the merits of the piece (and I can't judge as I haven't seen anything more than one short excerpt at the Edinburgh Fringe last August), the question remains: why would a renowned physical theatre director bother to take a screen classic and rework it on the stage? Won't it always be viewed negatively in comparison to the original film?

In interview, Steven Berkoff has said that it's an everlasting story; and although the Lecoq-trained Berkoff views Brando's on-screen performance as 'a masterwork of body language' there are, in his opinion, other actors who can be as great in the part (including his own lead man, Simon Merrells).

Berkoff is not the only veteran of the physical/visual theatre world to look to screen classics as inspiration. Kneehigh's *Brief Encounter* took the original film (a romantic classic telling the story of an unconsummated extra-marital affair) and reworked it into a theatre piece set in a cinema (coincidentally also in London's Haymarket). The Haymarket cinema in London is, interestingly, where the film *Brief Encounter* premiered in 1946. Kneehigh's theatre show is often described as a 'site specific' piece, and without getting too much into definitions, it should be said that there was little in the performance that was specific to this site, and even as a 'site generic' piece that could work in any cinema, there was more that could have been done to really engage the site and the audience in the piece. That aside, what took place on stage was a good, solid bawdy-but-beautiful Kneehigh show – director Emma Rice using both the film's screenplay and the play it was based on, Noel Coward's *Still Life*, as her source material, and creating a show rich in visual imagery, live music, and physical action that is less a 'version of' than an 'homage to' David Lean's iconic film. What works particularly well is the integration of both the original film and new film footage into the live action: at one point, the whole of the back wall a great wash of crashing waves; at another point, the cuckolded husband from the film calling out 'Laura, where are you?' to the actress (Hannah Yelland) playing the lovelorn Laura in the show.

Also in London, south of the river at BAC, the award-winning 1927 were in residence during the midwinter season with their wonderful amalgam of live performance and on-screen animation, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*. The show is a kind of surrealist's take on morbid nursery tales – a series of vignettes about psychotic twin children, lonely lodgers, and murderous gingerbread men. There are some on-screen sections (by the company's filmmaker Paul Barritt and writer Suzanne Andrade) that can, and do, exist as screen shorts in their own right: an example being the terrifyingly funny *Manderlay*, in which Andrade announces, in a tone reminiscent of a 1950s BBC children's presenter, the disturbing dream-world story of star babies tormented by Brownies who have badges in 'illusion-shattering' telling them that 'they will never be a ballerina... and the tooth fairy has no face'.



In a terrible turn of events, we learn that they are not Brownies but Goat Men, and their leader is Tony Hart, who 'sketches a vision of hell in charcoal'. Our narrator wakes up 'with a taste of Morph' in her mouth. (And following the news of Hart's death, it is great to see the influence of the great designer and creator of *Vision On* living on, albeit as a monstrous character in a warped dream.) There are other sections of the show in which all the elements – live and screened – come together, with the terrible twin performers Suzanne Andrade and Esme Appleton creating live animation in interaction with Barritt's film, all accompanied on piano by the lovely Lillian Henley.

I was also lucky enough to see the very first 'scratch' of the new 1927 show, *The Fugue of Pazy Villycar*, presented in Snapshots: Creation & Play at the Manipulate Festival of Visual Theatre (Traverse, Edinburgh, February 2009). This features the extraordinary physical presence of Ambrose the Clown, both live and on screen. It was a marvellous beginning, with all the much-love 1927 features and a similar aesthetic to 'Devil', yet with a new narrative direction and this rather wonderful collaboration with Ambrose.

An interesting screen-to-stage project, currently playing online at www.theflophouse.co.uk and at the Komedia in Brighton in six monthly live events, is *The Flophouse* ('The TV series inside yr head'), created by filmmaker and musician Simon Wilkinson. It's hard to put a finger on quite what the Flophouse film is like – but think David Lynch meets Danger Man and that will give you some of the flavour. Each episode of the film (inspired by Steinbeck's cult novel *Cannery Row*) is broadcast monthly at the Komedia, and this way of creating a live event out of a film is interesting in itself; but of even more interest is that characters in the film – which include a talking teddy bear called Su-Zan, a pair of degenerate banjo-playing clowns, and a batty doctor who seems to have stepped out of the pages of a Victorian novel – turn up on stage in an anarchic cabaret that merrily mixes performance poetry, vaudevillian turns, live music, and puppetry. Even more interesting is that the live acts are now starting to influence the filmmaking which happens between the monthly live events – so it has become a kind of episodic, devised film.

The above are just a few examples of the many contemporary artists who are bringing screen to stage in interesting new ways. In all the debates over the years about whether live performance will survive the fast-paced development of film and other media, what seems rarely to have been acknowledged is that the history of cinema is a history of shared territory with live performance – each inspires and informs the other.

What's interesting at this point in time is the dawning realisation that there need not be any sort of contest between the two – and indeed that our definitions of 'live' and 'mediated' performance are being healthily challenged by artists who aren't happy to stay in one or other box.

IMAGE 1 | 1927'S BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COMPANY
IMAGE 2 | KNEEHIGH THEATRE'S BRIEF ENCOUNTER.
PHOTO ALASTAIR MUIR
IMAGE 3 | THE FLOPHOUSE.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SIMON WILKINSON



SCREEN TO STAGE – AND MORE

Stephen Berkoff's *On the Waterfront* can be seen at The Theatre Royal Haymarket, London. See www.trh.co.uk

Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter* by Kneehigh Theatre tours the UK this spring. Dates include: Northampton's Royal and Dengate, where it opens on 13 February 2009; His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen; The Lowry in Salford; and the Theatres Royal in Newcastle, Bath and Brighton. For full tour details see www.seebriefencounter.com which can also be accessed via Kneehigh Theatre's website at www.kneehigh.co.uk

For more on 1927 see www.19-27.co.uk To learn more about filmmaker Paul Barritt, and to view *Mandalay*, see www.paulbarritt.com

The Flophouse appears monthly at the Komedia in Brighton. The last of the six episodes is on 14 March 2009. Bookings: www.komedia.co.uk
The film can be viewed online at www.theflophouse.co.uk

OTHER COMPANIES OF INTEREST

Forkbeard Fantasy is a theatre and film company who have been touring their shows, films, exhibitions and special events since the mid-1970s. Their theatre shows combine comedy with special effects, wild mechanical sets, outsize characters and their unique trademark interactive mix of film, animation and cartoon live on stage. They also run short courses in numerous techniques, including filmmaking and editing, and two six-day residential summer schools in film & animation and its integration into live performance. These are held at their Devon workshop. See www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk

Station House Opera, who were founded in 1980, have developed many projects, nationally and internationally, that integrate live and screen action, including *Live From Paradise*, in which live and on-screen performance (from live-feed video transmitted over the internet) from three different places – in some cases, on three different continents – mix and mingle in simultaneous performance and transmission. See www.stationhouseopera.com

Faulty Optic have, since 1987, built up an impressive body of 'theatre of animation' work that integrates puppetry with live-feed video and animation. See www.faultyoptic.co.uk

Welsh artist/dancer/musician Eddie Ladd creates performance work inspired by, and in interaction with, film. Shows include: *Scarface*; *Once Upon a Time in the West*; *Bonnie and Clyde* and the Total Theatre Award-winning *Club Luz*. See www.eddieladd.com

DOGTROEP -

ELEGY FOR A DEARLY DEPARTED PERFORMANCE COMPANY

EDWARD TAYLOR SINGS THE PRAISES OF AMSTERDAM'S FINEST, WHO SHUT UP SHOP AT THE END OF 2008

RIP

Dogtroep were an Amsterdam based theatre company who started off creating wild street theatre of all shapes and sizes and who ended up specialists in large-scale site-specific work. At their peak they were one of the best outdoor theatre companies in the world.

They were formed in 1975 by a group of artists who were inspired by workshops led by Neil Hornick of UK performance-art pranksters Phantom Captain, and by the work of Welfare State International, with whom two of them had worked in the mid 70s.

They started off performing small street acts and gradually began to build these into larger, longer shows for bigger audiences. The shows had no overall narrative to them but juxtaposed small comic or grotesque acts with more abstract imagery, all underpinned by music. (They were playing Balkan music and Arabic music long before 'World Music' became a popular marketing term.) And they used a lot of fire...

Dogtroep augmented a core team of six with extra performers when on tour or creating a site-specific show. There were no divisions of labour – the performers made the objects, arranged and played the music, and devised the shows. They often made the instruments they played. Actors were not encouraged – the company wanted something that was wild in its effect, and definitely not refined. Their aesthetic was deliberately rough-and-ready in order to make them stand out from the look of most indoor theatre.

The company could literally knock together a show at very short notice. I worked with Dogtroep from 1981 to 1983 so let me give an example. In July 1983 we were touring in Germany. In Munchen Gladbach we were due to perform outside the town theatre. However it was lashing down, and so faced with having to cancel the show the company elected to perform in the theatre. In an afternoon they put together a script which transformed the various spaces of the theatre into a real journey of surprise for the audience. I've never seen such an extraordinary manipulation of different spaces. After experiencing an introductory performance in the foyer, the audience came into the auditorium to see a scene on the stage;

they were then taken to various spaces backstage, during which time the scene on stage was removed and other objects and effects were placed in the seating so that when the audience were led onto the stage the whole seating area was filled with a different performance. When they went back into the foyer it too had been transformed into another atmosphere and outside in the rain a brass band bid the, by now, completely disorientated audience farewell.

This kind of approach made them very popular throughout Europe – they made an incredible impact in Eastern Europe (this was before The Wall had fallen) where their free-wheeling imaginative approach caught the imagination of highly regulated societies. Vaclav Havel was a big fan when he was president of the Czech Republic. Allegedly, after one show he helped them load the van. I wonder if the Dutch street theatre festival circuit would be half as developed without them. When they toured France in 1982 the only street theatre we encountered were sentimental Pierrot Clowns and other romantic Saltimbanque characters.

Working in such an intense way is not possible to sustain for a long time and the company also wanted to develop deeper strands in their work as they felt it was all becoming superficial and effect-heavy. This was when they started to move away from relatively portable shows that took a few hours to build up, and moved into site-specific work with heavier objects and more elaborate technical needs. They also became incredibly popular, and the only way to deal with the audiences who wanted to see them was to create indoor theatre seating and to make shows that ran for a week or more. They created several iconic shows – one sold out the Carre (Amsterdam's largest theatre) for a month, and another was performed in a large dry dock which was opened up half way through the show to let the North Sea flood in. They toured all over the world and became an important cultural export for the Dutch government. As a result their government grant grew in size and as a consequence of all these factors the work got more and more technically ambitious and moved very far from its original roots.

Actors, technicians and musicians were also employed, signalling the end to the vernacular approach to making work. The original members gradually left, until only one remained.

In September 2008 Dogtroep performed their last shows. By all accounts the final years were not distinguished ones. The group had its government subsidy severely slashed, the board conspired to sack a lot of the freelancers as well as the last remaining founder member, the new artistic director had different ideas and I suppose it became impossible for them to live up to their reputation with the amount of money they were getting. The fact that a company that bore no relationship to the original versions was still working under the Dogtroep name was also hotly disputed – letters were written to the press about this. Their legacy still lives on in the wonderful experimental work of Warner & Consorten (formed over ten years ago by Warner Van Wely); the community music projects of Jos Zandvliet; and the subtle public installation work of Lino Hellings – all three being original founder members of the company.

RIP Dogtroep - you were bloody fantastic!

The company closed activities end of 2008 with the publication of a book and the release of a documentary film. Dogtroep - 33 Jaar Beeldend Theater is in Dutch, but we are assured that 'the language is of secondary importance, it's the images that count'.

Former Dogtroep member Udo Akeermann created the documentary film Everybody=Dogtroep about the history of Dogtroep and the future of many of the members that made up the artists' collective.

Book (in Dutch) and DVD (English subtitles) can be ordered at: www.lavapublishers.nl

IMAGE: DOGTROEP'S ONNO. PHOTO PAOLO RAPALINO

THE GYMNAST

IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE PHYSICAL, VISUAL, POETIC, POLITICAL THEATRE? JANE ARNFIELD THINKS SO



Throughout 1979 something happened to me as I watched the displaced and disenfranchised people of Cambodia on the BBC television news, Cambodia inserted itself into my thirteen-year-old consciousness where it has resonated ever since. My eyes were appalled by the devastation of war, the abandonment of a country and people, ending in genocide. For the first time in my life I felt a witness to atrocity.

*“On 17th April 1976 the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh. I had just celebrated my ninth birthday. Over the next four years I was able to complete all of my British Amalgamated Gymnastic Awards (B.A.G.A.), experience the unusually searing temperatures of the British Summer of 76 and collect 550 silver bottle tops for the Cambodia Blue Peter Appeal. In 1979 I witnessed Cambodian people crawling, rolling and collapsing over their border into the refugee camps of Thailand.” Excerpt from *The Gymnast**

Those images have stayed with me, and after working with David Glass on *The Lost Child Project* (all over South East Asia & South America but specifically in Cambodia) thirty years later, my childhood connections to the country resurfaced. Five years after that, after instigating a cultural exchange with the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in Phnom Penh, I devised a piece of theatre, *The Gymnast*, as a testament; a memorial inspired by those initial reactions to the BBC 1979 news report on the Cambodian genocide.

I am passionate about making theatre and always have been, ever since I received a birthday present called The Horse of the Year Show from my Father. I transformed that board game into a magical world where I could act out scenarios and play out conflicts as I made up individual stories for each plastic horse and rider. I would build these stories to dramatic climaxes and then play out resolutions, working them through until peace was finally restored in this world of make believe.

Somewhat unknowingly I had discovered theatre and found myself acting in the role of director, albeit with actors who were models and puppets. Internally something had slotted into place as I came into contact with the power, privacy and luxury of using the imagination, working through realities and dreams attempting to assemble all the parts helping me to make sense of the world I was living in.

I believe theatre is a place for the living, a forum where we are empowered and enabled, a place to discuss how to live. It is a living exchange a place in public to examine and excavate the world in its entirety.

In 1992 after a rigorous series of auditions I went to work with Volcano Theatre on a piece called *How To Live*, directed by Nigel Charnock. Sixteen years later I invited Nigel to collaborate on *The Gymnast*. Our working process divided up into three parts. The first consisted of sending Nigel anything I had on Cambodia – photographs, books, websites, and films. I then went to Cambodia on a research grant for a month as an artist in residence at DC-Cam. I emailed Nigel my experiences from Cambodia and a week after my return we went into a three-week rehearsal period where we constructed the piece. We had a wardrobe designed by Neil Murray. I had requested a wardrobe as I had read an extract from John Pilger’s essay *Year Zero* where he described seeing a child clambering out of a wardrobe lying on the street after the liberation of Phnom Penh. Nigel and I agreed that wardrobes held the potential appeal to be magical, a place to disappear and reappear, a place to play and explore, especially as this was a solo piece. In fact we struck a deal that if we were stumped for ideas I would just go inside the wardrobe and stay there, but it never came to that!

At the heart of the work lurked the idea that whilst the West was disco dancing, Cambodia went dark. This provided a symbolic starting point. All of the contemporary music in the piece was sourced from the period between 17 April 1975 and 7 January 1979 (Liberation Day) – those three years, eight months, and twenty days being the length of time that the Khmer Rouge held power.



The text came from fragmented Shakespeare soliloquies and my personal testimony as a child. It felt the only way to address the horror of the genocide – through the juxtaposition of epic language and a child’s point of view. As I had walked into DC-Cam I had seen a poster of two hands tied with a *krama* (a traditional Cambodian scarf). The hands were holding a skull. My first thought was of Hamlet and for some reason I had been playing about with the language and verse in Hamlet in an effort to look at the enormity of how an individual copes with grief. DC-Cam allowed me to use the image for the poster of *The Gymnast*. It was a real skull – an image from the forensic evidence used to verify the deaths during the genocide – and the original image had been used in a photographic exhibition at Toul Sleng, the killing centre of the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh.

Nigel and I dovetailed the work together as we made and rehearsed it. There were set choreographed sections to music, and text (originating from a trauma questionnaire I was given by DC-Cam whilst observing their work on gathering witness testimony). There were sections of ‘found text’: quotations from J F Kennedy recorded live; an original phone conversation between Nixon and Kissinger on the bombing campaign of Cambodia; and a ubiquitous French woman who talked of culpability and guilt. I now know she is the soul of the next piece of work, the second piece I intend to make drawing on Cambodia. We edited, dissected, ruminated and structured until the piece existed, then I spent five months up in Edinburgh rehearsing and refining the work we had constructed.

As a theatre practitioner I aim to concentrate on factual information, evidence, data, the gathering of witness and participant testimony. The Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam) offered me an opportunity to research *The Gymnast* working closely with Sophearith Choung and the Victims of Torture Project. In January 2008 I accompanied DC-Cam in their fieldwork as an artist-in-residence on a research grant funded by A-N (Artists Network) in England. I was privileged to be able to listen to survivors’ testimonies and this enabled me to write the script for *The Gymnast* whilst in Cambodia. Two particular survivors stood out because both wished to actively participate in the work I was making. The first was Bou Meng, one of the six survivors of S-21 prison whose last words in the interview were, “Tell the world our story”. The other was Sum Rithy, a survivor from a prison camp in Siem Reap. He gave me copies of drawings he had commissioned himself in order to lay witness to his experiences and talked me through his thoughts before, after, and during his incarceration by the Khmer Rouge.



It was after these interviews that I realised that I needed to make not just one, but several pieces of theatre over a longer period of time drawing on testimony, archived material and historical events and with the engagement of the people that DC-Cam have introduced me to. I want to share and disseminate as much testimony as possible, using theatre to transmute memory into a theatrical landscape allowing objective and subjective perspectives to be viewed and experienced by both participant and spectator.

This is not theatre as post-trauma therapy; my intention is to illustrate the participants’ experiences by stimulating debate through dramatic performance and written documentation to accompany it. Making *The Gymnast* was the building block in what I hope will be a longstanding relationship with DC-Cam. It has allowed me to engage with people who wish to speak about their experiences during the Cambodian genocide and the effects and the legacies of those events for the benefit of cultural debate and exchange. I feel it is important to acknowledge that I am based in England, but nonetheless that the work I am developing could contribute to the active and progressive artistic culture already present within Cambodia.

The Gymnast is written and performed by Jane Arnfield and produced by The Empty Space theatre development agency with the support of Arts Council England. Co-direction by Nigel Charnock, design by Neil Murray, music by John Alder and lighting by Malcolm Rippeth. For further details and future plans, see www.theemptyspace.org.uk

Jane Arnfield graduated from Dartington in 1988 and has worked as an actress ever since, as a member of three ensemble theatre companies: Method & Madness, director Mike Alfreds; Northern Stage, director Alan Lydiard & Erica Whyman; & The David Glass Ensemble. She has appeared at Shakespeare’s Globe London, playing Imogen in *Cymbeline*, opposite Mark Rylance and directed by Mike Alfreds.

CAN THEATRE CHANGE THE WORLD?

LUKE DIXON, DIRECTOR OF THEATRE NOMAD AND OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FESTIVAL, TACKLES THE THORNY QUESTION OF POLITICAL THEATRE

MONDE WANI *THE RIVONIA TRIAL*



The question at the heart of the International Workshop Festival's Acts of Resistance programme was: 'Can theatre change anything?' I believe that it can, that it should, and that all the best theatre is in some sense political.

In the UK we have what is perhaps a limited view of what political theatre might be – a crusading, issue-based type of work that was at the centre of the alternative theatre movement of the 70s and 80s, exemplified by companies like Belt and Braces and Brighton Combination with often direct, agit-prop styles of work. Other companies such as Welfare State International, from a similar political perspective, found theatrical manifestations in more poetic forms rooted in very English traditions of both dissent and performance.

We have no shortage of issues today but a paucity of issue-based performance troops. In putting together the programme for Acts of Resistance, we wondered why that might be. Perhaps it is a result of cynicism and a sense of impotence. The biggest demonstration in our nation's history was the 2003 march through London against the Blair government's plan to invade Iraq. Some two million people took to the streets in what was not just a protest but a huge, magnificent, colourful, vibrant piece of street theatre that moved and stretched for three and a half miles engaging those within it as both performers and audience.

Yet it changed nothing. If two million citizens engaged in a piece of street theatre can make no difference, then it is easy to see why professional and politicised theatre-makers are not engaging in such direct action in Britain today.

Around the world things are very different, with companies in Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle-East making work that is provocative, dangerous and genuinely a part of the political debate. I have worked with actors in South Africa who could only make their work in secret during the apartheid years, with a group in Sudan who have to keep an eye open for soldiers coming to break up their work, and with a Syrian writer whose work can only safely be read in secret.

PEN, the international writers' group of which the dearly departed Harold Pinter was so active a member, is constantly campaigning in support of writers imprisoned, tortured and killed for their words. It was PEN who supported the visit to Soho Theatre of the Belarus Free Theatre that was a catalyst to our Acts of Resistance project. The Belarusian theatre group featured are very far from free in their own country, and their work is a direct challenge to their government and a source of succour and inspiration to their audiences.

Those forms of direct political theatre may be currently unfashionable here in the UK,

but if we widen our idea of what political theatre is and what political theatre might be, then the current situation is richer than it has ever been. Never before has theatre given voice to so many. Theatre here has become genuinely liberated and gives a voice to individuals, groups and constituencies that until now have had little or no public voice, and who have now found that voice through theatre and performance.

That is perhaps especially true in the area of my own practice – sexual politics. We may not have a Gay Sweatshop or a Women's Theatre Group, but today the theatrical ecology is strong and rich enough to give a stage to the expression of sexualities and sexual politics in manifestations impossible to imagine just a decade ago. Issues of female empowerment with The Whoopee Club, gay representation at Duckie and transgender identity from Gendelicious all give voice to different sexual politics and to sexual differences while doing so through forms of popular culture, specifically working-class culture, that themselves have been marginalised, stifled even, by Britain's burgeoning middle-class arts establishment since the Arts Council was established 'by Royal Charter' in 1946. Perhaps the class war is being won on the stage of the Royal Vauxhall Tavern.

Luke is Artistic Director of International Workshop Festival www.internationalworkshopfestival.org and theatre nomad www.theatrenomad.com



YES WE CAN

PENELOPE DIMOND REFLECTS ON THE IWF'S ACTS OF RESISTANCE, HELD AT THE SOHO THEATRE, LONDON

So, can theatre change the world?

Acts of Resistance, a three-day event at Soho Theatre in September 2008, hosted by The International Workshop Festival, came with the tagline 'three days of agitation, propaganda, dissent, politics, argument, debate, revolt and revolution!'

It was set up to stimulate debate around the subject of 'political theatre', and to enable UK performers to meet and work with iconic figures in theatre from around the world – unashamedly 'political' theatre-makers who shared a desire to use their theatre to tell the stories they felt needed to be told.

The event was launched with two performances. First was an affecting short piece called *The Luckless Angel*, based on personal recollections of the Beslan atrocity, in which hundreds of children were held hostage, many of whom died when the building was stormed. The testimonies of women who had lost children in this terrible event are mixed with the poetry of Heiner Müller. Then came the powerful *The Rivonia Trial*, a one-man show performed with deadly comedic effect by the South African actor, writer and director Monde Wani.

A wide-ranging debate started that night that continued over the next couple of days. Day two saw an all-day workshop with Derek Uya Alfred, the founder of Kwoto, a campaigning cultural centre based in Khartoum, Sudan, formerly known as the Popular Theatre Group. Some 20 of us – actors, writers, dancers, directors – sat in a circle to hear his story. His journey to London from Khartoum had taken four days, thanks to setbacks such as sand storms and cancelled flights. First, he needed to tell us about Sudan – a country with massive land mass, 597 ethnic groups, and 100 languages which has been riven by civil war between the north and south for decades.

He set up Kwoto – the word denoting a talismanic stone – 14 years ago as a response to the camps full of displaced people who had fled their homes. The project's aim was to go into the camps to engage, empower and entertain people on the verge of desperation, some of whom had arrived as small children.

He told us how 400 people turned up to the first audition, from which 45 were chosen. The aim was to put on performances with a high level of physicality that would inform the audience about current events and issues affecting them. Three months training followed, involving singing, dancing and spoken text in their own diverse range of languages. For this company, putting on a performance starts with numerous hair-raising bus journeys. On arrival at a camp, the company sets about clearing a space and starting to engage the potential audience. This is performance in the open air, with no lights and no make-up – apart from the use of flour, which denotes happiness!

Derek Uya Alfred was inspiring about the power of theatre – the power of nothing more than a group of actors to effect a change in people's lives. An eloquent raconteur; thoughtful, funny, and persuasive on the reach of theatre.

In the afternoon, it was over to us to come up with ways of creating political theatre. Despite the big and challenging examples of the two shows and Kwoto, it became apparent that it was too easy to focus on the petty tribulations of life, the day-to-day niggles of public transport, say – instead of bigger issues such as the widening gap between rich and poor in Britain, or injustice overseas. After Kwoto, our ideas all felt a bit tame.

On the third day, the final discussion was hosted by Leon Rubin, head of East 15 acting school, who told us about his work at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast during 'The Troubles'. Jennipher Antoni (the young German theatre-maker whose work *The Luckless Angel* we had seen on the first evening of the event) spoke movingly about working on a show about campaigning journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was murdered in Moscow two years ago.

Some participants questioned the value of agit-prop theatre, seeing it as preaching to the converted. For me, witnessing the skilful telling of powerful stories – personal stories of suffering, resistance and triumph in Beslan, South Africa and Sudan – was a testament to the idea that theatre really can effect change.

Can we performers make a difference?

Yes, we can!

Acts of Resistance took place 25–27 September 2008 at the Soho Theatre, London, as part of International Workshop Festival 2008.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FESTIVAL 2009

Following on from Acts of Resistance, director Luke Dixon will be working with Congolese playwright Frederick Yamsangie on a trip to Southern Sudan and Eastern Congo, researching new work around ideas of borders and democracy.

In 2009, IWF will have a focus on sexual and ceremonial performance, and on site-specific events. Tantric sex, naked body prints, waltzing and wonderment are just some of the things planned, with a welcome return to the UK for Annie Sprinkle & Elizabeth Stephens for a week in residence at The Rotunda outside of Oxford. Every year Annie and Beth have a chakra colour-themed wedding and for 2009 the colour is blue. The Blue Wedding Week will also include recreations of Yves Klein's Anthropometries with live prints from the naked human body, and an open invite to artists to make subverted work for the final day wedding ceremony. Annie and Beth will also run a week of workshops around the creation of performance for rites of passage.

Through the rest of the summer, IWF are hosting an intensive mentoring project in the creation of site-specific work. See www.workshopfestival.co.uk



IN DUBLIN'S FAIR CITY

CASSIE WERBER ENCOUNTERS A WHOLE WORLD OF EMOTIONS AT THE DUBLIN FRINGE

The brochure for the 2008 Dublin Fringe nearly convinced me to make my first trip to Ireland, crammed as it was with interesting performative and visual happenings. Being handed the brochure by Wolfgang Hoffman – the festival's outgoing director – clinched the deal.

On arrival I discovered that the programme of events, though full, was not as well organised as it might have been, meaning that creating an exciting – and achievable – schedule was no easy task. I booked shows, shifted them, swapped them again to accommodate cancellations. My brochure became a scribbled-on record of my days in Dublin, as its margins filled with notes, and events were circled, crossed out and re-circled. Now, thick with ticket stubs and flyers, it's a memory map of some tantalising days.

Thursday night, streetlamps haloed by rain, I step off the airport bus. The Iveagh Gardens (renamed The Secret Garden for the festival) is busy, despite the weather, and the Spiegeltent – when I get inside for a dance with the Vertical Rhythm Club – is packed and brandy-warm. I spot Wolfgang on the dancefloor; damn, the man can move.

Friday morning, and the first show of the day, Rotozaza's *Etiquette*. I've heard about the piece but never participated in it, and it's delightful. More like a narrative game than a performance, I 'play' it with a stranger, and we share a series of small shocks, intrigues and emotions of surprising depth. The experience is woven together by a subtle, atmospheric voiceover, and feels much longer, and more significant, than its modest half-hour.

With lots of time until the next performance, I buy coffee and set off on an art wander, intending to see the city, and have a look at the visual art listed as part of the festival. The first gallery is hosting Skewville, a New York duo inspired by graffiti and the visual life of public space. Their signature piece is a pair of wooden sneakers laced together and tossed over powerlines.



It seems a neat and pleasing idea, but in this small commercial gallery, the work appears pedestrian and dull, a set of cartoon cityscapes painted on board.

I continue walking and, perhaps because I am now considering the question 'what is art?', notice an abseiler working on a church. So much depends on context. On stage, people strive for this kind of functional, nonchalant, but physically dextrous effect. On the street, on a workday morning, it's just life. The next venue I find is the Monster Truck Gallery, showing *IMMATATE*. The concept is that creative professionals – designer, architect, illustrator – come up against that same question – 'what is art?' – by making work for a 'fine art' space. That oh-so-persuasive brochure suggests that "if the gallery's erstwhile offerings are anything to go by, this show will be full of energy and verve, without doubt a must-see". It is a desultory experience, though, a sparse little collection including a rack of chewed lolly sticks, a tent called *Play*, and a blank canvas on which visitors are invited to paint. They have contributed a dispiriting selection of first names, flowers, and penises. A fly buzzes around the otherwise empty gallery; it also seems a bit sad.





Deciding that food will counteract melancholy, I make up an apparently simple mission, to find a wheat-free lunch. Despite Dublin having more cafés per square meter than just about any city I've ever visited – sometimes more than one café per square meter – this is not possible. Defeated, I buy a tuna wrap and more coffee, and, in defiance, eat half a scone that someone has left on the table. I'm not actually intolerant to wheat; though I am now feeling fairly intolerant to everything else.

Revived, I walk to Trinity College and – still with time to spare before my next show – find myself outside the Book of Kells exhibition, which I duck into. It's packed, and I wonder if all these people know there is a theatre festival happening in their city as well. The 384AD manuscript, like the Mona Lisa, is pretty, small, and poured over by too many people. The way out of the exhibition leads through the Long Library. It's my favourite thing since *Etiquette*. In 1860, having run out of shelf space, the architects planned an extension and, with a nice mix of mad magnitude and practicality, took the roof off and built upwards. The library, now two stories high, is lined with busts of famous men and, today, 17th century Dutch tulip catalogues, from a time when tulip mania briefly blossomed.

I walk out, past some Brazilian dancers who, brave in the bracing winds, are wearing only green feathers and bikinis. In the Samuel Beckett Theatre I settle down for *Moonflight* by Schindel Killius Dutschke. As the first voice begins to sing in the darkness, I think I'm going to like it, and I do. It's an odd mixture, a show about the moon, sparkling little moments of creativity strung loosely together. The Berlin-based trio don't seem overly concerned with narrative, or with 'making an impact', though there are some great story-telling moments, such as the tale of doomed first-dog-in-space, Laika. There are some blow-up objects, balls, musical instruments, and the piece is more of a long, freeform lunar riff than a traditionally structured show. When it finishes, I hope the lights will stay down, so that we can all hang out in the dark a bit longer. It's a magic place, after all.

I was looking forward to some dance, and watched *Bygones* by Ingun Bjornsgaard Prosjekt with interest, as poker-faced performers began their soft, sock-foot dance on the carpeted stage. The piece never took off, however, and the tropes of falling, being caught, undressing, and mainly maintaining an impassive exterior lacked the zeal to mask what felt like derivative ideas. *Rhythmic Space* by Irish Modern Dance Theatre had more verve, and perhaps more originality, but also lost itself, and its audience. This was more of an open rehearsal than a performance; but I would have been much more interested to see a real rehearsal than this half-way house, a mixture of vitality and meandering. There were some children watching, their reaction a perfect Richter-scale of how much the performance moved its audience; they were delighted, engaged, then confused, then disinterested. Not so much earthquake as tremour of potential.

Other interesting moments included *Love 2.0*, well-performed new writing a little too close to the depressing end of bleak; the satisfying combination of great costumes, dancing, and cake found at Ragroof Theatre's *Shall we Dance*; a variety of odd interactions with strangers at Eric Davis's *Red Bastard* [reviewed elsewhere in this magazine]; and a 4am start for the airport bus. An odd mixture of beauty and disappointment, of boredom and glee – two days in Dublin might not sound like a long time, but it provides a lot to think about.

Dublin Fringe 2008, the last one under the artistic directorship of Wolfgang Hoffman, ran 6–21 Sep 2008.

The Dublin Fringe 2009, under the direction of Róise Goan, is now open for business. Applications are invited from artists wishing to take part in the September 2009 festival, which will be at various venues and public spaces throughout the city.

Director Róise Goan says: 'This year we are looking for artists across all disciplines to imagine Dublin with a new vision for the time we live in; to be brave, bold and uncompromising in their engagement with the cultural, social and physical landscape of the city and to once again invigorate, investigate, challenge, defy, excite and inspire its audience.'

Closing deadline for applications is Friday 3 April at 6pm. For full details and an application pack, see www.fringefest.com

IMAGE 1 | BASTIEN AND BASTIENNE - PEACE OFFERING
 IMAGE 2 | ROTOZAZA - ETIQUETTE
 IMAGE 3 | IRISH MODERN DANCE THEATRE - RHYTHMIC SPACE
 IMAGE 4 | SCHINDEL KILLIUS DUTSCHKE - MOONFLIGHT

LOOKING FOR THE EMPTY SPACES

EILON MORRIS OFFERS SOME INSIGHT INTO THE THEATRE ENSEMBLE TRAINING PIONEERED BY JOHN BRITTON

What constitutes an ensemble? A name? A shared space? A repertoire? A performance ideology? In the work of John Britton, who runs the MA in Ensemble Physical Theatre at the University of Huddersfield, 'ensemble' is a collective process that is engaged through rigorous training and a commitment to a shared set of 'psychophysical' principles.

I began work with John Britton around ten years ago in Melbourne Australia where we were exploring ensemble practice with a group called the Quiddity Ensemble, an offshoot of Quiddity Theatre. This encounter forced me to rethink many of the paradigms that had underpinned my performance practice up to that point. The focus of the work was not on creating a particular aesthetic or performance style, but rather on confronting the basic task of inhabiting a performance space and sharing that space effectively with other performers. Essentially there were no performance tricks or skills that could help me achieve this seemingly simple task. In the end it came down to a basic commitment to return to the work again and again, with a willingness to encounter both myself and the rest of the ensemble, afresh and in the moment, each and every time.

The work developed through the Quiddity Ensemble went on to form the basis of Britton's approach to ensemble training. Influenced by the work of Australian/American improvisation teacher Al Wunder and drawing on the psychophysical laboratory traditions of Meyerhold and Grotowski, Britton's work exists in a unique position, offering actors a set of tools to access ensemble practice, without imposing stylistic and ideological constraints.

In 2007 I was part of the first group to undertake the MA in 'Ensemble Physical Theatre: Training and Performance'. The course examined questions at the heart of contemporary psychophysical training and ensemble theatre through practical research, intensive ensemble training, theoretical contextualisation and independent study.

THE ENSEMBLE

As actors weave through the training studio, each following their own trajectory, they listen and look for the pattern that links them together. Britton reminds them: 'Look for the empty spaces or the spaces that are about to become empty.' This is both an exercise in developing peripheral awareness and a working model of the ongoing search for living ensemble.

Ensemble here is not an anonymous collection of bodies, all moving in perfect synchronicity, but something more organic; a gathering of individuals listening and responding to one another. Ripples of energy pass through the room, attentions waver, and steps shift in and out of sync. The moments when the group connects are perfectly clear from within the exercise and to an observer. In these moments time and space take on a rhythmic quality that is at once dynamically energised and vastly expansive. Ensemble is realised in these ephemeral instances. This ensemble is constituted by both its individuals and the spaces between them.

WHAT TRAINING PRINCIPLES INFORM THE ACTOR'S DAILY WORK?

The training principles John Britton works from act as a set of keys, allowing the individual to access a common space or understanding shared with other ensemble members.

Pleasure: Performers are encouraged to begin their work from a place of personal pleasure. Britton is clear that: 'this does not mean that a performer only does what they like, it means that they search for what they like in what they must do'. An active and personal search for pleasure guides an individual to access deeper personal engagement with their performance tasks, and also helps her/him find new ways of revisiting difficult or personally challenging material.

Psychophysicality: The mind and body are a holistic unit. Through engaging in work that is both physically and mentally demanding the performer can come into contact with personal blockages and performance

habits. Once a performer is aware of these psychophysical patterns, they can challenge, develop or change the way they engage with physical work. They can direct their actions and reactions as appropriate in each performance situation.

Task: The ability to define the specifics of each performance task and the discipline to attend to these tasks are the primary requirements of much of Britton's training and performance work. This work does not begin with a search for meaning, performance concepts, or emotional states; instead it focuses on the details of the immediate tasks from which meaning, spontaneity and emotion are able to grow. The work becomes richer not through the complexity of the tasks, but through the layering and embodiment of a collection of simple tasks.

TWO DOMAINS

Britton's training practice asks the individual to identify two performance domains. 'The first is their internal landscape – the processes of their mind and body, over which they can come to exercise some control. The second is the world outside of themselves, which they can influence but not control...

Through training exercises and group improvisation the performers develop an awareness of these domains. They explore means of articulating their own impulses so they can be read by others, and find effective ways to respond to impulses received from other performers and the performance environment.

The heart of the emphasis on impulse is Britton's passion for ensuring that performers genuinely connect and performance is genuinely 'live' in the moment of its execution.

Eilon Morris is an actor and percussionist currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Huddersfield, exploring the Embodiment of Musicality in Acting. For more details on courses and workshops at the University of Huddersfield go to www.hud.ac.uk/mh/drama For more information about John Britton's work, please go to www.quidditytheatre.com

IMAGE: MA ENSEMBLE PHYSICAL THEATRE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD. PHOTO MICHAEL THRESHER



ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

THE CANNY GRANNY PRESENTS AN IDIOT'S GUIDE TO THEATRE GAMES

I was watching some university theatre students run workshops about children's theatre. They played children's games. Theatre games are different to children's games: a theatre game gives you a new skill (such as finding keys with your eyes closed – always helpful when zigzagging back from a few hands of bridge on a Friday); create some dynamism within the group (being able to fire back quick responses – though this skill got me actually strangled in Peckham Morrison's, so hesitancy has its place); and generally set you up for life (with a phobia about standing in a circle).

But games can also provide structure for performance that offer an alternative to the traditional dramatic arc. I paraphrase charismatic writer David Gale, compere of the *Peachy Coochy Nite*. (Tight underpants, long corridors... these things have one thing in common: the strictures of parameters give rise to great things.)

Peachy Coochy events consist of 20 still images, 6 minutes and 1 microphone – I watched a host of them at Riverside Studios. Ursula Martinez read emails from the sleazy men who emailed her after her 'where's the hanky?' strip routine was posted on YouTube; Wendy Houston gave an encyclopaedic introduction; Anthony Hampton of Rotozaza described an impossible performance involving a conveyor belt made of turf; and Lois Keidan gave her own history of live art through the genealogy of audience members. It was intelligent and irreverent, and made my hair stand on end. I didn't need to get it set that week.

David's is a good definition. But tight underpants should also come with a fertility warning. In Station House Opera's *Mind Out* (Battersea Arts Centre), each actor gives instructions for one other actor's action, leading to a wonderful dissociation between speech and behaviour (or body and mind). It sparkles with humour when five people collectively make a cup of tea, but after half an hour we begin to wonder whether we might be allowed to go to a different corner of the yard (the bar) and play something else (sherry).

When parameters are exploited to ever-greater effect, we start to predict the shape of a piece and feel clever. Third Angel's *Presumption* (Southwark Playhouse) is a post dinner-party conversation between a couple – only they are persistently interrupted by the need to go and get the furniture that's missing from the stage, gradually building the immovable Ikea edifice of their relationship. It builds and builds, until all the colour-co-ordinated books to fill a bookshelf are being hurled onto the stage, and caught, and stacked by the woman (played by Lucy Ellinson).

So I found myself in the disabled toilets of the Southwark Playhouse. Seeing a show, actually, cheeky! I'm not that infirm yet. I was lured to sit on a towel and listen to Emily Smallwood's life story on headphones, whilst she put the lights off and rubbed another audience member's back. Then she recorded our personal stories. Meanwhile a couple seemed to be breaking up in one of the other toilet cubicles – I interacted through my own performance in a neighbouring cubicle (I couldn't help it, I was desperate). These were part a scratch night of interactive theatre organised by Glue, in which they ask: what is a meaningful interaction? It is the opposite of Quiz Call on ITV.

And of course there are the Shunt lounges. Shooting a man in Action Hero's *A Western*, in which the invitation to move around was key to one audience-member's enjoyment: 'He had permission', writes James Stenhouse. At Shunt I also paid a fee to try to catch as much money as I could in a room with a man wielding a leaf blower; and then emerged with a fistful of Burmese currency feeling heartbroken about the surreality of currency. It was worth less than my pension. In another room, on another night, a woman played a silent upright piano where the keys triggered different lightbulbs. It was beautiful, not so much for the game, but just for the fabulousness of the toy.

Gosh, what fun and games theatre can be, who would have thought it?
Now, back to the bridge.



MORE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

For more on Peachy Coochy Nites see www.artsadmin.co.uk/projects

Shunt Lounge programme can be found at www.shunt.co.uk

For Southwark Playhouse Secrets see www.spsecrets.co.uk/clues.htm

The Twilight Club at The Basement in Brighton is a regular evening of interactive games, installations and performances. See www.thebasement.uk.com or www.thetwilightclub.co.uk

The Fun Fed, led by Games Mistress Lucy Baker, offers structured game-playing and promises 'joy, upliftment and laughter for adults'. www.thefunfed.com

Further on:

Presumption by Third Angel:

www.thirdangel.co.uk

Action Hero: www.actionhero.org.uk/

Glue: www.gluehq.co.uk/home.html

Emily Smallwood's Blue Intervention

project: www.newworknetwork.org.uk

Ursula Martinez:

www.ursulamartinez.com

Lois Keidan at LADA:

www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/biogs.html

Anthony Hampton and Rotozaza:

www.rotozaza.co.uk

Mind Out by Station House Opera:

www.stationhouseopera.com

Canny Granny is written by Laura Lloyd

IMAGE 1: STATION HOUSE OPERA - MIND OUT
IMAGE 2: ACTION HERO - A WESTERN

LONE TWIN TIMES TWO



THERON SCHMIDT FINDS THAT THE LIVE ART AND THEATRE MANIFESTATIONS OF LONE TWIN ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

'You may wonder why I'm here,' announces Clare Catchpole, Project Administrator at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, before a small crowd who has just been led into her shared office. And a little while later in the Barbican Centre's green room, Andy Williamson makes the same speculation, 'You're probably wondering why I'm here.' Cycle courier Roger Ramjet, his bike screeching to a halt just short of the same crowd, doesn't put this thought into words, but his visible nervousness and trembling voice suggest that he, more than the others, might be wondering why he's here.

The reason why all three are here is because they answered an ad that had been posted all around the Barbican Centre addressing 'members of the public with something to say' with the invitation to 'speak your mind'. The project *Speeches*, by UK theatre company Lone Twin, paired those who responded to this ad with a professional speechwriter. In the end, nine participants prepared individual speeches to be given in distinct locations around the Barbican, with audiences getting to see and hear three of them in one guided tour.

The three speeches that I attended were delightful and heartwarming autobiographical fragments: Clare's journey from teenage Beatle-maniac to project worker inspiring young people with music; Andy's series of nearly unbelievable coincidences that led him back to the Barbican; and Roger's stories of high-speed adventure and the secret codes of London's streets. These are entertaining, uplifting stories, and it feels like a privilege to get insight into the speakers' struggles and triumphs. And though they seem confident enough not to need our support, without an audience these speeches would mean nothing – so it's the feeling that we are there to support them which seems like the source of the most warmth. This is why we are here.

In many ways, *Speeches* has a shadowy other half in the theatre show *Daniel Hit By A Train*. This is the second production by Lone Twin Theatre, a distinct strand of work from Lone Twin's duo work and public projects, and is part of a planned trilogy to be presented at the Barbican in 2010. As with *Speeches*, *Daniel Hit By A Train* presents a series of narrative accounts of the lives of real people – except that these stories are limited to one moment in those lives, the moment of death. Inspired by the Watts Memorial in London's Postman's Park, *Daniel Hit By A Train* recounts the stories of 53 people who died while trying to save the lives of others from drowning, burning, freezing in the ice, being run down by horses, and, yes, being hit by trains.

The material is heartbreaking: most of the stories are tales of failure, as more often than not both the hero and the victim are killed, and the situations seem so desperately inevitable.

Of course houses catch fire. Of course children get lost. Of course rivers flood. But the performance maintains a frenetic energy of forced cheer that never allows for gloom to descend. In song, and in dance, and in the incessant beating of a drum, the show goes on. 'It's big. It's bad. It's breathtaking,' one performer announces at the top of the show while pounding away on his drum, and the whole way through there's an explicit tension between the poverty of the performers' simple representations, presented as grand spectacle, and the deep pathos of what they depict. 'This may look like a little dance to you,' one performer says, 'but it's not. It's a man running into a burning house.' The contradiction between the dire predicaments of the narratives and the performers' highly theatricalised mode of presentation makes the whole experience both exhilarating and excruciating, both delightful and horrible.

'Who in here is burning?' our narrator asks, looking around the room at all of us gathered together. 'Who ran into the burning building? Who jumped into the river?' Eventually one of the other performers volunteers him or herself. 'I did. I jumped into the river,' and we hear his or her story. But we are all implicated in these questions, and indeed in the very setup of the show. If I left *Speeches* feeling good about why I was there, I left *Daniel Hit By A Train* with a more complex and irresolvable feeling, wondering why, indeed, I am here, sitting in the dark, listening to sad stories of heroic selflessness told by cheerful actors. This is skillful, provocative, and thoughtful work.

Lone Twin's Speeches seen at BITE, Barbican Centre, London, September 2008; and Lone Twin Theatre's *Daniel Hit By A Train* at Chelsea Theatre, London, October 2008
www.lonetwin.com



**FORCED ENTERTAINMENT
SPECTACULAR
RIVERSIDE STUDIOS, LONDON
NOVEMBER 2008**

In *Spectacular*, Forced Entertainment have us by the short and curlies. We squirm in our seats, sometimes laughing, sometimes wondering when we can escape. It's a show about death and playing dead; about 'corpsing' on stage versus taking the moment; about the 'if only' part of ourselves that is constantly craving what could have been or might have been, living in a permanent state of subjunctive longing. One character (Claire Marshall, in day clothes) 'dies' on stage, over and over again – with various degrees of drama, melodrama, underplay, and overplay – whilst the other character (Robin Arthur, in a fancy-dress skeleton suit) commentates, cogitates, ruminates and speculates on the situation he finds himself in – onstage in a performance that is somehow not going as expected. Where are the marabou-clad dancing girls? The orchestra? The warm-up comic? Absent without leave – we have just the man in the skeleton suit to take us on the theatrical journey, upstaged continuously by his 'dying' colleague. *Spectacular* builds on many of the visual/physical motifs and lines of theatrical enquiry of previous Forced Entertainment work, but also – surprisingly – has the feel of a Beckett play.

Robin Arthur's performance is a masterful portrayal of an 'unreliable narrator'. Just who is he and why is he on a stage? We despise his pathos and resigned disappointment; his humming and ha'ing; his down-the-pub storytelling tone. We love him for his raw sadness. He's there because he's representing us – poor holy souls loitering in limbo; somehow making do with what we've got while we wait for the final curtain to fall.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



**STATION HOUSE OPERA
MIND OUT
BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE, LONDON
OCTOBER 2008**

Mind Out certainly lives up to its title. In Station House Opera's latest piece, five performers occupy the minds and thoughts of each other to a level never before seen! They each take control over the actions and dialogue of one of their fellow performers. Sounds simple. But in the hands of Station House Opera – a company with decades of experience, who have made a name for themselves as challengers of theatre and performance conventions – this turns into a supremely complex performance which is often hilarious, sometimes brilliant, and always impressively delivered.

The five performers occupy a near-empty room and direct each other to perform a range of mundane tasks. As the piece builds, these eventually turn into malicious and violent outbursts – Tom Bowtell attempting to hang himself from a rope, and an ice-cream cone thrown smack at the wall top the bill for me.

Director Julian Maynard Smith has created an intricate set-piece which is performed charmingly and delicately throughout. Ultimately, though, the piece doesn't pack the punch it sets up for itself in the first two-thirds. As tensions and ridiculous situations grow, the idea of psychological manipulation develops but never amounts to much more than a very clever and excellently executed game.

What is lacking is the group's breaking of their own rules in order to really question how people influence and control one another. A great premise which needs to be pushed to another level in order to reach the dizzying emotional punch overall which it potentially could, and which its comedic elements do so well.

TERRY O'DONOVAN



**ONTROEREND GOED
ONCE AND FOR ALL WE'RE GONNA TELL YOU
WHO WE ARE SO SHUT UP AND LISTEN
BAC, LONDON
OCTOBER 2008**

Ontroerend Goed established themselves as a company to watch with *The Smile Off Your Face*, which took its audience individually on a disorienting journey. Now they return with a piece which exploits a conventional theatre space to even greater white-knuckle effect.

Amassing onstage thirteen appealing young whippersnappers who, over the course of an hour, play, fight, dance, make out, get messy, and speak with (apparent) candour about their lives, *Once and For All...* is ostensibly about the elusive world – transparent yet hermetic, ubiquitous yet inaccessible – of the misunderstood teen. But the genius of this production is that actually adolescence is merely the perfect pretext for a piece that's asking profound questions about performance itself, and the tension between artifice and authenticity that's both a basic faultline in theatre and an ongoing murmur in every teenage heart.

From early on, when the piece reveals its opening images of all-out chaos to have been meticulously choreographed, *Once and For All...* is endlessly confounding; every time I feared it had lapsed into cliché, it turned out to be way ahead of me, right through to a final scene which seemed woefully misjudged as it began, but unfolded into one of the most rapturously lyrical things I've ever seen. The energy and the smart, angry zeal of this show may require certain oclusions – some kinds of teenager are nowhere on this map – but its ingenuity and intelligence are awesome, acutely indicating in passing how the most radical form of audience participation often is, exactly, to 'shut up and listen'.

CHRIS GOODE



**SLUNG LOW
HELIUM
THE PIT, BARBICAN
SEPTEMBER 2008**

The audience is greeted in the foyer by boiler-suited removal (wo)men from Helium Removals. My guide is the cheerful Lucy and so begins our short individual journey through the worlds, sounds and sights of Max, Bella and the Grotesque.

Lucy guides me from room to room; rough hewn boxes, like packing crates on the outside which open to reveal carefully crafted world where we can be invisible eavesdroppers on key moments in Max's life. From his study to his deathbed, we follow Max as the final segments of his life unfold – spliced with his memories.

Set, sound and video are the dominant elements, and combine particularly well as we go on a bombing raid over Dresden with a young Max. Occasionally *Helium* falters, but there is a sense we're being looked after and there's a care in the crafting of the spaces that other, more high-profile, companies could learn from.

There's a danger with the weight of expectation that comes with winning The Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award, which places often inexperienced companies under a high level of critical scrutiny. Slung Low's carefully crafted world disarms and charms. Whilst there are problematic moments, this is genuinely good work which could never be made by an emerging company in today's funding climate without the help of such an award.

As I walk out into the concrete jungle I am cheered to know that I'm carrying a gift of a helium balloon in a box with my name on it – a gift just like Bella received every year from her grandfather. And I smile.

MATT BALL

LA MACHINE



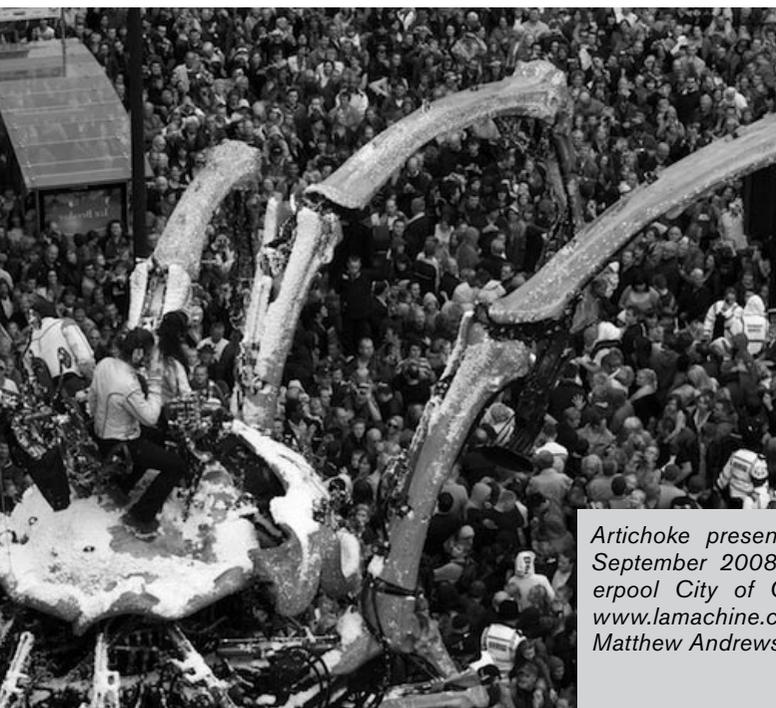
BECCY SMITH ON THE ARRIVAL OF A SPIDER PRINCESS IN LIVERPOOL'S CITY CENTRE



As one who missed out on the May 2006 visit to London of *The Sultan's Elephant* (I was on crutches at the time and challenge any doubter to explore London's public transport system with such a disability), I approached Artichoke's latest large-scale street art collaboration – this time with French company La Machine – with a feeling of awed expectation. That this was not fulfilled by my experience of La Machine as the centrepiece of Liverpool's City of Culture programme was not entirely the fault of the artistic team. Poor planning in terms of accessibility and transport links meant that thousands of us were squashed into narrow, deep viewing locations or staging posts where visibility was hugely limited, and getting in and out of the city that day was a complete nightmare. The secrecy surrounding the project central to its PR surely didn't extend to the organisers of the project to prevent them legislating for some of these difficulties?

But the issues surrounding the events were not limited to its practical framing. La Machine herself (a 50-foot spider called La Princesse) was an impressive creation, all taut steel and creepily angled joints, and her revelation on the side of the building one Friday morning undeniably smacked of panache (although perhaps they could have thought of a more organic way to get her down than by crane?). But overall, the production felt ill thought out. The aesthetic integration of performers within her (each sat on one hydraulic leg, controlling its range of movements using large levers) less satisfying than the presence of the Lilliputian-styled animators who crawled all over the elephant and little girl figures two years previously, diminishing our sense of the spider as an independent character that seemed to be required by the overarching narrative. And the narrative was less clear, less compelling. Was La Machine a threat or a benign visitor? The only way to really understand the proposed narrative was to read the online gloss.

I admired the scale and aesthetic of this production (especially the musicians on cranes, sadly their music too high for us to be able to really hear) but did the experience live up to the hype? It was disappointing to feel that the marketing and PR of a performance intended to celebrate the large-scale live event should so overshadow the thoughtfulness and experience of the real performance.



Artichoke presented La Machine in September 2008 as part of the Liverpool City of Culture celebrations. www.lamachine.co.uk All images by Matthew Andrews.



SANKAI JUKU

SANKAI JUKU
KINKAN SHONUN / TOKI
SADLER'S WELLS, LONDON
NOVEMBER 2008

Classic butoh by the master Sankai Juku company at Sadler's Wells: *Kinkan Shonun* is from 1978, while *Toki* is relatively recent (2005). To watch Sankai Juku is to be immersed in a wholly other world. A world that is visually stunning, filled with stylised movements, hidden meanings, hierarchy and ritual.

Kinkan Shonun saw the emaciated semi-naked dancers go through a series of seven scenes. Highlighted images rise out of a sea of dark strange dreams, where one felt that everything should make sense, but nothing does: a soldier, dishevelled, dusty, conjuring pictures of desolation and war, playing between rigid machine-like movements and intense softness, manically eats sand; four masked men with half-destroyed faces wind across the stage in sinuous homo-erotic movements; two dancers wrestling tenderly move up and down, open mouths a few inches apart; a stunted dwarf-like figure, smiling, moving across the stage as though doing a clown routine; a peacock (live) is danced with and released (and remains, wandering aimlessly and ignored, on stage the whole show).

After a while it takes a lot of concentration to stay with it, and when the fabulous ending image comes, a man hanging upside down from a red triangle against a blue background with six bowed figures in front, it is a great relief!

In *Toki*, which featured a visually stunning set of pillars, the ritualistic element was heightened. The master Ushio Agamatsu's solo, with its cramped supplicating repetitive gestures had a beautiful ending as a wave of cloth followed him off stage, an image worthy of the great Lindsay Kemp.

PHILIP BEAVEN

HOFESH SHECHTER
UPRISING / IN YOUR ROOMS
PLAYHOUSE, OXFORD
SEPTEMBER 2008

Hofesh Shechter is the man of the moment in contemporary dance – with a couple of high profile commissions and TV work under his belt he is a genuine crowd pleaser and rightly so. This, his first full UK tour, brings together his two most recent stage works: *Uprising* and *In Your Rooms*.

Uprising (2006), the more succinct work, has a taut masculinity. It evokes the dangerous and exhilarating side of brotherhood, as seven be-socked male dancers scoot across the floor like chimpanzees off hunting, or lock heads like young rams. *In Your Rooms* (2007) expands the exploration of community as eleven dancers rail at their boundaries and indulge or fight their instincts. But in expanding its remit, it also loses something of its clarity of purpose and where *Uprising* pursues a direct line, in comparison, *In Your Rooms* feels in need of a more solid direction – though as an experience both are fabulous.

Shechter's strengths lie in the fantastically kinaesthetically arresting vocabulary he generates and the colliding rhythms and patterns in which he sets it. Both pieces have a strong sense of an adolescent frustration with the world, which gives the work real force. But there are moments where the work feels less assured, particularly when the social context of each piece is bought to the fore, in part due to the 'acted' interactions imposing on the established tone but also in some over-simplified and oft-used contemporary dance images that feel like shorthand for something that could be more interesting. Regardless though, Shechter has bought a much needed verve and passion to contemporary dance creating an exhilarating and dynamic pair of works.

TOM WILSON

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY
CRWDSPCER / XOVER / SPLIT SIDES
BARBICAN THEATRE, LONDON BITE
OCTOBER 2008

In 1993's *CRWDSPCER* hive-like behaviour and androgyny overtakes the dancers. Set to what sounds suspiciously like music from an 80s computer game, the dancers are a machine with an unknown purpose; gliding insects performing choreographed confusion.

The next piece, and a new co-commission for this year's BITE festival, is *XOVER* – probably the weakest piece of the night, yet in some ways, the most expressive of Cunningham's oeuvre. The movement is slower and more pronounced, the music two John Cage works from 1958, and the costumes are simple white pieces designed by Robert Rauschenberg. But despite such heritage, something doesn't quite gel. The audience aren't transported to the places to which Cunningham can so often lead.

As if to remind us how it's done, the final piece of the night, *Split Sides*, is utter magic.

A BITE commission from 2004, the conceit of the piece is that there are two sets of lighting, décor, choreography, music and costume, and the order of each of these different elements is determined by throwing dice before the piece begins. In less skilful hands, such a technique could be gimmicky, but here, where each of the ten distinct elements are so strong (special note must be made of the music from Sigur Rós and Radiohead), we could probably encounter each in a fixed sequence and still be transfixed.

Over the last 70 years, Merce Cunningham has rightly garnered monumental status in the worlds of dance and performance. It will be a sad day when the fear accompanying each of his visits to London – that it will be his last – becomes a reality.

TIM JEEVES



TRESTLE LOLA

TRESTLE / INCREPACIÓN DANZA
LOLA
RIVERSIDE STUDIOS, LONDON
OCTOBER 2008

Trestle were once the country's premier mask company, making work at the forefront of the growing visual theatre movement of the 80s and 90s. In recent years, the company has relaunched as a kind of unmasked all-things-to-all-men, clinging to the physical / visual heritage, whilst embracing new writing, stating a desire to create 'culturally diverse' work, and dabbling in whatever theatre forms and practices take their fancy (a touch of the Grotrowski heritage here; a dash of Indian Kalari there).

In *Lola* the form explored is flamenco dance, and the vehicle for this the true-life story of 19th century Spanish dancer and 'adventuress' Lola Montez (born as the Irishwoman Eliza Gilbert). Apparently, despite her fame, her dancing skills left something to be desired...

There is an intrinsic problem here, a dramaturgical conundrum: how to portray someone who was not the greatest dancer, yet so mesmerising that she convinced everyone who saw her that she was, conquering hearts around the world. The only hope would have been to find an actress-dancer who had the star quality of Lola herself – and although Georgina Roberts is a lively and competent performer, she can't live up to the expectation placed upon her.

But she does her damndest in a feisty and fast-paced piece. She's joined onstage by renowned flamenco guitarist Ricardo Garcia, whose low-key but perfectly pitched performance is one of the joys of the production; and by Fiona Putnam who multi-tasks as Lola's Irish sister, and as some of her many famous lovers including composer Franz Liszt and the mad, bad King Ludwig 1 of Bavaria.

Competent contemporary devised theatre, but the earth did not move.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR

CONTRADICTIONARY STATE

ROBERT AYERS WITNESSES GOAT ISLAND BID FAREWELL TO NEW YORK CITY



Where would contemporary performance art be without Goat Island? – Or new dance, or theatre, for that matter?

Founded in Chicago in 1987, they've been going for so long that they stretch the sense of that word 'contemporary', and the impression that they've left on audiences around the world, not to mention the influence that they've had on other artists, has been enormous. I first saw their work in the spring of 1991, and since then I have seen all of their performances. So I was as unsettled as anyone when they announced that their ninth performance – it came to have the entirely appropriate title *The Lastmaker* – would be their last. In November 2008 they came to PS122 for what would be their last New York performances, and I found myself reflecting not only on what makes their work so special, but on what their work actually is. After all, having seen so much of it, I shouldn't find it difficult to describe.

Goat Island's work has always been marked by precision, by intelligence, and by a charming self-awareness. Nothing gets in to the final form of a performance that doesn't belong there. Their work is post-modern, and it takes none of the devices of performance for granted: when a microphone is used it is rarely simply to provide amplification, it has 'meaning'. Similarly the position and arrangement of the audience is rarely taken for granted. Goat Island's work sits where movement-based performance meets dance. There is acting in their work, but there is also the execution of tasks, impersonation, mimicry, and something that I can only call 'behaviour'. There are jokes, there is absurdity, the use of ridiculous props, and occasionally something very close to slapstick.

But the irony of trying to describe their work like this is that, in its conception at least, there is clearly nothing that is off-limit. To this extent, *The Lastmaker* was typical. Anything can get in there. For example, core company members Lin Hixson and Matthew Goulish told me that the structure of the first half is based on the architecture of Hagia Sofia, while that of the second half derives from the Martin Scorsese movie *The Last Waltz*, which is a celebration of The Band's last concert. And that is only one example of 'last-ness' that it includes. There is also Lenny Bruce's last recorded monologue; Robert Creeley's last poem; a monologue from Stanley Kunitz' last book; and Larry Grayson's last stand-up routine. Then it also includes a whole range of things that the company members wanted to do because there wouldn't be another Goat Island piece to include them in: Bryan Saner wanted to play the saw, for example (and to his credit, he does it very well).



Of course, few of these elements exist in isolation. Internal rhymes, reflections, echoes, things meaning several things simultaneously, and what Goulish calls "colliding two things together" (like Mark Jeffery quoting Larry Grayson while dressed as Francis of Assisi) are fundamental components of Goat Island's art. No wonder then that they could even make of this final show something optimistic. Hixson points out how rare it is that a company can get to plan their final piece, and make it on their own terms, rather than just being squeezed out of existence for financial reasons, or falling apart because of 'artistic differences'.

And of course, even when they finish touring *The Lastmaker* later this year, that won't be the end of the company. There is a stunning web project *The Last Performance* (www.thelastperformance.org) and a movie, *Curtain Call*, and all of the other things that the individual Goats will be getting up to. Still, that final night at PS122 was decidedly bittersweet, and I found it exactly like Goulish describes it: "Towards the end, the piece achieves a contradictory state where you're not sure whether to laugh or cry."

Robert Ayers saw Goat Island's The Lastmaker at PS122, New York, November 2008.

IMAGES | GOAT ISLAND'S *THE LASTMAKER*.
PHOTOS HUGO GLENDINNING



**PROTO-TYPE THEATER
WHISPER
SOHO THEATRE, LONDON
OCTOBER 2008**

On entering the auditorium I see the stage area is masked with a screen. On my seat I find a set of headphones. When the lights on stage come on, three performers behind microphone stands appear as silhouettes in changing scales, thus seemingly close-up one moment, distant in the next. The audio impressions I receive through the headset suggests their voices are whispering in my ear. The narrative which unfolds takes me on a walk through an unnamed city, along busy streets, past shopping malls and through parks. I am glimpsing aural snapshots of people passing me on my journey while overhearing snippets of phone conversations. Adding live sound creation to the fragmented narration of the three voices, I seem to be immersed in a radio play in which voice-over and Foley artistry coincide. The changing lightscape which frames the performers at times suggests the doors and windows of city office buildings and apartments; at other times side lighting from behind the screen transforms the black and white silhouettes into actual bodies, bringing them into the third dimension.

Cutting-edge technology and well-honed dramaturgy, but the piece does not resonate with me on a personal level – Whisper remains strangely abstract, feeling something like a speeded up audio-captioned performance of Peter Handke's *The Hour We knew Nothing Of Each Other*.

However Whisper does create an aurally imaginative and multi-faceted portrait of fast and fragmented modern city life and produces an ambitious and unusual experience. I take off my headset, expecting to witness a silent movie. Surprisingly I can still hear the words uttered.

MARTINA VON HOLM

**LES BALLETS C DE LA B / TED STOFFER
APHASIADISIAC
LILIAN BAYLIS STUDIO,
SADLER'S WELLS, LONDON
OCTOBER 2008**

Our failure to construct coherent language in the face of love for someone comes under a charming assault in the latest work from the C de la B stable. In Ted Stoffer's *Aphasiadisiac* an intimate quintet scrambles through a series of interactions in which the stage lovers find themselves lost in a sea of verbal and physical utterances. Stoffer offers us a delicately absurd world of inscribed bricks, incomplete walls, gentle desperation and drumming.

The piece opens on two lovers constructing and scaling prison towers of wooden brick, a genuinely piquant image that summarises the ensuing action. Moving briskly and haltingly towards a scattered and broken conclusion, the piece lends us no resolution but articulately evokes the crippling limitations of pronouncements of love. A man is turned upside down and inside out as his partner lists the ways in which she loves him and two lovers, eye socket-to-eye socket, tumble through the space. In delightful contrast, it is music that articulates feelings more closely, as another two lovers eek out a shared bond in the face of their physical separation: one firmly earth-bound and the other suspended from the wall of his apartment – the passion of crashing drums the thread that allows their hearts to touch.

Aphasiadisiac has an experimental feel, as if a study for a longer, more intense experience; but its brevity is also its charm. Wit plays a significant role and the gentle frustrations of the inability to convey the deepest feelings of love brings not only a wry chuckle but also that glimpse of recognition that lightens the heart.

TOM WILSON

**FILTER / RSC
TWELFTH NIGHT
TRICYCLE THEATRE, LONDON
SEPTEMBER 2008**

It was a very clever proposal to hook up Filter, whose work has always played with the marriage of live music and theatre-making, and Shakespeare's immortal opener 'If music be the food of love, play on'. Indeed, in this witty adaptation of the tragic-comedy (commissioned and co-produced by the RSC), it comes as something of a revelation to discover, in this clever cut, the extent to which music features as a theme within the play. Often in modern productions its songs are recited, spoken or simply edited out; here instead they are set pieces, emotionally and thematically expressive. Never have Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's drunken revels been so affirmingly festive, and never this world so triumphantly theatrical, and joyfully playful.

The company use a wide open staging, bare except for their costumes and shaped by the figures of instruments (including a rather beautiful electric double bass) and all manner of electronic trickery to produce sfx – from the functional to the orchestral. Against this backdrop the poetry of the verse is heightened and, generally, empowered. (Although there were moments when the underlying laid-back aesthetic of a gig infected the tone of some of the speech. There was a sense in which the emotional content of the play had been transposed from literature to music.)

The overall effect is of something more than theatre: this is Shakespeare *plus* and the injection of gig triumphantly energises the interpretation. Situating sound imaginatively within live performance has been an ongoing project of devised work, but Filter, in this apotheosis of their approach show they are inarguably the creative vanguard of this aesthetic. Inspiring stuff.

BECCY SMITH

**CHI CHI BUNICHI
NIGHTINGALE THEATRE, BRIGHTON
NOVEMBER 2008**

Is it a gig? Is it a theatre show? Yes, no, maybe! It's Chi Chi Bunichi, an ensemble of seven artists whose eponymous live performance event resists categorisation.

At the heart of Chi Chi Bunichi is an exploration of 'dying languages, songs and misremembered memories'. The show takes as its starting point a 'Ladino' song; a form of cantata, written in the dying Judea-Hispanic language, that has journeyed through the Balkans, Turkey and Spain for centuries. As reworked by the Chi Chi's, this musical form has something of the feel of contemporary 'new acoustic' bands such as Beirut: a vibrant mix of accordion, trumpet, guitar, harmonium, and melancholy voice.

Chi Chi Bunichi establish a wonderful relationship with their audience. They have us eating out of their hands from the moment we enter the space: literally, as we are given tiny glasses of mint tea and sweet tidbits of halva to nibble as we sort ourselves out onto the benches placed in a square. Inside this square, the space becomes a kind of archetypal village square, as stories of love and loss, innocence and experience, are played out in vibrant song and dance, robust physical action, and poignant verbal narration. Some of the best moments are when all the elements come together; for example, a story of a child smuggling sweets ends in an exuberant swirling dance, as the boiled sweets in their jewel-coloured wrappers tumble out from all sorts of hidden places. A magical mystery tour to be enjoyed in the moment, with a sweet aftertaste that lingers long after the last note fades away.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



ROBERT LEPAGE / EX MACHINA LIPSYNCH

**ROBERT LEPAGE/ EX MACHINA
LIPSYNCH
THE BARBICAN THEATRE, LONDON BITE
SEPTEMBER 2008**

Lipsynch is a deliberate attempt by Robert Lepage's *Ex Machina* to concentrate on a perceived neglected aspect of their practice – the voice. The resulting nine-hour commission presents an explicit excavation of the field. Proceeding through a series of nine interrelated characters' stories, voices are analysed, damaged, appropriated, translated; words are sung (in a broad variety of styles), howled, fantasised; sound effects are heightened and displaced. Cumulatively this feels like prolonged discourse: we are shown how the voice works, aurally and biologically; the intense relationship of voice to identity is unpicked (the experience of loss is located in the forgotten voice of a dead father, the character who has completely retrained his voice emerges as the villain of the piece); the destabilising effect of media, which can separate sound from scene, voice from individual, is thoroughly mined as we witness a single melodramatic scene being rehearsed, filmed and every element later redubbed across a number of the stories; we are asked to consider, variously, the experience the deaf, those who have undergone surgery, and the possible presence of voices in the head. And so the layers accrue, moved clunkingly along by some astonishingly cumbersome pieces of set.

**MARCIA FARQUHAR
ACTS OF CLOTHING
THE BASEMENT, BRIGHTON
NOVEMBER 2008**

As we file in and sit alongside the catwalk, I nudge my neighbour: "Look, on the clothes rail, she has a tartan flamenco dress". I was already hooked. That dress, and curious red garments I took for dressing gowns, book-ended Marcia's bravura romp through a life in clothes.

Acts of Clothing was an accomplished performance by an artist thoroughly at home with her material... Starting with that dress. It's her own clan tartan and has been pivotal in her career. In it, she performs her party piece, which represents her Scottish and Spanish ancestry – a bit of un-trained flamenco without music ("I have to rely on the duende"), and some off-kilter Scottish jiggy.

As key outfits are dragged on and off, Marcia doesn't stop talking. Her voice is wonderfully deep and posh. She has a fluency and turn of phrase that is elegant and naturally humorous. Each outfit comes with an accompanying anecdote, and Marcia's life unfolds. She is candid yet vulnerable. "This outfit reeks of courage" she says of a spotted mini jumpsuit which she wore to the beach when recovering from an operation for piles, before telling a story of marital mis-communication that is revealing of both parties.

The show ends with the curious red outfits. Not dressing gowns, but her version of a cut-out paper doll chain. It fits seven, and as they dance, we all wish we could be part of Marcia's wardrobe. There are few performance artists who can make you feel so at ease, comfortable in the knowledge that they will deliver something special. *Acts of Clothing* is a timeless wonder – resonant to all of us beyond our teenage years with decades of sartorial disasters and joys to think back on.

LISA WOLFE

The nine episodes this exploration is shot through veer unpredictably in tone and content, as though such a concentration on the theme left little room to think about what was being built around it. We move from kitchen-sink drama, to hackneyed gumshoe cliché, to hard-hitting sex trafficking documentary via some spectacularly ill-judged farce. Too often, the vocal concentration simply means a lot of talking and it just isn't well written enough (and in some cases not at all well enough performed) to sustain our scrutiny. 'It's a bit... banal' complains one character as she unlocks the verbal secrets of her silent old home movies, 'That's life' her savant deaf lip-reader explains. But not good theatre.

And yet there are sudden eruptions of expression that remind us of what *Ex Machina* do best: visual poetry whose images speak volumes. A young, dead mother strides across the roof of a plane in which her son is travelling unwittingly back toward his roots; snow falls thickly on the silent visions of a mentally disturbed bookshop-keeper in a masterful bit of staging we're allowed to share twice – once from within the deadening snow and once inside the store. The closing sequence finally manages to achieve synchronicity between its operatic emotional pitch and the performances, writing and visuals of the staging. These moments, however, are circumscribed: as though visual lyricism might contaminate the company's focus. In fact, too often, they emphasise the poverty of their surrounding material.

Working on this sort of scale creates theatre that feels more like a novel – rather than the normal poetic ellipses of devised work, there's a greater illusion of reality suggested in the sheer scale of detail made possible, and space to gesture toward. But, like a novel, such accumulation must be carefully and thoughtfully controlled. In *Lipsynch*, it instead felt as if their words had got the better of the company.

BECCY SMITH



BOUFFON GLASS MENAJOREE

**TEN DIRECTIONS/PAUL LUCAS PRODUCTIONS
BOUFFON GLASS MENAJOREE
FILMBASE, DUBLIN/DUBLIN FRINGE FESTIVAL
SEPTEMBER 2008**

Guess who's coming to dinner? You? Or you? Or maybe – yes, you! This bouffon-clown interpretation of Tennessee Williams' 'melancholy family drama' takes place, as does the original, entirely inside the 'meagre apartment' of the Wingfield family, which comprises single mother Amanda, son Tom, and 'crippled' daughter Laura – obsessive collector of the little glass animals that give the play its name.

The production takes Laura's suggested physical and mental disabilities and plays on society's fears of those attributes, (glass)blowing them up to a grotesque extreme. Bouffon? You ain't seen nothin yet... Bulging bruise-purple eyes, hair that no self-respecting bird would dream of nesting in, skin the colour of a two-day corpse, blood-stained hospital gown flapping open to reveal a bulging nappy. What a doll!

The story centres around the impending arrival of Laura's first 'gentleman caller', giving our three bouffons the opportunity to play with the audience, rather as a trio of alleycats might play with a house full of baby mice. At first this play is gentle and teasing (a ringing telephone is passed through the audience: 'it's for you-oo.'). Then our three move into the torture phase as the process of finding Laura's elusive suitor gets into gear, and finally they move in for the kill.

The game-playing always keeps the balance between edginess and entertainment. These three are cool and canny cats, and it is no surprise to learn that the director of the piece is Eric Davis (aka Red Bastard), audience manipulator extraordinaire.

What's most interesting is that ultimately, this grotesque interpretation is truer to the spirit of Williams' play than many a modern-day revival. Perfectly-pitched theatre for lonely hearts everywhere.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR

FOULISFAIR THEATRE DAUGHTERS



VARIOUS ARTISTS
MIDGET GEMS
THE CARRIAGEWORKS, LEEDS
SEPTEMBER 2008

Midget Gems describes itself as 'a tempting assortment of short, sharp pieces of theatre from new writers' – specifically, women writers.

Susan Gilbert's *Waiting for Carver* is in two parts with the same text repeated in each, with different actors – clearly an homage to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* but with its own vibrant originality. The characters Adam Lamb and Butcher almost irritatingly anticipate C's entrance with multiple enigmas and ensuing confusion. The premise is simple, but the visceral and intense performance belies this.

In Joanne Hartley's *Antithesis* two interlocking monologues contrast the Blakeian themes of innocence and experience. Both characters attract our sympathy, or at least empathy, but not without the odd wince or two at the rigidity of their worldview.

Helen Shay's *Smoke* is the only overtly political piece out of the five, focusing on the fascistic repression of a woman playwright in Indonesia. A harrowing work that manages to make its mark without polemics or soap-box speeches.

But the highlight of the night is Foulisfair Theatre's *Daughters*, which relies far more on the physicality of its performance than the other pieces. *Daughters* explores the mother-daughter relationship unflinchingly. It manages to be both universal, the stuff of life through the ages, whilst also drawing on intensely personal experiences which are thrown out to the audience with a mischievous glee. Domestic objects are used throughout to ground into the everyday quite complex and emotive issues.

An interesting selection new writing by women that demonstrates a number of powerful voices, performed by equally capable actors – theatre asking some pertinent questions without dumbing down to achieve easy answers.

RICH JEVONS

COME INTO MY PARLOUR
A CAUTIONARY TALE
HOXTON HALL, LONDON
OCTOBER 2008

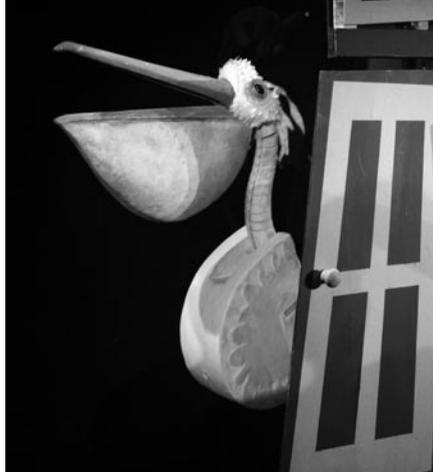
Hoxton Hall is one of London's few remaining music halls; beautifully preserved, with high stage and wooden gallery intact. The perfect setting, then, for a mock-Victorian revue.

The Parlour's *Cautionary Tale* has come on in leaps and bounds. The structure is much as it was: a ludicrously OTT melodrama of murder most foul a frame on which to hang a series of variety acts and musical comedy vignettes. There are still inconsistencies in performance skills and levels of engagement, which could perhaps be ironed out by a skilful director; but there have been shifts that have made the whole thing hang together more effectively.

In particular, the care and attention to the 'offstage' sections has upped the ante considerably. The little cabaret tables are decorated prettily, furnished with 'newspapers' advertising magical cures for all ills. The walk-about character Miss Fanny Brown has found her form in her dual role as door-girl and Sally Army saver-of-souls (admonishing us all for our enslavement to the demon drink). Archibald Floss's *Museum of Prodigies*, the interval entertainment, is a marvellous show-within-the-show – a lovingly assembled installation-performance in which we encounter a whole horde of freaks, including a baby pickled in a bottle, a man who walks on broken glass, and the infamous escaping spiderwoman, Spidora.

Meanwhile back in the Manor, the loony Lord (aka Professor Elemental) raps on the joys of tea, and transmutes into a Wildman; recalcitrant butlers dust down their circus tricks; and the six-times-widowed Miss Sadie Belle is turned into a grotesque Day of the Dead figure, stripped to the bare and bloody bones by the morbidly musical Butcher Boys. A cautionary tale indeed.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



LITTLE ANGEL THEATRE
THE GIRAFFE AND THE PELLY
AND ME

LITTLE ANGEL
THE GIRAFFE AND
THE PELLY AND ME
LITTLE ANGEL THEATRE, LONDON
DECEMBER 2008

One of Roald Dahl's celebrated books is brought to magical life at the Little Angel by director/designer Peter O'Rourke and his team of excellent puppeteers. The story sees our hero, Billy, gazing wondrously at an old abandoned house which, rumour has it, used to be a sweet shop. In O'Rourke's design, the house is a beautifully crafted wooden creation with edges sticking out every which way and suggesting the distinct possibility that life won't be too long arriving.

And indeed it does arrive – in the form of three gorgeous puppets: the giraffe (complete with extendable neck), the pelican and a tiny, blue monkey. These animals have created a ladderless window washing company, but have yet to make any money and are therefore incredibly hungry – so they enlist the help of Billy as their business manager.

There are some wonderful set pieces, including the entrance of a massive Rolls Royce and its occupier: butler of the richest man in the land with the longest, spindly legs imaginable. The highlight of this enjoyable and charmingly performed piece comes with the introduction of a wanted burglar, a fantastically surreal puppet whose body bends over double and who is pursued by every character possible in a hilarious and exciting chase sequence.

It is the surreal quality of the story which O'Rourke's production doesn't quite nail on the head, and there are some overlong and slow musical numbers. Overall, however, the *Giraffe and the Pelly and Me* put a contented smile on my face and is thoroughly recommended.

TERRY O'DONOVAN



BOUFFON GLASS MENAJOREE

COMPAGNIE BEAU GESTE
TRANSPORT EXCEPTIONNELS
CHERWELL SCHOOL, OXFORD
PLAYHOUSE PLAYS OUT
OCTOBER 2008

Having premiered in the UK last year at Dance Umbrella, Compagnie Beau Geste return to the UK for a prolonged tour with their genuinely crowd-pleasing duet for mechanical digger and dancer, seeing an eclectic audience at this, the first part of The Playhouse's new 'Playin' Out' initiative.

Transport Exceptionnels builds its magic on the incongruity of a man dancing with a digger, and the realisation of the boyhood fantasy of large machines doing things in contexts they are not necessarily designed for. Thus the scooping and sweeping arm of this (particularly clean) example of mechanical engineering is matched to the striding and rolling form of the grey-haired Philippe Priasso and set within the soaring emotional landscape of operatic arias. It is a magical event that resists being dominated by the digger.

Dominique Boivan has achieved a choreographic balance between machine and man's roles in the ensuing romance that lends a certain tenderness to both parties. Most striking are the moments when Priasso is lifted and carried by his steel partner, suspended from the digger's arm by his own. In these arcs there is both humanity and vulnerability. The forms of man and digger are amplified into something approaching a kinaesthetic ecstasy, a feeling that weakens when Priasso allows his partner to move without him. The over-riding memory, though, is one of a hulking tenderness bought to heel by a soft-fleshed man in his fifties

TOM WILSON

BOOKS & OTHER MEDIA

Books & Other Media reviews by Dorothy Max Prior

IN PRINT

PERFORM EVERY DAY

Joshua Sofaer

what>

ISBN 978-9-075-40619-1

£12.00 Paperback

www.dekunstbank.org

Can be purchased from

www.thisisunbound.co.uk

“What can I do with this book other than read it?” is not a question one usually poses to one’s print purchases – but this artist’s book from Joshua Sofaer is not your usual sort of book-to-be-read, it rather ‘seeks to establish a relationship between everyday actions and performance’ so that we can become both maker and audience of our very own private theatre. Falling into a small category of books (which includes Wrights and Sites’ Mis-Guides), Perform Every Day encourages an interactive and participatory experience for the ‘reader’. So – open page randomly – printed is the suggestion to ‘ask someone if you can wash their hair’. Then there is ‘next time you’re crying look at yourself in the mirror’ or ‘write yourself a letter, give it to someone you trust, ask them to send it to you in eleven months time’. The 33 flash performance instructions (one for each year of the artist’s life) are sandwiched between 33 colour photographs and 33 ‘accounts’ – short pieces of autobiographical writing. Sofaer is an artist who has consistently used autobiographical material in an engaging way, and Perform Every Day is another interesting example of this practice.

BOBBY BAKER:

REDEEMING FEATURES OF DAILY LIFE

Ed. Michele Barrett & Bobby Baker

Routledge

ISBN 978-0-415-44411-8

£25 Paperback (also available in Hardback)

www.routledge.com

Can be purchased from

www.artsadmin.co.uk/shop

Bobby Baker is one of our national treasures: an artist whose intelligent and entertaining work has investigated the business of ‘daily life’ through (usually solo) performances that entwine visual, physical and verbal storytelling into works that are deep, delicate and often very funny. And here’s a book to do her justice – a truly beautiful book full of lovely photographs, drawings, and other images, together with an eclectic mix of texts and commentary by academics, journalists and writers that include Marina Warner, Adrian Heathfield, John Daniel, and Tim Etchells – plus chronicles and performance texts from the artist herself. The design also rates a mention: clear and attractive typography, clean-cut layout, and high quality image reproduction. Oh, if only all books about contemporary performance were this good! Whether you are a life-long fan of Bobby Baker, or new to her work, this is an essential purchase. Note to Routledge and to all other publishers: see, you can be both intelligent and beautiful at the same time!

SMALL ACTS OF REPAIR: PERFORMANCE, ECOLOGY AND GOAT ISLAND

Ed. Stephen Bottoms and Matthew Goulish

Routledge

ISBN: 978-0-415-36515-4

£19.99 Paperback (also available in Hardback)

www.routledge.com

Goat Island, one of the world’s leading contemporary performance ensembles, are about to call it a day; currently touring with their last ever show (see Robert Ayers’ review in this

magazine). This book, originally published in 2007 and now re-issued, was the first to ‘document and critique the company’s performances, processes, politics, aesthetics, and philosophies’. It is co-edited by Goat founder-member Matthew Goulish and researcher-practitioner Stephen Bottoms, and describes itself as a ‘collage text’ which combines and juxtaposes writing by company members and arts commentators; a detailed look at Goat Island’s collaborative processes and the reception of their work in performance. The book includes practical workshop exercises and thoughts on teaching drawn from the company’s extensive experience, so is also a valuable classroom resource. Nowhere near as pretty as the Bobby Baker book, but a good introduction to Goat Island.

HEART OF PRACTICE: WITHIN THE WORKCENTER OF JERZY GROTOWSKI AND THOMAS RICHARDS

Thomas Richards

Routledge

ISBN: 978-0-415-44148-3

£18.99 Paperback (also available in Hardback)

Thomas Richards’ previous book, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, is an essential text for anyone interested in the work of Polish theatre-maker and teacher Jerzy Grotowski. *Heart of Practice* also reflects on the work of Grotowski, but here the focus is on his later work and the development of *The Workcenter* – the Italian centre that is a place of exploration and an ongoing legacy to Grotowski’s work. Although Richards is credited as author, rather than editor, the book is for the most part a compilation of interviews that he has given to writers and scholars over the past decade – and the exploration is predominantly of Richards’ own work as a teacher/theatre-maker (although this is always viewed in relation to his intrinsic connection to Grotowski). There is, by the way, a rather nice little joke referenced in Andre Gregory’s ‘Non-Preface’ that could be said to sum up the Grotowski ethos: ‘a young violinist asks a taxi driver how to get to Carnegie Hall. The driver answers: “practice, practice, practice”’. *Heart of Practice* provides a good insight into the *Workcenter*, and is a valuable addition to the ‘Grotowski legacy’ body of research.

ON THE ART OF THE THEATRE

Edward Gordon-Craig

Ed. Franc Chamberlain

THEATRE: THE REDISCOVERY OF STYLE AND OTHER WRITINGS

Michel Saint-Denis

Ed. Jane Baldwin

Routledge Theatre Classics

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Two welcome additions to the 'Theatre Classics' series, which – as the name implies – reproduces classic texts about theatre, each newly edited with an introduction by the editor.

As Franc Chamberlain rightly points out, Craig's *On the Art of the Theatre* (first published in 1911) has been one of the most influential books of the past century, and has subsequently touched all the great theatre-makers in one way or another. Craig never intended it to be a textbook, and wrote it in a style that he hoped was not elitist (it isn't!). It is far more than a piece of theatre history and is still a great introduction to the notion of 'visual and physical theatre' – theatre in which scenography is at the heart of the work; theatre which, in Craig's words, is an art 'which shall spring from movement'. Essential reading!

Jane Baldwin's subject is Michel Saint-Denis – not as familiar a name as Craig, and perhaps best known in the UK for his work as an actor-trainer and director with Olivier's Old Vic and the Royal Shakespeare Company. But to students and artists working in physical and devised theatre, it is his relationship with Jacques Copeau (as a member of the Vieux-Colombier Theatre of Quinze) and his development of Copeau's theatre ensemble work and ahead-of-their-time devising methods of 'collective creation' that is of most interest. In particular, that he brought this knowledge with him when he moved to the UK in 1934, and thus introduced notions of devising processes, and the creation of theatre work with easy-to-tour sets, to the naturalistic-drama besotted 1930s Britain. Another excellent 'Classic' – keep 'em coming, Routledge!

BERTOLT BRECHT

Meg Mumford

ISBN: 978-0-415-37509-2

RUDOLF LABAN

Karen K Bradley

ISBN: 978-0-415-37525-2

ROBERT LEPAGE

Aleksandar Sasa Dundjeric

ISBN: 978-0-415-37520-7

Routledge Performance Practitioners

Series editor: Franc Chamberlain

£16.99 Paperback each volume

(Hardback also available)

www.routledge.com

Routledge Performance Practitioners is a series of introductory guides to the key theatre-makers of the last century. Each volume explains the background to, and the work of, their chosen subject. They are small, neat (handbag sized!) volumes; a good mix of theory and practice, written in a refreshingly straightforward and informative style.

Bertolt Brecht brings us an overview of Brecht's life and work (1898-1956) and his influence on twentieth century theatre; a clear explanation of his key theories, including the renowned ideas of *Gestus* and *Verfremdung*; an account of his groundbreaking 1954 production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; and an in-depth analysis of Brecht's practical exercises and rehearsal methods.

Rudolf Laban offers a reflection on Laban's life, work and influences; an exploration of his key ideas, including the revolutionary 'Laban Movement Analysis' system; analysis of his works *Die Grünen Clowns* and *Mastery of Movement* and their relevance to dance-theatre from the 1920s onwards; and a detailed exercise-based breakdown of Laban's key teachings.

The series now includes contemporary practitioners, and a welcome addition is Canadian legend Robert Lepage (Ex Machina) whose work 'blends acute personal narratives with bold global themes'. This book includes an overview of the key phases in Lepage's life and career (so far!); an examination of the issues and questions pertinent to his work; a discussion of *The Seven Streams of River Ota* as a paradigm of his working methods; and a variety of practical exercises designed to give an insight into Lepage's creative process.

Routledge Performance Practitioners are good value, easy to carry around, and contain all the key information on each practitioner – a perfect choice for the student who wants to get a grip on the big names in performance from the past hundred years.

OTHER MEDIA

NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART ARCHIVE

The National Review of Live Art is produced annually in Glasgow by New Moves International. It originated from a one-day event in 1979 called the Performance Platform, and has since then grown into a large annual festival, directed, since 1984, by Nikki Milican OBE. As well as performance, the festival includes installation and video art – a platform for new performers to show their work alongside more experienced and well-known artists. NRLA has been carefully documented over the years, the video collection growing into an archive containing over 1,200 hours of footage. Custodianship of this has now passed to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, who are committed to the archive's long-term preservation and accessibility. Thus, the entire collection has now been digitised by a project entitled *Capturing the Past, Preserving the Future*, launched at this year's NRLA (February 2009).

There is an online catalogue and video clips, and appointments can be made to visit the archive in Bristol. For details see www.bris.ac.uk/nrla

If you would like us to list details of online resources or have any other information for our Books & Other Media section, please email listings@totaltheatre.org.uk

Copies of books for review should go to: The Editor, Total Theatre Magazine, The Basement @ Argus Lofts, 24 Kensington St, Brighton BN1 4AJ



THE BASEMENT LIVE ART PROGRAMME

As part of our dedication to innovative and experimental live art practice, we have put together a programme that explores new ideas, formats and methods of presentation to create a dazzling line up of the most interesting work nationally and internationally.

SOME COMING EVENTS:

THE TWILIGHT CLUB	25th Apr & 13th Jun
LIVE LUNCH	12th Mar & 9th Apr
SUPPER CLUB	21st Mar, 18th Apr & 6th Jun
IMAGINED MONOCHROME (MASSAGE) 2009 Anish Kapoor	2nd-24th May
DEMOGRAPHIC OF A PIGEON FANCIER Victoria Melody	18th-25th May
GO Lisa Nelson & Scott Smith Presented by Movement 12	6th Mar
DEAN GIBBONS AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF DEATH	19th Mar
REVEREND BILLY AND THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING	1st Jun

Please visit our website to download the full Programme, March to June 2009

(The programme will be available to download from March 2009)

For further information about the programme and our organisation please contact The Basement, details below.



24 Kensington Street
Brighton
BN1 4AJ

Telephone: 01273 699 733
Email: info@thebasement.uk.com
www.thebasement.uk.com



RONNIE BURKETT BILLY TWINKLE



BALLETS C DE LA B



DARREN JOHNSTON UNDERDROME

COMPLICITE AND RONNIE BURKETT AT BARBICAN BITE

Early spring highlights at BITE include Complicite's *Shun-kin*, featuring puppetry by Blind Summit. Moving between the neon glow of Japan and the vanished world of Meiji, *Shun-kin* tells a tale of devotion, passion and power, where beauty is unforgiving and love is blinding. Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes returns to BITE with Billy Twinkle *Requiem for a Golden Boy*, the story of a middle-aged cruise ship puppeteer who dazzles audiences with his 'Stars in Miniature' marionette nightclub act: "for anyone stuck mid-career, mid-love, mid-life, this requiem for a golden boy shines a light on the wonder of youth meeting the wisdom of age". 18–28 March 2009. Other spring treats include *Improbable* with the UK premiere of new show *Panic* (see item below for further details on *Panic*). See www.barbican.org.uk/bite



CORN EXCHANGE NEWBURY

As a highlight of its spring programme the Corn Exchange will be hosting the first UK showings of *Improbable's* new production *Panic*, developed by Lucy Foster, Tamzin Griffin, Matilda Leyser, Phelim McDermott, Lee Simpson, Julian Crouch, Phil Eddolls, Colin Grenfell, Nick Powell and Lysander Ashton. Ancient myth bleeds into modern life to reveal a tale of love or sex or panic – but usually a giddy mixture of all three. Following its world premiere in Ohio, USA, *Panic* plays the Corn Exchange 19–21 March before its official UK premiere and London run at the Barbican 15 April–16 May. In addition to its ticketed programme, the Corn Exchange is continuing its artist development work, through the *Evolve* programme, which is funded by Arts Council England. This includes working with Lost Dog Dance Theatre, Company FZ's John Paul Zaccarini, Colin Riley & MooV, Belinda Lee Chapman and writer Andy Muir. The *Evolve* programme also sees the continuation of residencies with comedy theatre duo Plested & Brown and KeiraDance. See www.cornexchangenew.com

NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL MAY 2009

This year's Norfolk & Norwich Festival has a plethora of interesting performance work. Les Ballets C de la B perform their latest work *Ashes* as part of a major European festival tour. This will be their only UK performance of the work. Australian ensemble Circa has pioneered the re-imagining of circus as a brave new art form, embracing the innovative use of music, multimedia, interaction, improvisation and collaborations with exceptional artists, and bring *The Space Between* to this year's festival. Highly acclaimed cabaret artist Taylor Mac comes to the festival for the first time after sell out shows in Edinburgh and Brighton. Commandos Percu French pyrotechnic group puts on a spectacular outdoor performance, and Ontroerend Goed invites audiences on a sensory journey with their Total Theatre Award winning show *Smile Off Your Face*. All this and a Belgian Speigeltent, which will be putting on two shows a night, plus bar, DJs and late night burlesque cabaret shows. See www.nnfestival.org.uk

IMPROBABLE PANIC CAMDEN PEOPLE'S THEATRE

This Spring CPT will present a season of exciting, risk-taking new work. In February Apocryphal Theatre return with *Besides, You Lose Your Soul or The History of Western Civilisation*. Following its previews in the autumn, Little Wonder return in March with *Meet Me Halfway*, a multisensory journey with very limited audience capacity. Daedalus Theatre Company premiere *A Place at the Table* in April, in which an international collective of artists explore the decades-old crisis in Burundi. For more see www.cpttheatre.co.uk

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL 2009

This year's Brighton Festival, which runs throughout the month of May, is curated by special guest artistic director Anish Kapoor and features numerous innovative commissions and site-specific productions from leading artists including Hofesh Shechter Dance Company, who will create a new outdoor performance on the seafront. Hydrocracker, who received five-star reviews in the 2007 Festival, return with another site-specific performance, Joe Orton's *Eppingham Camp*, which will be presented throughout the iconic location of Brighton Pier. www.brightonfestival.org

QUEERUPNORTH 12–25 MAY 2009

Highlights include Taylor Mac's *The Young Ladies of...* and Ursula Martinez's *My Stories, Your Emails* are both already on sale at the Library Theatre. The internationally celebrated marionette artist Ronnie Burkett will be appearing at the Lowry with his new show *Billy Twinkle, Requiem for a Golden Boy* and Chris Goode is appearing at Contact with his heart-warming storytelling in *The Adventures of Wound Man and Shirley*. www.queerupnorth.com

THE ROUNDHOUSE

Coming up at the Roundhouse in London: Hofesh Shechter's *In Your Rooms / Uprising: The Choreographer's Cut*, two older dance works re-presented for the first time with live music (composed by Shechter and performed by twenty musicians), 27–28 February; NoFit State Circus' *Tabu*, a promenade circus performance that throws the audience into the centre of its orchestrated chaos (28 March–19 April); and Darren Johnston's *Underdrome*, a collision of dance, voices, music and video presented as a 360 degree experience: the audience stands at the very centre of the Roundhouse to take in the experience all around them (22–24 May). See www.roundhouse.org.uk

THE MET IN BURY

Physical and devised theatre highlights at the Met in March include the new show from Shifting Sands, *The Devil's Doctor*, a comic feast of clowning and physical theatre peopled by fakes, frauds, revolutionaries, tricksters and prophets. On the same day (14 March) there's also Spike Theatre's *The Sandman*; and George Dillon's *The Man Who Was Hamlet* is there on 18 March. Under the new nationally funded scheme to encourage young people to the theatre, under 26s are eligible for free tickets to these events. See www.themet.biz

SHIFTING SANDS THE DEVIL'S DOCTOR



AWARDS



WAR HORSE

WAR HORSE IN THE WEST END

War Horse, the hugely acclaimed, award-winning puppet-theatre production (based on Michael Morpurgo's novel) will open at the New London Theatre on 28 March 2009. The West End run follows the production's second sell-out season at the National Theatre, which finishes on 18 March. Booking at the new venue is until 26 September 2009. *War Horse* won the 2007 Evening Standard, Critics' Circle and Laurence Olivier Awards for the set design by Rae Smith and Handspring Puppet Company; Toby Sedgawick also received an Olivier Award for his choreography. See www.newlondontheatre.co.uk

CRYING OUT LOUD

2009 is set to be an exhilarating year for Crying Out Loud. We are launching a new network and season called City Circ, London's new season for Theatre and Contemporary Circus bringing together London wide venues and the most dynamic and daring in Circus Theatre. In April, Franco-Catalan company Circo de la Sombra return with their drop deadpan humour and live Napolese band Le Grand Osim Orchestra. See www.cryingoutloud.org

**EPIDEMIC PRESENT
LEPAGE'S EONNAGATA**

Robert Lepage's latest project *Eonnagata* brings the writer / director together with dancers Russel Maliphant and Sylvie Guillem to take on the challenge of linking together abstraction, contemporary dance, and the narrative tendencies of theatre. The extravagantly swash-buckling life of Chevalier d'Eon serves as the jumping off point for a project in which the sword is juxtaposed with the courtesan's fan (or the courtesan is juxtaposed with the combatant), but in which the main purpose is to explore the idea of one sex representing the other through the notion of gender rather than through the more familiar approach of treating transvestism as a sexual practice. In these investigations, *Eonnagata* (a Kabuki theatre technique in which male actors represent women in an extremely stylised fashion) will supply most of the formal vocabulary. *Eonnagata* will be presented in Europe from February 2009. See www.epidemic.net

MISSION POSSIBLE

State Of Emergency are a dance organisation who have existed for over twenty years, championing black artists and choreographers. In 2007 they delivered a touring project focusing on the female perspective called *Mission Re-Position* and now in 2008 with *Mission Possible* company founder Deborah Baddoo explores male relationships and the bond between fathers and sons. For more information on the production and dates of its current nationwide tour, see www.stateofemergencyltd.com



IMPROBABLE PANIC

OSBTT 2010

The Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award is changing. For the past three years they have selected a show to be performed in the Barbican's Pit Theatre. However, this year they will be awarding the prize to a company or individual to create a site-responsive /non-traditional performance space show to take place in one of the five host boroughs for the Olympic and Paralympic Games that will be part of the Create Festival. They're looking for a proposal that is inspired by, and takes place in a non-theatre space. Artists from all disciplines are encouraged to apply, with the hope that applications are for making a performance piece in areas that would be commonly found in any urban conurbation. Bold and innovative projects will be favoured. See www.osbtttrust.com

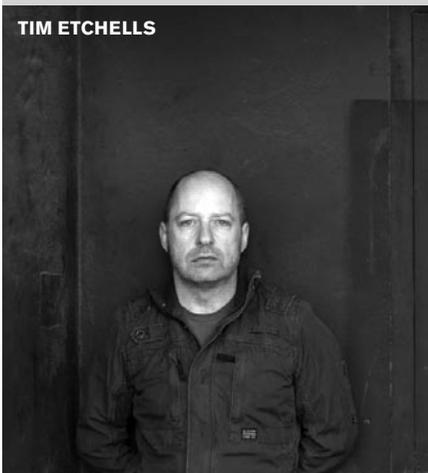
NICCI MILICAN OBE

The New Year's Honours list included an award for Nikki Milican, the artistic director of New Moves International Ltd, producers of New Territories and the National Review of Live Art. Nikki has been awarded an OBE for her services to performance art. The Scottish Arts Council commented that "many in the live art arena feel that without Nikki Milican's unstinting commitment, passion and acumen these festivals would not be as influential and progressive as they are". Total Theatre Magazine will be running a report on NRLA 2009, together with a tribute to Nicci written by Robert Ayers, in the summer issue (out May 2009).

NOLA RAE MBE

After over thirty years solo performing her work all over the world, Nola Rae – co-founder of the London International Mime Festival, Clown Hall of Fame member, multiple award-winner – received an MBE in October 2008 'For Services to Drama and Mime'. For her current projects and whereabouts see www.nolarae.com

TIM ETHELLS

**LEGACY: THINKER IN
RESIDENCE AWARDS**

The Live Art Development Agency and Tate Research have announced that Anne Bean and Tim Etchells will receive Legacy: Thinker in Residence awards of £30,000 each. The Legacy awards have been set up in recognition of the breadth of influence of live art practice in the UK today, and to acknowledge its achievers and achievements over the last few decades. Bean and Etchells will carry out extensive research throughout 2009 addressing the legacies of performance in art historical contexts, examining the processes and challenges of archiving live work, and looking at aspects of their own performance practice in relation to these. Following this, they will translate their findings into the creation of their own legacies, which may take the form of new artworks or publications. See www.thisisliveart.co.uk



JONATHAN KAY

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



MOMENTUM'S PHYSICAL FEST

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOL 21 | ISSUE 01 | SPRING 2009

JONATHAN KAY'S NOMADIC ACADEMY OF FOOLS

Applications are now being accepted for the Nomadic Academy of Fools 2009–2010 where, drawing upon his vast experience as a performer, Jonathan Kay's unique Fooling Technique shall begin to unfold. You will find ways to arrive in yourself at any given moment, even upon the stage, and feel comfortable about working with no given material but your own imagination. This experience will creatively invigorate your work whilst renewing your relationship to the audience and the stage. The work is on-going and Fools from the Academy are moving towards forming a Company of Fools, who next year shall be touring a show. So this is also an opportunity to continue developing yourself with the Fooling Technique and create new work out of this. See www.jonathankay.co.uk. Or email emlyn@jonathankay.co.uk

MOMENTUM PHYSICAL THEATRE WORKSHOPS

Momentum's annual physical theatre workshop and performance festival, Physical Fest is now in its fifth year and will take place from 21–31 May in Liverpool. The festival is ten days of exciting physical theatre workshops from world renowned practitioners, evening events, classes, a live jam and performances including Momentum's Tmesis and Yoshi Oida's acclaimed solo show *Interrogations* inspired by his years of travelling with Peter Brook. Full details of the festival's programme will be available at www.momentumtheatre.com. Go to the website to sign up to mailing list as places sell quickly!

BA STREET ARTS DEGREE AT WINCHESTER

The BA Street Arts degree at University of Winchester is a new opportunity to study street dance, free running, street theatre, large-scale puppetry, circus and acrobatics, site-specific performance and comedy. This exciting new degree is the first of its kind in the UK, and will suit you if you're interested in making contemporary outdoor performance that is physical and visual, exciting and adventurous and that explores and develops new ways of creating work. See www.winchester.ac.uk/?page=9091 or email john.lee@winchester.ac.uk

SKYLIGHT CIRCUS ARTS

Skylight Circus Arts – the North West's only centre for circus, based in Rochdale – are launching a brand new season of events and training. Rochdale Circus School launched in mid-January, offering exciting, safe, and challenging evening classes and workshops for adults and children. A fabulous chance to have fun and get fit learning aerial silk, trapeze, tightrope, stilting and more. No previous experience is necessary! Classes run throughout the week; details on the website. See www.skylightcircusarts.com or email office@skylight-circus-arts.org.uk or call 01706 650676.

JACKY LANSLEY STUDIO

The Speaking Dancer: Interdisciplinary Performance Training is a professional development programme open to dancers, actors and performance artists with a graduate or postgraduate qualification, and/or three years professional experience in one of the performing arts (can be combined with visual practice). The programme is divided into four two-day modules in February, April, June and July. For more details see the website. The Dance Research Studio is also for hire. Approximately 10m x 10m, sprung wood dance floor, mirrors, piano, sound system, video available, flexible lighting, central heating. There is one off-centre pillar. Varied and negotiable rates. For further information call 020 7613 0341 or see www.jackylansley.com

AU BRANA INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP SEASON 2009

The third full programme of international workshops at Au Brana has now been announced. The centre aims to programme a range of residency workshops that allow participants opportunities to experience innovative and challenging explorations of the performer's craft. All sessions take place on a converted farm in the French countryside and full board is provided on-site. The 2009 season includes workshops led by New International Encounter, Anna-Helena McLean, Christopher Sivertsen, OBRA and Gabriel Gawin (more to be announced). For more info email Kate at info@aubrana.com or see www.aubrana.com

DESMOND JONES

Regular Short Courses in mime and physical theatre with one of the world's leading practitioners. Email for full details. A unique blend of Decroux and Lecoq techniques. Classical and modern mime; storytelling; masks; commedia; the psychology of colours; dramatic timing; physical/verbal/psychological improvisation; stage and body dynamics; performance etc. Powerful, exciting and creative. Also, private individual and group lessons. Corporate lectures and workshops on projecting image and personality. Specific workshops for colleges of art, film animation courses etc. Tel or email for full information. See www.desmondjones.com or call 020 8747 3537 or email enquiries@desmondjones.com

THE CIRCUS PROJECT

The Circus Project is a community circus company based in Brighton, now in its tenth year, specialising in aerial circus and running weekly classes for all ages. The company also creates circus/theatre shows with their youth troupe (Brighton & Hove Youth Circus) and provides opportunities and resources for local professional artists, as well as running training programmes, workshops, demos and performances in and around Sussex and beyond. See www.thecircusproject.co.uk or email thecircusproject@ntlworld.com

DELL'ARTE INTERNATIONAL

Plan your summer training now! Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre offers workshops and intensives in Blue Lake, California, and North Jutland, Denmark, June-August. They offer a month-long Intensive, plus workshops in Grand Guignol, maskmaking, and Rasaboxes (TM). Celebrating 30 years of ensemble performance, actor training and research, Dell'Arte International is the source for ensemble-based physical theatre among the majestic redwoods. Dell'Arte offers the only accredited MFA in Ensemble Based Physical Theatre in the US as well as a one-year certificate program. Email info@dellarte.com or see www.dellarte.com

LAUNCH AT THE SPACE

Launch is a professional development day organised by Dance UK and The Place for final year students and recent graduates who are looking for a career in dance. Launch acts as a starting point for all participants regardless of their career aspirations. It is a great opportunity for participants to start thinking about and planning their future, as well as to make contacts with both peers and the industry professionals who will deliver all sessions of the day. Launch takes place on Saturday 28 February 2009, 9.30am-6.30pm at The Place. For more information and to book a place, email Rosanna Chierico on artistdevelopment@theplace.org.uk Alternatively check www.danceuk.org or www.theplace.org.uk

IWF SMALL SITES, LARGE SITES CALL TO ARTISTS

An office building on Regent Street, the disused Eurostar terminal at Waterloo, the tidal banks of the Thames through the centre of London, the World's End Estate at the end of the King's Road, Waterstone's Bookshop in Piccadilly, the streets of Bloomsbury around the School of Life, the canal basin and public spaces around the new King's Place development: all locations for the site specific work created in the IWF project Small Sites, Large Sites. Building on the success of four recent related IWF projects (Out of the Box, Outside Space, Rites of Passage and Flamma) IWF plans to address the gaps in provision for site-specific artists by mentoring up to 30 artists and enabling them to create a number of visible performances in a host of surprising spaces from offices, shops, conference centres and cafes to river banks and disused railway stations. So if you fancy decorating the walls of the UK's most exciting new venue with prints of your naked flesh, making work on the banks of the Thames or have any other ideas, do get in touch with the International Workshop Festival. See www.internationalworkshopfestival.org

PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATES



ANGEL EXIT THEATRE

Angel Exit Theatre have carried out an intensive period of research and development at the Dorchester Arts Centre on their new show, *Moonfleet*. The company carried out immersive devising and writing exercises on the Dorset coastline, as well as having lots of fun in the rehearsal room. *Moonfleet*, based on J Meade Falkner's classic smuggling novel, is a dark adventure story told by a gang of straggling buffoons being washed up amongst the flotsam onto the wild shores. Angel Exit plan to tour this show in autumn / winter 2009. Further information can be found at www.angelexit.co.uk

BOTTLEFED

Bottlefed will premiere their new show *Hold Me Until You Break* at Jacksons Lane 2-4 April, 8pm. A performance about love. A performance about relationships. A performance with no set ending – it will be different every night. Free improvisation within a set skeleton and set rules that might change every night. Conceived and performed by physical theatre ensemble Bottlefed and their improvising musical partners in crime Kobayashi. Further performances in Iceland and Switzerland in summer and autumn 2009. Email info@bottlefed.org or see www.bottlefed.org

CHIPOLATAS

Apart from a new music recording project, new costume and new filming, The Chipolatas are touring in Australia during March, performing in Melbourne and regional Western Australia. April dates include a British Council tour to Vienna and the Dream Festival in Corsica. May dates so far are Belfast Festival of Fools and Norfolk and Norwich Festival. See www.chipolatas.com for updates.



CLOD ENSEMBLE

CLOD ENSEMBLE

The Clod Ensemble are performing two shows in the spring: *MUST – the inside story*, a collaboration with legendary US performer Peggy Shaw (Split Britches), at The Show Room, Chichester (25 February), Leeds Met Studio Theatre (12 March), and Junction, Cambridge (15 March); and *Under Glass*, a recreation of a cavernous Victorian warehouse where a collection of extraordinary human beings are contained in a series of glass jars, at S.P.A.C.E. UK, La Laboral, Gijón, Spain (6-8 March) and Sadler's Wells Off-Site at the Village Underground, Shoreditch High Street, London (9-16 May). See www.clodensemble.com

COPPERDOLLAR

Copperdollar is a vibrant community of multi-disciplinary artists whose work crosses over to create a feast of art and performance. Copperdollar successfully premiered at Blank Gallery, Portslade July '08, with a magical piece of immersive theatre that transported the audience into a world beyond their own. 'It's the Roundhouse, come to Portslade.' On 19 December they took part in an Advent Beach Hut Calendar, Brighton. Copperdollar bridges the gap between audience / performer and creates a space where participation is not threatening but exhilarating. For more company information and booking details email kt@copperdollar.co.uk

DELL'ARTE

Continuing its thirty-year tradition of creating dynamic, physical, ensemble theatre, the Dell'Arte Company begins work on the *Lorca Triptych*, with three actors, three plays, and three themes: Love, Death, & Art, inspired by Lorca's dream to create a poetic theatre combining traditional popular theatre with dramatic poetry. Directed by Ronlin Foreman. For more info check the website or Dell'Arte International's new blog – DAInternational.blogspot.com features commentary by artists, faculty and staff on the work of ensemble, physical theatre, pedagogy and more. Email info@dellarte.com or see www.dellarte.com



DESPERATE MEN

Desperate Men's new show *Darwin and the Dodo* celebrates the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and takes a sideways look at the mysteries of evolution. *Darwin and the Dodo* will tour museums, science parks and festivals throughout 2009, and will shortly appear at the Natural History Museum, London, and Cambridge Science Festival, amongst other venues. For a full list of *Darwin and the Dodo* shows and other Desperate Men activity, see www.desperatememen.com

FOURSIGHT THEATRE

In Spring '09 Foursight Theatre will tour *Can Any Mother Help Me?*, an evocative new play bringing to life the funny and moving stories of a group of early twentieth-century women who wrote letters for a secret magazine. From marriage to childbirth, hidden desires to socialism, this production delves into lifelong friendships and domestic tragedies. Following the sell-out success of *Thatcher the Musical!*, Foursight Theatre, renowned for their distinctive style of ensemble

theatre and live music, turn from the epic to the everyday with this poignant production. Previews at The Courtyard, Hereford in February, then touring nationally. See www.foursighttheatre.co.uk/The-Cooperative-Correspondence-Club

JONATHAN KAY

Jonathan Kay is a fool in the tradition of fools: he's a 21st century jester. He has developed his highly original technique for over 35 years, leading audiences on a journey through imagination, developing each individual performance with them. Jonathan is currently running public workshops in fooling, with dates in Brighton (7-15 March), Glastonbury (4-12 April) and London (2-10 May). For more information about the workshops or performances call Joeli on 07843560139 or 01903 501262 or see www.jonathankay.co.uk



LEFT LUGGAGE

LEFT LUGGAGE

Left Luggage Theatre brings its brand of vibrant, innovative and exciting theatrical experience to the North East. Having recently moved its base to Tyneside, Left Luggage will be undertaking its first full-scale project in the region: a site-responsive performance at the Segedunum Bath House, Wallsend in spring/summer 2009. The piece will unlock the wealth of memories and stories of life in the town through engagement with local residents and young people. The resulting performance will combine physical theatre, puppetry, soundscape, text, live video and projection throughout the impressive architecture of the Bath House. For more information on the project see www.leftluggage theatre.co.uk

LITTLE BULB

Little Bulb's *Crocasmia* enjoyed huge success at last year's Edinburgh Fringe, winning three major awards including the Total Theatre Award for Best Graduate Company. The company are now gearing up for a national tour of the show, starting in September 2009, with dates to be announced. Little Bulb are also currently in an intensive research period for a show they hope to premiere at Edinburgh in 2010. In the meantime they are working on a smaller scale piece inspired by the idiosyncratic world of poetry and poets. They will be seeking to introduce new characters at performance poetry events in the forthcoming year, so check the website for early peeks as the characters develop. See www.littlebulbtheatre.com

DESPERATE MEN



LOST SPECTACLES

Lost Spectacles are touring the visually stunning and wildly comic *Lost in the Wind* nationally and internationally this spring and summer. Blending clowning, puppetry, object manipulation and delicate physical performance, Lost Spectacles take audiences gently by the hand and lead them into a dreamlike other-world. A world where bits of rubbish become waltzing lovers, giant balloons bounce through the sky and rotten vegetables make sweet music. Dates span from 18 April–7 June. For further details email info@lostspectacles.com or see www.lostspectacles.com

METRO-BOULOT-DODO

2008 saw MBD premiering three major projects (*Winter, Nightscene* and *Communication Breakdown*) and a host of smaller works. In spring 2009 the company is moving to a former warehouse on the outskirts of Leicester's cultural quarter. After a five year journey MBD are also preparing to complete their Four Seasons series of work. Looking to the seasons to reflect the stages of life, *Summer* will investigate the years between 20 and 40. An end-on piece featuring unusual and beautiful use of film and projection, *Summer* will consolidate the touring ambitions of The Four Seasons project by playing at galleries, street festivals and returning the company to theatres. MBD's sister company Watch This Space will be producing an audio tour for Snibston Discovery park in spring 2009. See www.metro-boulot-dodo.com

MIMBRE

Spring 2009 sees mimbre in production with their new show, which will be touring the UK and Europe in summer 2009 alongside last summer's success, *The Bridge*. The new show will be premiering in May with previews in April and is directed by renowned Spanish clown Leandre. Keep an eye on the website or join their mailing list to keep up to date with the plans. See www.mimbre.co.uk or email info@mimbre.co.uk or call 0207 429 1485

MOMENTUM THEATRE

After two national tours in '08, Momentum will perform their Capital of Culture commission, *Anima* at Mayfest in Bristol 1 & 2 May. Momentum will then re-work their successful first piece about the origin of love, *Tmesis*, premiering it at Physical Fest 5 in Liverpool 21–22 May. Momentum will also continue their collaboration with the Everyman Theatre and writer Chris Fittock on *The Dreadful Hours*, an experiment using movement and text, to be performed as a work-in-progress at the Everyword festival in June, with a tour planned for the autumn.

NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY



NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY

Natural Theatre Company was recently invited by the British Council to perform their unique brand of street theatre at the Cairo International Book Fair. Oddly, the organisers didn't choose the company's literature-related scenarios but selected the popular Pink Suitcases, Coneheads and Flowerpots (last seen next to the pyramids!), plus their British Bobbies to keep everyone in order. The Natural Theatre Company will also be part of the very first Bath Comedy Festival, taking place in their home town 1–12 April. With new street theatre pieces devised specially for the festival you'd be a fool to miss it! To see if they will be on a street near you take a trip into the Natural world: www.naturaltheatre.co.uk

OBRA

Obra is theatre company in residence at the Au Brana Centre in southwestern France. The company is made up of four international artists brought together by their essential need to communicate with an audience. Obra's debut performance *Transfixed*, based on ancient legend around Charlemagne, uncovers themes of love, obsession and necrophilia. The performance will premiere 3 April 2009 at the Au Brana Centre. In June and as part of the centre's international season, Obra will facilitate a workshop in the diverse approaches to creation that define their practice. For more details see www.aubrana.com

PANTS ON FIRE

Pants on Fire are currently working in collaboration with acting students at Rose Bruford College on a new devised production based on tales from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The year-long project, which explores dynamic storytelling, puppetry, mask, and original live music and song by composer Lucy Egger, will culminate in a preview performance in September 2009 with the newly graduated cast. For more information on this project and future training opportunities with Pants on Fire see www.pantsonfiretheatre.com

PETA LILY

Act of Intimacy is the latest show by performer Peta Lily. A performer confesses that she gave up theatre. Gave up the flesh, blood, sweat and celebration for sesame oil and spiritual practice. A woman dressed in a business suit confesses that she teaches confidence and aims at success while secretly harboring a love of the loser. It's about theatre, money, passion, profession and inner peace. It's romantic, savvy, mysterious and real. An intimate and very human account of hunger, purpose, blind impulse, timidity and thinking with the heart, culminating in ritual that brings together theatre and spirit. Email peta@petalily.com or call 020 8348 7171 or 07960 800 607

PLATFORM 4

Platform 4 are presenting a stripped-down version of *The Tempest* in 2009. This highly choreographed production evokes a dream-like world that feels both real and magical. It previews in partnership with Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts, 11–14 March at 7.30pm. Platform 4 are then touring around and about in autumn '09. The company are also creating two summer installations – in association with the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton – for the Connections Club, a social club for adults with early onset dementia. See www.platform4.org or email enquiries@platform4.org or call 01962 622050

NIKI MCCRETTON



NIKI MCCRETTON

Niki McCretton, resident artist at Lighthouse, Poole, is currently touring her two 'sister' productions for families (age 3+), called *Hoof!* and *Horseplay*. *Hoof!*, directed by Amit Lahav of Gecko, is a physical production with video and live camera which brings miniature horses onto the big screen as larger than life characters. It features a specially composed score by Paul Riordan and a stunning puppet created by Marc Parrett of Stuff and Nonsense Theatre. *Horseplay* is an interactive experience for children age 3–5 where they can create their own adventures. It takes place inside an 8 x 5 metre lifelike stable, full of horse-themed treasures, a live performer, lighting and soundscapes. Parents watch on a live feed or through the little stable windows. Touring February–June, including performances at Theatre Royal Winchester, Newbury Corn Exchange, and Farnham Maltings. For full tour dates see www.nikimccretton.com



PRECARIOUS

Following a knockout 2008 where Precarious performed to over 7500 people, in 2009 the company will commence a major audience development project. Precarious are looking to extend their pool of collaborating artists and would love to hear from performers with strong physical and vocal technique to make a new work *anomie* which will debut in July. Precarious will be running a series of workshops and masterclasses where artists can come and learn more about the company's distinctive practice and be considered for casting. If you are interested in taking part email info@precarious.org.uk or see www.precarious.org.uk for details.

PROM-PROM

Following the phenomenal success of *Joey – King of Clowns*, comes Tony Lidington's latest one-man show on the lives of the great British clowns. Dan Leno was the most famous musical hall artist of his age, but ended his life incarcerated in a lunatic asylum. Billed as 'The Funniest Man on Earth', he created the modern pantomime role of the Dame and what is now called 'stand-up comedy'. With live musical accompaniment, *Dan Leno – The King's Jester* brings the nineteenth-century showman to life, and, with him, an understanding of how British comedy has evolved. See www.prom-prom.com or call Emma Potter 01626 862175

REDCAPE THEATRE

RedCape's Total Theatre Award-winning show *The Idiot Colony* is currently touring, with performances at The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen (9–11 April) and Tron Theatre, Glasgow (15–18 April). Three women have spent decades wandering the wards and corridors of the Idiot Colony. Locked away for their illicit loves, they relive their faltering memories amidst the drugs, brutality and restraints of the Asylum. Based on real life accounts, *The Idiot Colony* tells the story of lives forever destroyed for the crime of falling in love with the wrong person. See www.redcapetheatre.com

SCARABEUS

In October 2008 the company undertook an amazing week of R&D with CandoCo Dance Company to explore ideas for mixing aerial work with integrated dance, and now planning a further period of R&D with CandoCo in May to explore ideas for a site-specific show taking place in art galleries. The company are also: developing a new light-hearted show for outdoor festivals, *To the Love of Food*, exploring the sensual qualities of food, the rituals connected to it and its symbolism in different cultures, collaborating with Ku-Da-Mix composer Kuljit Bhamra; in the early stages of developing a large-scale site-specific promenade performance *Wolves* for macrobert Arts Centre in Stirling, Scotland for summer 2010; and applying for a number of grants to continue and expand their education work with school-age children. For more see www.scarabeus.co.uk

SHAMS THEATRE



SHAMS THEATRE

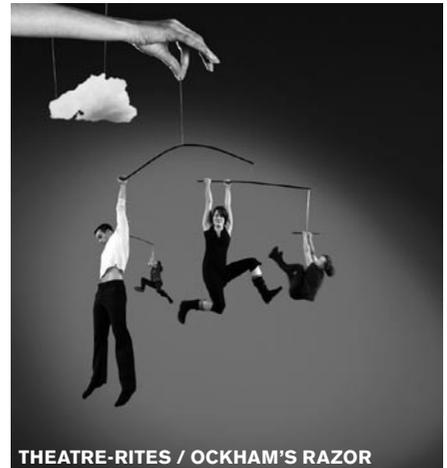
Shams' new project, *Reykjavik*, is due to have its first full performances in autumn 2009. An intimate, multi-sensory journey into the architecture of memory, *Reykjavik* is based on writer / performer Jonathan Young's experience of living in Iceland, and explores destiny and the need to make sense of the past through story. *Reykjavik* immerses its audience into both real and imaginary spaces as witnesses and co-creators, in a performance that combines installations, projection, text and movement. The company are also offering another month-long Clown through Mask training this April in London. See www.shamstheatre.org.uk

STRANGEFACE

StrangeFace are touring with *The Last Resort* until 3 April. Their dark comedy features mask, puppets and live music and a cast who have previously worked with Trestle, Faulty Optic and Green Ginger. The company have received an Arts Council Award to tour nationally following their initial run in the South East. The piece has been described as "a rustic Avenue Q" and the Total Theatre reviewer added "made the hairs on the back of my neck prickle with delight!". StrangeFace are also developing their adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic ghost story 'A Christmas Carol', touring from November 2009. See www.strangeface.co.uk

THEATRE AD INFINITUM

Lecoq-trained company theatre ad infinitum are touring their five-star Edinburgh success *Behind the Mirror* in March/April 2009. A hit with audiences of 'all ages and from many nations' and Best of the Fringe in the Observer, *Behind the Mirror* took Edinburgh by surprise; the show charmed audiences at the Lowry later in 2008, where the piece was celebrated for its universal appeal as "world-class theatre in its truest sense". Check www.theatreadinfiniutum.co.uk for dates and details. The company will also be running intensive physical theatre workshops for those interested in devising and experiencing a Lecoq-based discipline for theatre creation. For more information please email info@theatreadinfiniutum.co.uk



THEATRE-RITES / OCKHAM'S RAZOR

THEATRE-RITES / OCKHAM'S RAZOR

As a giant mobile tantalisingly appears *Hang On*, the new collaboration between Theatre-Rites and Ockham's Razor, catapults audiences into an aerial world of dizzying thrills. A perilous and playful journey from two of the most inventive companies around, mixing circus, movement, humour and live percussion. Ockham's Razor's Alex Harvey, Tina Koch and Charlotte Mooney will perform alongside juggler Stefano Di Renzo, musician Nao Masuda and actor / improviser Eric MacLennan. For adults and children aged 5+; playing 4–11 April at York Theatre Royal and 15–25 April at Lyric, Hammersmith. See www.theatre-rites.co.uk and www.ockhamsrazor.co.uk

TRESTLE THEATRE

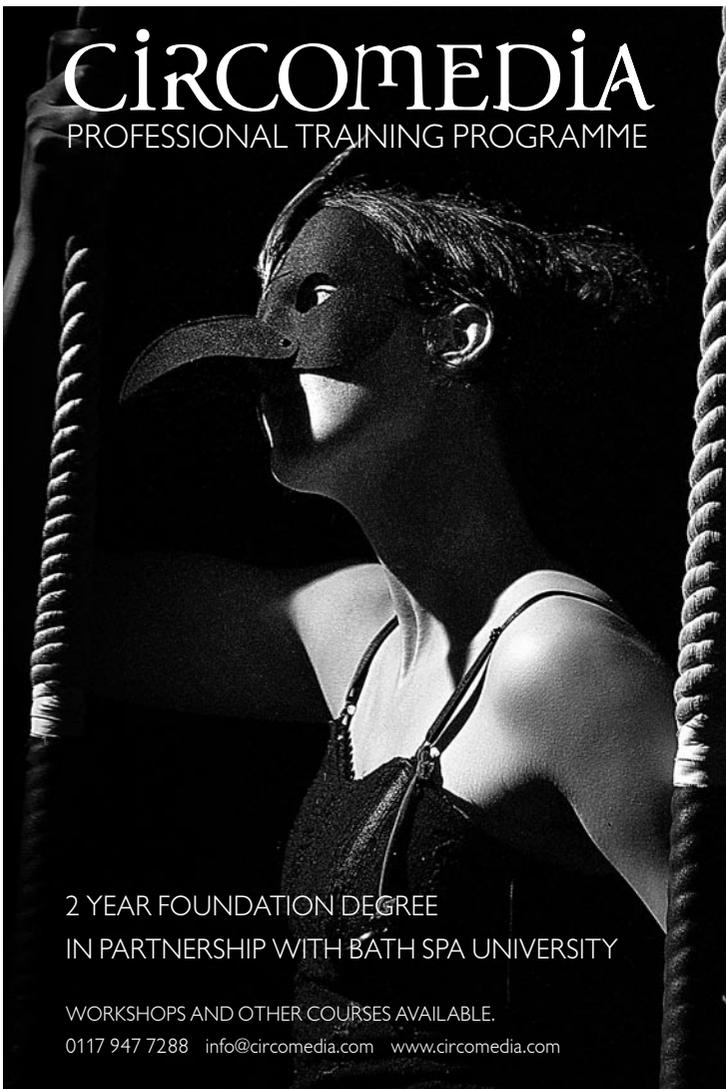
Trestle Theatre presents *Lola*, a new touring production which tells the true story of Lola Montez, the infamous nineteenth century Spanish dancer. *Lola* fuses theatre, dance and live Flamenco music to deliver a spirited production capturing the maverick life and soul of a remarkable woman. Performed without their trademark mask-work, for this new show Trestle have collaborated with Barcelona-based dance company Incepción Danza to develop a dance-theatre fusion with which to tell Lola's story. Following its successful tour last autumn, *Lola* will be back on the road in 2009 from 5 March, starting at the Lakeside Theatre in Colchester. See www.trestle.org.uk or email admin@trestle.org.uk

UNPACKED

Unpacked are currently working on *Jumping Mouse* with support from Camden People's Theatre, and will be touring in the spring before taking it to the Edinburgh Fringe in August. Set on a red double-decker, *Jumping Mouse* is a totally full-throttle adventure guaranteed to get you absolutely revved up. A contemporary adaptation of the Native American story, it's suitable for ages 5+. Unpacked also premier a new piece of work at the London Festival of Puppety: *Suspense* at the Kings Head Theatre in October 2009. www.unpacked.org

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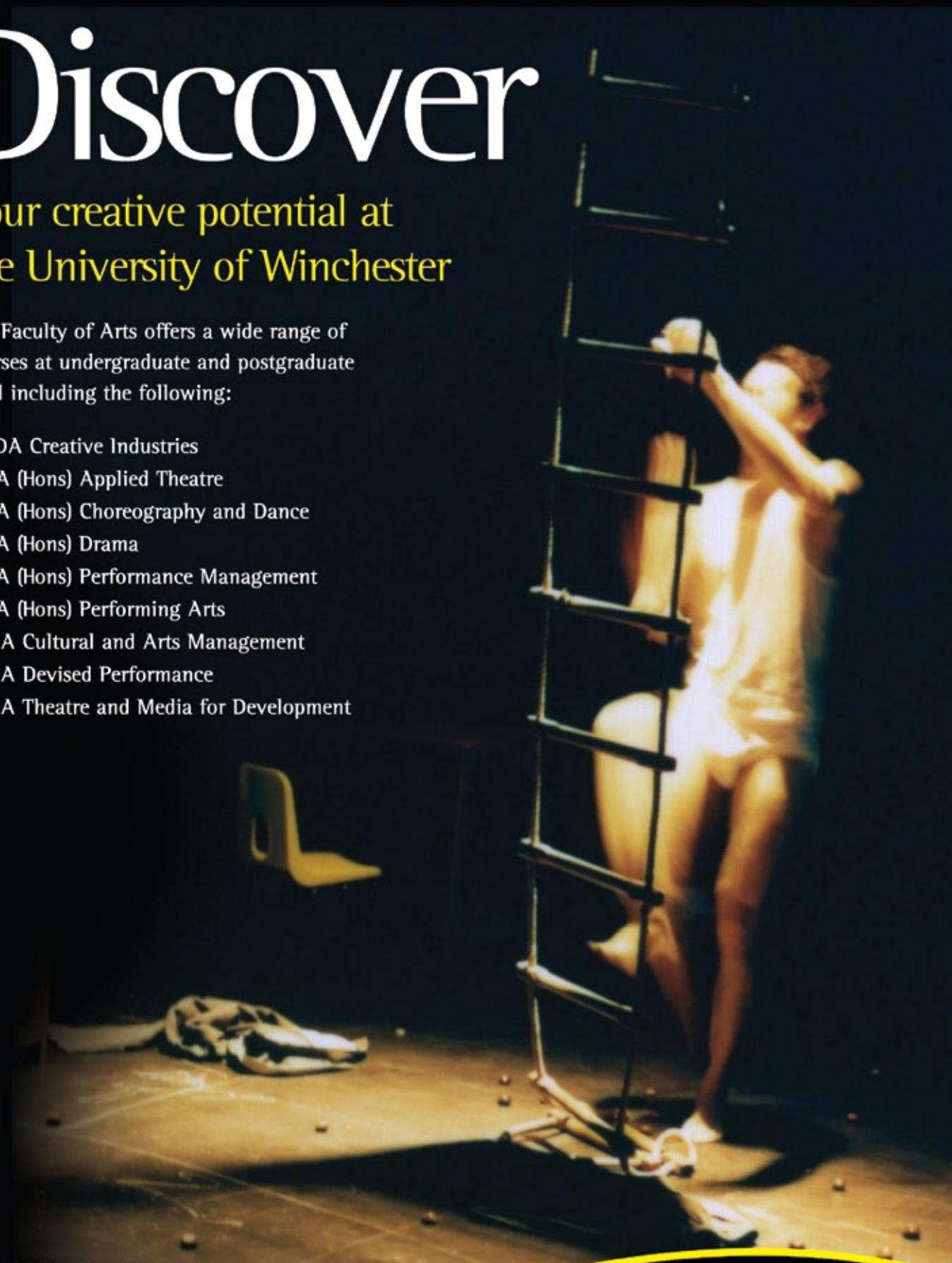


Image: 'Some Short Exercises in Love' By Fevered Sleep A piece commissioned by the Faculty of Arts for the launch of the Performance Gymnasium

For further details on the full range of courses offered at the Faculty of Arts visit:

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