

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE

VOLUME 21 | ISSUE 04 | WINTER 2009 / 2010 | TOTALTHEATRE.ORG.UK
TOTALTHEATRE - DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

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BE THERE WITH THE DIVINELY DECADENT DAVID HOYLE
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE - BLACKSKYWHITE COME TO LIMF
HEARING VOICES - PAUL CLARK FROM CLOD ENSEMBLE
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THE PUPPET THOUGHT POLICE HAVE ARRIVED: BLIND SUMMIT'S 1984
WELSH MEN IN FROCKS! THE TOTAL THEATRE AWARD WINNERS AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2009
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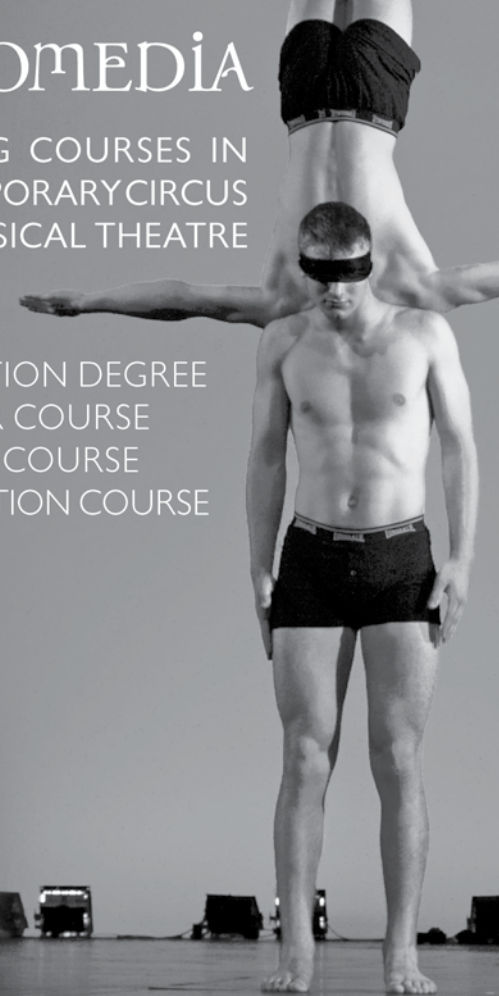
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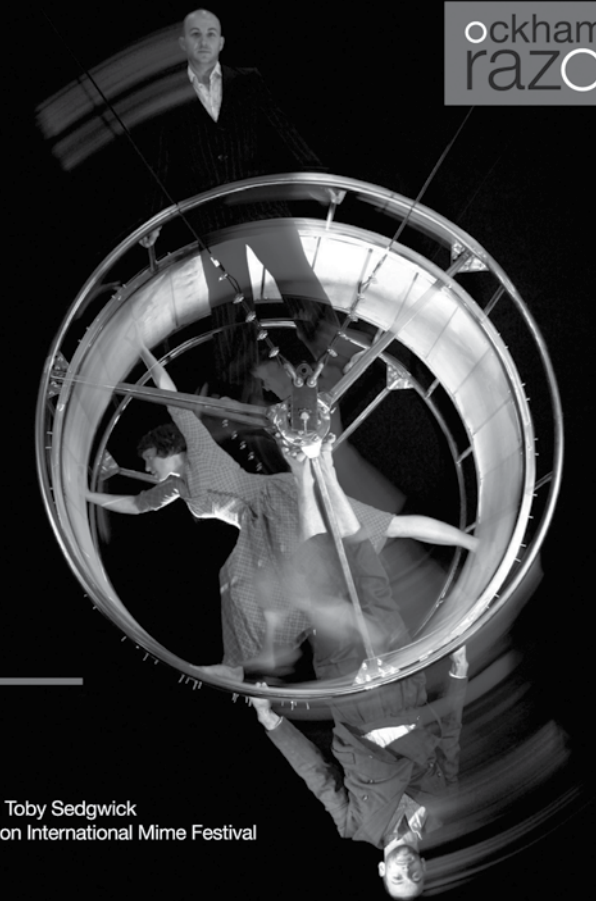
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EDITORIAL

As the year, and the decade, draws to a close it feels like an opportune moment not only to look back, but also to ponder on the future.

Ten years ago, the cover of the Winter 1999/2000 issue (Total Theatre Volume 11 Issue 4) featured enterprising and eccentric performance artist La Ribot. She was profiled as an artist appearing in the 2000 London International Mime Festival. Plus ca change! It is great to note that the Mime Fest is still going strong, and in 2010 is presenting shows by equally outrageous and entertaining female performance artists (such as bearded lady Jeanne Mordoj) as part of the eclectic mix of work pulled together under the now-preferred label of Visual Theatre. The Mime Fest is previewed in this issue with an article on Russian mavericks BlackSkyWhite, together with a round-up of key shows.

Back to our 1999 issue and we see an article by David Harradine, of then emerging (now established) company Fevered Sleep, about intimate theatre work performed in homes and other out-of-the-black-box sites – flagging up something that would become an increasingly popular mode of practice in the coming years. There’s certainly an extraordinary number of shows around in 2009 that take the audience out of their seats and in to a very different relationship to the performance. This is reflected in the high number of intimate, immersive or interactive shows shortlisted for the Total Theatre Awards (reported on in this issue).

In the reviews section ten years ago we find many familiar names: Clod Ensemble (also featuring in the current issue, with the company’s Co-Director Paul Clark our Voices subject), Split Britches, David Gale, Station House Opera, DV8, Guy Dartnell, Told By An Idiot, Frantic Assembly, The Cholmondeleys, Forced Entertainment, Complicite – and the first show by a new collective called Shunt. These are some of the artists who form the ‘backbone’ of the theatre work that we have supported over the years. Another familiar name, featured in this current issue with a multi-voiced artists’ diary, is The People Show – going strong for 40 years, and proving that there’s life in the old dog yet!

Absent from our pages in 1999, but firmly established now, are Punchdrunk (founded in 2000) who are reviewed in this issue. I’d hope that they would still be with us ten years hence. And I’d expect new circus stars Ockham’s Razor (previewed as they prepare to launch new show *The Mill*) to be swinging to ever greater heights over the coming decade.

So gazing into our crystal ball, who else might we expect to be featuring in Vol 31, Winter 2019? Perhaps budding street arts performers Plungeboom, flagged up in our round-up of the Lakes Alive season; or Kindle Theatre, whose bizarre banquet-performance is reviewed here. Perhaps Total Theatre Award winners Beady Eye Productions/ Kristin Fredricksson or The River People or Dafydd James. Perhaps The Fiasco Division, referenced in Absolute Beginners, our regular column written by Total Theatre’s Canny Granny, Laura Lloyd – who in another life is a rising star with The Honourable Society of Faster Craftswomen.

Maybe the names of the artists seen in the flurry of Scratch festivals, Rules & Regs encounters, and studio theatre presentations at Battersea Arts Centre in late 2009 will still be on our lips in ten years time: Non Zero One, Deborah Pearson, Coney, Inua Ellams, subject to _change (creators of *Home Sweet Home*). Certainly I’d hope to see BAC supported companies like New International Encounter (reviewed) and Blind Summit Theatre (who are presenting new show *1984* over the midwinter season) going from strength to strength. BAC’s work is the subject of a special focus in this edition of Total Theatre Magazine.

I would also love to learn a decade from now that the BAC affiliated project Forest Fringe (reviews section) has inspired other enterprising souls to seize the moment and create wonderful new opportunities for the making and presenting of theatre work.

Who knows where we will be in a decade’s time. Regardless of what’s to come, it is good to be leaving this decade with a feeling that ‘theatre’ – if I can dare to use that word without any qualifiers – is in a pretty good state. There’s exciting times ahead!

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NOT FOR ME, NOT FOR YOU, BUT FOR US



ALEXANDER ROBERTS MEETS DAVID JUBB AND DAVID MICKLEM, BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE'S JOINT ARTISTIC DIRECTORS, AND REFLECTS ON A BUILDING WITH MANY THEATRICAL PURPOSES AND POSSIBILITIES

Battersea Arts Centre – based in the same 19th century former town hall building in South West London that has been its home since its birth in 1980 – boasts a myriad of corridors, doors and theatrical possibilities.

Joint artistic directors David Jubb and David Micklem are on a self-proclaimed mission to ‘take ownership of the word “theatre”’ and transform the way that BAC functions as a building.

For Jubb and Micklem, the term theatre refers to a place rather than an event, ‘a place where both ordinary and extraordinary things happen’. Jubb explains that BAC is driven by an ‘interest in programming a cocktail of different events that bring people together... and for those experiences to be transformative’.

Micklem coins it a ‘porous building’. He says: ‘The town hall has always been a place where people have come together, in the same way that they do in a theatre; come together to celebrate something, or question something, or debate something. The theatre that we are imagining at BAC does all of those things. As well as producing and championing theatre shows in our building, we also still have weddings, conferences and community meetings. All of those elements are of equal importance to us in the ecology of a theatre.’ Jubb adds: ‘The building was previously quite fixed in how it was used, and conversations with artists would be quickly reduced down to ‘well, do you want it in the 150 seat black box or the 60 seat black box?’”

But they have been working together to move things on...

Starting in 2007 with Punchdrunk’s *Masque of the Red Death* (a whole-building site-responsive work which ran from autumn 2007 well into 2008), Jubb and Micklem have been running a series of initiatives entitled The Playground Projects. These instigate collaborations with artists, audiences, BAC staff and architects to experiment with, explore and develop the nature of the building as a theatre.



To date, a new brand of programming is gaining momentum at the BAC – as I’ve witnessed in numerous visits over the past year.

My first outing to the venue in 2009 was to see Kneehigh’s *Don John*. The theatre had burst out onto the street – the company of Kneehigh actors sporting tank-tops and flares, to the flicker of tacky fairy lights and the pong of scampi and chips. The chosen site for Kneehigh’s story was the Grand Hall, which had been totally transformed and split into two, the space converted into a 1970s lounge bar, and an end-on stage and auditorium.

A few months later I was back once more, this time to see a retrospective of the late theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski. There is little to say about this exhibition, beyond it being a disappointment, but the time I spent at BAC took an interesting turn that day. Just as I was leaving I came

to a stop in the foyer. This large entrance space is characterised by doors, corridors and a great marble staircase, all leading off to the here, there, and everywhere of this 71-roomed building. It’s an exciting space just to look at, but I had also heard something. From the corridor on my right I caught wind of some music and followed the sound down the long, tall hallway. Opening the door to one of the rooms I was greeted to my delight by a massive party in the Grand Hall. There was tea and cake, and elderly men and women loving it on the dance floor. It appeared like some sort of flash mob or installation piece. I had become an unwitting witness to a BAC Tea Dance. Funny, surprising, and bizarre.

A few months on and I am standing in the foyer again. I am here this time to see the Scratch Festival – just one of many visitors scrambling around the programme, trying to negotiate what to see and when. Amongst the line-up are *Non Zero One* and *Stolen Words*, both taking the opportunity to work with the building’s architecture as a creative partner in the work. There are performances going off everywhere, from the foyer to the black box spaces, to little nooks, crannies and corners. I found myself, for twenty minutes, stranded – sandwiched between two performances going off simultaneously.

After nearly a year of regular visits I am well and truly seduced by the endless creative possibilities offered by this new BAC approach.

Jubb and Micklem see everything that is programmed at BAC as a chance to ‘scratch’ the space. As such, it is not just the artists shaping this building, it must also be attributed to the likes of the homework club, the yoga class and the handful of visitors drinking coffee and eating cake in the café.

IMAGE 1 | CONEY’S A SMALL TOWN ANYWHERE. PHOTO BY GAVIN MILLAR
IMAGE 2 | DEBORAH PEARSON PERFORMING AS PART OF RULES AND REGS. PHOTO BY KRISTIAN WILDING
IMAGE 3 | KNEEHIGH’S DON JOHN. PHOTO COURTESY OF MOBIUS

BAC’s ‘theatre’ in 2009 certainly extends beyond the artist, the audience, the show and the single event. It’s evident that BAC is on a journey of evolution and pioneering an ideology that champions the possibility of a theatre experience made up of more than is expected. I have encountered moments that were surprising, enchanting and transformative – this is as much because of conversations I have had, and people I have met, as the theatre I have seen, and events I have witnessed.

BAC, however, are not embarking on a solo mission and we should acknowledge other London-based pioneers – Shunt Lounge, The Theatre Royal Stratford East, Southwark Playhouse and Camden People’s Theatre being examples of other theatre platforms that invite a more global sense of the relationship between architecture, the theatrical event and social space.

Nevertheless, it is exciting that BAC is inviting so many practitioners to make full creative use of what the building’s architecture has to offer. BAC is actively developing the physical capabilities of its many rooms and spaces, in order to further enhance the availability and flexibility of their invitation.

Further to that, BAC’s choice to use artists and audience as active parties in this enterprise will surely strengthen the outcome.

As BAC now moves towards realising elements of David Jubb and David Micklem’s BAC vision, there is a question, which will at least for now remain unanswered, over whether BAC is slightly imbalanced in the level at which work is serving the building, rather than serving the artist. This question feels particularly relevant when Jubb and Micklem talk about the idea that when a piece of work is shown at BAC, it will leave carrying with it a ‘BAC signature’. It is certainly a valid pursuit to explore the different possibilities for collaboration between venue, artist, audience and community at large, but still there is a value to the artist as the instigator and owner of their own work.

There is no doubt that the BAC party is in full swing and 2009 has been a year full of successful adventures for both artists and visitors. The hope, for me at least, is that the journey does not stop here and that each success brings a desire for more change and development.

The building’s motto, ‘Not For Me, Not For You, But For Us’, suggests that all of those that visit the building get the chance to place their hand on the BAC steering wheel. Long may it take the risk to let that happen and long may it avoid pressing cruise control.

For Punchdrunk’s *Masque of the Red Death*, presented at BAC 2007–2008, see www.punchdrunk.org.uk/past/tmotrd.htm

Kneehigh’s *Don John* ran at the BAC from 9 April–8 May 2009. See www.kneehigh.co.uk

Grotowski: Theatre and Beyond conference and touring exhibition took place in June 2009, at University of Kent, and at BAC. For further information see www.britishgrotowski.co.uk

For details of the BAC Tea Dances and other events see www.bac.co.uk
 Alexander Roberts and Dorothy Max Prior from Total Theatre Magazine attended the BAC Scratch festival 25–26 September 2009

Coming soon to BAC: Battersea Arts Centre presents Homotopia’s *Jiggery Pokery*, from 1–19 December. A one-woman homage to Carry On actor Charles Hawtrey, performed by Amanda Lawrence (known for her work with Kneehigh and Told by an Idiot). BAC’s main Christmas show, Blind Summit’s adaptation of *1984*, will be running from 2–23 December 2009 & 4–9 January 2010. (See feature elsewhere in this issue for more on this production.) There will also be a number of Scratch performances from BAC regulars alongside this main programme.

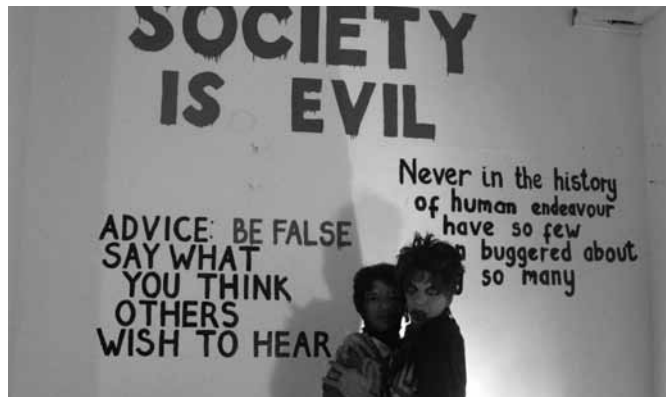
For further information on any of the above, and more, see www.bac.org.uk

BEING THERE

THREE POINTS-OF-VIEW OF DAVID HOYLE'S INSTALLATION / PERFORMANCE FOR RULES & REGS AT BAC, 25 SEPTEMBER 2009

THE RULES

1 Think of England 2 Don't be Yourself 3 Be Straight with Us 4 Panic



I'm ushered into a room with a ring of pineapple on my finger, placed there by our host's rather elegant attendant ('The Blackamoor'). The room contains an installation/performance/party presented, hosted and haunted by David Hoyle. The warmth of the welcome makes me question whether our host and I have actually met before. We haven't. That's just how things work in this room. It has an intimacy somewhere between a secret society, an adolescent bedroom and your Nan's front room.

On the walls are a series of photographs, portraits of the growing club of young men who made themselves heard in school corridors and classrooms across the civilised world, gunning down their classmates, teachers and finally themselves. They are in gold frames; an aristocratic lineage of disaffection, icons of alienated youth, the alter-egos and supervillains to our ideal selves.

The walls tell of broken adolescence across the years. With the directness of slogans scrawled on school-books, the evils of society are referenced with words daubed on the white walls in stark red and black – a savage and eclectic barrage of references. This litany of rage is tilted at the dogmas and demands that have broken many young men over the centuries, and balanced with David Hoyle's: Death, Revenge, Society Is Evil. Be False, Displacement, The Myth of the Masculine.

Among all this is David Hoyle, standing, sitting and dancing by his words. Reworking them, mulling them over, often just chatting about whatever comes up, having a laugh. Wine, grapes, more pineapple rings, candelabra, conversations with strangers: gifts made not against the darkness, but inviting it in, asking how it is doing. Maybe we can start to understand, just a little bit.

We all drink lots and smoke inside.

Tim Harrison

My allocated room was dingy and rather depressing ... shades of Miss Havesham (where's the wedding-cake and mice?!). The budget was spent on transforming the nicotine-esque walls to bright white. Words which related to my interpretation of the four 'Rules' were painted onto the walls (expertly by Cath O' Gorman). I mixed up the aristocratic world of Evelyn Waugh (with particular reference to *Brideshead Revisited* and the Lygon Family, whose home Madresfield Court served as a template for *Brideshead*) and the world of *Dis-Enchanted Youth*, presenting photographs of various youths who had gone into schools or academies and shot people indiscriminately. The Grandiosity of The 18th Century-House Party converging with The Dysfunctional NOW!

I reasoned that there was a connection as some great estates were founded on murder and ruthless seizure of territory – a comment on the seemingly NICE and the seemingly EVIL.

To present the killers as aristocratic ancestors, their faces framed in gold (some smiling attractively), was deliberately provocative. We live in a world where the media feasts on the latest atrocity: they need the killers to sell their product.

These are poisonous times of manipulation and mis-information – is it any wonder that in the confusion guns are fired, people are blown away? We tell our young people that murder is bad, yet at the same time normalise perpetual war.

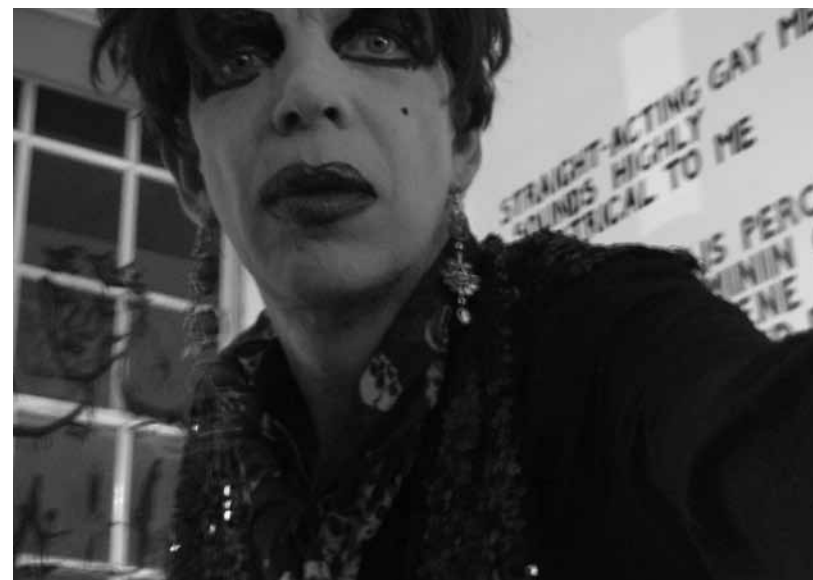
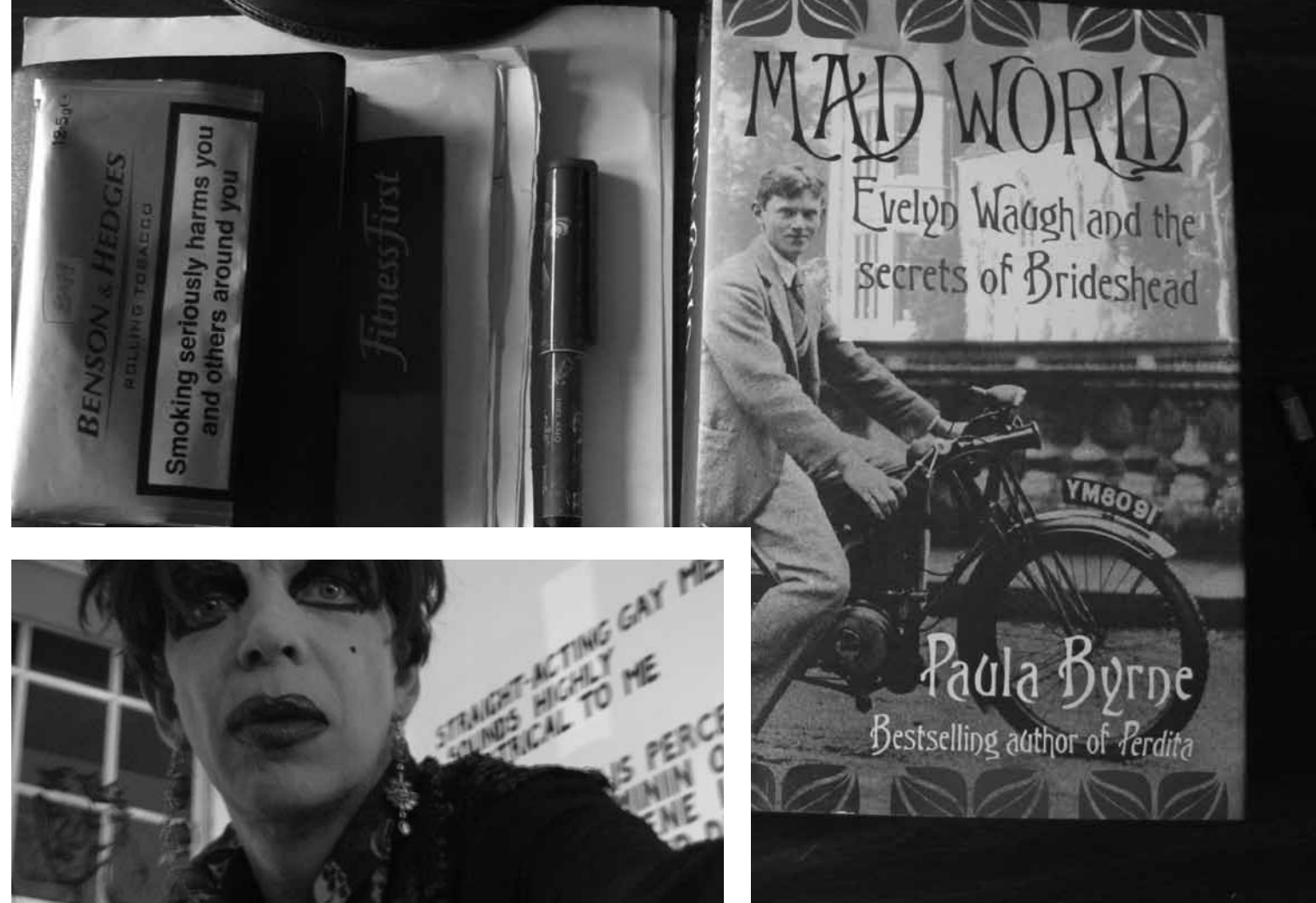
History records how the aristocracy for centuries ruthlessly sent youths to their deaths. The dukes involved in Highland clearances; the Crimea; Lord Kitchener sending gilded youths in their thousands to be torn apart in Ypres or the Somme during WW1.

I hosted a Party in this room, with wine and candles, and engaged in conversation with all who attended. This was a space that said that at some level ALL is PROFOUNDLY CONNECTED and that DISPLACEMENT activities can distract us from a wider REALITY!

25 September was my first night OPEN to the public! We drank, we conversed, we spun around to the music. We transgressed! Together we created a temporary autonomous zone. It was Bacchanalian, and we all had a wonderful time. Nobody got killed.

Evelyn Waugh was a huge inspiration to the project so I shall finish by quoting what he insisted be printed at the front of *Brideshead Revisited*. I AM NOT I, THOU IS NOT HE OR SHE, THEY ARE NOT THEY.

David Hoyle



'Home' is something of a recurring artistic motif for David Hoyle. The award-winning short film *At Home with David Hoyle* (directed by Nathan Evans) took us inside his Manchester pad; a visit to BAC for the Burst festival saw him create an artist's garret usurping the Romantic tradition; and in his latest BAC residency, he's created a *Brideshead*-inspired stately home – replete with banqueting table, stained glass windows (well OK, painted Perspex, but equally lovely), and portraits of the aristocracy.

The New Aristocracy, that is... for within the six gilt frames are photographs of 'Disillusioned and Immortalised Youth' – high-school killers (or presumed would-be-killers). In smaller frames on another wall are some of the bon mots of these young men: 'Humanity is Over-Rated' and 'Remember Me This Way'.

David Hoyle's performance personae range from extreme alter-egos (like the dearly departed Divine David) through to a lightly-masked version of his own dear self, and it is this David that shares the space with us tonight – chatting, drinking, smoking, dancing, discussing his artistic influences.

As a veteran of the punk era, the evening reminds me of the opening of the Prostitution exhibition at the ICA in October 1976. It is interesting to note that it is still the same things that can shock and subvert: the tongue-in-cheek 'celebration' of teen violence; the use of images of criminals as artistic icons (remember Vivienne Westwood's Cambridge Rapist T-shirt?); gay men who refuse to play it straight; an interest in Englishness (Derek Jarman's *Jubilee*); the appropriation of upper-class fashion foibles (Adam and The Ants). On that former occasion, the Daily Mail response was 'These People Are the Wreckers of Civilisation'. And — surprise! — three decades have passed, but we haven't gone away! Punk: the Crone Generation...

Dorothy Max Prior

David Hoyle was in residence at BAC as a participating artist in Rules & Regs. Musical mixes for the evening were provided by Grim Outlook. David was assisted by Thom Shaw (meeting and greeting).

Rules & Regs is a practice-led development initiative for artists working in Live Art that travels around the UK and is sited at a new venue for each phase of its development. Each month-long programme is curated by a different organisation and culminates in a public exhibition of work, the chosen artists each creating new work in response to rules devised to challenge their usual creative strategies. For the BAC residency, the artists were: David Hoyle, Deborah Pearson, Sharon Smith, and Swen Steinhauser. The artists were in residence at BAC from 1 September 2009, with showings of work taking place 25–26 September, in tandem with the BAC Scratch festival. For further information see www.rulesandregs.org

Other David Hoyle events late 2009:

David Hoyle's *Total Abasement* came to The Basement arts centre in Brighton on 30 October 2009. See www.thebasement.uk.com

David's *Theatre of Therapy* is at The Chelsea Theatre in London 6 & 7 November as part of the Sacred season, which will also include *On the Couch with David Hoyle*.

For details of this and other shows and events at Sacred see www.chelseatheatre.org.uk/sacred2009.htm

David Hoyle will also be hosting a life-drawing class in the sculpture gallery at the V&A in London on 27 November.

If you wish to contact David Hoyle, email david@davidhoyle.net

IMAGES: DAVID HOYLE AT BAC FOR RULES & REGS, PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR MEETS DIMITRI ARUYPIN FROM BLACKSKYWHITE, WHO BRING *USSR WAS HERE* TO THE 2010 LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL

The Midsummer madness of Glastonbury Festival feels a long way from now, as we plunge downwards towards the darkest point of the year, but let me take you back to one of those balmy summer evenings...

It's 11.00pm, still warm, thankfully dry, and the Glastonbury Theatre and Circus Fields are full of happy revellers. There's a floodlit outdoor aerial rig, populated by spangly-costumed trapeze-ers, a number of small stages featuring various fire-spinners and acrobalancers, and at the far end of the theatre field, street arts company Emergency Exit Arts are drumming and dancing and setting fire to things, their giant metal Runga-Rung elephant all the while harrumphing loudly.

Meanwhile in the cavernous theatre tent, currently pretty empty, a show is beginning. Jarring electronic sounds burst out of the PA, the stage is lit with a wash of intense red light, and the space pumped full of smoke.

Out of the darkness emerge two figures, whose masked faces and dislocated movements cast a mesmerising spell. I'm sitting near the front, and my gaze is locked onto these horribly compelling beings, who one moment seem hardly human yet in another moment all-too-human; morphing from one state of being to another with alarming and disturbing regularity. When I eventually drag my eyes from the stage and glance around me, I'm surprised to see that the tent is nearly full, the attentive audience shocked into silence (a near impossibility at Glastonbury). It's as if all these people have been charmed into the tent, for all I know walking hypnotised in silent procession from the world of summer evening fun-and-games into something deeper, darker and far more dangerous.

The aesthetic of the piece is a sort of twisted Gothic-Romantic. A parade of increasingly disturbing 'creatures' arise from the hellish smoke, demonstrating their angst through solo movement sections, or in pairings that sometimes confuse the viewer by shifts in which they take on the trappings of each other's identities. It is hard to believe that there are only two performers, as we seem to encounter so many beings: shadowy fairy-tale figures appear and disappear, cajoling and retreating; patriarchal figures rant and rage; and dislocated dancers waltz to the sound of an old radio broadcast, clinging to each other as the world falls down around them.

The soundscape is a dense collage of electronic music and found sounds, with text used as part of the integrated soundscape more for its sonic (rather than semantic) qualities. There is, in one section of the piece an ironic use of lip-synching and in another a disturbing play on the powerful image of the ventriloquist's dummy (which I took to be commentaries on political posturing, speechmaking and the constant disparities between what our leaders say and what they really mean).

Welcome to the world of Russian renegades BlackSkyWhite, presenting *USSR Was Here*, a show which will have its premiere in the capital as part of the 2010 London International Mime Festival.

Whilst in Glastonbury I had several conversations with BlackSkyWhite's Dimitri Aruypin about the making of this work, about the company generally – and about life, the universe, and much else besides. This, I should say, wasn't difficult to arrange as I was staying with the company in their tent (a rather military arrangement with camp beds lined up on one side of the space, and metal storage units serving as tables for the seemingly continuous consumption of ridiculously strong black coffee).



Dimitri is something of a polymath, a professor of mathematics turned theatre director, designer and sound artist; a trained scientist with a detailed knowledge of European history – not to mention his interest in philosophy, theatre, literature, and music. Throughout our various talks, he moves easily from one subject and area of knowledge to another – and he obviously doesn't suffer fools gladly. I manage to keep up (just about) on the discussions on the comparative theatrical visions of Artaud, Maeterlinck, and Meyerhold; on Russia's troubled relationship with its allies in the Second World War; and on the musical genius of Ryoji Ikeda, Jocelyn Pook, and Diamanda Galas. I fail dismally on anything relating to physics and maths (despite drawings he makes in my notebook to illustrate points about 'symmetric groups' or whatever) and am told sternly 'not to be afraid of mathematics'. Eventually he takes pity on me, and suggests I try, for starters, reading Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*.

Somewhere in that discussion comes an explanation of why he gave up mathematics to become a theatre-maker, which hinged around meeting Marcella Soltan in 1987, and a slow-burning desire to make theatre that manifested over a 3–4 year period. He learnt on the job, he says, 'I have no diploma or qualifications; I'm a trained scientist, not a trained theatre-maker'. He is, if anything, a little disparaging about theatre training, or at least about some aspects of it, describing the obsession with Stanislavski's and Grotowski's 'methods' as being something akin to Scientology. And as for 'theatre studies' – 'what's it for?' he says dismissively.



BlackSkyWhite are based in Moscow, but have never felt the need to 'penetrate the theatre community'. Although their work has common territory with other Russian physical theatre companies – such as Derevo – they have developed on a lone trajectory. They worked initially without funding or support, making around one show a year. Artaud's writings proved to be a strong influence on the company's work, and they see their driving force as the desire to 'bring dreams to the stage'. The references to dreams are many in Dimitri's musings on theatre, and unsurprisingly he has a strong interest in Carl Jung's writings on the dream life, the collective unconscious, and the archetypes.

Having built up a sound reputation for their early work, BlackSkyWhite decided, in 1993, to respond to the cultural turbulence happening all around them – initiated by Gorbachev's 1980s policies of Perestroika and Glasnost, and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 – with the creation of a piece about Russia and the many histories of its people. Dimitri speaks passionately of Russia, which he describes as 'less a nationality than a mentality'. It is obvious that *USSR Was Here* is a work close to his heart, and at the core of the company's repertoire.

The investigation of Russian history and cultural identity takes the form of a dream-like journey through the inner psyche of the nation, rather than anything that one might call a regular narrative history, or 'political theatre' in the usual sense of that term. Yet politics and histories – both national and personal – are crucial to the work, with ideas for the piece fermenting over many years. Dimitri is a great believer in allowing the subconscious to do its work.

In the process of exploring the fear and anxiety generated by the changes occurring, and to investigate the notion of what 'being Russian' might mean at the cusp of the twentieth/twenty-first centuries, the company worked with their own childhood memories, with shared histories, and with archetypal images inspired by notions of cultural identity. For Dimitri, the essence of Russian-ness is a willingness to challenge – be that a challenge to 500 years of capitalism, or a challenge to Nazi Germany.

At the heart of *USSR Was Here* is the collective memory of centuries of struggle and upheaval.

The work is very much in the style of intense and atmospheric visual theatre that BlackSkyWhite are known for, and bears their signature clearly. In many ways, it is a companion piece to *Bertrand's Toys* (which was created a year later, in 1995, and which won a Total Theatre Award, amongst other accolades, when it appeared at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2000). Both pieces reflect on death, loss, and horror. The starting point for *Bertrand's Toys* was 'the realisation that the most concentrated evils do exist — Satanism, serial killers, torturers — they are really in the world, and the people I love have joined a world with them in. This thought brings me so much pain.' *USSR Was Here* is haunted by the ghosts of 'the 20 million Russians dead in the World War, and the further 20 million young men lost to Stalin and to emigration'. Thoughts of death are never far – and if it is reasonable to talk of a nation having a tendency towards one temperament, then Dimitri is perhaps typically Russian in his tendency towards melancholy. He talks about 'feeling the abyss within yourself' and says, with a sigh, 'you cannot predict your dreams'. Weeks later, he emails me to say (as if I hadn't noticed!) that crucial to his psyche and his work was an awareness of death, a sense of the finite. Yet, he says, it is 'the feeling that life here is finite that is the only thing that brings sense and makes life valuable'.

As in *Bertrand's Toys*, key elements of *USSR Was Here* are the strong physical performances of the two actor/dancers, and the intense relationship between the two played out onstage. As in other shows by the company, costume and mask are used to create illusion, but the corporeal language is at the heart of the piece.

In particular, the work is a brilliant showcase for Marcella Soltan's extraordinary physical performance abilities – she has the most unsettling shapeshifter ability to twist and turn her body into anything she wants it to be. Dimitri and Marcella are partners in work and in life, and their intense director/performer relationship is at the heart of the company. 'If Marcella stopped performing,

BlackSkyWhite wouldn't exist' says Dimitri. The importance of the performer as creator of their own work, and the deep level of work explored by theatre-makers who continue to work together over many years, is crucial to Dimitri's understanding of what makes good theatre. Dimitri is seen by many people outside the company as the auteur of the work, the driving force, but he says: 'I am not the creator, I am the gardener. I know how to take care of the actors. I know how to take care of the technical things.' He also says, of the creation of the work: 'It takes so long to make a show that it is impossible to say who made what.'

It is obvious that, despite his many competing talents and interest, theatre is where Dimitri needs to be: 'I won't go back to mathematics,' he says, 'I make theatre work because I need to show people what it is to be alive – to live with the knowledge that we can die at any moment, and thus the importance to *really* live life. It's a kind of reality, but a very different one to the common one.'

Returning one last time to a favourite topic, the dream nature of theatre, he finishes this particular conversation with this thought: 'The dream on stage is not a metaphor, it is the real life.'

For more information on BlackSkyWhite see www.bsw.ru

USSR Was Here was seen by the author at Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts, June 2009. See www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk

USSR Was Here is presented by the 2010 London International Mime Festival at ICA, The Mall, London SW1: 16–20 Jan 8pm. £14 (£12 concs) 020 7930 3647 Booking opens 12 November. See www.ica.org.uk/mimefestival

The London International Mime Festival runs 13–31 January 2010 See www.mimefest.co.uk

IMAGES: ALL PHOTOS ARE OF BLACK SKY WHITE'S *USSR WAS HERE*. COURTESY OF THE COMPANY

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL 2010

JOHN ELLINGSWORTH PICKS HIS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS YEAR'S ECLECTIC PROGRAMME

Switzerland, Belgium, France, Israel, Spain, Russia, Portugal, Denmark and Italy – as usual the Mimefest pulls its performers in from all over the world, with this year's highlights including Theatre Etgar's *Eshet*, a puppet-retelling of an Old Testament story; Kitt Johnson X-Act's *Rankefod*, a solo performance charting the origin of the species; Ateliers du Spectacle's *A Distances*, collecting seven short pieces of animation / machine theatre; *Kefar Nahum*, the latest from LIMF favourites Cie Mossoux Bonte; a London premiere for *USSR Was Here* by Russia's BlackSkyWhite; and new work from returning companies O Ultimo Memento / Joao Paulo dos Santos (King of the (Chinese) Pole) and Collectif Petit Travers (a brilliant French company with two previous LIMF successes under their belt). And if that's not enough, Tom Morris (Former Director of BAC, then Associate Director of the National Theatre, now Artistic Director of the Bristol Old Vic), returns to give the 2010 Mime Festival Talk. Entitled Chapter 3, the talk takes place at the ICA on 23 January, 2.30pm.

The two UK representatives at LIMF this year are both circus companies: Mimbre, whose *Until Now* is an extended stage version of the outdoor show that toured the festivals in 2009, a three-hander using acrobatics to explore and illuminate the fluid changes in the trio's relationships; and Ockham's Razor, who are at the Royal Opera House's Linbury Studio with *The Mill*, a completely new piece directed by Toby Sedgwick and played out on the Mill itself, a giant custom-built aerial wheel. The new show follows Ockham's Razor's established modus: creating a piece of equipment and then developing a narrative in the process of finding out exactly what's technically possible on it. In past shows their kit has stayed relatively close to traditional circus apparatus (a frame in *Memento Mori* had some of the properties of trapeze without the torsion or swing; the rope in *Every Action* took corde lisse and complicated it with two pulley-wheels), but the Mill is a step toward something more challenging and complex. In circus it's closest to Wheel of Death though it's most accurately communicated as a giant suspended hamster wheel – one that performers can run inside or on top of – with steel rims and terrible, dangerous momentum. Exactly what theatrical narratives will emerge from it remains to be seen, but it's a good place to start.

UK companies at LIMF 2010:

Ockham's Razor's *The Mill* can be seen at Linbury Studio Theatre, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden: 19–21 January 7.45pm (after-show discussion on Weds. 20th) £6.50 / £11 / £13 / £16 (£7.50 students / under 16s)
Bookings: 020 7304 4000 or at www.mimefest.co.uk
For more on Ockham's Razor see www.ockhamsrazor.co.uk
Mimbre's *Until Now* appears at Southbank Centre's Purcell Room: 25–27 Jan 8pm (after-show discussion Tue 26th) £14.00. Booking opens 13 November on 0844 847 9928 or at www.mimefest.co.uk.
For more on Mimbre see www.mimbire.co.uk

The London International Mime Festival runs 13–31 January 2010. For further details on any of the shows, to download a programme, or to book tickets, see www.mimefest.co.uk



IMAGE 1: JEANNE MORDOI'S *ELOGE DU POIL*. PHOTO BY CHRISTOPH RAYNAUD
IMAGE 2: OCKHAM'S RAZOR'S *THE MILL*. PHOTO BY NIK MACKAY
IMAGE 3: OKIDOK'S *HAHAHA*
IMAGE 4: MOSSOUX-BONTÉ'S *KEFAR NAHUM*. PHOTO BY MIKHA WAJNRYCH

IMAGE: THE FIASCO DIVISION'S *MORID*. PHOTO BY EDDA BJÖRNSDÓTTIR



ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

THE CANNY GRANNY MUSES ON CLIMAX AND CATHARSIS

Boiling kettles, thunderstorms, yodelling orgasms – the origin of the inherent satisfaction of dramatic climax needs little explanation.

Climax feels part of the natural order: the build-up of gack on the emotional white-head until it's a relief when late at night you squeeze it between two fingernails and it pings onto the mirror. This release is known as catharsis. If reading about this makes you uncomfortable, don't worry – you probably just need a good cry.

London-based company The Fiasco Division have recently developed a theatrical training process in laughter and crying. They've been exploring the physiological processes of catharsis, doing laughing yoga, breathing and voice exercises. Though be warned: Laughing whilst doing yoga could itself end in tears, or at the very least incontinence.

Jacques Lecoq insisted that a denouement was a necessity of effective theatre. He devised an exercise in which students build the intensity of their reaction to an event – say, washing up whilst a tsunami hits. Consequently, when Armageddon strikes and my street starts pissing molten lava into the sky, I'll probably freeze until someone bangs a tambourine and shouts 'C'est six! Reagissez!'

More recently, and with age perhaps, I've begun to wonder whether climax is all it's cracked up to be. Anyway, is it really that natural? A tree burgeoning, a British summer, greying hair – these things are wonderful and are more of a natural fade.

Amy Russell, drama teacher at London's Lecoq inspired school, LISPA, says: 'At LISPA, we're very much into the building blocks, but there are as many theatrical structures as musical ones, and they're not all going to come to a symphonic fourth movement. What about Eastern music – the Indian raga, or the rising and falling of the Gamelan at a Topeng event in Bali. Or the trance-like effect induced by companies like De la Guarda?'

On stage at least, Daniel Kitson never seems to need a climax. In *The Interminable Suicide Note of Gregory Church*, a show he presented at the Traverse for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, he insists that his story is not a novel, with the right people falling in love, actions delivering consequences. Instead, it's all about inaction, and a very human ongoingness...

There's a risk of disappointment in an absence of climax. Virtuoso acts like those in Cirque du Soleil and Victoria Thierree Chaplin's *Aurelia's Oratorio* (created with daughter Aurelia Thierree) have to build in increasing impressiveness. That's not the same as being an anticlimax though. Gormley's fourth plinth at Trafalgar Square often seems to host one of those. But then, after you've been hoiked onto a massive pedestal and are sitting on your toy horse, what more is there to do for an hour than wave to your friends below? (Perhaps that is the point, to remind us that we are small and ordinary...)

There's power in deliberately denying climax (as opposed to failing to rustle one up) and perhaps it's not the only way to achieve catharsis. Alexander Roberts (of the aforementioned Fiasco Division company) cites Gob Squad's *Kitchen* – a recreation of a Warhol film in which 'nothing much happens' – as a climax-free show that gave him 'waves of perceptual shifts'. 'There was more than one moment when something dropped, and it wasn't for everyone at the same time. There were triggers that were available to everyone.'

And watching Deborah Pearson's work for Rules & Regs at BAC recently – a journey into a British bunker, that turns out to be sponsored by the BNP – that step-by-step altering of our awareness, inching us further and further forward in our discomfiture – was itself a kind of build that needed no great crescendo.

Or perhaps giving the audience release is not as interesting as not releasing them? Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment writes in his collection of essays, *Certain Fragments*, of the audience as witness, and of performances that leave their mark on the consciousness, 'unable to stop thinking, talking and reporting what we've seen'. I'm still thinking, talking and reporting about that.

Laura Lloyd is the Canny Granny

The Fiasco Division's new piece *Happiness* [END], seeks to induce multiple cathartic climaxes through laughing and crying. Showcasing in Norway on 13 November 2009, and in London on 20 November 2009. For further details see www.thefiascodivision.com or email tfd@hotmail.co.uk
One and Other was a live artwork by sculptor Antony Gormley. 2,400 participants representing every region of the UK each spend an hour alone on the empty plinth in Trafalgar Square, London over the course of 100 days and nights. The project took place July–October 2009. For further details see www.oneandother.co.uk

For further information on the work of Deborah Pearson with Rules & Regs: www.rulesandregs.org/bac09.html

Tim Etchells book *Certain Fragments* is published by Routledge: www.routledge.com. Further information on the work of Tim Etchells can be reached at www.timetchells.com, with a fortnightly blog being published by the artist at www.timetchells.com/blog-section/notebook/

Cirque Du Soleil: www.cirquedusoleil.com

Jacques Lecoq: www.ecole-jacqueslecoq.com

LISPA: www.lispa.co.uk

NEW DOGS OLD TRICKS

GAFFER TECHNOLOGY, SEWING BAVARIAN APRONS,
AND THE JOHNNY HUTCH BOOT CAMP – IT'S NOT YOUR
AVERAGE WORKSHOP, BUT WHAT ELSE WOULD WE
EXPECT FROM THE PEOPLE SHOW?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE BRING YOU –
PEOPLE SHOW 120: THE WORKSHOP

Hi (first name)

Thank you so much for attending our audition day for People Show 120: The Workshop. The point of this session is that you get to see if you want to work with us – and we get to see if you are right for this project.

The session will be in two halves: the first being a workshop with a few short devising exercises, where you will work in a group. The second half is when we would like you to present the following task.

The Task:

Take 1–2 minutes of a scene from a film of your choice. You will then present that scene to the group in any manner you want. You can act it out, dance it out, sing it out, describe it, symbolise it... etc. Whatever you like.

Use it as a starting point for a small piece of work. If this task was given to me, I might take the lift action scene from Die Hard and describe in detail to you every detail of Bruce Willis's rope work. I might take the final speech from Bladerunner and do it a bit upbeat.

Play to your strengths and don't worry.

Any questions just email me at
people@peopleshow.co.uk

The People Show have been creating devised performances for the past four decades, and are often considered to be the UK's first experimental theatre company. In summer 2009, they created a three-week intensive summer school with 22 exciting new artists. This diverse and multi-talented group developed, honed and expanded their skills under expert guidance from People Show artists, to create a show combining promenade performance, cabaret, film, new writing, dance, music, light, sound, puppetry, animation...



Tuesday, 28 July 2009

It's day two, every few hours my reasons for being here change and that's great and unsettling and I like it. Mark Long gave a chat this morning on the 'serious' business of making theatre, devising, the ingredients, what it's all about. MICHELE

Beginnings. Four People Show artists sitting in a small, cold room drinking coffee, coming up with ideas. If the People Show did workshops what would they do? Useful stuff. Pulley Masterclass. Gaffer Technology and its Origins. Johnny Hutch Boot Camp. Two years later and we still haven't done these workshops, let's just get it done – summer 2009. Looked back at the notes... they were good ideas, but we needed to get simpler – more direct. What shall we call it? People Show 120 (it is the next number after 119 after all), The Workshop.

We put into action the marketing plan which we had formulated before and during the funding application process. We received over 150 applicants by deadline and then engaged in a careful and rigorous vetting process, which resulted in getting the numbers down to 44 applicants for the audition days.

IMAGES: ALL PHOTOGRAPHS ARE OF THE PEOPLE SHOW'S
PEOPLE SHOW 120. PHOTOS BY SADIE COOK

WEEK 1

22 participants, 10am–6pm
Monday to Friday, plus homework.

'I can see in his eyes that, yeah, he regrets capitalism.'

You're trying not to be visible but you are, and it's beautiful and it's like a painting.

As a performer, find the point at which you know you are being listened to.

The importance of the dynamic of a show, but not necessarily as in beginning-middle-end, instead to do with instinct, like a day going from night to dawn to light to dusk and night again.

I want to see (and hear) two minutes of just the balloons squeaking minutely against each other in front of the microphone.

I want to hear Delano tell his whole journey home by only describing people's shoes.

I want to see Ruby just stand and lick the inside of a chocolate bar wrapper until the lights go out. IRA

Images are emerging in my head that link all our diverse journeys to one port of call, one airport, one train station, the last place on earth – how did we get there? Who did we see? Why are we here? What have we got to show for our journey? What are our fears, hopes, dreams? ... cough spit drool sneeze cough ... frantic mushrooming uncontrollable ... who knows!!

Right got to go or will be late to see you. JAMES

WEEK 2

The careful planning of each session that characterised Week 1 was now more fluid and was necessarily more responsive to the issues emerging from the work being developed in each of the spaces... The participants were divided into groups of fives and sixes and were assigned a space within People Show Studios for which to create a piece of work. These spaces were the garden, the toilets, the stairs/foyer and the tank room (props and wardrobe store). One particular focus was to ensure that those with least performance experience did not settle into comfortable roles of non-performance, but were challenged to discover a performance mode that suited their ability and/or interest in self-development.

*Day ... erm ... *lili struggles to count her fingers* ... Nine ... and my first blog attempt ...*

I embarked on this workshop looking for adventure and I haven't been disappointed... I have pushed boundaries and pull muscles that I didn't know I had! Each day

I dip my toes willingly into the unknown... My own practice works within the loose framework of the surreal and the absurd, which generally manifests itself through sculpture and fine art performance... working as part of such a huge group is unknown territory for little old me. I never imagined it would be quite as powerful as it is... We are at times menacing and destructive then at the blink of an eye, delicate and graceful... No mean feat for some 20 something individuals who barely know each other a week!

The past few days have found us in smaller groups working site-specifically in various points of the People show building. Michele, Nicola, Lyndal, Camilla, Alice and myself are in the garden. Not the best of spots to work in today... But we braved the good old English summertime in our matching red plastic ponchos (think strawberry flavoured condoms!) And began adding to the foundations we have already built... and, in my case especially, discovered a few things that really should be left alone! BTW ladies... I have to insist the lobster stays... Even if only as my cigarette holder! ;) LILI

Wow, late, I should go to bed and I should write some freedom slogans for the toilet and learn my poem and sew a Bavarian apron... SOPHIE

WEEK 3

As this week began the practicalities of performance and fear of failure became paramount for the participants. This was countered by continuing to play with ideas and exercises and reinforcing some of the principles of People Show performance which include drilling and refining theatrical moments, and maintaining the idea of a sharing of our work ahead of delivering a polished performance. With this in mind the form of our presentation was progressively shared and understood by all.

The fact that each space could handle different amounts of audience (twelve was the maximum in one of the spaces), helped to shape the form the presentation would take. By now each group had full possession of the aesthetics and shape of their work, to which we added the constriction that their performance should have a duration of no more than ten minutes. Together these limitations led to a form in which 60 audience members would be divided into 5 groups of 12, so that at any given time four audiences would be seeing work in the four spaces with the fifth group held for a time in the hall. Out of this necessity grew the idea of the hall as a gallery in which a speculative photographic idea begun in Week 2 became the focus alongside written or representational material.

13, 14, 15 August 2009: the performances were fantastic. All three shows sold out, and the People Show were extremely proud to host a new forum for new artists. The audience feedback was astounding.

Endings. No – new beginnings. New aims: to support the 22 new talented People Show artists as much as we can. To do the 2nd act airport show again in another venue with all the original cast. To do the workshop every year because it is too important not to. To refine and respond.

*The viscosity of icing sugar
The ratio of hair to talcum powder
The relative merits of expensive balloons
The many varied uses of lampshades as clothing
A People Show 120 workshop excursion to Gatwick Airport*

All things that are spinning (right round) in my head tonight. Good night john-boy. (Anna)

Words by Gareth Brierley, Sadie Cook, Tyrone Huggins and members of the People Show 120 company. Images: Sadie Cook

People Show 120 Company:
Anna Benner, Jade Blue, Ira Brand, James Cowan, Rachael Fountain, Chantal Francis, Delano Giovani, Ruby Glaskin, Teba Gomez, Sophie Habenicht, Isobel Henderson, Camilla Lysell, Lyndal Marwick, Laura Milnes, Michele Moran, Rebecca Nada-Rajah, Rachel Owens, Alice Parsloe, Nicola Singh, Isobel Slater, Lili Spain, Monique Squeri

Blog:
<http://peopleshow120.blogspot.com>

The People Show Team:
Workshop leaders: Gareth Brierley, Sadie Cook, Fiona Creese, Tyrone Huggins
General Manager: David Duchin
People Show artists: Mark Long, George Khan, Chahine Yavroyan, Richard Rudnicki, Nik Kennedy, Nick Tigg, Fred De Faye, Bernadette Russell

For further information on The People Show, and details of past, present, and future projects, see www.peopleshow.co.uk

CITY CIRC

FROM A GIANT-SIZED MOBILE TO THE WHEEL OF DEATH, JOHN ELLINGSWORTH FINDS A LOT TO LIKE AT LONDON'S CITY-WIDE CIRCUS SEASON

I got to see Wheel of Death for the first time on London's South Bank in September. It's a remarkable thing, a house-size structure that pivots two wheels around one another – one small, the other large and caged so that a performer can run within or on top of it. Imagine it as a bit like a fairground Big Wheel except there are no safety harnesses and you have to power it yourself and it goes much faster. It's genuinely terrifying to watch, each turn of the Wheel rasping a little more from your strained nerves. Most circus carries some measure of physical danger, but I can't think of any other discipline which has the same sense that the performer is running always just ahead of a wave of disaster. (Recognising the strong malevolent energy of the Wheel, presenting company Les Studios de Cirque de Marseille interpreted it as an SF-style device, crashing into different time zones to enslave whatever humans encountered it.) It certainly got to the audience. Screams, exclamations, breathy disbelief, and a huge collective wwwooooaaaaaaahhh whenever a performer picked up enough pace to hit an anti-grav dead point at the top of a rotation, airborne within his wheeled cage for a few terrible seconds.

La Roue de la Mort: La Trilogie du Temps closed off the circus strand of the National Theatre's Watch This Space festival, and, with it, the longer, broader City Circ season that began in March with NoFit State's Tabú at the Roundhouse. Highlights in-between those two dates included the London appearance, pre-Edinburgh Fringe, of Circa from Australia (seen at the Riverside studios).

Originally an Arts Council initiative called the Circus Venues Alliance, City Circ got a new name and a shift in direction when it was handed over to producing house Crying Out Loud to manage.

Directed by Rachel Clare, Crying Out Loud represent such theatrical and circus luminaries as James and Aurélia Thiérree, Circo de la Sombra, and TPO Company, as well as taking on the administration of individual projects like the Europe-wide funding initiative Jeunes Talents Cirque. With City Circ, they were more-or-less given free reign to do what they wanted. 'We called a lot of meetings,' remembers Pam Vision, Crying Out Loud's Associate Producer, 'a lot more meetings, with the idea of making it into a season and sort of into a festival. To give people a focus of when they needed to programme some circus, what they were looking for, what the shape of it would be around London, how many other people were involved. [...] What we've found in London is that venues are very protective of their programme and their knowledge, their audiences. And I think we really want to see them collaborate more and open up.' About half of the venues who attended the meetings actually programmed circus – some had already been intending to, but in many cases it was the guidance and support offered by City Circ that made it possible: Broadway Barking and Arts Depot are two venues new to programming circus who put on, respectively, Circomedia's *You Take My Breath Away* and Muziektheater Transparent's *Feedback*, and want to do more in the future.

For a season without a central curating intelligence, the first City Circ has shaped up pretty well. The official opening for the season in April was alongside the Lyric Hammersmith premiere of *Hang On*, a collaboration between aerial theatre group Ockham's Razor and Theatre-Rites. It aimed itself directly at the younger members of its family audience, and even if in doing so it became a little distant to the adults, the children were loudly excited as aerialists clambered over a giant turning structure based on the mobiles of Alexander Calder.

Going into the summer, there was fine outdoor work within other festivals, including, at Victoria Park's outdoor festival Paradise Gardens, a collaboration between Chinese Pole artists Gemma Palomar and Telma Pinto and Avant Garde Dance (the risky and often disastrous combination of street dance and circus finally pulled off), and an incredible ensemble piece from Gandini Juggling, *Gandini NightClubs*, which united ten jugglers from a broad spectrum of styles and temperaments and nationalities and was made in a week over the course of the company's residency at the National for Watch This Space. It was the larger pieces I found myself least taken with: the self-regarding virtuosity of renowned French company Le Cirque Invisible at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the ENO's production of *L'Amour de Loin* (directed by Daniele Finzi Pasca, formerly of Cirque du Soleil and Cirque Éloize), a leaden two hours of thinly plotted opera where the circus artists represented 'spirits' and were mostly just pulled on to do splits then floated off. Still, the City Circ hit rate is already a lot higher than many other, more tightly curated, festivals.

The '09 programme was mostly circus theatre rather than cabaret or act-based work, but there were some exceptions (the *So and So Circus Cabaret* and Circomedia's *You Take My Breath Away*) and Pam explains that they needed to be flexible: 'Yeah, it's difficult. Certainly the Arts Council but Crying Out Loud as well are interested in circus theatre – indoor, hour-long entertainment, not acts. Sometimes it's difficult because some of the artists that are the best artists working in Britain still only have twenty minute shows that are mostly outdoors. But we've had a lot of discussions within the [City Circ] group about what the definition of circus is. Some of the shows in the brochure people would say aren't circus – some of them have no tricks in them, no flying in them, things like that. And we haven't quite got it yet – haven't got the crux of the definition yet. It's a difficult one. It's such a mix of different types of theatre – it's really good theatre that has its root in circus.'

With the first year finished, Crying Out Loud have begun planning for the future. There's some housekeeping to be done – a bigger website, a combined marketing campaign that expands from print to the furthest frontiers of digital media, a number of funding applications – and if the money comes in, they'd like to be able to commission or co-commission new work – something like the way the Without Walls consortium does for street arts. Another big ambition is to take City Circ national with satellite seasons in other UK cities, and in London to have a festival within the festival. Crying Out Loud's General Manager, Marie Remy: 'One of Rachel's ambitions will be to have within the season a short blast of more challenging work, themed around the body. And maybe also a commission for children's work – starting in 2010, but touring in '11.' It's all dependent on pulling down the money, but at least now they have a solid base to build on. 'It's all been really good feedback from the venues,' says Pam. 'Sounds like we're just complimenting ourselves, but they're all up for it again.'



IMAGE 1: THEATRE-RITES/OCKHAM'S RAZOR'S HANG ON
IMAGE 2: CIRCA'S CIRCA
IMAGE 3: LES STUDIOS DE CIRQUE DE MARSEILLE'S LA ROUE DE LA MORT

City Circ took place at various venues throughout London from April to August 2009. See www.citycirc.com

Crying Out Loud, established in 2002, is an organisation, led by creative producers, that creates memorable events for festivals and theatres in the UK, USA, Australia and Europe. See www.cryingoutloud.org

PLAYING WITH TIME

FILMMAKER CHRISTOPHER HALL EXPLORES THE FOURTH DIMENSION AND MUSES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIVE PERFORMANCE AND FILM IN HIS WORK WITH THIRD ANGEL



18 January 2004: We're having a pre-production meeting for *Realtime*, a work that provides some of the most explicit examples of our time-related interests. It is also the last film that we produced in the traditional manner: writing a script, shooting that script and then editing to closely follow the script. The on-screen performer, Jerry Killick, sits impatiently in a waiting room with a clock, asks the audience a number of questions about their perception of time, their time-based habits and asks them to perform a task: to wait in silence until they think that a minute has passed.

The film presents ideas about, and challenges and plays with the audience's perception of, real and screen time. Towards the end, the film rewinds and presents a different version of itself after the rewind point. Crucially for us, it is only shown in contexts where the viewer cannot pause, rewind or click off.

6 April 2009: Alexander Kelly and I have been to a DVD proofing screening of a new Third Angel film, *A Perfect Circle* (APC), at Site Gallery. The DVD is commissioned by Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum to be premiered at the 2009 Istanbul Biennial. APC is a good example of our working methods and broadly this is how almost all of our films get made: planning, accidents, adaptation of other ideas and embracing the devising process.

APC is derived from the theatre piece *9 Billion Miles From Home*, which features Alexander Kelly and Gillian Lees creating a white circle on a black stage using only culinary dusting cups and bags of talcum powder, a process that took about 40 minutes in real time. In a ten-minute film we wanted this process to retain its ritualistic quality, and to exemplify the fact that it's supposed to take as long as it takes. Alex also wanted to add an element that had been discarded during the devising process, a spoken description of the 153 images that were part of the NASA Voyager Space Probes that were launched in 1977. The diverse images include a satellite picture of Earth, mathematical formulae, rush hour traffic in India and diagrams of human conception. We had new thematic issues to embrace as well as the practicalities of the shoot.

This was a two-camera shoot, one overhead, framing the whole of the action, and the second doing pick-ups of the performers on the floor. There was also a series of storyboarded sequences that needed to be shot, on our second studio day.

Whilst setting the rig we embraced our first challenge: the camera we were using for the overhead shot didn't have a wide enough lens to frame the whole of the completed circle. Some experimentation followed with framing and lighting and hard questions were asked about the fundamental nature of the circle-making process. We decided to make a smaller circle with only one performer – Alex's part was cut before we'd even pressed record. The devising and development of our ideas and of the film's themes continued well into its production.

Staging the action for camera allowed us to view the material we were working with in new ways. This was now a filmic performance and the devising continued, subtly shuffling away from its theatrical origins. This process continued, getting particularly intense during editing. I discarded a lot of the material that we had originally, formally planned, and concentrated on the second camera pick-ups. Clean, well-lit close-ups of the silver dusting cup were jettisoned in favour of under-lit lines of white powder falling through a black frame, slowed down to almost a standstill.

Slowing down these delicate images provided the meditative qualities that we had originally been looking for when developing the work. I spend a long time working with the films on my own before I am ready to show any of my collaborators a cut – discovering what I find interesting about the work and understanding my own reactions to the material. Striking silhouettes of Gillian describing the aforementioned Voyager images were lost early in the edit, they weren't working, and they were diluting the atmosphere that I was developing. However, I did retain the dialogue and as I often discover anew when cutting, freeing the sync sound from the visuals can be creatively liberating. On APC I worked a lot with sound design to enhance and explore the atmosphere that was developing.

Working concurrently with sound and picture and exploring their complex relationship is an important part of my practice, and is an aspect of filmmaking that I never cease to find astonishing.

The fact that APC was filmed on two different models of HD (high definition) cameras in low light conditions, featuring several very long dissolves and slow-mo sequences, created technical challenges when it came to the DVD authoring. The encoding process couldn't handle the very subtle and languid shifts from one type of black or grey to another. I'm poor at compromising in these situations and work on the film to resolve these problems continued right up to and beyond the delivery deadline. I had to find a solution to the slow mixes from video black to studio black which created a large amount of visual compression artifacts. I tried straight cuts, a device I'd not used anywhere else in the film, and they worked. Once again technical challenges had prompted me to question the nature of the work, and the answer was a development and improvement of the work.

2 March 2003: We're shooting a film, not quite a documentary but not quite documentation of a performance. I suspect that nailing the description of what An Acquired Taste (AAT) actually is isn't all that important. Alex tries to drink, for the first time, three pints of Guinness as quickly as possible, in a pub with his dad and some friends present. An Irish friend had estimated that it would take about 30 minutes. Alex did it in less than ten.

So AAT, which had been planned as a multi-screen gallery piece of up to an hour in length, became a short film. It is our most widely shown film, presented in a wide variety of contexts, and consequently we've learnt a lot about how we like our work to be viewed. Although not intended as a comedy, it has been shown at comedy film nights; not planned as an experimental short, it has been shown to students studying experimental film; and as a performance piece it has been shown to theatre students who subsequently made their own versions. Often it has simply been shown as a short film.

In common with many of our films, the exhibition of AAT is something that we try to keep on a tight reign. Very few of our films are online. Although a convenient distribution medium, online is not how I like to watch short films and generally its not how I wish our film work to be presented. Implicit for me in the uploading of a clip is the relinquishing of control over my work, which troubles me in ways not easily articulated. Statistics help: Wired reckons that the optimum length for a YouTube clip is 59 seconds (easily the length of a fade from black on one of our more abstract films), and Tubemogul reckons that about 54% of viewers will have clicked away after that first minute anyway. And there's the advertising, picture quality quibbles, and streaming speeds. Audience numbers are potentially huge, so are we missing a trick? We don't know.

The one concept that has been specifically planned for online distribution has proved so contentious for us that Alex now refuses to even discuss it.

23 April 2007: We're viewing an untitled rough cut of a film that I've been cutting, on and off, for a while. It was to be a kaleidoscopic trip around two separate cities on the same day at the same time. I was walking through a snow-covered Sheffield, and Alex was taking a tram through sunny Lisbon. Alex was having such a great time at the Gulbenkian Foundation that he forgot to do the filming. The work is now a minimalist piece of abstract images slowly mixing in and out with a soundtrack idea lifted from an Akira Rabelais CD. After seeing the cut, Alex suggests that we contact Akira asking for his permission to use the track as he now couldn't imagine the film without it. Akira agreed.

Like *Realtime*, I doubt we'll put *Snow* online, giving people the option to fast forward or click off. We want our films to be viewed from beginning to end, in one go. We like introducing them. To be in control.

Experimenting with *Snow's* distribution we gently nudged our comfort/control zone. Alex and I had two video installations at Leeds Met Gallery in April/May 2009. At the opening we gave DVDs of *Snow* to anyone who seemed interested. Liberating, but it also felt funny (funny peculiar) to just hand over a disc to people. Several weeks later I find it tricky to untangle my feelings. We don't know when, how, if, those DVDs will be watched.

And that of course is one of our things. We like being present when audiences engage with our work, inviting their comments. This is what turns us on and it's how we like our films to be watched.

Christopher Hall is an Associate Artist of Third Angel. Established in Sheffield in 1995, the company makes work that encompasses performance, theatre, live art, installation, film, video art, documentary, photography and design.

Third Angel's latest project is *Words & Pictures*, a book reading for a book that doesn't exist (yet). A theatrical collection of short stories, obsessions, illustrations and digressions. Following October appearances in Belfast and Sheffield, *Words & Pictures* will be at Leeds Met Studio Theatre (University of Leeds), Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 November, 7.30pm. Booking: 0113 812 5998. See www.leedsmet.ac.uk/arts Follow the projects progress on the company's blog: www.thirdangeluk.blogspot.com

For further general information on Third Angel, email info@thirdangel.co.uk or see www.thirdangel.co.uk

IMAGE 1: THIRD ANGEL'S A PERFECT CIRCLE
IMAGE 2: THIRD ANGEL'S REALTIME
IMAGE 3: THIRD ANGEL'S SNOW
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THIRD ANGEL

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2009



OUT & ABOUT

PIPPA BAILEY SHRUGS OFF THE AUTUMN CHILLS REMEMBERING THIS SUMMER'S FESTIVAL SEASON

As the autumn settles in for the long chill, I am reflecting on the fact that Britain really does spring and autumn best, as seasons go. However much we hope for heat, summer is inevitably variable and this year has been no exception. Thankfully British audiences are hopeful and resilient, so the outdoor summer festival has grown and multiplied over the past decade and I was lucky enough to get to several between July and September. What I noticed was how much the outdoor festival is integrating performance and participation, blurring lines and realities in very interesting ways.

Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) installed NoFit State Circus in Trinity Green Park for the full five days of the Teeside celebrations. *Parklife* is an extraordinary undertaking, aiming to develop a new outdoor show via a series of residencies interacting with local people, the company parked up circus-style in a town park. There is a large circular stage and an aerial rig, sans tent and open to the elements. For four days in Stockton local groups met circus folk and exchanged skills, then presented a 'show' on the final evening. Now, showing process or work-in-progress in public is extremely difficult to achieve well. The dangers include public humiliation, professional and/or critical damnation, as people are too quick to judge and may not sufficiently appreciate the process. But NoFit State may have cracked a new model. While working within tight restraints of budget, schedules and weather, they brought a large young company to SIRF, held workshops in the park, exchanged skills and then captivated the good people of Stockton who were glued to their seats in the rain for an afternoon of repetitive rehearsal. These rehearsals were all accompanied by live direction, announced over the PA by director Orit Azaz asking for feedback and gauging audience response,

which informed the company's next moves. During the evening performance, professional and community were artfully combined. In addition to the expected spell-binding circus, the audience was introduced to a local unicycle troupe whose leaders had actually married on their cycles (yes, really!); young lads from a football team; and a newly invented sport involving trapeze – a cross between netball, basketball and quidditch. The *Parklife* project is brave and has great integrity. It will be interesting to see how the series of residency shows are then distilled into a fully-fledged production, what dramaturgy is employed, and how they retain the flavour the community groups bring to their work. See more in Brighton and Norwich for their respective festivals in May 2010.

Audience participation where revelers turn performers were featured at both Big Chill and Bestival – rival ticketed music festivals. The Big Chill at Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire entered the Guinness Book of Records with 4026 zombies as part of a scene at the centrepiece of a mockumentary by Film4 and Warp Films called *I Spit on Your Rave*. The undead are the result of a virus released at the 2012 Olympics with Noel Fielding playing the zombie king. This travelling circus approach to filmmaking, where volunteer crowds are included and therefore invested in the outcome of the film, is at the heart of participatory arts practice and increasingly being adopted. At Planet Bestival on the Isle of Wight the annual fancy dress party adopted a space theme. A large percentage of the crowd obliged with impressive costumes emerging from tents all over the site, transporting the festival to another galaxy. The acts also played their part with Lily Allen (Lily Alien?) dressed as Barbarella and the English National Ballet sporting futuristic costumes while dancing to contemporary



tunes. Bestival culminated in an adaptation of The World Famous and Peepolykus theatre company's touring show *Blast (Blastival)* over two nights, starring intrepid spaceman Michael Santos trying to reach the stars and festival director Rob da Bank, DJing atop a mighty 'afterburner' bonfire. The escapist aims of Bestival cast all 40,000 punters into active players where fact and fiction become indistinguishable. Even the police looked like characters in a surreal drama, a sign of the times perhaps.

Pippa Bailey is Creative Director of the Total Theatre Awards. See report on the Awards 2009 elsewhere in this publication.

For the Stockton International Riverside Festival see www.sirf.co.uk

For the Big Chill see www.bigchill.net

For more on Bestival see www.bestival.net

The World Famous www.theworldfamous.co.uk
NoFit State Circus www.nofitstate.org

IMAGES: NOFIT STATE CIRCUS PARKLIFE. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE COMPANY



DIE ROTEN PUNKTE
ROBOT/LION TOUR



LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES
ERNEST AND THE PALE MOON



YOU NEED ME
CERTAIN DARK THINGS



POWER PLANT

INSPECTOR SANDS
IF THAT'S ALL THERE IS



SUBJECT TO CHANGE
HOME SWEET HOME



HOIPOLLOI
THE DOUBTFUL GUEST



IDLE MOTION
BORGES AND I

The Total Theatre Awards, established in 1987, honour the best theatre-makers performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The Total Theatre Awards 2009 brought 30 assessors and judges together to view and discuss 236 theatre shows presented at this year's Fringe. For the first two weeks of the Fringe, assessors view all of the registered shows and nominate the better pieces to move forward (which means being seen by at least one other assessor). Total Theatre makes a commitment to seeing all registered work eligible for the Awards. This year the assessors were: John Ellingsworth (writer/editor – Total Theatre Magazine and Sideshow Circus Magazine), Matthew Evans (director), Jusstina Hermann (performer/teacher), Holly Kendrick (Director – National Student Drama Festival), Lisa MacFarlane (producer), Angharad Ormond (performer), Joanna Mackie (performer/director), Joanna Robinson (performer), Caitlin Rucker (performer) Beccy Smith (dramaturg/writer/Interim Director Puppet Centre Trust), Charlotte Smith (writer), Brina Stinehelfer (performer/writer), Kelly Taylor Smith (performer) and Wendy Windle (producer/performer).

This team met regularly to share their views and challenge their perceptions. On 20 August the assessors met for the last time and in a charged five-hour meeting decided on the shortlist. Each assessor can put forward up to three shows they think deserve to be considered for Awards and then shows are argued off the longlist. No-one has seen all of the shows, so many tastes and styles of theatre are represented. The real challenge comes with trying to find appropriate categories so that shows are compared with work that shares form. This year the categories saw two new areas of development – Music and Theatre, and Innovation/Interaction/Immersion – alongside Devised Performance, Emerging Company and Physical/Visual Theatre.

The judging panel represents a wide range of academics, critics, presenters and artists. This year we were fortunate to have Bill O'Brien, Deputy Chair for Grants and Awards at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington. It was fascinating to have an American perspective. Bill was joined by: Christie Anthoney, Director – Adelaide Fringe; David Bauwens, Producer – Ontroerend Goed; Matt Burman, Executive Producer – Norfolk & Norwich Festival; Richard Cuming, Head of Department, Performing Arts –

University of Winchester; Robert Jude Daniels, Senior Lecturer – University of Chichester; Lyn Gardner, Critic – The Guardian; Ben Harrison, Artistic Director – Grid Iron (& Total Theatre Board); Donald Hutera, Critic – The Times; Louise Jeffreys, Head of Theatre at the Barbican; Dorothy Max Prior, Editor – Total Theatre Magazine; John McGrath, Artistic Director – National Theatre of Wales; Steve Scrivens, Programmer – Royal & Derngate Northampton; Nick Wood, Course Leader – Central School of Speech and Drama. Unfortunately Kate Potter, co-artistic director of Great Leap Forward who was listed as a judge had to pull out during the judging process.

A huge thanks to all of the assessors and judges for their effort and commitment and for taking the responsibility of this difficult task so seriously.

If you would like to see the notes from the judging meeting please email director@totaltheatre.org.uk

This year the Total Theatre Awards announced a new cash bursary of £800 for each winning company to help them document the months following their win. Provided by the Centre of Excellence in Theatre Training (CETT) at the Central School of Speech and Drama, this money will contribute to artists and companies being better able to capture and develop their work. Their reflections will also help emerging companies address the joys and trials of making new work.

Every year Total Theatre invite applications to take part in the assessment process, so if you are curious or critical then please register your interest at awards@totaltheatre.org.uk

The 2009 Total Theatre Awards are being supported by *barbicanbite09*, Central School of Speech and Drama - Centre for Excellence in Training for Theatre (CETT), London International Mime Festival, Norfolk and Norwich Festival, Royal & Derngate Northampton, University of Chichester (MA Theatre Collectives) and University of Winchester.

PIPPA BAILEY

See over for the winners of the Total Theatre Awards 2009!

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2009



THE RIVER PEOPLE
LILLY THROUGH THE DARK

AWARD FOR EMERGING ARTIST/COMPANY

The River People
Lilly Through the Dark
Bedlam Theatre

2009 was the year of white-face clown, petticoated Victoriana and quirky stringed instruments at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe! Perhaps it's the Steam-Punk influence? The River People may share this Gothic sensibility with many other companies, but what marks them out is the interesting marriage of form and content, for they have taken the brave step of using their own difficult autobiographical material as the subject of their shows – in the case of *Lilly Through the Dark*, the subject is coping with bereavement. It's a tale told with artful sensitivity, and just the right mix of pathos and humour. *Lilly* had previously been presented in Edinburgh at The Bedlam as a work-in-progress, and it was good to see the company taking the sound decision to return for a second year with this show in its developed version, invigorated by a new design. A life-affirming story about death, beautifully told.

Shortlisted in this category: *Antoine & the Paper Aeroplane* presented by Blak Wulff Productions, C Chambers; *Borges & I* presented by Idle Motion, The Zoo; *Certain Dark Things* presented by You Need Me, Underbelly; *Sweeney Todd – his Life, Times and Execution* presented by Finger in the Pie, Gilded Balloon; *6.0 How Heap & Pebble Took on the World and Won* presented by Dancing Brick, Pleasance Dome.



BEADY EYE / KRISTIN FREDRICKSSON
EVERYTHING MUST GO

AWARD FOR DEvised PERFORMANCE

Beady Eye/Kristin Fredricksson
Everything Must Go (Or the Voluntary Attempt to Overcome Unnecessary Obstacles)
Augustine's

Kristin Fredricksson had some stiff competition in this category, which included no less than three former Total Theatre Award winners (Hoipolloi, Company FZ, and Inspector Sands). *Everything Must Go* is an everything-including-the-kitchen-sink show, and features robust physical performance, puppetry, object theatre, projection, and monologue in an autobiographical piece that is, in essence, a eulogy to Fredricksson's recently-deceased father. Karl Fredricksson is a long-haired, cross-dressing former athlete who would, had he not died, performed in the show with her. He may be dead, but in his absence he is very much present onstage. Images of the man are everywhere: on screen in super-8 home movies; in cardboard cut-outs; as a giant mannequin that 'observes' her for most of the show, eventually joining her for a last waltz. For one hour only we get to know and love this man, and when it finishes we experience a real sense of bereavement. Heartbreaking but soul-enriching.

Shortlisted in this category: *The Doubtful Guest* presented by Hoipolloi, Theatre Royal Plymouth with ETT/Escalator East to Edinburgh, Traverse Theatre; *Ernest and the Pale Moon* presented by Les Enfants Terribles Theatre Company in association with Pins & Needles, Pleasance Courtyard; *Horse* presented by Company F/Z, Underbelly Hullabaloo; *Icarus 2.0* presented by Camden People's Theatre, Pleasance Courtyard; *If That's All There Is* presented by Inspector Sands, Traverse Theatre.



ADRIAN HOWELLS
FOOT-WASHING
FOR THE SOLE

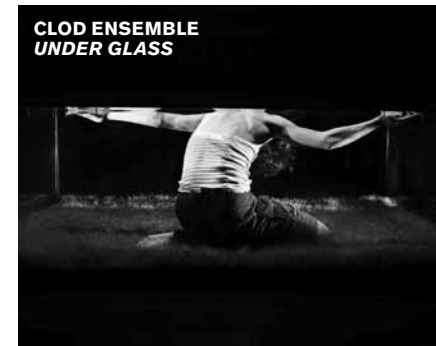
INNOVATION/INTERACTION/IMMERSION

Adrian Howells
Foot Washing for the Sole
The Arches at St Stephens

The past few years have seen an increasing number of shows that challenge the traditional divide between 'onstage' and 'audience' space – through the immersion of the audience into a created environment, through the creation of an intimate exchange between performer and audience member, or through the encouragement of active participation of the audience in the action. Thus, the Total Theatre Awards judges in this category found themselves cycling (*Rider Spoke*), sniffing the night air in the Botanical Gardens (*Power Plant*), building miniature cities (*Home Sweet Home*), non-stop-shopping at the supermarket (*Wondermart*), or perhaps even having their feet massaged... The winning show in this category, Adrian Howells's *Foot Washing for the Sole*, is a performance work for an audience of one. Howells is a highly competent performer who exudes an air of confidence, trust and authority. Whilst washing and massaging the feet with tender loving care, he shares his thoughts on the symbolic relevance of feet washing, and the cultural resonances associated (such as the story of Christ washing his disciples' feet), which leads easily into reflections on the current situation in the Middle East, and on notions of 'peace' and 'service'. It's a gem of a piece, small but perfectly formed.

Also shortlisted in this category: *Home Sweet Home* presented by Subject to Change, Forest Fringe; *Internal* presented by Ontroerend Goed and Richard Jordan Productions, Traverse at The Point; *Love Letters Straight from your Heart* presented by Uninvited Guests & Fuel, Pleasance at McEwan Hall; Nic Green's *Trilogy* presented by The Arches, St Stephens Church; *Power Plant* presented by Mark Anderson, Anne Bean, Jony Easterby, Kristen Reynolds and others, Assembly at Royal Botanical Gardens; *The Little Box of Horrors* presented by Bootworks at Forest Fringe, various locations; *Wondermart* presented by Rotozaza, Forest Fringe at various supermarkets.

Added to shortlist during judging week: *Rider Spoke* presented by Blast Theory, Dance Base at various locations/cycling; *Ringside* presented by Mem Morrison/Arts Admin, Signet Library.



CLOD ENSEMBLE
UNDER GLASS

AWARD FOR PHYSICAL/VISUAL THEATRE

Clod Ensemble
Under Glass
Pleasance at McEwan Hall

Under the revised rules for eligibility for the Awards 2009, late-opening shows could enter the shortlist if seen and nominated by two judges. *Under Glass* was thus seen in the last week of the festival, highly recommended for inclusion in the shortlist, and subsequently won the Award for Physical/Visual Theatre. *Under Glass* is a promenade piece, but rather than wander freely, the audience are immersed in almost total blackout, their attention drawn to a series of glass boxes or framed stages by an imaginative use of light and sound. Each performer uses their 'station' to great effect, creating a series of moving pictures that explore a whole plethora of issues around 'containment', 'framing', and 'the gaze'. There is no one 'thing' that the piece is about, but there are a multitude of possibilities suggested: from scientific experiment to art exhibit; from peep show to the imprisonment of office life... A great concept, well realised, with a wonderful integration of all its constituent elements – a truly 'total' theatre piece.

Also shortlisted in this category: *A Lot of Nerve* presented by Martha & Arthur, Pleasance Dome; *Circa* presented by Circa, Assembly Hall; *Cocorico* presented by Patrice Thibaud/Prod Illitees, New Town Theatre; *Crime of the Century* presented by Chickenshed, Zoo Southside; *Raw* presented by Fidget Feet Aerial Dance Theatre, Dance Base; *This is Now* presented by New Art Club, Assembly at George St; *Zeitgeist* presented by Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre, C Chambers.

Added (with *Under Glass*) during judging week: *The Overcoat* presented by Gecko, Pleasance



DAFYDD JAMES / BEN LEWIS
MY NAME IS SUE

AWARD FOR MUSIC AND THEATRE

Dafydd James/Ben Lewis
My Name is Sue
Pleasance Courtyard

My Name is Sue starts with the entrance through the auditorium of a person with a gawky haircut, dressed in a simple wool dress and cardigan, who perches herself perkily on the piano stool, switches on her chintzy standard lamp, and introduces herself in a lilting Welsh accent: 'Hello, my name is Sue, and I'm here to sing you some songs'. Later, there's a perfectly-realised theatrical moment as three more 'Sues' take their place on stage, relentlessly straight-faced and staring as they provide accompaniment on cello, violin, and drums. Sue's offbeat ditties – delivered in a quavering falsetto – tell of a life marred by strange encounters, sudden bereavements, and puzzling events. We start to wonder if everything is as it seems – Sue has had more than her fair share of 'accidental occurrences', and we watch her reach for the pill bottle on top of the piano more than once, washing a handful down with what we suspect might be gin drunk through a straw... but regardless, we allow ourselves to be drawn into her slightly wonky world, and by the end she has us all clapping our hands and singing along to the cheery refrain: 'We're All Going to Die!' Co-written and directed by Ben Lewis (of Inspector Sands), with Sue played with perfectly-pitched precision by Welsh (male) musician/composer Dafydd James, *My Name is Sue* toys cleverly with the notion of the 'unreliable narrator' and creates a wonderful onstage world that draws us in with a horrified attraction to its occupants. Good songs too!

Also shortlisted: *Accidental Nostalgia* presented by Cynthia Hopkins With Jim Findlay and Jeff Sugg, Traverse Theatre; *Brocante Sonore: The Mechanics* presented by Zic Zazou, C Chambers; *Die Roten Punkte – Robot/Lion Tour* presented by Rodney Breit, Richard Jordan and Paul Lucas, Pleasance Courtyard; *Midsummer (A Play With Songs)* presented by Traverse Theatre Company; *Sporadical* presented by Little Bulb Theatre, Forest Fringe.



IMPROBABLE THEATRE
PANIC

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD FOR A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THEATRE-MAKING

Improbable Theatre

This Award was given in recognition of the achievements over many years of this internationally acclaimed company, and in acknowledgement of the way in which they have brought 'total theatre' to an impressive range of audiences. Improbable's work spans diverse areas of live performance including opera (notably their co-creation for ENO of the Phillip Glass opera *Satyagraha*), musical theatre (e.g. *Wolves in the Wall*, created in collaboration with National Theatre of Scotland), outdoor performance (famously with the all-done-with-Sellotape extravaganza, *Sticky*) and an extensive repertoire of devised physical/visual theatre that has puppetry and object animation as a strong element of the work (from early work such as *70 Hill Lane* and *Animo* through to the recent Barbican co-production, *Panic*). Their use of Open Space Technology in the creation of the *Devoted and Disgruntled* series over the past four years has empowered artists and theatre-makers to address challenges facing the sector. Improbable have collectively shown a determined effort to reflect on and change the world of theatre-making and the world in which theatre is made.

Special Commendations for shows closed before the judging period: 100 Wounded Tears presented by Dot 504 at Zoo Southside; This Is a Picture of a Person I Don't Know presented by Pere Faura, Dance Base; The Red Room presented by David Hughes Dance Productions, Traverse Theatre).

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD WINNERS REPORT BY DOROTHY MAX PRIOR

See also reviews section of this magazine, and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009 archive under Reviews on the Total Theatre website www.totaltheatre.org.uk

VOICES

PAUL CLARK, COMPOSER AND CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF CLOD ENSEMBLE, WHOSE SHOW UNDER GLASS WON THE TOTAL THEATRE AWARD FOR VISUAL THEATRE AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2009

Under Glass had a long gestation period. Suzy (Willson – Clod Ensemble’s co-artistic director) first had the idea about ten years ago for a piece in which all the performers are within some sort of glass container but it took years to actually start working on it. At first, we weren’t sure whether it was going to be a sequence of short solos or one longer piece. When we were asked by BAC to contribute to their *End of the World Cabaret* it seemed like perfect opportunity to make some headway with the idea and concentrate on just one container. So, we made the first seven-minute solo with Silvia Mercuriali (of *Rotozaza*).

The performance took place on a bed of grass in a container roughly the size of a double bed, but not tall enough for her to sit up straight in. The choreography was driven by the constraints of the container. It could seem incredibly spacious and then impossibly cramped. The container, in some ways, worked like a mask – magnifying tiny movement details in unexpected ways. Sadler’s Wells then commissioned three new short solos for different events.

We wanted all the containers to make different demands on the performers. As we’d suspected, each vessel suggested its own movement dynamics: *Jam Jar* revealed lots of twists and still images, the *Spectator* (a very large tall box) long expansive limb movement, and *Wall Flower* (a three-metre-wide panel screwed to the wall, meaning you are unable to take a full step forward) an almost two dimensional, flattened-out dynamic.

The next challenge was to try to put several pieces in the same space, to make a single 50-minute promenade work with eight different pieces, so we could create more expansive movement sequences, with trios, duos and so on. The new ones were a *Twins* Petri dish containing an older man and woman; *Office*, a cube containing an office worker and, finally, *Flood* a larger cube holding a pool of water.

We deliberately worked with different types of performers with very different movement vocabularies. Suzy worked with each performer individually to create the choreographic/dramatic material. We were lucky to work with a really enviable cast of four dancers (Ramona Nagabcynski, Ragnihld Olsen, Francois Testory and Joy Constantinides) a clown (Angela de Castro) and four very physically savvy actors/performers (Silvia Mercuriali, Jason Thorpe, Sachi Kimura, Olwen Fouere).

It was quite a strange process for them. It is not easy to have any complicity with other performers or indeed with the audience when you are inside a glass container. But, in a sense, this was what the whole piece was about.

We didn’t want to make a durational piece or an installation that gave the audience total freedom. It wasn’t that we aren’t interested in that type of work, but in this instance we were happy to, more or less, control the audience’s gaze. As music was so integral to our work we looked for ways it could help.

Some of the devices were quite simple – if you make a sound go bang behind an audience’s back they will turn around to see what’s happened. In this way we were able to keep the audience moving when we wanted, but also still when we wanted.

The music was also working at a deeper level. *Under Glass* is an unashamedly abstract piece: its themes are pretty easy to get to grips with (finding freedom within restriction, solitude, living within one’s limits, entrapment etc.) but there was no clear narrative arc.

For us, the answer isn’t to abandon narrative drive, but to find it elsewhere – in music. I wrote a five-movement piece of music – mostly using a string quartet and percussion, but also electronic sounds, and samples of distorted radio. We actually synchronised the lighting desk to follow the sound score, so we were able to make quite precise adjustments to what people were seeing and when. We spent a lot of time thinking about the structure of the piece – how visual and musical material were going to interact – so we had a firm structure, full score and a sketched lighting plan before we went into our final few weeks of rehearsal.

It’s not a straightforward piece to tour because the boxes are very heavy to move and all need a lot of care and attention to look good. As you’d expect, you get a very different experience depending on the space.

The first time we performed *Spectator* at Sadler’s Wells the glass case was on the apron of the stage and the audience were also sitting on the stage. The spectator sits on a red velvet chair in her box and behind her there were hundreds of empty red seats in the vast main house auditorium. That kind of experience is impossible to recreate when we perform it in a traditional black box theatre. *The End of the World Cabaret* piece on the grass, however, is more consistent as the audience are always in the same intimate relationship to the box.

We now have several versions of *Under Glass* in additional to the full-length production. In Edinburgh, for the British Council Showcase 2009 as part of the Fringe, we made a shorter 20-minute structure for four performers. It is a fair amount of work, adjusting to different spaces – finding the best method for the audience to safely navigate the space, changing the soundtrack to suit the room(s), relighting. But it is good to see the piece reinvent itself.

Must, Clod Ensemble’s collaboration with Peggy Shaw, was structurally driven by spoken text rather than by music. So the main collaboration was between Suzy and Peggy who created the script over two years. Suzy had the concept and a set of ideas which she gave to Peggy, who wrote responses to them which would be broken down and the whole process would begin again...

Must is more text-based than any of our previous pieces. The movement is primarily in the poetry of the text rather than in any detailed choreography.

We have always been very influenced by Lecoq’s idea of the ‘poetic body’ and of working with neutral mask whereby you embody the movement dynamics in nature (water, fire, sunset, mountains etc) before transposing them to drama. In a way *Must* was a chance to explore this idea in words rather than in movement. The starting point was thinking of Peggy’s body as a landscape in contrast to the stark ways in which the medical profession can view her/our bodies.

We worked with Hansjorg Schmidt to create a detailed lighting plan which could interrogate, romanticise or objectify Peggy’s body on stage and we plundered the Wellcome Collection’s library of images to create sequences in the show where we can literally see the interior of a body in beautiful microscopic detail.

My main job for *Must* was to write the score rather than be involved in the overall structuring and writing of the piece. The pianist John Paul Gandy and violinist Calina de la Mare were in our very first piece, so it was written with them in mind. But the score is written down rather than improvised, so they were brought in late in the process.

It is a much more relaxed score than *Under Glass* – a jazz trio playing much less dense music than I would normally write because the musicality of the text was leading. We’ve tried to keep the music live wherever venues have the budget – even though the music is pretty much incidental, it seems to make a huge difference to the piece to have the physical presence of the musicians in the room.

Each project has a very different process. Sometimes the music leads, sometimes it follows. Sometimes I get very involved in discussing the visual content, other times I don’t have much to offer. Sometimes we have no text; other times we commission a writer to make a text (as we did with Alice Oswald for *Under Glass*). Some pieces are site-sensitive, others not.

Clod Ensemble was created in 1996 by musician Paul Clark and director Suzy Willson.

The company will be touring *Must* and *Under Glass* in 2010, and also have plans for earlier show *Red Ladies*.

They are also working on the very early stages of two new pieces which won’t reach full production until 2011. One is a piece they will be developing with dancers another is a piece for live music and lights.

Clod Ensemble will also be continuing their programme of *Extravagant Acts for Mature People* at centres for the elderly and their *Silent Movie Music* workshops with children, as well as a new Performing Medicine Season scheduled for Autumn 2010 on the theme of anatomy and physiology.

See www.clodensemble.com

1984

PUPPET THEATRE PIONEERS BLIND SUMMIT'S LATEST VENTURE IS THE CHRISTMAS SHOW THIS YEAR AT BAC. TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE FINDS OUT MORE FROM COMPANY CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARK DOWN

How's it going? What's the devising/creating story? Are you working as you always do, or is there anything different or specific to this process?

We are working as we always do – turning up, getting a few people along, scratching our heads, doing some stuff, trying to work out what we did...

There is a script. There are puppets made of cardboard. There is a brilliant cast of seven actors. There is no projection...

The best thing about making a show is working with other people. Bringing many people together and trying to get them into a single shape where all their individual voices can still be heard. It's all about the people.

I guess the big departure for us is to have a fairly full-length script before we start. We have written it over the past year mainly, but we began almost three years ago! Essentially we have been devising and writing with a small, varying company during the year. We have done a few Scratch showings, writing and rewriting, to find a premise that can tell the story.

The challenge in adapting a novel (in this case, George Orwell's classic, *1984*) to stage is that you lose the author's voice – which is a prime relationship to the work as a reader. In a play the characters tell the story. The premise for our adaptation is that the company are an agitprop company in the '1984' of the novel who are telling the story for the audience as a lesson in thought-crime.

Tell us about your YouTube Scratch idea...

At the moment it is very much an experiment. The viewing figures are so small I guess I should call it a hobby really. The idea came about from a frustration of making and seeing YouTube trailers for theatre which are like film trailers, which I think is ridiculous. Theatre is not film because it is interactive, unfinished and messy. That feels like a perfect fit with YouTube. The good thing about YouTube is that people can write comments and we wanted to start a dialogue. The bad thing about YouTube is that you look at the number of viewers and realise no-one really watches puppet videos when they can watch two girls and a cup.

Anything you want to say about BAC and your relationship with them?

We are in a longterm relationship with BAC and we love the place. We grew up there and have continued making small pieces with them, for example *Odde Angel* in Punchdrunk's *Masque of the Red Death*, and a small Scratch piece in the main hall last year. It feels like home. *Low Life* was made there and we have re-rehearsed there many times. The set was basically made up of furniture we borrowed from the cafe each time we went out on the road.

As for if and how they are changing – I don't really know, but I am sure they are – I am still infuriated and excited by ideas I hear there, they still shock me with their outrageousness on occasion and their conservatism on others ... it all feels very familiar really!



Mark Down is an actor, puppeteer, and director. He and designer and puppet-maker Nick Barnes are co-founders and co-artistic directors of Blind Summit Theatre. Blind Summit's *1984* is at BAC 2–23 December 2009 & 4–9 January 2010. See www.bac.org.uk Blind Summit will be running a Puppetry Skills Workshop Monday 7 December, 10am-1.30pm @ BAC, London The workshop provides hands on experience of basic puppet skills such as focus, fixed point and breath, manipulating objects and working with 3-man operated puppets. Places are strictly limited and cost £25 (+VAT). Included in the price is a ticket to watch the matinee performance of *1984* on the 7th December.

For more information or to book your place, please contact Helen Hodge at helen@blindsummit.com or 020 7272 9020. For more on Blind Summit Theatre, see www.blindsummit.co.uk

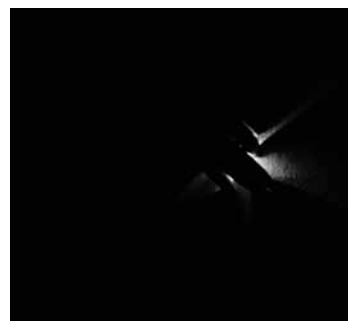
IMAGE: BLIND SUMMIT THEATRE 1984.
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COMPANY

REVIEWS

I WONDER SOMETIMES WHO I AM

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR GOES TO THE FOREST FRINGE, EDINBURGH 2009

TOM DUGGAN, TOM LYALL & MISCHA TWITCHIN / *I WONDER SOMETIMES WHO I AM*.
IMAGES COURTESY OF MISCHA TWITCHIN AND SHUNT



Forest Fringe was set up 'to create space in the midst of the Edinburgh festival for artists, directors and writers to play and experiment', and 2009 saw its third season. There's been a steady build over three years, with a healthy mix of established artists, presenting works in progress and artists at all stages of development trying out new ideas or experimenting with new ways of working. The sheer volume of work on offer seemed overwhelming at times, the Forest Café a buzzing hive of activity day and night. And this year the festival spread out onto the streets and sites of Edinburgh (Rotozaza's *Wondermart* at the supermarket; *Home Sweet Home* in a shopping centre; Bootworks' *Black Box* on the streets). In residence nightly were Little Bulb Theatre, presenting an ever-changing version of their new folk-musical, *Sporadical* – a fine festival romp replete with cardboard props and Am-Dram operatics. Other highlights included a lovely show (presented as a part of a day of work made in Bristol) by young company Tinned Fingers: *Our Daddys Ears* (sic) featured storytelling in many forms – verbal, visual, physical – with the audience embroiled in the creating of the story (about human identity, and survival), blowing up balloons, operating the CD player, wearing the animal ears...

One of my favourite shows, and one which in many ways epitomises the spirit of the Forest Fringe, was a piece made by Shunt artist Mischa Twitchin in collaboration with Tom Duggan and Tom Lyall – *I Wonder Sometimes Who I Am*.

We sit in complete darkness (or at least as complete as the Forest Fringe can manage), and we are surrounded by sound. The sound penetrates the darkness, wraps us, comforts and disturbs us, is somehow inside us and outside of us. Schoenberg's music – degenerate music, as the Nazis would have it – is everywhere, all around us, wonderfully crackly, the early gramophone it is played on adding its own layers to the sound. And those trademark Schoenberg declaimed lyrics... the odd and lovely songs, the melancholy voices of fallen angels. There are other voices too; phrases of spoken language, mostly fast and German, sometimes slow and English; multi-layered, the phrases merging with the music to make a different sort of music. A political rally, raised voices, chanting. Now a gentle voice reflective, musing: 'I wonder sometimes who I am...' It's as if we are listening to one radio broadcast, and there's at least two others playing at the same time. This feels familiar – I often go to sleep listening to Radio 3... Is there something in the room? It's hard to tell what's seen and what's imagined – in the darkness, imagination and memory merge, ideas are animals. Everything is seen, everything is real. Is this what Schoenberg means by 'sounds for the eyes'? A 'transfigured night'. Out of the darkness come flashes of light. A desk lamp switched on/switched off. Illumination: a pair of hands, naked, wringing out their sorrows. Now one hand bare, one hand gloved in black leather; now both hands blood-red. When there's nothing but the hands, the hands become the face, the body. Later, a burst of flame leaps out of the darkness; surrounded by blackness, it feels like a great conflagration. The destruction of Dresden, Coventry.

Schoenberg, like all who are exiled, sits between cultures. He's on the edge of the Old and New Worlds. A Romantic and a Modernist. *I Wonder Sometimes Who I Am* explores the liminal – the point of change between light and dark, between 'meaning' and 'feeling', between consciousness and unconsciousness. Leaving the performance space, the question to ask is not 'what does it mean?' but 'how do I feel?' I feel like I've been on a journey, that my head has been filled, that I've sat and watched pictures flickering in the fire, that I've travelled through time, that I've made a greater acquaintance with the subject of the piece, Schoenberg.

Artaud talked of making a theatre that honoured the profound, poetic bearing of dreams – *I Wonder Sometimes Who I Am* comes closer than most to that ideal. A beautiful, entrancing piece that makes colourful pictures with sound, and suggests lost worlds with pictures that we are not sure if we really saw or merely imagined... synaesthesia for the soul.

REVIEWS FROM EDINBURGH
FESTIVAL FRINGE AUGUST 2009



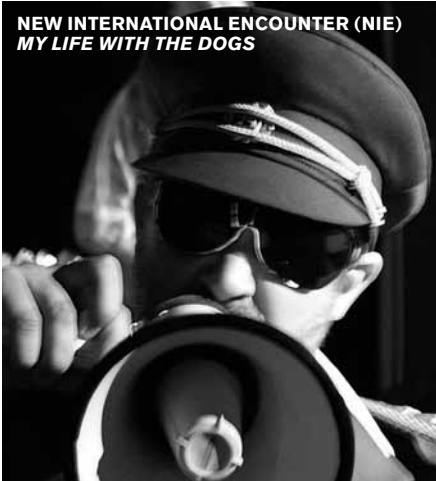
Camden People's Theatre
Icarus 2.0
Pleasance Below

The venue is a tight fit for the set, actors, and audience – although the claustrophobic feel turns out to be just perfect for *Icarus 2.0*. The highly disturbing onstage world we find ourselves locked into is peopled by only two characters – a father (who shifts dangerously from the cloying to the combative) and an eerily naive pubescent son, shut away from what we are led to believe is a dangerous outside world. A third ‘absent character’ is a wife/mother referred to with terse disapproval that masks desperate longing (the father) or just plain unmasked desperate longing (the son).

Their onstage ‘home’ is less a theatre set than a lovingly constructed installation – a mad professor’s den of jars, bottles, tools, and accumulated junk. Why are these two locked in here together? An outside world exists, or once existed – evidenced in letters, and mentions of a former family life and a lost daughter. The crackling sound of a radio seeps in – the shipping forecast, or a straining, slow-mo version of the theme from Dirty Dancing. There are occasional forays to the outside world, which involve protective wear and safety ropes, but we are not party to what is seen outside – we are held inside. Only ‘Icarus’ leaves, returning bruised, battered, and bewildered by what he finds. Eventually, he takes flight... with a pre-determined outcome.

Intense, funny, shocking, surreal... *Icarus 2.0* can be read as a parable of the adolescent male need to push past the father; as an investigation of the line between parental love and abuse; as an exposition of the idea that for a child struggling to live up to the memory of a dead sibling, death can have a fatal attraction... it’s all this and so much more.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



New International Encounter (NIE)
My Life With the Dogs
Pleasance Courtyard

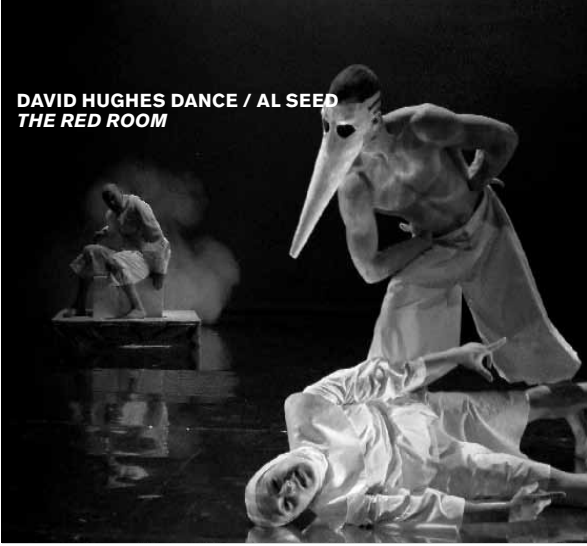
Strangers in the Night is something of a theme tune in New International Encounter’s latest production. But Frank Sinatra’s twinkly blue eyes are also oceans away from the dark tale of *My Life with the Dogs*.

Four-year-old Ivan Mishukov lives in a small flat near Moscow, and is not welcome while his vodka-soaked mother and Uncle Boris ‘make the noises’. He runs away, eludes a paedophile, and (a true story) survives for two years living with wild street dogs. This is rich material for physical theatre. As well as a panting pack of dogs, the movement includes television broadcasts (an actor with a hollow set around his head), and *tableau vivant* images of the wayward mother and Boris caught red-handed.

The piece is set in 1995 and the political transition from communism is also felt (the Scorpions’ *Winds of Change* is another anthem). We see Ivan outside a sweetshop, looking at new fizzy drinks and chocolate, then dangerously lured away with a hot dog. Fairytale traditions combine with witty ensemble theatre devices and vibrant music. The audience are addressed directly, and it’s particularly funny when we are told to imagine a Mancunian actor in his forties as a child, or a 37-year-old who has just taken up jogging as a Russian policeman.

There are some similarities with previous NIE production *The End of Everything Ever* (the last work of a trilogy exploring early 20th century experiences) – both focus on a lost small child in a harsh adult world. Perhaps this just means that the company has a distinctive, haunting style, rather than getting stale. *My Life with the Dogs* starts a new trilogy that explores more recent European history.

CHARLOTTE SMITH



David Hughes Dance/Al Seed
The Red Room
Traverse Theatre

Pestilence, lunacy, sexual excess, hysteria... it’s all here, served up with grotesque glee and playfulness. *The Red Room* is an interpretation of Edgar Allan Poe’s *Masque of the Red Death* – a popular text amongst visual theatre makers (Punchdrunk and Paper Cinema being two other recent *Red Death* interpreters). This one’s a dance-theatre piece directed by a physical theatre performer/director (Al Seed); a beautiful burlesque romp with – as you’d expect from Seed – strong elements of dark clown or Bouffon. Carefully crafted, expertly performed, *The Red Room* (after Poe) explores typical Gothic concerns: the battle between reason and emotion; the struggle of the individual versus the needs of the collective; the lure of the dangerous ‘outsider’; the fear of the invasion of the body.

It’s certainly a ‘total’ visual theatre experience: there are stunning lighting shifts (electric emerald, lurid lime, vivid violet,) as we skip merrily through the colour-coded rooms in the doomed castle of the story, towards our final razor red destination; gorgeous white-on-white costume/mask design, with some interesting peripheral puppetry (cloth horses emerging from swathes of skirts); and entertaining performances from a team of dancers collected up from many disciplines (ballet, hip hop, contemporary, capoeira) who meet the physical theatre sensibility of Al Seed’s direction full-on – for example, when a courtly gavotte breaks into a chaotic clown fight.

As an added bonus, for the run at the Traverse Al Seed was performing in the show – and although this was a last-minute deputising for a dancer on compassionate leave, it is actually hard to imagine how the piece might be without his distinctive physical presence.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



Dancing Brick
6.0: How Heap and Pebble took on the World and Won
Pleasance Dome

Dancing Brick’s latest show sparkles in the Pleasance Dome. Heap Krusiak and Pebble Adverati are skating champions who must adapt to a world without ice. This lovely idea is developed with physical ingenuity. Thomas Eccleshare and Valentina Ceschi capture gushing celebrity and coy emptiness perfectly, with every twitch. The ice dance champions, a Torvill and Dean satire, are very funny. Their greatest work includes *Escape*, a political piece in which they play Tibet and the Dalai Lama. *Apollo* features Neil Armstrong and the lunar docking module, whilst shaving eighteen seconds off Holst’s *The Planets*.

The theme of global warming is cleverly understated. The pair struggle to perform on a wooden floor because the ice has melted, but the environmental catastrophe is not overdone; instead, explored through comedy. Details of the design, costumes and music also work well. Heap nonchalantly wastes plastic bottles of a bright blue sports drink, taking a single sip from each, even before giving Pebble hers. Audio ranges from birdsong to White Christmas. The comic timing is perfect, including the audience participation. Three volunteers receive whispered or card instructions to play interviewers, and are always handled sensitively.

My only quibble is with the structure of the show. This is nicely non-linear, with the stars taking final bows throughout. However, the shape of the piece can seem flat, with the story left hanging. This is nonetheless a beautiful follow-up to last year’s *21:13*. Eccleshare and Ceschi are two engaging young performers with... star quality.

CHARLOTTE SMITH



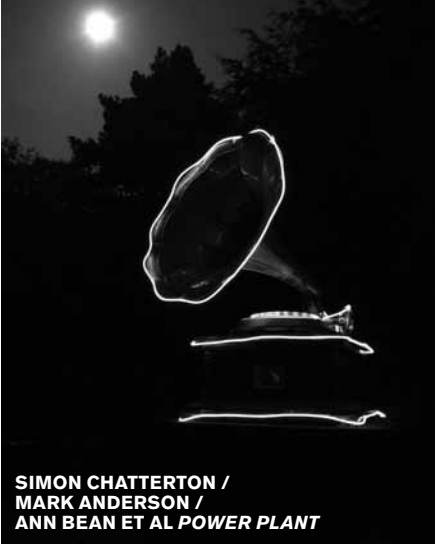
Grid Iron
Barflies
Traverse at The Barony Bar

Scrawled in chalk on the pub blackboard: ‘If I had to choose between drinking and fucking I think I would have to give up fucking.’ Welcome to the world of Charles Bukowski – or is it the world of his alter-ego Henry Chinaski? It’s hard to tell. Set in a real working bar, *Barflies* takes beat poet Bukowski’s work and life as its subject, with Grid Iron’s starting point a selection of Bukowski’s short stories, weaved together to form a linear narrative. (Mostly ‘realist’ in tone, but for one magic realist story of a man who shrinks until he is just six inches tall, then gets used as a dildo.) To be fair, Grid Iron make no biographical claims, and yet this imposed narrative somehow bolsters up the common confusion between Bukowski’s works of fiction and the facts of his life.

But putting that aside, and moving on to what Grid Iron actually do with their chosen material – the mahogany-and-mirrors environment of the Barony Bar is a great space, and Grid Iron use it to brilliant effect, the audience seated at tables with Whisky Sours; the blackboards embellished with Bukowski bon mots; a blue neon sign bearing the legend *Sloefuck* flickering above the action. There’s charged performances from the cast of three – poet-drunkard ‘Henry’, an ‘everywoman’ female character who is humped and bumped on bar and table and floor, and (my favourite) the witness to our poet’s excesses and despairs, Silent Dave the barman, who doubles as singer/musician, as when he accompanies himself on the Old Joanna for a rendition of *Lilac Wine*.

I don’t feel that this is Grid Iron at their best – but nevertheless, a good piece of theatre, presented with the professionalism and panache we would expect from Edinburgh’s finest.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR



Simon Chatterton/Mark Anderson/Ann Bean et al
Power Plant
Royal Botanic Gardens

A night-time trip to the park is always exciting... through the gate we go, sent down a path, told to follow the light. Now here’s the glasshouse, projections highlighting its metal skeleton. We weave inside and outside, I lose my companions and end up off the beaten track, peeping behind ferns, crunching gravel underfoot. If this were just a chance to wander round the Botanical Gardens at night, that’d almost be enough, but this is more, much more...

There’s a row of tall and proud customised standard lamps for a start; a great glass mansion full of lily ponds and weeping willows hung with distressed dresses; a forest of illuminated His Master’s Voice gramophones whizzing and whirring; kinetic flowers spinning amongst the foliage; a tree full of electronic fireflies, a courtyard full of flares and flamelights. There’s the sound of Tibetan bowls singing (set in motion by vibrating mobile phones), and of electronic insect hummings; the whisper of cracked and warped old records, the clicking of a thousand cricket legs.

The glasshouses (turns out there’s not one or two but four or more I seem to remember, although it is easy to get disorientated), and these plus the space in between, around and outside of them, have been used as a canvas (though not of course a blank canvas) by a group of artists that includes environmental sound installation artist Jony Easterby, Mark Anderson of *The Photophonic Experiment* fame, and legendary performance artist and founder member of the Bow Gamelan Ensemble, Ann Bean.

I wish I could have made more trips to *Power Plant*, there was so much to see and hear and smell and feel. A beautiful site-responsive piece; a magical journey into the undergrowth of the psyche.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR

ADVENTURES IN MOVEMENT AT ARCOLA THEATRE STUDIO K JULY – AUGUST 2009

Studio K is a space at the back of the Arcola Theatre. With a blue corrugated steel roof, it looks more likely to contain vegetables than cutting-edge dance. Aficionados know that this is part of the venue’s charm—but it’s also a new space for a new festival.

Forty companies perform for Adventures in Movement, a broad and ambitious four-week programme that promises ‘ballet, boys and bikes, capoeira, a fairytale of swans and a mass exercise routine’. The Arcola may be known for experimentation, but it hasn’t made such forays into dance and physical theatre before. The Arcola’s executive producer Leyla Nazli has now skilfully fitted together some diverse jigsaw pieces into coherent, interesting evenings.

Freefall Theatre’s *Half Man / Half Clam* is a gem. The main character chokes on his own emotions, but the movement is lithe, teasing and expressive. Danielle Meehan and Joe Wild excel as a drunk couple stumbling home and gobbling fish in an aquarium. Beautiful, lingering folk is sung and played by Jamie Doe and Max Jones on kalimba, gramophone horn, melodica, guitars and penny whistle. Some of the writing may be trite (in character) and the puppetry harder to follow, but this is a lovely piece with an unflinching sense of humour.

Another favourite evening was full of contrasts. Curved Space Theatre’s *3 Crystals* takes the story of Dorothy Hodgkin and her life-saving research into insulin. Crystallography is a clever subject: the dance gains momentum as the crystal is captured on film and released with a final burst. It breaks up a narrative that is sometimes linear, but well acted, in a promising ‘scratch’ performance.

Maddy Wynne-Jones captures emotional nuance with Tempered Body Dance Company in *Amuse Bouche*. Four perfect duets range from a raunchy, breathless opening accompanied by Nina Simone’s *He Needs Me*, to the light, upbeat *This Magic Moment* (performed by Ming-Hei Wong and Claudia Palazzo). The choreography in the closing piece is kaleidoscopic: new patterns constantly emerge, before and as others fade.

(*Prelude*) by Wreckless Arts, a solo piece by Jemima Hoadley, incorporates sign language in a graceful, thoughtful performance. Sound by La Horrox and Rossi Adams suggests crackly microphones, techno beats, interference with bassline and raw tinnitus – all part of a struggle for expression.

One of the strengths of Adventures in Movement is that the festival is promoting both new and established companies, side-by-side. *Wanna Play?* by established contemporary Arabic dance company IJAD is sometimes disturbing, with teasing doll, flapper girl and techno moves as well as the three female dancers struggling with apples in skinsuits, suggesting a twisted creation myth or rite of passage. In contrast, 2B3D has a clear overall dynamic, creating a surreal world of bubbles, skateboards, architecture, antlers and bright costumes. The performance can be furiously inventive, breathtakingly quick and also moving, such as in a traditional male/female duet (Ali Temple and Kirsty Green).

The same evening Vocal Motions bring powerful, *a capella* singing with strong harmonies and unexpected cadences to *The Passion of Saints Sergius and Bacchus*. However, the tortured movement, passionate subject and freeze-frame changes can be overly intense.

Some shows involved extensive audience participation. Fiskultura, group gymnastics from the former Yugoslavia, is recreated in *Mass Exercise* with Nadia and Olga Sokolski (Ivana Peranic and Lara Ritosa Roberts). This eccentric piece manages to be deceptively simple, deliberately monotonous and fun at the same time. It was part of a double bill with *Vulnerasti* by Lo Commotion Dance Company, an elusive meditation on illness, in which the dance conveyed more fragility and subtlety than the spoken word. The Anonymous Ensemble’s *Wanderlust* (shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award 2008) has a picaresque plot, music that fits well (such as when a cough becomes a burst of techno), stilt-walking and varied puppetry. However, despite generous sweets and vodka, I find the participation relentless – perhaps a better fit for festivals than a reasonably sober Monday.

Some work will inevitably seem raw in a programme favouring the new and experimental. ‘Virtual reality theatre’ (live digital animation and dance) about prosperity and unhappiness sounded unusual, but (*No*) *Living Room* by al’Ka-mie became laboured on stage. *We Will Overcome* by writer/director Charlie Shand was weighed down by cliché, despite its subject of the freedom riders challenging segregation in the 1960s and the young energy of The Kamichi Plan.

An enjoyable festival, which with any luck will be back at Arcola in 2010.

CHARLOTTE SMITH

FREEFALL THEATRE HALF MAN HALF CLAM. PHOTO OLIVER LAMFORD

KINDLE THEATRE EAT YOUR HEART OUT

Kindle Theatre
Eat Your Heart Out
Coachwerks, Brighton
September 2009

I nearly ate a small cricket pierced on a pin inside an orange nasturtium flower, but chickened out at the last moment. Kindle Theatre’s immersive performance piece felt like *Gormenghast* meets *Babette’s Feast*, set in operatic Flemish painting. You would like to say the set was sumptuous, and it was in a way, as you were led by a bent and hissy-voiced retainer through a phantasmagoria of contemporary junk, ranging from old oil-fired radiators to soft bell-shaped bin bags strung from the walls. Through the curtains of recycling, a chorus of cooks, in voluminous chef’s costume, gently moan and sing.

Once led through to the feasting area, the cook’s tableaux and song picked up the threads of the post-apocalyptic story from the retainer. They referenced a queen who spoke in a lofty out-of-touch voice from a crackling TV screen suspended above our heads. The weird food (strands of seaweed, the crickets, pork cake) didn’t overshadow the well-crafted physicality and narrative of the piece, but rather felt like a natural development of it.

This show was part of Kindle Theatre’s continuing development of performances based around cooking and food (in other shows they’ve roasted pheasants over hot coals) and *Eat Your Heart Out* was inventive, fun, and impressively performed. Kindle managed that difficult line in interactive theatre between looking after and challenging your audience, without any lack of pace or style. There is a real sense of freshness in the performing – and the cricket was fresh as well.

BILL PARSLOW

Chloé Déchery
Useful Knowledge to Know
Nightingale Theatre, Brighton
September 2009

There will be classical music, sung in Italian, which no-one will understand; there will be white flowers, lilies perhaps; and when she caresses this chair, we will know that the performance will end...

Chloé is French, a lecturer, not a dancer. This mantra is repeated throughout her lecture-performance, *Useful Knowledge to Know*, an exploration of the tripwires of

communication. Using spoken language (English and French), movement, film, recorded sound, and a kind of theatre-of-objects – in which the placing of the vase of lilies on the table, or the moving of a chair, creates a constantly evolving still-life – Déchery and her offstage collaborator, the documentary film-maker Chris Eley, have made a very pleasing and thought-provoking piece of contemporary theatre.

At the heart of the piece is an investigation into how we communicate: how we ‘read’ what we hear and see; how everyone speaks and uses different languages; and how this continuous negotiation of understanding and misunderstanding is multiplied when we come from different cultures, with different ‘mother tongues’. What fascinates Déchery most are the near-misses, when two words or actions are so similar that we think we understand, but have miscommunicated. Take the word ‘lecture’ for a start: in English, giving words in a talk; in French, receiving words, on the page – reading.

In many ways this piece is typical of much work doing the live art circuit at the moment – solo performer (female) using the self as the source, mixing and matching a toolbox of performance tricks (projection, choreography, performative objects etc). What distinguishes this piece is the confidence and skill of this theatre-trained performer – in contrast to many people presenting this sort of work, Déchery has what it takes to carry the audience through the journey, and to engage them in her story.

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR

Robert Lepage / Ex Machina
The Blue Dragon
The O’Reilly Theatre / Dublin Theatre Festival
October 2009

In Chinese calligraphy, the first stroke that is taught is a straight line that represents the horizon and separates heaven and earth. Or so we are told at the opening of *The Blue Dragon* (written by Robert Lepage and Marie Michaud) where this notion of inclusive division infiltrates Lepage’s stunning production.

Pierre (Henri Chasse) is an ageing artist who has fled to China to escape the criticism of his Canadian peers. Claire (Marie Michaud) is his acquaintance and former lover who travels to adopt a child. Pierre’s current lover, Xiao Ling (Tai Wei Foo) a young artist, acts as the bridge between these two and the needs and desires they’ve come to China to fulfil. Michaud captures perfectly the humour, desperation and pathos of a woman who has realised, too late, the futility of her lifestyle. Tai Wei Foo’s choreography and movement suitably contrasted with her aseptic portrayal of the thoroughly modern Chinese artist. Her dance in the snow was electrifyingly beautiful.

It’s a rare production that invites its stage crew to participate in the curtain call. But in this case it would have seemed churlish not to. The separation of the stage into an upper and lower level allowed for magical set changes to appear as if from nowhere. Tiny trains and traditional Junks crossed the stage, toying with the idea of scale and perspective. Projection allowed Chasse to literally illustrate Chinese calligraphy as he ‘paints’ symbols onto the cyclorama.

The script was perhaps the only disappointment as dialogue at times seemed stilted or overly simplistic. The concluding scenes cleverly and poignantly left the audience questioning the West’s influence on the East, the two cultures’ relationship, and what this could cause China to lose.

LOUISE FINN



No Theater / Young@Heart
End of the Road
Royal Northern College of Music / Manchester International Festival
July 2009

I had seen the More4 documentary on the Young@Heart choir a couple of years ago, and was pretty astounded by the strength, tenacity and imagination of this group of people from Massachusetts, who are aged between 73 and 89. They are a choir, but a choir unlike any other. I went to the show with some positive expectations, but also expecting a fair amount of nostalgia and schmaltziness. But this wasn’t merely a group of old people singing – it was a performance of great breadth and depth. The set was fantastic, featuring a see-through revolving door through which many of the performers appeared, and a bar. Other performers just wandered on to the stage. Most of the ones coming through the revolving door were dressed to the nines, as if going out to a show. They didn’t acknowledge the presence of the audience. Some of the musicians also wandered on from the wings; others joined them later.

It was an amazingly moving and powerful experience, living up to the publicity for the show, which described it as ‘a hauntingly beautiful show about age, memory and the power of music.’ It gave me a completely new perspective on what being older means. It challenges the stereotypes and social norms of old age without once ever overtly referring to these things. Hopefully, Young @ Heart will return to the UK – if they do, go see!

PAUL ALLENDER



Mint Fest – Kendal, August 2009

Mint Fest (the largest of the Lakes Alive programme of Cumbrian festivals) follows in the grand tradition of many French street arts festivals where a small, unlikely town plays host to a well-funded festival with an international perspective, the local population take to it like ducks to water, and pretty soon it's attracting visitors from far and wide. A daytime programme of street shows is complemented with an evening of stand-alone shows and installations.

First up were Plungeboom with their new Lakes Alive commission, in which two 'French' chefs standing in their own kitchen unit recruit a handful of young chefs to find ingredients for a meal for a troll. Plungeboom are a young Manchester group whose rise to street arts fame has been very quick. This is down to the unique quality of their work and their ability to put their ideas across in a fresh and engaging manner. There's a lot of chat, which usually puts me off, but they avoid the weary at-one-remove cynicism that can hamper the street artist and instead have the audience eating out of their hands. They were up against an extremely loud and lazily presented sideshow, but carried on regardless.

Fairly Famous Family presented *Anyone for Tennis* on the road – a measure of a good street festival, in my opinion, is when roads are closed off and you can stand where you damn well want to stand. This featured a small lawn tennis set-up with a net and a high seat for the umpire to sit and control the goings-on. Very Middle England in look and feel. A member of the audience is selected to be the Minor Royal who will present the shield; two are chosen to be ball-boy and ball-girl, whilst another is chosen to be John McEnroe. The second company member becomes Pat Cash in all his mullet-haired, strutting glory. The show takes us through a Wimbledon final complete with daft slow-motion replay and although it's familiar stuff the charm of the commentary (which hides a few salty innuendoes along the way) effortlessly carries us along with it. The audience is tight in on the show, and there's nowhere to hide so it relies on a lot of varied skills to carry it off – a perfect piece of street entertainment.

Sadly the classic bank holiday weather affected the early evening programme so we made our way to the big tented show, *Circenses* by Circus Ronaldo. I've said before on these pages that there isn't a better group around in terms of top quality, comic, live entertainment and the same still holds true. This time the audience are split in half – one half goes backstage to see the preparations for the show, whilst the other half sees the show, and at half-time they switch over. We went backstage to start with, entering the Big Top via laundry hanging out to dry. This section is widescreen, impressionistic, very textured and there's a lot of little sub-plots to keep in your head. The mood is by turns fractious, panicky, chaotic, sulky and furious as props don't work, stage animals get accidentally shot, and blunders conspire to change the running order or wipe certain acts off the bill completely. People return from in front of the curtain with odd props, we hear the other half of the audience laughing and find ourselves wondering what's going on out there; likewise those on the other side hear us laughing and wonder what's happening on our side. All hung together by lovely music from the houseband overlooking both stages. There are moments when all hell is breaking loose as well as moments where you can just sit back and reflect.

Half-time and we swap over to see the actual show. This is a showcase of some exquisite circus skills presented in a very unshowy fashion but after about 15 minutes it becomes apparent that we aren't just seeing what the audience in the first half saw, and by the end both audiences can see each other over the debris of a show that has literally brought the house down. We are left with a very sober image of the future of circus as real father and real son sit in the ruins next to a skeleton version of grandfather on a merry-go-round horse, trading verses on concertinas.

Circus Ronaldo for me leave all other circuses who use narrative trailing in their wake – indeed the skills are so subsumed into the story that it's easy to take them for granted. But it is the skill at telling a story which remains in your head as much as the eternal question of how Danny Ronaldo swaps the bike frame around without you noticing so he sits on the pedal wheel instead of the saddle. He's done it in two shows now and I still haven't twigged.

On such a wet day a fire installation is the perfect end, and French company Carabosse provide a magical and beautifully realised version in a nearby park. They use different qualities of fire to give a real sensation of space and size and do it so effectively that the space they use appears to be bigger than it actually is. I saw their first show 10 years ago where they incorporated performance in a poor and rather po-faced manner to frustrating effect. Good to see that they've ditched that element and paradoxically strengthened the theatrical possibilities through other means.

EDWARD TAYLOR



Once Upon a Summer's Eve – Keswick, August 2009

Once Upon A Summer's Eve sees quality (and mostly British) street theatre acts gathered for a lakeside feast of bucolic art – a *Lakes Alive* event in a landscape of such intrinsic beauty that the glorious colours of the setting sun threatened to upstage the many acts.

The event kicked off with Markmark performing their evergreen street theatre show, *Idiots*. Mark Tillotson and Simon Kerrigan are a perfectly complimentary double act who wow their audience with their slick timing and easy rapport. I particularly like their measured restraint, while appearing to be making it up as they go along, they are actually very much in control – the adlibbing is effective, and nothing is overdone.

Also seen was the world premiere of *The Cabaret of Dr. Caligari*, in which James Macpherson (of Artizani) has created a bold and ambitious new street theatre show. With a cast of seven comedians, the show features a collection of exotic characters performing cabaret routines in a bizarre style that would have delighted the late Angela Carter. James, as the malevolent MC, bravely holds it all together, while his young cast cavort with enthusiasm.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to see Bash Street Theatre's show *The Station*, which impressively engaged the audience for an hour, with performances of intricate precision and beguiling charm – and demonstrating that a complex and sustained narrative is possible outdoors, even in these damp and windswept latitudes. Their beautiful set looked perfect with the lake behind.

Also on offer: Whalley Range All Stars presented their imaginative *Compost Heap*, a visually poetic piece with the confidence to play at its own pace. Performances, characterisation and set fitted in perfectly to the rural setting. Red Herring constructed a *Punch & Judy* set-up in the centre of the park where it looked striking against a picturesque background. They then went walkabout in their Punch and Judy characters. Utopium (from France) presented *Snow White* with Gallic whimsy in an ironically knowing style. And their set also suited the location, resembling a fairytale castle in a forest. Strangely, this French show was the most verbal, and although losing something in translation, it did have an interesting quality.

The event ended with *Tubas on the Lake by Tres*, which was – yes – tubas playing harmonies in boats on the lake, sailing across the water, an intentionally low-key finale – although they missed a trick by not illuminating the boats, as lanterns would have looked beautiful reflected in the waters of Lake Derwentwater.

MICHAEL LISTER



Dance Daze at Penrith July 2009

Penrith is a picturesque small town in the Lake District that, as far as I could tell, is normally a little starved of arts activity. So it is good to honour in these pages the arrival of Dance Daze, a new mini-festival dedicated to dance-theatre works sited outdoors, which was launched by Cultural Olympiad guru Bill Morris who stressed the value of having a programme of 'world class' work presented in Penrith. And whilst it was certainly true that the audience was a little less forthcoming than so-called 'educated street arts audiences' in places with established festivals, the cowering in doorways was at least as much to do with the rain as the fear of art and artists – once the sun broke through, and the local population had got used to the idea of the streets and squares being full of artistic activity, there was an obvious feeling that this was something they could happily get used to. Companies presenting work at the first Dance Daze included Srishti, Stopgap, Balletboyz II, and the company I was there working with, Ragroof Theatre.

And then there was Punchdrunk, with *The House That Jack Built*. It's a piece that seems to have caused some consternation amongst people who associate Punchdrunk with large-scale immersive theatre work, forgetting that the co-director of the company (Maxine Doyle) is a Laban trained dancer/choreography, and that dance-theatre is at the heart of the company's work. There have also been grumbings about the light and easy mood of this work, as Punchdrunk are associated with the dark and the dangerous, but surely the exploration of other moods is their prerogative as a company? Personally, I find it to be an engaging and enjoyable piece. The soft and easy movement work (with typical Doyle choreography, focusing on the relationship between performers rather than the creation of abstract pictures), the gentle clowning, and the whimsical humour of the set-up (the construction/deconstruction of various edifices from a wall of hay bales) all combining to create a harmonious and happy piece of outdoor dance-theatre. Not what some people might expect from Punchdrunk, perhaps, but that's alright Jack!

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR

Lakes Alive is a four-year programme of world-class arts events. It is a Kendal Arts International initiative produced by Julie Tait with Jeremy Shine and MIA.

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2010 LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL 13-31 JANUARY

This year's Mime Fest features 15 companies from 10 countries, with a plethora of premieres, including *The Mill* from Britain's Ockham's Razor, one of the festival's three co-commissioned works. Switzerland's Zimmermann & de Perrot open the season at The Barbican, the first of many different circus-theatre shows on offer, and there's world-class puppetry and animation from around the world, including Israel's Etgar Theatre with *Eshet*.

Other highlights include Circus Klezmer's uproarious wedding, visual theatre supremos BlackSkyWhite and Mossoux Bonte, and the multi-talented bearded lady Jeanne Mordoj with her badgers and mountain goat.

So all-in-all 19 days of contemporary visual theatre performance, meet-the artist sessions, workshops, and the festival lecture to be given by Bristol Old Vic artistic director and National Theatre associate director, Tom Morris. See also the features section of this magazine. Full listings, further information, and booking details on the website: www.mimefest.co.uk

ETGAR THEATRE *ESHET* AT LIMF



GREEN GINGER *RUST* AT SUSPENSE



SUSPENSE

As this issue of Total Theatre Magazine goes to print, London is gearing up for its first festival of adult puppetry for over 25 years. The festival, hosted by Islington's Little Angel Theatre, takes place over ten days, in seven different venues across London, involving twenty-four companies. With performances, lectures and masterclasses from UK and International practitioners, the creators of Suspense have set out to prove that puppetry isn't just for kids. Highlights include performances from UK companies Green Ginger and Horse and Bamboo, US company Inkfish and TAMTAM Objektentheater from the Netherlands. Little Angel has been supporting the development of puppetry in the UK since 1961 and has joined forces with The Central School of Speech and Drama to create professional masterclass opportunities included in the festival programme.

At the Suspense launch event, festival director Peter Glanville (Artistic Director of Little Angel) claimed that shows such as War Horse, Avenue Q and the ENO/Blind Summit Madama Butterfly are revealing how 'sophisticated, irrational and grotesque the artform can be'. He added, 'The work we have programmed for Suspense represents not only the changing landscape of contemporary puppetry practice but a challenge to the way theatre is made – opening new doors of expressiveness.'

Suspense is running 30 October–8 November 2009. For full listings visit www.suspensefestival.com

NEWS FROM VENUES



THE ARCHES

Russian/German physical theatre company Derevo unite with St Petersburg theatre mavericks Akhe to bring you a spectacular premiere. For the first time ever in the UK these two companies will come together to produce a brand new promenade work, *Natura Morte*, in association with Scotland's Conflux project. The Arches are putting them all together and letting them run loose through every corner of the huge venue building, exploring and transforming corners that have never been seen before (10-14 November). For Christmas, the Arches will also be running an in-house retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood*, complete with puppets, music, song and dance (2 December–3 January). See www.thearches.co.uk



CAMDEN PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Applications are now being accepted for Sprint 2010, which will take place in London next March. CPT are happy to accept proposals for imagined or existing works from emerging or established companies and individuals working in theatre, performance and live art. Previous participants include: Unlimited, Cartoon de Salvo, Fevered Sleep, Shunt, Wishbone, Chris Goode, The Paper Birds and Mamoru Iriguchi, with work encompassing one-on-one performances, boat trips, durational performances, puppetry... the list goes on. For more information or to apply (deadline 30 November '09) download an application form at www.cptheatre.co.uk

ROUNDHOUSE

This Christmas the Roundhouse presents Little Angel Theatre's *Jelly Bean Jack*, an exciting new version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* that combines tabletop and shadow puppetry, bringing to life the story of the brave little boy who climbs a magic beanstalk and overcomes a fearful giant (5 December–3 January; ages 3+). Also playing over the Christmas period, Tall Stories and Network of Stuff's *Them With Frozen Tails* follows up previous successes *The Gruffalo* and *The Pickled King* with another masterclass in storytelling (15 December–3 January). See www.roundhouse.org.uk

TOBACCO FACTORY

Melanie Wilson's *Iris Brunette* is a sortie into a curious cityscape of the future past inspired by the film *La Jetée* by Chris Marker. The piece follows compassionate voyeur and time-travelling refugee Iris as she delicately uncoils the remembrance of a friendship destroyed by the outbreak of war and the unfathomable demise of lost kinship and love. With its elegant imagery and elegiac sound score, *Iris Brunette* is a disarmingly engaging piece. Playing 20 & 21 November. See www.tobaccofactorytheatre.com

JACKSONS LANE

Attend a superior form of pantomime this season with Jacksons Lane's in-house production of *Cinderella*, a new adaptation of the classic story incorporating magic and acrobatics courtesy of Jacksons Lane associate artists So & So Circus Theatre. Written and directed by Adrian Berry, this updated version sees Cinderella transported into a world of reality TV, fame and fashion as she seeks her true love on Britain's favourite talent show. *Cinderella* runs 7 December–3 January. See www.jacksonslane.org.uk

HACKNEY EMPIRE CLOSING

Due to financial difficulties Hackney Empire will be closing its theatre programme in January 2010 at the end of the pantomime season. While the theatre itself will go dark, the venue's community and education work will continue and the intention is that the Empire should reopen after a 'period of reflection'. Built in 1901, Hackney Empire has in recent times retained a commitment to its variety background while programming experimental and interdisciplinary work in its smaller Studio Theatre. See www.hackneyempire.co.uk

WARWICK ARTS CENTRE

Following the huge success of *The Gruffalo* and *The Gruffalo's Child*, Tall Stories returns with the story of Billy the Goat and the mysterious Snow Dragon. Billy is the kid. *The Snow Dragon* runs 5 December–3 January, and is recommended for ages 3+. See www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

ICIA

Two total theatre productions coming up at University of Bath's Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts: bgroup's about around pays reference to the timeless tradition of a circular gathering, seating its audience in a ring of 50 chairs for a dance piece that charts the passing of an hour and explores ritualistic conventions from the primitive to the modern day (14 November); and Mem Morrison's *Ringside*, which draws on a lifetime of remembered Turkish Cypriot family weddings to bring to life a long overdue wedding reception. See www.bath.ac.uk/icia/home

NEWS FROM ARTS ORGANISATIONS

PUPPET CENTRE TRUST

Having recently secured funding from the Arts Council for a groundbreaking and important period of activity, the Puppet Centre Trust, England's national development agency for the dynamic artform of contemporary puppetry, is now able to deliver an even more strategic programme of lobbying, advocacy, education and training on a national stage. Overseeing the organisation is newly appointed director Linda Lewis, formerly director of the visions festival (an international festival of visual theatre, puppetry and object theatre in Brighton), South East Arts Drama Officer, theatre manager, and lecturer. Linda will be assisted by Emma Leishman who has been appointed as PCT's Administrator. See www.puppetcentre.org.uk

BRITISH DANCE EDITION 2010 3-6 FEBRUARY

Prestigious biennial dance showcase British Dance Edition announces an extensive programme for 2010 returning to Birmingham, a thriving cultural centre and international destination for dance. A National Dance Network Initiative hosted by DanceXchange, Shows includes Arthur Pita's new production *God's Garden* – a world exclusive, Jasmin Vardimon's critically acclaimed *Yesterday*, Vincent Dance Theatre's *If We Go On* and *In the Spirit Of Diaghilev* from Sadlers Wells. The non-theatre-based strand of performance explores some of Birmingham's more unusual spaces for dance and includes work by Liz Aggiss, Clod Ensemble, Dudendance, Iona Kewney, Anna Krzystek and TopShot. See www.bde2010.co.uk

CIRCUS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The Circus Development Agency works to assist and develop the circus arts in the UK. It runs monthly one-to-one surgeries with professionals from the industry, free to anyone who would like to speak with them about their chosen area of expertise. For a list of the surgeries available, and a wealth of other information about circus in the UK, see the organisation's website. The CDA also runs a journalist training project which has included mentoring from Lyn Gardner, theatre critic for The Guardian. The organisation are currently searching for a new trainee journalist, as well as looking to recruit new volunteers to assist with their newsletter, website updates and research. If you're interested see www.circusarts.org.uk or email info@circusarts.org.uk

FUEL AT THE ROUNDHOUSE

To name something is to call it into life, to determine its future. Inua Ellam's *Untitled* is a magic realist story, set in Nigeria and England, of identical twin brothers separated at birth, one twin without a future, without a purpose, without a name. Inua Ellams is a poet and graphic artist whose critically acclaimed debut theatre production *The 14th Tale* was awarded a Fringe First at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009. He was born in Nigeria and now lives and works in London. *Untitled*, the last in a series of performances in development presented by Fuel, is on at the Roundhouse's Studio Theatre 20 & 21 November. See www.phaze05.com

CIRCOMEDIA

For the third year running Circomedia are delighted to present *The Birdcage* Christmas cabaret. As usual the show will be hosted by Rod Laver, Circomedia's head of juggling, and will feature other performers from the Circomedia stable including Bongo Bolero along with more recent graduates from the degree course. The show has musical accompaniment from the Hot Potatoe Syncopaters and features several acts from the Gandini jugglers. Performances are at St Paul's Church, Portland Square, Bristol on 3 & 4 December. Tickets £49.50 each; box office 0117 922 3686. See www.circomedia.com

NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY

Two events that come under the Natural Theatre umbrella were nominated in the finals of the prestigious 2009 Bath Life Awards. Bonbon Cabarets, which encourages the development of local acts, was up for Best Event, and the notorious White Wine Arts Trail, which takes 110 people on a theatrical tour of all the galleries that spring up at Bath Festival, was up for the Arts Award. These are both regular events supported by the Naturals as part of their community involvement. Coming up: Bonbon Cabarets on 19 November and 17 December. For full details of these and all national and international Naturals gigs see www.naturaltheatre.co.uk and www.widcombe.net or email info@naturaltheatre.co.uk



TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ARTSADMIN WEEKENDERS

Artsadmin's Weekenders are open to all practitioners regardless of level of experience; all that is required is an openness to meet, talk, play, perform and collaborate. Come to one or all – each Weekender operates as a standalone while the series as a whole offers an opportunity to work with an outstanding range of artists. Autumn/winter weekenders: Chris Goode (28 & 29 November), Lone Twin's Gary Winters (30 & 31 January), Anne Bean (27 & 28 February), and Blast Theory (27 & 28 March). See www.artsadmin.co.uk

THE DRAWING THEATRE: CREATIVE LIFE DRAWING WORKSHOP

The Drawing Theatre is a spectacular fusion of theatre and drawing in a creative workshop designed to inspire and excite. Combining elements of performance and movement, light and sound, participants explore the human figure in hidden spaces and beautiful architecture, turning inspiration into sketches, collages and 3D drawings. This workshop, held at BAC on 5 December, is suitable for all levels of ability – accessible for beginners; inspiring and challenging for those with more experience. Advice and tuition will be available for those who need it. See www.londondrawing.com

ISAN CONFERENCE: THE SPACE BETWEEN

At The Space Between ISAN will be facilitating in-depth discussions of issues critical to the development of the outdoor arts sector, as well as providing a great opportunity for networking and information sharing. The programme will be a lively mix of presentations, practical activity, debate, discussion and networking. Experienced speakers and facilitators will lead the sessions and maximum input will be sought from the delegates to explore specific issues in greater detail. Featuring keynote addresses from Jeremy Deller, Lyn Gardner and Pax Nindi, The Space Between will be held at the Assembly Rooms, Derby 18-20 November. See www.streetartsnetwork.org.uk

CONFLUX

Based at The Arches, Glasgow Conflux is a new project that will develop a voice for Scottish artists working in street arts, physical theatre and circus. Conflux will create opportunities for the development of existing professionals as well as for a new generation of artists. These professional and emerging artists will be showcased at Conflux festivals in 2010 and 2012, with eyes firmly fixed on further chances afforded by the Commonwealth games in 2014. For more information on Conflux's plans for the future see www.conflux.co.uk



CIRCELTION CLOSES

After ten years supporting the professional development of British circus artists, Circelation have decided it's time to shut up shop. Over its lifetime Circelation has run 23 week long courses, 12 weekend tasters, hosted more than 200 circus artists, developed 30 emerging directors, and programmed 35 leading cross-artform directors/artists from the UK and around the world to lead laboratories. Founders Leila Jancovich and Chenine Bhathena have decided to close Circelation due to their other work commitments, but also with confidence that the sector is now well served by similar initiatives – CAST in Bristol, Creative Exchanges at Circus Space, Jeunes Talent UK via Crying Out Loud, and the education work of many UK schools and companies. See www.circelation.co.uk

NICA

The National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) is Australia's centre of excellence in contemporary circus. As the only training institution of its kind in Australia, NICA provides professional training through accredited courses including a three-year Bachelor of Circus Arts and a Certificate III in Circus Arts through Swinburne University. The full-time degree course prepares young people from across Australia and the world for exciting careers in all facets of the circus industry. NICA is supported by the Australian Government through the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. For information about shows, short courses and special events see www.nica.com.au

MASK WORKSHOP WITH CHRIS VERVAIN

Performers are invited to participate in workshoping Euripides' *Bacchae* in mask. Led by mask specialist Chris Vervain these free workshops are a chance to develop skills in performing Greek tragedy in mask, working creatively on the text of Euripides' *Bacchae* with a small group willing to collaborate together on interpreting and performing the play in masks. The series of workshops might be developed into a production. Dates to be arranged in autumn/winter 2009. See www.chrisvervain.btinternet.co.uk or email chrisvervain@btinternet.com

CLOWN THROUGH MASK COURSE

Coinciding with the London International Mime Festival, Jonathan Young (Shams Theatre) will again be leading this intensive, month-long training in contemporary clowning from 4 January 2010. A bold synthesis of Native American and European clowning traditions, participants go on a visionary journey, each making and wearing six masks, which then becomes the basis for a powerful, non-ego based way of clowning. Veronica Cohen from Barabbas described the course as 'by far the most productive, supportive and informative route into clown I have so far encountered'. Places limited. For more information see www.shamstheatre.org.uk or email info@shamstheatre.org.uk

NOMADIC ACADEMY OF FOOLS

The new Nomadic Academy of Fools had its first week on the road at the Actor's Space in Catalonia at the end of September, with weekend workshops and performances by Jonathan Kay and also a nearly complete *Richard II* performed by the newly galvanised A Company of Fools (made up of those who have trained in the Academy over the last two years). After that they headed to Pezenas in Southern France for October, and will be in Berlin in November and then back in Brighton for December. For more details see www.jonathankay.co.uk or email info@jonathankay.co.uk

TADASHI ENDO WORKSHOP

Tadashi Endo, director of the Butoh-Center MAMU and the Butoh-Festival MAMU Germany, is running a two-day workshop at the Courtyard Theatre 14 & 15 November. Over the years Tadashi has formed a deep relationship with Butoh founder Kazuo Ohno that informs his work. No theatre, Kabuki and Butoh, as well as the traditional forms of Occidental theatre, combine to create his special style – a tightrope walk between eastern and western culture, mixing theatre, performance and dance. He calls it Butoh-MA. Alongside the course, on 14 November, Theatre Training Initiative will also be presenting a night of highlights from the Mamu Butoh Festival Archives, introducing rare footage of works shown at the festival. See www.theatrettraining.org.uk or email booking@www.thecourtyard.co.uk

COACHWERKS UNSCHOOL OF PERFORMANCE

A place to learn and share the work and findings of theatre artists, Coachwerks' Unschool of Performance is currently running its autumn programme. The next short courses are Steve Lambert's Theatre of Violence, an exploration of the philosophies of Grotowski and Artaud (20 November); Emily Ayres' Intention, Opposition, Surprise (23 November); Rachel Ellis' Theatre Beyond Words, focusing on the creation of physical characters that embody the themes and images of a work (24-26 November); Anna-Helena McLean's Actor-Chorus-Text, a workshop in musicality, movement and Shakespeare (27-29 November); Eva Recacha's Words Movement Montage, an improvisation and choreographic workshop focusing on piecing together fragments of movement and text (12 & 13 December); and Ania Psenitsnikova's Butoh Workshop (14-17 December). For full info on Coachwerk courses (in Brighton) see www.coachwerks.org.uk

THE SPEAKING DANCER

Directed by Jacky Lansley and taking place at the Dance Research 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). For more info on the programme and also hiring the Studio see www.jackylansley.co.uk or email drs@jackylansley.com

SKYLIGHT CIRCUS ARTS

Children as young as five and adults of all ages can enjoy learning circus skills this autumn with Rochdale's Skylight Circus Arts. Bridging sport and the arts, everyone can find something for them at circus school. Intensive one-to-one classes in aerial technique are also available from Mish Weaver of Stumble Dance Circus, an innovative performer and teacher whose work is on the cutting edge of contemporary circus. Mish will teach a wide range of trapeze techniques along with a whole new approach to aerial choreography. For course dates and times see www.skylightcircusarts.com

INTERNATIONAL PHYSICAL THEATRE LAB

Organised by IUGTE & ArtUniverse, this Physical Theatre Lab offers intensive practical training, lectures and discussions for actors of physical, dramatic, dance and musical theatres. Dancers, choreographers, circus performers and directors welcome. The Lab takes place at the historic 15th century Retzhof Castle in Leirning bei Leibnitz, a beautiful town located within 30 minutes of Austria's Graz Thalerhof Airport, 22-27 February. Accommodation and three meals per day are organised for participants. The working language is English. See www.iugte.com



ANALOGUE

Following a critically acclaimed near sell-out run of *Beachy Head* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, plans are being made for a UK/international tour in autumn 2010. The company will be back in the rehearsal rooms at Farnham Maltings throughout autumn 2009, developing ideas for three new experimental projects. Analogue has also been invited to take a short residency at Central School of Speech and Drama working with MA students to research and test out ideas for future pieces. Alongside the creation of new work, Analogue continues to develop their education programme, running workshops at schools and universities throughout the South East. See www.analogueproductions.co.uk

ANGEL EXIT THEATRE

A straggling gang of buffoons are washed among the flotsam onto the shores of the ghost village at Chesil Beach and conspire to spin a yarn of smuggling, dastardly deeds and wicked adventures. Deeply rooted within the rugged landscape of Dorset, and presented in Angel Exit's trademark style, *Moonfleet* joins live music from an original score, striking physicality, puppetry and ensemble storytelling to weave together local legends, sea shanties and the area's hidden history. Based on Falkner's classic coming-of-age love story, *Moonfleet* is currently touring the UK, with dates including Croydon Clocktower 26 November; Rondo Theatre, Bath 3 & 4 December; and Bridport Arts Centre 12 December. For full dates see www.angelexit.co.uk

BASH STREET THEATRE

Bash Street performed *The Station* for the last time in the UK earlier this year at the x.trax Platform 4 Piccadilly festival in Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester in September. The show has already been well received at major festivals in Belgium, Holland, France, Germany, Spain and Poland this year. After last year's tour to the commissioning festivals, the company re-rehearsed the show quite radically in the closed season, and then spent a further four-day residency at the Dommelhof creation centre in Neerpelt, Belgium in May doing some extra adjustments. The result is a more streamlined show, with a new twist in the relationships between the characters and a punchier start to the proceedings. *The Station* is now available for booking by all festivals in 2010. See www.bashstreet.co.uk

HORSE + BAMBOO

FORKBEARD FANTASY



BEADY EYE / KRISTIN FREDRICKSSON

After a wonderful Edinburgh Fringe where *Everything Must Go*, Beady Eye's inaugural show, won a Total Theatre Award (for Devised Performance) and the Arches Brick Award, tour booking for April-June is underway and Kristin is delighted to be working with producer Jo Crowley on this. The show is about Kristin's dad; finally he is in the limelight. Dates so far include the Theatre Royal Bath, the Barbican and Ruhrfestspiele in Germany. For updates on the tour and future projects, see the handmade website www.kristinfredricksson.mfbiz.com

BLIND SUMMIT

In a world where even your thoughts are controlled and revolution is just around the corner, Julia and Winston begin a clandestine romance... In a startling new adaptation of George Orwell's *1984*, Blind Summit combine physical theatre, puppetry and music to create a cutting-edge and thought-provoking performance. At Battersea Arts Centre 7 December – 9 January. See www.blindsummit.com

BOTTLEFED

After successful performances of *Hold Me Until You Break* in Iceland and Switzerland, Bottlefed is back in London to develop the piece into an installation with live music. Research days and work in progress performances are scheduled to take place at BAC 12 & 13 November. Kathrin Yvonne Bigler, one of Bottlefed's co-artistic directors, was invited as one of twelve European artists to take part in ENPARTS Campus' The Electric Body at La Biennale di Venezia in September/October 2009. In 2010 Bottlefed is involved in Mapping Pathways, a project that will deepen the involvement of the arts in mental health settings. See www.bottlefed.org or email info@bottlefed.org



CHIPOLATAS

In 2010 The Chipolatas will be 18! To celebrate the company are taking the street to the stage and working on a new piece, *Gentlemen of the Road*, a high energy performance mixing physical feats with live squeezebox and breakbeats. Three musical clowns tap into themes that are both traditional and contemporary, embracing the old and the new, transcending trends and creating a timeless quality. The emphasis is on celebration, generating a contagious energy between the performers and the public. See www.chipolatas.com

DING FOUNDATION

In *Hanging by a Thread* the audience is slowly guided into a wordless story. The two characters are a mother and daughter who create and are consumed by a bed that has developed a life of its own. Using objects, puppetry, physical performance and original music to depict obscure worlds and shadowy emotions, *Hanging by a Thread* stirs and delights its audiences. Devised and performed by Amelia Pimlott and Hannah Marshall of The Ding Foundation, with puppet direction by Steve Tiplady and lighting by Jack Knowles. At Norden Farm Arts Centre, Maidenhead 27 November. See www.myspace.com/thedingfoundation

FORKBEARD FANTASY

Forkbeard Fantasy's latest show *The Colour of Nonsense* is a comedy thriller about a priceless Invisible Artwork... and its theft. With Forkbeard's famed mix of visual trickery and film, and nods at Edward Lear and The Emperor's New Clothes, this new production is about the highs and lows of creativity and the paralysis of indecision. Touring nationally from October 2009. The company is also now taking early bookings for its two Summer Schools, 2-9 July and 16-23 July 2010, and its February short courses. For details see www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk

HORSE + BAMBOO THEATRE

Award-winning Horse + Bamboo Theatre present *Deep Time Cabaret*, an exciting new production from one of Europe's leading visual theatre companies. The show is a humorous and anarchic production that mixes theatre, Eastern European absurdism, folk songs and dances with film and animation to create a visually evocative and powerful story about the wonder of the universe and our place in it. Directed by Bob Frith with music by Loz Kaye and puppet design and direction by Alison Duddle. For adults and young people (11+). See www.horseandbamboo.org

METRO-BOULOT-DODO

MBD are pleased to announce they've been commissioned to create *Whispers from a Rickshaw* by the Igniting Ambition Programme in the East Midlands. Taking place entirely in a moving rickshaw, *Whispers* will be an intimate street arts experience featuring stunning audio, an intriguing narrative, beautiful artwork and a dizzying ride around a city. Made in collaboration with Ling Peng, a classically trained Chinese musician, *Whispers from a Rickshaw* will be available in 2010. See www.metro-boulot-dodo.com



NIE

NIE are undertaking a twenty-day research and development voyage this November, sailing on a banana boat freighter with eight actors and musicians. Travelling from Antwerp to Columbia, they will be developing ideas for a show exploring the tales and music linked to the sea. Then in December the company will be working on a family show based on Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days* with development time at BAC. Join them for scratch performances during their residency there. For more details on new work and current touring shows see www.nie-theatre.com

NOLA RAE

Nola Rae will be joining Footsbn for *A Footsbn Christmas Cracker*, a cabaret take on Shakespeare, at Shakespeare's Globe 22 December – 3 January. Nola is also researching a new show for children for 2010 while undertaking her usual busy schedule of international touring. For more info see www.nolarae.com

OCKHAM'S RAZOR

Experience the sweat, grind and grit of physical work in a wheel of wood and steel – suspended six metres in the air and powered by the performers – where a seemingly small decision or action can gather momentum and impetus beyond your control. Directed by Toby Sedgwick (Olivier Award for Best Theatre Choreographer for the National Theatre's *War Horse*) and taking on two new performers to augment the core company, *The Mill* previews at the Lowry, Manchester 7 December and the Wales Millennium Centre 12 December, premiering at the London International Mime Festival 19-21 January. See www.ockhamsrazor.co.uk

OPENBATCH THEATRE

Openbatch Theatre is a new Bristol-based theatre company made up of seven graduates from Dartington College of Arts and specialising in contemporary devised theatre. Openbatch are currently touring their first professional show *Floor Plan* and offering 'Introduction to Devising' workshops to students. *Floor Plan* explores the individual vs the group in a factory setting, with the use of a live soundtrack and performing director. Openbatch's workshop breaks down the areas of devising into gesture, text, topic, technology and composition – with each session tailored specifically to the school's requirements. See www.openbatchtheatre.co.uk or email info@openbatchtheatre.co.uk



REDCAPE THEATRE

PLATFORM 4

Platform 4 are touring their take on *The Tempest* this Autumn to venues across the South, South East and South West of England – including Leicester Curve 21-23 January; The Pound, Corsham 29 January; and Bath Theatre Royal Ustinov and Liverpool's Unity Theatre in March. See the company's website for full listings. Platform 4 have also just finished *A Midsummer Night at the Starlight Picture Palace*, an installation for people with early-onset dementia in association with the Nuffield Theatre. See www.platform4.org

RAJNI SHAH THEATRE

Created during the era when George W. Bush was President of the United States, *Dinner with America* provides a gentle but provocative insight into a defining moment in the country's history. As the performance space transforms and shifts through extraordinary images, it gently uncovers sub-themes of consumerism, rights, ownership, hopes, harvest and division, leading to a finale which delightfully embraces its audience in a shared feast. Devised and performed in collaboration with costume designer Lucille Acevedo-Jones and film and video artist Lucy Cash. Funded by Arts Council England. At Bonnie Bird Theatre, Laban 21 November and Colchester Arts Centre 25 November. See www.rajnishah.com

REDCAPE THEATRE

RedCape Theatre have been working on two new shows. *Beach Road* is a tale of defiance, a shrinking island, synchronised swimming, and trying to turn back the tide. As with *The Idiot Colony* the starting point is true stories: stories from communities which are beginning to disappear from the east coast of England – literally falling into the sea. Beach Road will be written in collaboration with New York playwright Suli Holum. RedCape's second upcoming piece, *From Newbury With Love*, is based on a book of letters exchanged 1971-1986 between Harold & Olive Edwards, antiquarian booksellers in Newbury, and the family of Marina Aidova, the daughter of an imprisoned Soviet dissident, living in Kishinev, Moldova. Scheduled for first performances in 2011, Amnesty's 50th anniversary, the play will premiere at The Corn Exchange, Newbury and then be performed in Moldova. See www.redcapetheatre.co.uk

SHUNT

In a tobacco warehouse by London Bridge sits the giant centrepiece of a great industrial exposition – an abandoned relic of Victorian technology. The original purpose of the machine is unknown. If it were built today it would probably fit into the palm of your hand, but, in that Golden Age, colossal bulk was the plat du jour. The future is behind us. The end of the empire is just around the corner. *Money* is Shunt's first full company show since 2006. Taking place in an extraordinary three-storey set built in the centre of an empty warehouse in Bermondsey Street, audiences are led inside and the action unfolds around, above and below them. At 42-44 Bermondsey Street, London SE1. Performances until 31 December, Tuesdays-Saturdays. See www.shuntmoney.co.uk



THEATRE AD INFINITUM

THEATRE AD INFINITUM

Theatre Ad Infinitum have had an amazing year. Kicking off with Arts Council funding for their sell-out UK tour of *Behind the Mirror* and R+D on their forthcoming production, the company were also picked out from 400 applicants for the Exchange Theatre's Residency Programme – The Orchard Project, in New York. Then this summer the company's latest show *Odyssey* became a critically acclaimed sell-out success at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with George Mann picking up The Stage Award for Best Solo Performer. *Odyssey* and *Behind the Mirror* are available for touring in 2010; for more information see www.theatreadinfinitum.co.uk or email info@theatreadinfinitum.co.uk



THEATRE CORSAIR

THEATRE CORSAIR

New collective Theatre Corsair will perform their debut production, *The Terror of Happiness!*, again this winter at the Amersham Arms. The result of an investigation into female persona and the use of the actor's self when building character, the production combines intricate set design with new text and promenade performance. Bringing together graduates from Rose Bruford and Goldsmiths College, and current students from Camberwell College of Arts, Theatre Corsair work collaboratively to create a production that is immersive and detailed, transporting the spectator from the bustling streets of London to the centre of a darkened room: text flies overhead; there are half remembered details of times and places, changing faces and a chase through the night to Island Gardens. A daughter wakes light-hearted and buys coffee at the station. A lover is sleeping, and a small child is lost behind a closed door. See www.theatrecorsair.com

THÉÂTRE SANS FRONTIÈRES

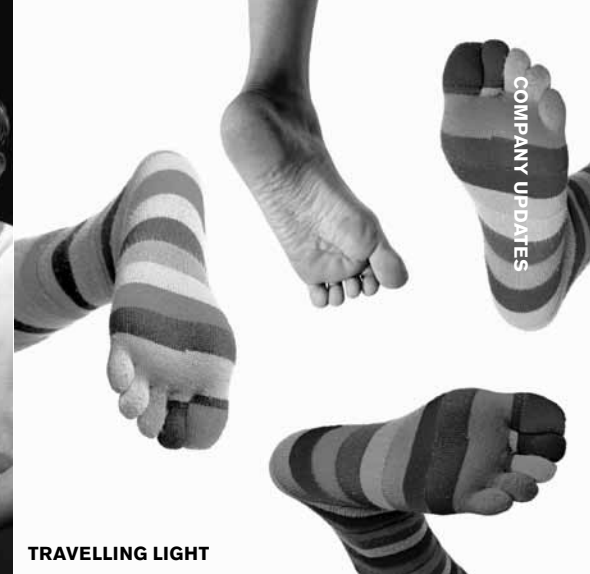
TSF's French production for children aged 8-12, *Contes Dorés*, will be touring UK schools January-March 2010. Based on two fairytales from the French-speaking world, these gold-themed stories are told with the company's trademark use of physical theatre, original music, mask and shadow puppetry. TSF's artistic directors John Cobb and Sarah Kemp continue to perform with Robert Lepage and Ex Machina in the epic nine-hour *Lipsynch* as it goes on its world tour, next appearing in Montreal, 27 February–14 March 2010. In the meantime, TSF is devising a new multi-lingual production, *Islands*, in collaboration with MCB Gestion Cultural (Canary Islands), Theater Wahlverwandte (Germany) and Persona Theatre Co (Cyprus). It is planned to tour the show in the UK spring 2010 before going to Spain, Germany and Cyprus. For more see www.tsf.org.uk or email sue@tsf.org.uk

THE FIASCO DIVISION

The Fiasco Division are developing a new work called *Happiness [END]*. An exploration of laughing, crying and cathartic climaxes, *Happiness [END]* showcases first at Operahuset Nordfjord in Norway, before arriving in London 26 November 2009 for a month of further scratch and development. January – March 2010, The Fiasco Division will be collaborating with fifty over 65s and fifty 12-16 year olds to create a new work through game structures and improvisation. For further details of The Fiasco Division's activities see www.thefiascodivision.com or email tfd@hotmail.co.uk.

THE PAPER BIRDS

With the support of Arts Council England and Sheffield Theatres, The Paper Birds have just undertaken an R&D period at The Lyceum Theatre alongside Alex Murdoch (Cartoon De Salvo), Chris Thorpe (Unlimited), Mandy Lawrence (Kneehigh) and Maryam Hamidi (A Moments Peace Theatre). The company will continue touring *In a Thousand Pieces* while working towards two new productions in 2010, continuing their R&D development as well as beginning work on a site-specific production. See www.thepaperbirds.com or email jemma@thepaperbirds.com



TRAVELLING LIGHT

TMSIS THEATRE COMPANY

Tmesis Theatre are collaborating with The Liverpool Everyman Theatre and writer Chris Fittock on *The Dreadful Hours*, a dark physical comedy exploring what happens when the everyday realities of suburban isolation slowly suppress the endless promise and idealism of those first sparks of limitless love. The company's first piece with a writer is directed by Javier Marzan (Peepolykus) and will open at The Liverpool Everyman 11-13 February, going then to The Royal Exchange Studio, Manchester 3-6 March before embarking on a national tour. The company's successfully re-worked first piece, *Tmesis*, is in London 21 & 22 November at The Pleasance Theatre, Islington. See www.tmesistheatre.com

TRAVELLING LIGHT

Travelling Light have moved base over the summer and are now installed in Barton Hill Settlement with offices, a meeting room, storage space and a beautiful light rehearsal room. In their new home they are currently creating *How Cold My Toes*, a new show for ages 2+. The team that created *Shadow Play* have joined forces with urban dance company Champloo to take young audiences on a magical journey through the seasons. A coproduction with Bristol Old Vic and Birmingham Rep, the show will tour nationally 22 October – 17 April, including a four-week run at Bristol Old Vic over Christmas. See www.travlight.co.uk



UNPACKED

This winter Unpacked are touring their show *Jumping Mouse* around the UK – see their website for venues and dates. The company will also be making some new work, a little of which will be shown in development at the Suspense Festival in November, and so far includes some old and new stories, a monstrous Hoover, and half a piano. See www.unpacked.org

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