

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE



KEEP ON RUNNING – PERFORMANCE PARKOUR HITS THE STREETS

FIGHT CLUB! GLOVES ON FOR A SPECIAL FEATURE ON BOXING AND THEATRE

ENCOUNTER TALES FROM A SEA JOURNEY WITH ALEX BYRNE OF NIE

I SEE NO SHIPS: ALL ABOARD KARAVAN ENSEMBLE'S A SHIP OF FOOLS

LAND AHOY! AMONGST THE CHERRY TREES WITH DREAMTHINKSPEAK AND RACHEL HENSON

INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS OF A THEATRICAL KIND WITH ONTROEREND GOED

PLUS: DELL ARTE ABROAD, RICHARD DEDOMENICI, NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART, NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL, FOREST FRINGE MICROFEST, ROUNDHOUSE CIRCUSFEST AND MORE



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TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE

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As the summer kicks in, thoughts turn to the pleasures of outdoor performance. Of course, sunshine isn't a prerequisite to enjoy street arts, public art and other work set outside of dedicated theatre spaces and galleries, and there are plenty of outdoor events in the winter months – from Brighton's magnificent White Night to Newcastle-Gatehead's delightful Enchanted Parks.

But the summer sees the amount of work set outdoors – be it under the sun or stars, or set in temporary structures such as tents or booths – increase dramatically. (See our Update section for the low-down on outdoor – and indoor – summer festivals.)

Having recently attended Norfolk & Norwich and Brighton festivals in chilly May, I feel drawn to share some thoughts on what I feel works and what doesn't work so well outdoors in good old Blighty.

It is often stated that British companies are better at smaller-scale promenade shows than large-scale static street theatre (although that is slowly changing). There are many reasons for this traditional bias, but surely a factor is the weather? If it's a bit windy or rainy, it is easier to keep moving, and thus keep your audience moving, than it is to stay put. Having sat frozen through David Rosenberg's *Electric Hotel* in Brighton (which is set inside a specially-constructed building that the audience views from a seated area outdoors, hearing the composed soundscape through headphones), I found myself wondering – perhaps a little ungraciously – why we needed to be outdoors.

On the other hand, taking part in Periplum's *1000 revolutions per moment* (seen at King's Cross for the Reveal festival), the fact that we were walking for a great deal of the show, and occasionally going in and out of buildings, meant that we weren't likely to freeze our socks off. Willi Dorner's outdoor piece *Bodies in Urban Spaces*, recently seen at Brighton Festival, is similarly a keep-the-audience moving event that uses doorways, garages, lampposts, car parks and all sorts of other (yes) urban spaces to sculpt bodies within an environment and to play with the relationship of human body and inanimate object. (These shows are amongst many recently reviewed on the Total Theatre website.)

Public art events are an important element of the Norfolk & Norwich festival (reviewed in this issue of Total Theatre Magazine), and the beauty of walking around Norwich catching the work sited in the nooks and crannies of the city is that if it rains, you can just huddle in a doorway until it passes, an option not open to you if you are sat in chairs in rows. Also encountered in Norwich was NoFit State's *Park Life* (an outdoor show which is also a community participation event). Seeing the aerialists almost dead with cold as they rehearsed in public in a windswept park was a timely reminder of why tented circus was an English invention...

UK artists are continuing to be inventive, embracing new forms and finding new ways of working outdoors: in this issue of the magazine, you can read Alister O'Loughlin's account of his company's development of 'performance parkour'; and Miriam King looks at Ragroof Theatre's *Gloves On* (amongst other shows that circle around boxing), which is set in a boxing ring and can be performed outdoors at street arts festivals or indoors in boxing clubs.

Our Voices candidate for this issue is Richard DeDomenici, whose work takes him into all sorts of places, indoor and out – including the inaugural Public Space Programme in Reykjavík, which the organisers are hoping will become a model for a travelling public art/street arts event that could be staged in many different European cities.

Alex Byrne reports on a different form of the great outdoors in *Tales From a Sea Journey* – in which NIE take to the open decks of a container ship to sing songs and tell stories. The show will eventually be taken indoors, but its development has relied on the outdoor element of life at sea!

Whether you find yourself on land, at sea, by the riverside, in the countryside, or even up in the air, this summer – enjoy the wealth of opportunities to make and witness performance in the great outdoors! Don't forget your woolly hat, though...

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Front cover image: Kimmo Pohjonen, commissioned to create a new site-specific piece with Paper Cinema at Winspit Quarry on the Dorset coast for the Inside Out Festival 10–19 September 2010. Photo George Wright.

Performance Parkour



Prodigal Theatre’s Alister O’Loughlin reflects on his company’s collaboration with Gravity Style on *The Urban Playground*, now taking environmental dance to the Next Level



Parkour was created by nine friends growing up in the suburbs of Paris twenty years ago. With no cash in their pockets and a burning desire to *move* they started to create games – trainings – involving only their bodies and the environments in which they played.

These included the now iconic architecture of Evry and Lisses (where the abstract climbing wall La Dame Du Lac still stands as a kind of monument to parkour) and the woods of Sarcelles. Early training involved many tests of endurance and no one would go home until they’d all completed every new task.

Parkour grew to be the discipline of overcoming physical obstacles with movement which is safe, fluid and efficient, but commitment to the group was at the heart of parkour in creation. The training is based upon the ability to remain useful – to keep moving despite any obstacle – so that the *traceur* may themselves escape danger and more importantly reach another person to aid them out of danger.

Much of this route philosophy has been lost in parkour’s journey across the channel and across the globe. Following the screening of *Jump London* on TV (September 2004, Channel 4) numerous parkour groups sprang up in the UK and elsewhere, and, without any proper guidance, would-be *traceurs* attempted techniques and, particularly, jumps that the originators had grown up to over fifteen years of constant training and refinement. The result is similar in quality to those companies in the 60s who, having seen Grotowski’s laboratory theatre or after a two day workshop with the man himself, attempted to create ‘laboratory’ performances. The outward form is similar, the inner life all but absent, and the intention completely different.

All images: Prodigal Theatre & Gravity Style
The Urban Playground. Photos Matthew Andrews

Whilst attending the Odin Teatret with Dah Teatar back in 1998 I read an article by theatre scholar Franco Ruffini entitled *Mime, the Actor, Action: The Way of Boxing*. The author discusses the effect of various kinds of physical training on theatre movements in France during the first half of the twentieth century, tracking changes in theatre performance against developments in boxing and particularly the career of The Orchid Man, Georges Carpentier.

Carpentier demonstrates the new athleticism appearing around the turn of the last century and exemplified in the Natural Method of Physical Training, created by Naval training instructor Georges Hébert, who reacted against the 'action specific' fitness of weight lifting and called for a new training to take place in the open air and which was inspired by tribal trainings he'd observed in the French colonies, and the movement of the 'topmen' or 'button men' – the sailors who worked in the masts and rigging of the tall ships on which he travelled. In common with the tribal hunters, they carried none of the weightlifter's bulk, but possessed a holistic, adaptable and versatile strength based in the ability to employ the entire body in the making of any action.

This 'natural' method of training was adopted by the French Navy and gave the world the '*parcours du combattant*' or 'assault course'. Most interesting for us is the knowledge that this method was also adopted by Jacques Copeau and helped to inspire the work of his student Etienne Decroux (the godfather of contemporary corporeal mime).

Where we differed from others who watched *Jump London* was that we immediately made the connection between modern 'parkour' and the '*parcours*' of Georges Hébert. We brought our knowledge of movement from dance and theatre into our parkour and from the outset tried to work with the same principles we use in our release-based training.

Copeau loved 'methode naturelle' as it is based in truth – you cannot act your way over a wall – either you get over it or you don't. If performance is to be based on the presentation of truth it is essential that a performer's training is premised on truthful actions.

Parkour is a contemporary flowering of the utilitarian principle, explored by Copeau, Decroux, and later Grotowski. It is extraordinarily utilitarian, in fact, requiring only the imagination and commitment of the *traceur* and an environment – any environment – in which to move.

The ideal *traceur* would hone their economy of action to such a degree that the casual observer would barely notice their passage through a space. The *traceur* would notice the audience only in terms of their impact on a shared environment. This does not make for a good performance...

How then to move parkour into performance?

We hold as a basic premise that the performer's job is to provide the opportunity and context in which the witness becomes creative. To this end the performer must be conscious of their audience on many levels. They perform, as Grotowski described it, 'before, and somehow, on behalf of the audience'.

In performance, the *traceur* becomes a dancer, and must obey all the same principles that any dancer works with. Conveniently, this means that parkour can be seen in performance as a language of dance and by that distinction it can be a partner to other forms of dance/theatre.

The partnership between Prodigal Theatre and Gravity Style (the organisation of Charles Perriere and Malik Diouf – two of the nine co-creators of Parkour) is a partnership between performance-makers of different disciplines. Our work is based on the evolution of a distinctive performance language for parkour.

It is this that distinguishes our work from the adoption of parkour techniques that has been seen on several occasions in the performance world, and equally distinguishes our work from the demonstrations of technique which have passed for performance in the parkour world.

In working with parkour in the creation of performances we've also gained an education in the process of creating work for outdoor spaces.

It is apparent that our general process of making sense of others in our environment is based on a rapid perception of intention, through projection of meaning onto action. Unwieldy sentence – but understandable if we take the following example: Whilst walking down the street you see someone sitting on the kerb and another person run to and crouch beside them. The reasons behind this set of actions could be any of an infinite number: someone is hurt and a stranger seeks to comfort them; someone is late and their friend has sat to wait for them – and in the process of witnessing actions we project reasons or meaning onto them. Our projections are based on our ability to read intentions – and this comes down to our perception of the qualities of energy employed in the actions and so on.

“French theatre pioneer Jacques Copeau loved *methode naturelle* as it is based in truth – you cannot act your way over a wall, either you get over it or you don't”

“The parkour performer must be conscious of their audience on many levels. They perform, as Grotowski described it, before, and somehow, on behalf of the audience”



The fact is that particularly in the outdoor environment humans are superb at perceiving and (rightly or wrongly) projecting meanings on to actions they glimpse at distance. Our ability to do this is stronger the ‘purer’ the action we witness (the more utilitarian, the clearer it is).

Grotowski defines an action as being specific – in direction, distance, in the amount and quality of energy it uses, and says it must be made in relation to something specific. In performance parkour the ‘something specific’ cannot be a purely inanimate object – we cannot jump only to cross a gap – and neither can it be purely an abstract concept – ‘a jump of sorrow’. Most often it will be another performer – and so Parkour quickly becomes a kind of contact or partner dance played at proximity or distance.

This in turn throws up meetings and relationships which appear and disappear without stating their nature – instead, we rely on the audience’s skill of projection to create meanings for these meetings and relationships.

We’ve named this ‘the glimpsed narrative’. Rather than constructing a long A to B story, we construct moments of meeting and parting, of togetherness, of solitude, of co-operation, and of division – each of which can be read in its own right or as part of a whole.

It is Miranda Henderson’s task as the director to organise these glimpses and maintain ‘the red thread’ which binds them all together. She constructs, in advance of the rehearsal process, the structure within which they appear, and she is the only person, during the rehearsal process, who maintains a total perspective on how each of these moments compounds the last.

The performers are then free throughout to focus on each moment without loading an action with their character’s journey, and in so doing muddying the clarity of its form. The journey is a series of physical actions. The character is a collaborative work between the director, the performer and ‘this audience now’. It is the result of how this audience reads each of the character’s actions, their meetings with others, and the environment in which it all takes place – this includes the costumes, the musical score, the lighting, and The Urban Playground itself.

For this Urban Playground structure we’re now using MKII – an evolved scaffold frame combining a series of stages with complex supporting struts, handrails and ramps – all loading out of, and also employing as ballast – a high top transit van. The set is a living maquette for a city – each of the Urban Playground shows has featured a set which is based on the building blocks of modern architecture – cubes, towers, handrails and stair sets.

The MKII set strips the solidity of the first shows back to the skeleton of the scaffold frame, allowing for the weaving of bodies through, and not just over, the miniaturised cityscape. Scaffold is a projection of a building in potential. Our scaffold maquette is a glimpse of a city that might be. It provides enough solidity to represent the essence of many places without inhibiting the readings projected onto it.

Performance parkour takes the root intention of ‘helping another / remaining useful to others’ upon which parkour is premised, and re-directs it to create through performance an invitation from the performer to the audience – the performer acts ‘in front of / somehow on behalf of’ the audience, but not ‘instead of’ them. In the first case the audience participates in a creative intervention through projection onto our performance, but there is another process at work too. We always teach in conjunction with our performances, and through a process of combining compact workshops and ‘supervised freeplay’ we are able to quickly move members of the audience from the position of spectator to the position of performer.

This is a magical process to observe, and those individuals who do step forward from the crowd and explore the Urban Playground become the champions of the audience – they absolutely represent the audience and act ‘in front of and somehow, on behalf of’ the others.

We know that as the audience walks home they are looking with fresh eyes at the environment around them and they are imagining alternate pathways of progression. In this way the performance spaces themselves are transformed – transformed by the lasting imaginings of the audiences and performers, and the result is the existence *in potential of another way*.

Performance parkour is for us an opportunity to present a series of different possibilities – a different way of moving, a different way of relating to the environment, a different way of understanding one’s place in relation to other people. It is the means of animating public spaces, and of animating public imaginations.

For more information on the company and tour dates for Urban Playground shows, see www.theurbanplayground.co.uk
For more on Prodigious Theatre see www.prodigioustheatre.co.uk
To find out more about the company’s training for parkour, contact prodigious@prodigioustheatre.co.uk



Ragroof Theatre Gloves On. Photo Ray Gibson

You've Got to Have Heart

No guts, no glory?
As the physical theatre world goes boxing mad,
Miriam King reflects on three very different shows
focused on the big fight

Beautiful Burnout, the first collaboration between Frantic Assembly and the National Theatre of Scotland, will be bursting onto stages across Scotland this summer, immersing the audience in the visceral world of boxing – bringing the experiences of those whose lives are closely involved with the sport to the stage.

Yet as I write, a number of other shows open taking boxing or other forms of sports fighting as their theme – and over the past year I've seen three entirely independent shows, all of which had their basis in the notion of an organised fight. Something is obviously in the air! As it is such a zeitgeist moment, let's take this chance to reflect on those three shows I've seen to date, and what this all might mean...

Although these three shows all had boxing or fighting sports at their core, each expanded upon the source material in a very different way. The first, by Fredrik Lloyd, is one man's theatrical reflection on his improbable cage fighting career; the second, by Athina Vahla, is a contemporary dance piece exploring the relationship between dance and boxing, and the physiological responses of boxers and dancers; and the third, by Ragroof Theatre, is a community-engaged site-specific performance set in a boxing ring (to be toured outdoors this summer).

Fredrik Lloyd's *Survival of the Thinnest* is the true tale of a pale poet who faces his greatest fears and ends up a super-feather-lightweight cage fighting legend. A self-styled 'stand-up poet' Lloyd mixes this poetic account of his fight club days with physical re-enactment. He has a quietness on stage which draws the audience in; his show an inspiring and uplifting fifty minutes' entertainment.

In conversation, Fredrik told me that there is some parallel between cage fighting and stand-up poetry, in that you need to win the crowd over in the first couple of minutes. Essentially, both are a matter of showmanship. Fredrik told me that the spectators at a cage fight are a 'crowd', but they are mostly silent, respectful and well behaved. Quite unlike the crowd in a movie fight scene, in fact – more like a theatre crowd. Yet cage fighting isn't 'theatre'; it is a knock-out sport and the injuries very real.

Fredrik was a little surprised by the audience he attracted at the Edinburgh Fringe. A lot of nurses came along: they recognised many of the injuries he talked about and often laughed at 'inappropriately painful moments'. By the end of the run, the house was full of old ladies; they liked the stories, could laugh at the injuries and were not afraid of anything a skinny poet might come out with.

Fredrik also talks of the primalism of fighting. Facing your worst fears in a small cage results in nothing domestic to worry about: bills hold little fear; washing-up is done without a second thought; tax bills become a shared joke. He also appreciates the poetic in the sport. He feels it's like a modern dance, when done well – a physical contact sport can be both intimate and beautiful.

"Boxing is like a choreography in which each movement has its cost and no one knows the end"

From oratory to choreography: *Fight Club* is a collaboration between choreographer Athina Vahla, dancer Leon Baugh, dance scientist Emma Redding, film-maker Monica Alcazar and photographer Helen Burrows, alongside boxer Gary McCarthy and his trainer father Michael from Repton Boys Boxing Club in Bethnal Green.

Fascinated by the rituals and rhythms of boxing and enthused to explore similarities to dance movement, Athina began looking to develop a unique dance-sport movement language by establishing a relationship with the historic boxing club.

“Performed at night and set in a floodlit boxing ring, *Gloves On* investigates masculinity, ritual, spectatorship”

The first stage of the research was focused on training. She presented her early findings to an audience at Chisenhale Dance Space in East London, where I saw a preliminary performance in autumn 2009. Five initial sessions were held at both Chisenhale and Repton and the work was documented by Alcazar and Burrows. This took place as part of Burrows’ ongoing photographic project with the club, *No Guts, No Glory*.

I asked Athina what inspired her to explore the similarities between boxing and dance movement. She told me she had always liked watching boxing and had been looking to create a new hybrid performance, which she calls *sport theatre*, for a few years. To this end, she has shown particular interest in the notion of *agon* (Greek: struggle/contest) as a means for the performer or athlete to redefine themselves. She is particularly interested in the threshold of pain and exhaustion and what makes someone continue beyond physical limits. For Athina, boxing encapsulates these elements – it is bare, direct, often damaging, and yet highly structured and focused. Boxing is like a choreography in which each movement has its cost and no one knows the end.

I wondered how, as a woman, it felt to enter a boxing club for the first time. Athina describes the boxing club as a hermetic, singular world without women, highly codified. She had to work hard to find the language to communicate to the Repton representatives that she even held a genuine interest in the sport, let alone that dance and boxing share affinities. She recalled, however, that Ali famously asked Foreman: ‘Shall we dance?’

Through her investigation, Athina found that the similarities between the two disciplines were the need for rhythm and a strong centre. In a fight, as in a dance, gestural precision, tight structure and painstaking preparation are key to success. Boxing is not, though, ultimately about aesthetics – the most important thing is the outcome, who wins. The task of locating a space between boxing and dance where each discipline keeps its integrity and yet an exchange is possible was more challenging than anticipated. *Fight Club* was presented at Chisenhale to an audience accustomed to dance, but Athina intends to present the work to boxing spectators too. ‘Ideally I would like to bring the two audiences together, so spectators/audience meet and learn from each other.’

The next stage of Vahla’s research is the fight, including the rituals of preparation. She intends to invite a team of experts and commentators to sit between the spectators and the ring during the fight and attempt a live analysis of physiopsychological functions in boxing. Future plans look to a larger scale, site-specific work where the theatrical experience is built around the boxing ring as an arena and explores the importance of space.

Ragroof Theatre are a multidisciplinary collective who have made a name for themselves creating site-specific work, often outdoors. Most of their productions are developed from real-life histories and community engagement. They are currently redeveloping their latest show *Gloves On*, to be toured this summer to urban spaces, such as skate parks, and on the street arts festival circuit. The show has been a year in development, including work-in-progress showings in boxing clubs. I met with company co-director and performer Ivan Fabrega to talk with him about the provenance and development of the show.

“A boxing contest produces a huge amount of adrenalin – there is a parallel buzz with circus skills such as trapeze”

Performed at night and set in a floodlit boxing ring, *Gloves On* investigates masculinity, ritual, spectatorship. The show explores boxing and its place in the British psyche through a multidisciplinary production that incorporates spoken text, rap and physical performance (and yes, boxing!). The audience are asked to support either the champion or the challenger and the two opposing teams enjoy the show in separate fenced areas, covered with graffitied canvas.

I asked Ivan whether training to be a boxer held any parallels with his background in circus and dance. He told me that boxing training is very basic – no fancy equipment, just circuit training, press-ups, sit-ups, punching bags, skipping. But although boxing is physically demanding way beyond anything he has done before, a contest produces a huge amount of adrenalin, and in its dependence on fitness, calculated risk, and reactions in-the-moment, there is a parallel buzz with circus skills such as trapeze.

I wanted to know what Ivan enjoyed about boxing and he told me that, for a man who has never had a fight in ‘real life’, the training and ‘punching the shit out of a bag’, gave route to his inner masculinity. Violence is unavoidable, yet it’s a calculated violence: it is not about anger, it’s about getting the points. ‘A boxer who gets angry will lose.’

Ivan reflected on how certain boxers are revered as fantastic movers: there are fighters who slug it out, and then there are the artistic ones, like Ali, who was a beautiful, technical fighter. Yet although technique is important, ultimately ‘you’ve got to have heart’.

Gloves On has developed from within the boxing community so I wondered what the new street arts context would mean for the show. Ivan feels it’s a positive thing – the show provides a theatrical context for boxing to be seen, and to explore the history and complexity of the sport. I attended a work-in-progress preview shared with the boxing community, ex-boxers and boxers’ families: for many of those Ragroof worked with, going to the theatre and being in a show was a new experience.

The question of audience is key for these pieces, as the artists have testified. In creating work in direct collaboration with professional fighters and their communities, they pose the question of whether such shows can have resonance outside of those specific groups. By taking their shows into arts venues and festival spaces, they are forcing traditionally passive theatre audiences to take the fighting sports seriously and to put themselves in the shoes of sports spectators. And in taking the work back into the communities from which it came, they are bringing contemporary performance to people who perhaps wouldn’t otherwise experience it. Points all round!

Fredrik Lloyd trained in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA – aka Cage Fighting) at Fight Skool in Hove, East Sussex. He fought as an amateur fighter under the name The Nutcracker. *Survival of the Thinnest* was seen at The Nightingale Theatre, Brighton, on a preview for its run at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009.
www.ztfightskool.com
www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk

Athina Vahla’s *Fight Club* (work in progress) was a Homelands Dance Festival commission for Chisenhale Dance Space, presented there in November 2009. For further on the project’s future plans, contact Cheryl Pierce. www.artsadmin.co.uk
For more on the artist see www.athinavahla.com

Ragroof Theatre’s *Gloves On* was seen as a work-in-progress at boxing clubs in London and Brighton, autumn 2009. The reworked outdoor show, set in a boxing ring, premieres at Paradise Gardens, London 19–20 June 2010, then tours to various street arts festivals and venues throughout the summer, including LIFF and Stockton International Riverside Festival. www.ragrooftheatre.co.uk

Fighting Talk

BOXING:

For more on boxing see Joyce Carol Oates' *On Boxing* (Harper Perennial, 2006 NY). Initially published in 1987, Oates considers most sport to be the 'game of combat' whereas boxing 'is the real thing' and therein lays its morbid fascination. *On Boxing* is a history of the sport in America, a dialogue on contemporary concerns around boxing, explorations of the careers and personae of supernovas of the profession and a reflection on the significance of spectatorship – especially across genders. www.jco.usfca.edu

On ballet and boxing: film director Martin Scorsese claims Powell and Pressburger's 1948 film *The Red Shoes* (featuring ballerina Moira Shearer) as one of his greatest influences. The film theorist Lesley Stern argues in her book *The Scorsese Connection* (Indiana University Press 1995) that his *Raging Bull* (1980) is essentially a reworking of *The Red Shoes*. Both films depict characters in the grip of a powerful obsession that threatens to escape the confines of the stage (or ring) and destroy them; both are interested in the nature of performance – whether in a theatre or a boxing ring; and both are powerfully concerned with totemic objects – the red shoes for Vicky and the boxing gloves for Jake La Motta. (Reported by Charlotte Higgins in the Guardian newspaper, 20 November 2009. www.guardian.co.uk)

Further scholarly discussion of boxing and physical theatre performance can be found in Franco Ruffini's *Mime, the Actor, Action: The Way of Boxing* (Mime Journal; Pomona College Department of Theatre and Dance, US). See article by Alister O'Loughlin in this issue of this magazine for further details.

Boxing has proved to be a favourite subject matter or motif for theatre-makers over the years. Theatre legends The People Show have tackled boxing on numerous occasions – *People Show 16* (which featured Laura Gilbert and Mark Long, amongst other luminaries) was the first in a series of shows that used the boxing icon. Others included *People Show 66 The Boxer* (1976), made when Mike Figgis (now better known as a film director) was in the company. www.peopleshow.co.uk

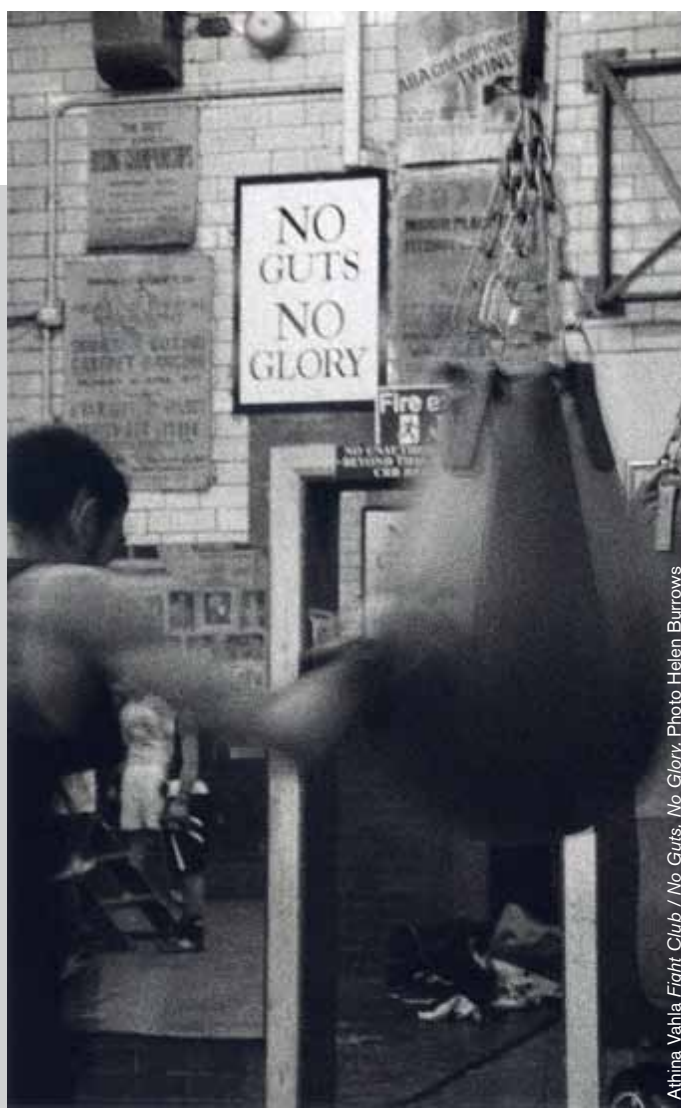
Sucker Punch by Roy Williams, coming to the Royal Court 11 June–24 July 2010, is a new 'physical play' that explores racial politics and black male relationships. A British boxing champion and his old friend, an American star prizefighter, slug it out over the title and what it meant to be young and black in the 80s. www.royalcourttheatre.com

Beautiful Burnout, the first collaboration between Frantic Assembly and the National Theatre of Scotland, makes its debut in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 4–29 August 2010. Written by Bryony Lavery, it's about 'the soul sapping three minute bursts where men become gods and gods become mere men'. The company describe it as 'a thrilling new piece of highly physical theatre immersing the audience in the explosive world of boxing'. www.nationaltheatrescotland.com

WRESTLING:

Professional wrestling has long been equated with performance. The moves are carefully choreographed, the participants have characters and personae and they may even enact storylines which eventually have to be settled with a fight. The sculpted body of a WWF fighter is part of the show, unlike the natural, functional muscles of a heavyweight boxer. www.sobwrestling.com/professional-wrestling-a-performance-art.html

Jim Rose Circus vs. Jake 'the Snake' Roberts: When Legends Collide debuted in Seattle in 2009. This largely improvised show took the rise and fall of pro-wrestler Jake 'The Snake' as its starting point and looked at the artifice and fickle celebrity of the sport during its heyday.



Athina Vahla Fight Club / No Guts, No Glory. Photo Helen Burrows

Trafford Tanzi by Claire Luckham is a wrestling play in ten rounds in which a young tomboy refuses to conform to preordained gender roles. First performed as *Tuebrook Tanzi: The Venus Flytrap* by Liverpool's Everyman Theatre Company in 1978, the play also fits the tradition of atypical performance space – it was brought to the people of Merseyside in pubs and working men's clubs while the theatre was refurbished. In 1980 it was transposed to Manchester and renamed *Trafford Tanzi*. Since then the play has enjoyed a West End run featuring Toyah Wilcox – although the Broadway run of *Tanzi*, starring Debbie Harry, was notoriously short lived (it closed after its first night).

OTHER FORMS OF COMBAT:

Para-Active are one of a number of companies with an ongoing interest in the integration of capoeira (a Brazilian practice rooted in fluid movement and a dialogue between two fighters/performers) into physical theatre practice. Para-Active has collaborated with Anglo-Brazilian company Zecora Ura in the creation of *Hotel Medea*, which returns to LIFT this summer. Other fighting motifs have also inspired the company in the past: *The Zoo-Oid Fight Night Experience* was a 'tournament of ritual culture clashes: part bare knuckle fighting, part Wheel of Fortune'. www.zoo-oid.com/productions.html

Martial arts have proved to be another constant source of inspiration or opportunity for collaboration, one example in recent years being the Damon Albarn / Jamie Hewlett collaboration with acclaimed Chinese theatre and opera director Chen Shi-Zheng, *Monkey: Journey to the West*, which received its world premiere as the opening show of the 2007 Manchester International Festival. www.monkeyjourneytothewest.com

Fighting Talk researched by Sophie AR London & Dorothy Max Prior

Tales From a Sea Journey

As the planes grind to a halt, the boats are there to welcome us.
Alex Byrne of New International Encounter takes to the waves

The boat was big
but the sea was much,
much bigger / The
sea changes all the
time / The sea is like
a desert / You cannot
live in the sea / You
visit the sea / There
is much more water
in the sea than on the
land / People do not
come from the sea
(this may not be true)
/ The sea is alive /
The sea can consume
you / If you fall off
the boat you will die /
The boat is like a
prison / There is less
to see on the sea

I am stuck, stuck in Nuremberg. Everyday I borrow a bike from a German friend and make the 40-minute ride out to the airport to get my ticket re-booked for the next day (Icelandic volcano willing). At least the weather is good and I have friends to stay with. The airport is very quiet; the Lufthansa ladies are polite and apologetic, a little bewildered and not very helpful.

Life runs so fast, I have meetings that I cannot make, stuff to cancel and re-arrange. I am impatient. I hate to wait.

In November of 2009 I went on a boat, a big boat, out into the big ocean. I did not go on my own: I went with a Dane, two Norwegians, a Belgian, two English, and a Czech. I went with a musical director, six actors and a production manager. I went with a folder of letters from an Icelandic writer and a suitcase of mysteries from a Danish set designer. We all went on journey, from Le Havre in France over the salty sea to the French West Indies, across the Atlantic. We left Le Havre in heavy seas and high winds from the tail end of an Atlantic storm. None of us had any idea what to expect, or what we would find.

It was a cargo ship and it carried 5,000 containers bound for the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The crew could not tell us what was in the containers, as they are not allowed to know. They bring back bananas, sugar and rum from the West Indies. They were quite suspicious of us arriving with our instruments and looking like a strange collection of misfits. We got onto the ship, took our bags to our cabins and waited, and then nothing happened for quite a long time.

The Fort St Louis run by the French shipping firm CMA-CGM was to be the location for the first phase of research and development of our new show, *Tales From a Sea Journey*. Eight of us made the trip and two others contributed to the process even though they could not be on board. As the title suggests, the show will be about stories from the sea, about songs from the sea, and about the pull and power of the sea. But it all started long before the boat...

In 2007 we took part in China Plate and the Arvon Foundation's fantastic Dark Room project that teamed us up with a writer to work for a week at John Osborne's former country home, The Hurst, in Shropshire. One of the strongest experiences of the week was the sense of isolation and focus that the location brought. There was almost nothing for miles around, and we had no signal on our phones and limited access to email. In the past we had often sought out isolated, detached places as the location for our first work on a project, a desire that goes right back to our first work together as a company in the small Czech village Mseno. The company really started as a small group of friends going to a kind of isolated retreat to try to start some work together. It was after that week at The Hurst that we started to talk about a boat, and then to find out how and where it was possible to travel. We also started to talk about working with a writer on a show, and working with a mixture of true and made-up material. These would be new steps for us, new ways of working.

In the past we have always started with narrative, using a basic story as the beginning point for improvisations and ideas. In general, these have been true stories rather than literary adaptations or our own inventions. We have also always started with music, with learning and playing music together – it has always been a principle for us that a New International



NIE Tales From a Sea Journey. Photo courtesy of the company

Encounter (NIE) show should be presented by a group of actors who are also a band on stage together. Starting from the base of an experience that we would share together meant that we needed a broader way to come to the material, so that we would become a part of the material – the subject matter as well as the means of expression. I didn't really know what to do, so I decided that the best strategy was to get other people to do things instead – I asked each of the people involved to bring three stories and three songs from the sea.

Meanwhile Kjell Moberg, NIE's Norwegian associate director, had been in contact with an interesting Icelandic writer called Sjon who had written songs and poems as well as some short novels and theatre pieces, so it seemed like a good fit to work with him. Sjon could not go on the boat but he sent each of us a letter with instructions and provocations, but more of these later...

As ever at the start of an NIE project there was an initial stage of arrivals – arrivals by plane and train in Paris from London and Oslo, from Prague, Copenhagen and Hamburg. Then arriving by train to Le Havre late in the night, and arriving in a small hotel, and then a bar. It always takes a long time to start, and I am impatient, I hate to wait.

Boarding a cargo ship is not like boarding a plane. Cargo ships run to a schedule created by container port authorities and set by sea tides and pilot boats – and in our case by striking French dockworkers. We waited in Le Havre for three days before finally leaving the harbour, out into big waves and a gale in the Channel. We made a brief stop in Brittany and then headed out towards the Azores and the Caribbean.

The experience of being on the boat was complex. It was a great space for the imagination, but also quite boring at times. The weather was bad at the start so that many of us were sick, or at least not able to do much work. It was beautiful but also like a prison – there was no way off. It felt dangerous but was also quite mundane.

Once the weather settled down a little and our own excitement abated we began the work. We took turns to tell stories, sometimes as small performances that happened in different parts of the boat. We opened the letters from Sjon the writer (it was like Christmas!). Each one contained a message that was a provocation to a narrative: a postcard from Iceland asking for help to find a family lost at sea; a letter from a father to his son wishing him luck on his trip and enclosing his lucky 100 Yen bill.

These were all very inspiring and each came to form the basis of a solo performance that was delivered as part of our work on the boat.

We opened the suitcase that Marie our set designer had sent. She had also given us tasks to carry out. We each got a disposable camera and secret instructions for a set of pictures that we should take. There were also costumes and objects to use. The aim of all of this was to find ways to explore our situation and subject. The stories that each of us brought were hugely different: some were historical and true, others were myths of the sea. Some were urban myths passed on and embellished onboard. I brought three stories of shipwrecks, ending with the wreck of a mail ship in the Caribbean where all passengers drowned, tied into their beds by the crew who wanted to keep them safe in a heaving storm.

We spent loads of time playing music, at first in the passengers' common room until the cook complained to the captain. Then out-deck where you have to play loud to hear yourself over the wind and the sound of the engine. As the weather improved we were able to visit the front of the boat – the Leonardo and Kate in Titanic bit. This was a revelation and became our favourite place onboard. It was quiet away from the engine noise of the stern, you could see flying fish jumping out of the way, and you could sit on a small platform and hand your feet over to the Atlantic fifteen metres below as we crashed through the waves. Once we passed the Azores the weather improved, and the clear sky at night, with no light pollution from the land, was amazing.

At the end of the journey we have hundreds of photographs, twelve recorded songs, fourteen stories that we all thought might develop further, the short performances made in response to Sjon's letters – and an amazing experience. This becomes a bag of material to mix together, so that when we improvise and start to shape a show we have them available to offer immediately to the process.

We came back by plane via Paris – we travelled ten days by sea and then back again in ten hours. The journey in the air is, in many ways, more remarkable and miraculous than the journey over the sea, but it is much smaller journey for the imagination.

I will rehearse the show some more if I ever get back...

For further information on touring plans for *Tales From a Sea Journey* and other NIE shows, see www.nie-theatre.com

I'll Be Your Mirror



Ontroerend Goed *A Game of You*. Photo: Elies Van Renterghem

As BAC revs up for its summer festival of one-on-one theatrical experiences, Charlotte Smith has an intimate encounter with Ontroerend Goed's artistic director Alexander Devriendt

Safe. That's how Ontroerend Goed want the audience to feel in their latest show, *A Game of You*, which has its UK premiere at London's BAC in July. 'Safe' is not an obvious choice for the Belgian company that created a gentle furore with *Internal*, testing how quickly complete strangers can build a meaningful relationship. 'We had stalkers, we had people falling in love with each other... really, we had a mess,' says artistic director Alexander Devriendt. But their latest production, developed around the idea of a real avatar (an idea which he had in bed), aims to make audience members feel 'really, really safe'.

In *A Game of You*, we're going to take more risks and you're going to feel that, but as an audience member you're going to feel more protected by us than you did with *Internal*. And that way we could skip the whole ethical discussion"

Ontroerend Goed are back at BAC for the UK's first major festival of one-on-one shows, or 'intimate theatre'. Artists including Adrian Howells, Stan's Café and Rotozaza promise your own cinema, coffin, serving soldier and personal journey. The festival brings together work that rethinks the traditional dynamic of spectator and performer.

It's a type of theatre that has gained momentum, with a wealth of such work seen at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009, and more recently at Brighton Festival (May 2010) – *Seeing Things*, presented at The Basement, added a different dimension by combining four one-on-ones that had not been shown together before, but which had an eerie logic as a curated journey. Watching, you may feel like a rabbit in headlights, isolated, disorientated, reborn, shaken or soothed.

The 'intimate theatre' format lends itself to physical contact, trust, even romance. But it already has its clichés: a few tealights, touches and a darkened room do and do not intimacy make. And it may be harder to draw boundaries with 'intimate theatre'. Should this include productions like Punchdrunk's *Faust* or *1000 revolutions per moment* by Periplum because they offer unguarded moments where you may be, or feel, alone with a performer? Or is it a pointless label, because all theatre needs this connection?

Alexander Devriendt feels that the terms 'one-on-one' and 'intimate theatre' narrow the possibilities too much. Ontroerend Goed have experimented with the format in a trilogy of works, *The Smile off Your Face*, *Internal* and *A Game of You*, all of which are based around a strong encounter between a single viewer and performer (and all of which can be seen at BAC this summer). However, the company is also interested in the spaces in between, the middle ground between a traditional and individual performance. They're alive to the fact that intimacy can be found anywhere, whether it's a crowd of commuters, Skype interview, promenade performance, random encounter, the kindness of strangers or under a proscenium arch. 'When you do

“For *Smile Off Your Face* we had an idea to change all the rules of a normal play. So normally you’re with 100 or 200 people, now you’re individual; normally, you’re mobile, so you became immobile”



Ontroerend Goed *A Game of You*. Photo Richard Duyck

I'll Be Your Mirror | Charlotte Smith

one-on-one theatre, intimacy is the easiest thing to achieve,’ says Alexander. ‘It’s like, it’s there.’ So he feels that there are many other possibilities between the extremes of audience numbers. *Under the Influence* by Ontroerend Goed used an audience of about sixty people and fourteen actors. ‘You came into a sort of party and afterwards the actors go home—but they take you too. You know the feeling, you’ve been to a party and afterwards you go home and talk a little bit. That’s what happened in the play too: each of the actors took four or five audience members with him and started talking and doing a monologue.’

The company wasn’t looking for intimate theatre when they started *Smile off Your Face*, which became part one of the trilogy. ‘For one project, Joeri [Smet] and Sophie [De Somere] had an idea to change all the rules of a normal play. So normally you’re with 100 or 200 people, now you’re individual; normally, you’re mobile, so you became immobile; normally, you can clap your hands, so we tied the wrists and normally you could see, so we took away the eyes with a blindfold. And then we had a sort of starting-point, and of course we came into intimate performance, but it was more a form experiment in the beginning.’ The company then stripped the fiction from *The Smile off Your Face*. ‘It was so close and personal that every audience member always felt when there was something fictitious. We didn’t want a frame of mind to click “now I have to believe that”’.

With *Internal*, the company still felt there was so much to discover in the one-on-one form that they wanted to develop it. After pairing up for no-holds-barred conversations and a glass of schnapps in separate booths, audience members come back together, share, test and push their fantasies in a group therapy scene. But the company felt that visitors needed more ‘keys’ to understand that this was a theatrical experience. So they are taken through a dressing room, see letters sent as part of the show and know that the previous audience of five has had the same experience. This wasn’t enough.

‘Some people couldn’t make the distinction between reality and fiction,’ says Alexander, who admits it could be difficult. ‘One girl came the first day and split up with her boyfriend after the performance. And I was like, “no way, guys, we don’t want to make theatre where we tear couples apart, this is absurd,” I thought it was absurd. But she sent an email and she said it could have been a book, it could have been a movie, it could have been a fight – you weren’t the reason, but you were the catalyst. So we’d crossed an ethical boundary but we shouldn’t underestimate people – they realise it’s theatre.’ He added that the show was not suitable for people with psychosis, but that this had only affected about five people out of about 8,000 so was a ‘minor problem’.

Alexander occasionally struggles for *le mot juste* – although his English is fluent, he and the company also work in Dutch and French. He’d spent the weekend rehearsing *Teenage Riot* (which, like their Total Theatre Award-winning *Once And For All We’re Going To Tell You Who We Are So Shut Up And Listen*, centres on young people) for its premiere in Ghent. First thing on Monday morning, he can’t quite find the word to explain why he was surprised by the audience’s reaction to *Internal*, because he himself is less susceptible to the trick. ‘I myself am too ... how do you say that? *Je suis trop*... I’m really a control freak, so I wouldn’t believe that kind of thing, but what I felt is that people were really... easy is the wrong word... I don’t want to say that people are gullible... pretty open to what happens. Ach, man, it’s too early.’

Alexander has to take a step back once a show has taken off, and did ‘only’ a few hundred performances of *Internal*. ‘I have to stop touring because otherwise we don’t create anything new. So, for instance, with *A Game of You*, I played like 50 performances but now I have to back off and let the actors do their thing.’ After the ‘commotion’ of *Internal* in Edinburgh last year, he wanted to make a show that was as ‘confronting’ but with a different audience dynamic. ‘As actors, we’re going to take more risks and you’re going to feel that, but as an audience member you’re going to feel more protected by us. And that

“It’s like the girl says at the end of *Once And For All*... Everything has been done before, but not by me, not now”

way we could skip the whole ethical discussion... Because the thing with *Internal* was that after a while in Edinburgh and after all the texts written about it, I wanted to have a review of the play, but I didn’t get that. Every review dealt with the ethical boundaries.’

Does he feel that the company is pushing boundaries, trying innovative forms, even finding something that’s the future of theatre? No other companies that have done a trilogy like this spring to mind. But Alexander shies away from this idea slightly. ‘I was always jealous of people like Peter Handke or Marcel Duchamp who could make these totally new things and tell you this is art. We won’t have that opportunity. Everything is art now.’ The company likes to step into relatively new areas of performance, but doesn’t claim to have reinvented the wheel. ‘It’s like the girl says at the end of *Once And For All*... “Everything has been done before, but not by me, not now.”’ When people say they have seen something similar, he’s often surprised at how different the other show is.

So are there any other companies that he feels artistically close to, practitioners that he really admires? He cites Forced Entertainment of ten years ago, specifically *And on the Thousandth Night* (2000), which was a six-hour performance, like some Ontroerend Goed productions. Then Alexander calmly admits: ‘I don’t watch a lot of theatre, I have to be honest, I don’t like theatre. There’s so much bad stuff.’ He adds: ‘When I see another theatre show I can’t take away the director in me, I’m always thinking “I would have done it differently.”’ Instead, he cites influences from visual arts and literature: Maurizio Cattelan, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Sophie Calle and Haruki Murakami. *Hard to Get* by Ontroerend Goed dramatises Julian Barnes’s novels *Talking It Over* and *Love, etc*, by dividing the audience into three groups that each hear only two of three monologues about a love triangle. Cosmology and evolutionary theory inspire Alexander’s next work, a collaboration with Sydney Theatre Company.

As a young theatre-maker in his late teens, Alexander reacted strongly to the idea that you couldn’t achieve reality on stage, which he remembers reading in an article about Tim Etchells. He feels that somewhere between absolute reality and absolute fiction, you can find an interesting mid-point where theatre can mirror life. ‘We look for a possible reality, a strange reality,’ he says. I suggest that there still is a fair dose of illusion: on a basic level, my partner in *Internal* acted charming and straight, but I later discovered he’s deeply unavailable (gay and married). ‘Reality itself is so fictitious sometimes,’ says Alexander. ‘You meet a guy in a bar and he could pretend he’s unmarried. Reality is so much mixed with fiction that as a truthful mirror the fiction has to be mixed with reality. Otherwise, I’m like a sort of lonesome mirror that doesn’t mirror anything any more.’

It’s the ‘here and now’ of theatre that remains central to Ontroerend Goed’s work. ‘Sometimes it’s a pain in the ass,’ Alexander says, ‘but I think it’s the beauty of it.’ So closeness can be found in various forms. ‘For me, what I like about *Once And For All* is that I achieved the intimacy and the confronting, even in an end-on performance,’ says Alexander. He does not need belief, of which the biggest example is that ‘we’re in Denmark and a guy is doubting his life’. Instead: ‘You don’t have to pretend anything. You’re experiencing an hour of your life together with us. And I think too much theatre wants you to stop living and start watching.’

Ontroerend Goed’s trilogy, *Smile Off Your Face*, *Internal* and *A Game of You* will play at BAC, London as part of the One-On-One festival 6–18 July 2010. For show dates and bookings see www.bac.co.uk For more on the company see www.ontroerendgoed.be

Charlotte Smith saw *Seeing Things* at The Basement as part of the Brighton Festival, May 2010. www.thebasement.uk.com



Adrian Howells *The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding*. Photo: Hamish Barton

One on One

One-On-One ‘the UK’s first major international festival of one-on-one theatre’ runs 6 July –18 July at BAC London, offering a feast of work that the venue’s joint artistic directors David Jubb and David Micklem say ‘gets to the heart of the relationship between artist and audience, transgressing boundaries and leading to truly unique experiences that invite us to question the ways in which we interact with others.’

‘Many of the artists creating work for the festival are legends of the one-on-one form including Adrian Howells and Ontroerend Goed,’ says David Jubb, ‘but the festival also introduces artists new to this increasingly popular form of theatre including Emma Rice (Kneehigh Theatre) and Quarantine.’

New commissions include Adrian Howells’ *The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding*, which invites the audience to surrender themselves to be fully bathed, fed and held in a long embrace; and *The Soldier’s Song* by Quarantine, which offers an intimate screen liaison with a currently serving soldier, asking the audience member to partake in a karaoke duet with an individual fighting for the UK.

International artists include Ontroerend Goed, who present their trilogy of one-on-one theatre together for the first time in the world, including the UK premiere of *A Game of You*; Hanneke Pauwe, whose *Rendez-vous* encourages audience members to ‘confront their own mortality’; and, from the US, Patrick Killoran will invite audience members to see the Old Town Hall from a new perspective: lying on their backs with their head and upper body suspended from a window in *The Observation Deck*.

The festival will also include classics such as Stan’s Cafe’s *It’s Your Film*, a ‘live film’ using cinematic language to explore what an audience contributes in the act of viewing. Other artists in the programme include Abigail Conway, Ansuman Biswas, Breathe, Ed Rapley, Eitan Buchalter, Emma Benson, Folk in a Box, Fractured Cloud, Franko B, Lundahl and Seidl, Melanie Wilson, Rotozaza, and Sheila Ghelani.

Each audience member will have a personally charted journey through the evening, featuring at least three one-on-one performances: no two journeys will be the same.

For further information and bookings see www.bac.org.uk

Home Truths



Shunt Money. Photo courtesy of the company

The Canny Granny spends a week in good company

Being in good company is very important: great people make things go quicker and more cheerfully, which is presumably why people organise themselves into theatre companies. I'd like it, I think: it's such a pain being an offensive old bat like myself. I've noticed that a couple of regulars haven't turned up for Mahjong recently and I'm sitting here tapping my tiles, smoking a raft of Craven As and wondering what to do about it.

A company is like an artificial person. A person who goes on being there even if someone has to duck out for a quick cigarette or a sabbatical. A person who can't get sued. Now I have a hip replacement and an artificial knee it doesn't seem so strange to become an artificial person.

Theatre companies are basically an extension of the gangs you had as children, and their names can be equally imaginative. They differ from commercial companies in having names that deliberately obscure their purpose. If they were a shop, Spymonkey would be peddling CCTV technology, Coney would be selling icecreams and Forest Fringe would be a bikini waxing specialist.

Theatre companies' names may also obscure their actual size, like a padded bra. The National Theatre of Brent is only two people. Their comedy double-act is based around pretending to be a theatre company in the same way that Flight of the Conchords' live show was based around their delusion of being 'a band'. Quite some irony now that their current television success far outstrips their original fantasy.

Being in a double-act might be a like a marriage of sorts. LipService, the Manchester-based female theatrical duo

(Sue Ryding and Maggie Fox) who tour the country with literary spoofs notable for their virtuosic character-switches, described the tribulations for Maggie's husband of Sue almost being part of their relationship. They are constantly inventing reasons to leave the stage to change character, so they, too, play with the illusion of a huge cast. Perhaps I should play Mahjong this way, stepping out and then making an entrance as a new player.

A 'collective' is usually a theatre company that graduated from Central School of Speech and Drama. Groups like Present Attempt have democracy embedded at a molecular level. The government should consult groups such as these when considering the stability of proportional representation. For a larger collective like Shunt, you'd think it would make decision-making as slow as Bosnian parliamentary processes, but they seem pretty streamlined now: they only started designing their breathtaking *Money* machine in January 2009, which is a remarkable turnaround considering its scope and scale.

An 'ensemble' implies that each part has an equal role in creating the whole. It also implies an excellent outfit – my favourite ensemble is a dog-tooth check two-piece, though I barely fit it with all the French Fancies I've been indulging. The Clod Ensemble is another favourite – with the music becoming part of the action. Fitting, perhaps, that they are exploring anatomy: the body knows all about working in synchrony. My eyes just about still work in synchrony with my brain, harmonised by my glasses.

In my day we had 'troups' who would barnstorm around. Footsbn, who come to town with all the family, must like each others' company very much indeed, as they live and work all together, a bit like

Zippo's Circus. As a child I found this ethos captivating – all the behind-the-scenes and caravans. You could play a lot of cards in caravans.

Oh do come over, everybody. I'm tired of solitaire. You need at least four people for Mahjong and we can play for hard cash next time.

Laura Eades is the Canny Granny, some of the time. The rest of the time she's a Faster Craftswoman, and she has an Honourable Society:
www.fastercraftswomen.blogspot.com/

Spymonkey's *Moby Dick* is currently touring: www.spymonkey.co.uk
Coney's *A Small Town Anywhere* is set to tour in late 2010 / early 2011: www.youhavefoundconey.net
Forest Fringe, Microfestival is currently touring round the country, with a return to Edinburgh at the Forest Café August 2010: www.forestfringe.blogspot.com
The National Theatre of Brent: www.nationaltheatreofbrent.com
Flight of the Conchords www.flightoftheconchords.co.nz
LipService: www.lip-service.net (They were on BBC R4 Woman's Hour on 9 February 2010 and you can still access the programme as this goes to press)
Shunt's *Money* runs until September 2010 at Bermondsey St, London Bridge: www.shuntmoney.co.uk
Present Attempt: www.presentattempt.co.uk
The Clod Ensemble: www.clodensemble.com
Footsbn: <http://footsbarn.com>
Zippo's Circus: www.zippocircus.co.uk

Dell'Arte Abroad



Dell'Arte Company *Inverted Alba: Fable & Rondelay*
After Images of Garcia Lorca. Photo Robin Robin

A land where art, spirituality, and everyday life converge holistically; a training programme in which those principles are integrated into performance practice. Come to Bali with Dorothy Max Prior and meet Joan Schirle, founding artistic director of Dell'Arte International

It's a Thursday in January, and it is very hot, and extremely humid. Workshop participants sit in a circle for the orientation session (happily, under the shade of the bamboo roof), and learn from 'Pak Newman' that we will be able to tell if we are sharing our rooms with a Tokay Gecko lizard because 'they always poo in the same spot', and not to worry about the country rats that come in from the paddy fields, they are harmless. 'Ibu Joan' tells us that we are in a place where spirituality, art, theatre, religious observance, and everyday needs such as eating, are all intermingled. Newman adds that here, mask, puppetry and dance-theatre are not esoteric arts, they are everyday necessities, all around us – to demonstrate, he points through the windowless side of the building to a stone wall from which a whole family of stone faces look in on us benevolently. Over the next month, explains Joan, we will be immersed in that culture. We will carve masks, and learn to dance the mask in the character-driven dance-drama called Topeng; we will make two-dimensional puppets from rawhide, paint them and learn at least something of the art of Wayang Kulit (shadow puppetry); we will study traditional Balinese dances, learning how to move in a way, influenced by the postures of the women who pick the rice, that will at first feel completely alien; and we will exercise our voices, attempting to master the six-part Kecak monkey chant. We will learn how to tie our sarongs for temple wear, to understand the importance of New Moon and Full Moon, and we will learn to take our shoes off before we enter any indoor space.

“Theatre can be a place of metaphysical communication. A place where gesture, both physical and vocal, conspire to work out the desires and fears of our lives”

For yes, we are in Bali – for a month-long study programme curated by theatre research, training and performance centre Dell'Arte International (DAI).

The programme has run for a decade, and for the past two years has been an integral part of DAI's Master of Fine Arts course: all third-year MFA students at Dell Arte have to attend the Bali module (poor things, I hear you say?). Thus, around 50% of the twenty or so participants

in the Balinese course are DAI postgrad students, and the rest of us are practitioners at various stages of our careers, taking time out for a month of professional development – a situation that you might think would lead to a ‘them and us’ division, but far from it; there is an extraordinarily harmonious group vibe right from that first orientation session, through the weeks of carving and painting, and physical training and performing, until the February morning of tearful farewells finally dawns. Those who already know each other, teachers and students, welcome with open arms the rest of the participants, and despite the extraordinary range in ages and experiences and countries of origin (which include the USA, UK, Scandinavia, Mexico and Spain), all work together in an exemplary spirit of collaboration.

This can perhaps be put down to the soul-enriching ethos of the Dell’Arte School, and the inspirational guidance of its director, and leader of this programme in Bali, Joan Schirle (whose full title is ‘founding artistic director of Dell’Arte International and director of Dell’Arte School of Physical Theatre’). Somehow, in the hurly burly of all the various activities, I manage to find an hour to sit down with Joan to talk about her work with Dell’Arte.

Dell’Arte first saw light of day in Berkeley, California, in the early 1970s as a series of workshops, evolving into a building-based school in Blue Lake in 1975. Dell’Arte at first described itself as a school of mime and comedy, later changing its name to Dell’Arte School of Physical Theatre. Like many other practitioners, Dell’Arte’s teachers and actors struggled to find the appropriate terminology to describe their practice: ‘mime’ is usually misunderstood and is too limiting; ‘gestural movement theatre’ not quite right; ‘devised theatre’ falling short too – this last, Joan says, becoming something of a catchphrase of the day in contemporary American theatre, in danger of turning into another ‘technique’ to be taught as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. ‘Find the technique for the content you want to communicate’ is Joan’s preferred take. ‘Physical theatre’ is a term that the school’s founder Carlo Mazzone-Clementi disliked; and ‘Dell’Arte’ as a name has always caused Joan problems because of the assumptions that school and professional company are exclusively focused on Commedia Dell’Arte (they’re not!) – but a name’s a name and this is the one they have stuck to.

The crucial point, feels Joan, is that the school exists to serve the cause of performer-led work – what she describes as theatre made by ‘the actor-creator or the actor-poet’, as opposed to theatre made by playwrights that is interpreted by actors. “Theatre can be a place of metaphysical communication. A place where gesture, both physical and vocal, conspire in the manifestation of characters who play in situations to reveal circumstances in emotional dynamic poetry” she says.

Joan Schirle is a strong resister of the trend towards ‘performance studies’ and an over-academic approach to post-graduate work, and – whilst encouraging students to learn to critique their own and others’ work – Dell’Arte keeps its courses firmly rooted in practice, with the collaborative making of work a continual requirement throughout. The school does not exist to serve any one mode of practice, but its heritage is most definitely linked to the influence of French pioneer Jacques Copeau, who abandoned his successful career in the Paris theatre (talking dismissively of ‘a theatre of scene-shifters’) to start a holistically-minded actor-led company based in the Burgundy countryside. Amongst Copeau’s ‘disciples’ were Etienne Decroux and Jacques Lecoq, the two ‘godfathers’ of contemporary mime / physical theatre / total theatre (call it what you will!). And in later years, it was Lecoq’s Italian assistant Carlo Mazzone-Clementi (whose career had also included work with Marcel Marceau, Dario Fo, and mask-maker Amleto Sartori) who, having decided to up and leave Europe in 1959, took some of that ‘total theatre’ spirit with him to America and his subsequent adventures in performance and professional actor training.

Other influences, such as that of Grotowski, are there too in Dell’Arte – but Joan is critical of the post-Grotowskian obsession with pushing the body excessively, feeling that this approach is out-of-balance and creates unnecessary tension. It is no surprise to learn that she is a trained Alexander Technique practitioner – and in fact, qualifying in and teaching Alexander was her own route into Dell’Arte (a qualification she gained in New York at a young age, having also trained in ballet and Martha Graham influenced contemporary dance). This qualification took her to Dell’Arte on a whim, and there she has been ever since. Very little of her life has been down to conscious decision-making, she says, and she has always resisted what she calls ‘the goal orientation of the American psyche’, preferring the improviser’s willingness to see what occurs: ‘if you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there’.

Always at the heart of Joan’s own practice, as with Dell’Arte’s, is the belief in dynamic balance – a holistic approach to training, performance, and indeed living as a human being in harmony with other human beings and within our environment.

It is little surprise then that Dell’Arte eventually found its way to Bali – a place in which holistic living is not the preserve of a few leftfield folks, as it is in the West, but a way of being that permeates everything, everywhere on the island. This might also be the point at which to note that it was the witnessing of Balinese performers in Paris that inspired Artaud to pursue his thoughts on embracing the metaphysical through the physical, and to coin the phrase ‘total

“It is little surprise that Dell’Arte eventually found its way to Bali – a place in which holistic living is not the preserve of the few, but a way of being that permeates everything, everywhere on the island”



Stone wall carving, Telek mask, Topeng dancer's feet. All images taken in Bali by Elizabeth Colon Nelson



Dell'Arte's Joan Schirle in Flock. Photo GW Mercier

“Dell'Arte's teachers and actors, like Copeau's troupe before them, have found ways to nurture the creation of theatre that seeks to integrate itself with the community in which it is placed”

theatre' to express the sort of all-in integrated theatre work, in which dance, drama, mask, puppetry, song, poetry or indeed anything else, could all combine in what his collaborator Jean-Louis Barrault called 'a theatre that is the crossroads of all the arts'. Echoing this, Joan says, 'Our work is "total theatre" – sometimes ideas lead, sometimes visual images...'

One particular aspect of Dell'Arte's work that still retains its European flavour is the integration of training and professional practice: school and theatre company are intertwined and feed each other. But it is difficult to tour work in the US, says Joan. There just isn't the infrastructure, and she is dispirited by the dearth of international festivals – US artists just don't get to see work from other countries.

Joan is also scathing about the rise of what she describes as 'the gatekeepers of the arts' – presenters and programmers who decide what's good or not good, 'stifling the movement of the arts through the US' as opposed to the artist-led festivals and events of earlier years (luminaries such as the Bread and Puppet Theater, and other 'community-based' collectives, such as the UK's Welfare State International, who Joan had first-hand experience of in earlier years, are mentioned here).

Then, there's funding – the US still bears scars from the withdrawal of funds in the Reagan years, and government interference. The fight between the National Endowment for the Arts and performance artist Karen Finley is well documented, as is the outrageous withdrawal of support from photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Both these incidences were many years ago, but Joan feels that these were boundaries crossed that the American arts have not recovered from.

On the positive side, Dell'Arte's teachers and actors, like Copeau's troupe before them, have realised that alternatives exist, and have, at their home base amongst the beautiful redwoods of Northern California – and when in Bali, amongst the magnificent rainforests and rice fields of Ubud – found ways to nurture the creation and practice of theatre that recognises that the important work is not necessarily that which tours the major theatre venues, but is that which seeks to integrate itself with the community in which it is placed.

'Bali teaches me something different every time I come,' says Joan of her decade-long romance with the island, referencing the ceremonies, the value placed on ritual, the sharing of culture with the community... 'Here, there is no celebrity culture – even the most revered artist is expected to go to their local temple to dance or play music for a local festival, or to honour the passing at a cremation, or to celebrate the birth of a child.'

There may, God forbid, come a time when the young Balinese no longer feel the high calling to the life as a Dalang (puppet master), or are no longer willing to close shop at a moment's notice to take part in the Topeng performance at the local temple for The Feast of the Fish, or Dark Moon, or whatever, but hopefully as the century progresses and we make choices about how we want to live – and how and why we make theatre – it will be Bali that influences the world, rather than the rest of the world that influences Bali.

Meanwhile, nestled amongst the redwoods of Northern California, there's Blue Lake's Dell'Arte, an oasis of calm in the American maelstrom, cradling a little bit of the Bali spirit in its tender hands...

Dorothy Max Prior attended the Dell'Arte Abroad programme in Bali, Indonesia January–February 2010. She would like to express her gratitude to programme director Joan Schirle, to facilitator Newman, to the Dell'Arte faculty staff, to the Balinese guest teachers, and to all the students present in the making of a very special professional development opportunity.

Dell Arte Abroad will next be in Amsterdam 22-27 June 2010 for Fundamentals of Clown: Basically Stupid, led by Matt Chapman & Suzanne Bakker. Further information from matt@dellarte.com or see the Dell'Arte website

Dell'Arte Abroad's next Bali dates are 6 January – 4 February 2011, and applications are now being accepted. The Bali programme is open to actors, musicians, designers, dancers, mask-makers, directors, teachers, and anyone who is interested in Balinese culture and performing arts. No previous enrolment in Dell'Arte programmes is required. Contact louise@dellarte.com or see the Dell'Arte website.

For details of both the above, and for Dell'Arte's summer workshop programme and full-time courses see www.dellarte.com

Newman, facilitator of the Dell'Arte Bali programme, is a leather mask-maker who has made performance and training masks for Cirque du Soleil, Teatro Zinzanni, The Central School of Speech and Drama, and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, amongst many other institutions throughout Europe, Australia, Asia and the Americas. www.commediamask.com

The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, based in Blue Lake, California, is the North American centre for the exploration, development, training and performance of the actor-creator. They are the only institution in the US offering a full-time professional actor training programme in physical theatre, through a one-year certificate programme, and a NAST-accredited three-year MFA in Ensemble-Based Physical Theatre.

Dell'Arte International was founded by the late Carlo Mazzone-Clementi (1920-2000) and Jane Hill in Berkeley in 1971 to bring the European physical training tradition to the United States and to develop actor-creators through training in mime, mask, movement and ensemble creation.

With actors Joan Schirle and Jon-Paul Cook, Carlo Mazzone-Clementi created the Dell'Arte Players Company in 1976. The ensemble, which has continued to the present day, embodies the concept of 'actor as creator' and the belief that professional theatre can be enhanced by a rural setting away from the distractions of urban life.

As well as the full-time programmes, Dell'Arte offers summer workshops, and annual residencies abroad, in Bali and in Europe.

Joan Schirle is founding artistic director of Dell'Arte International and director of Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre.

The company's producing artistic director is Michael Fields.

www.dellarte.com

VOICES



Richard DeDomenici. Photo Andrew R Darbyshire

Gadfly, trimtab and quipnunc Richard DeDomenici in his own words

What is in the pipeline? Lots of new things! A site-specific video-installation in Cambridge about earthquakes... giving a talk at the ICA in London about the future of Live Art... in June I am touring my show *Plane Food Café* to the Napoli Teatro Festival. In July I'm launching an experimental augmented reality work in Glasgow, and in August I am taking a new show to Edinburgh in an innovative new type of venue. In September I will sleep.

What is exciting me today? If I finish my video installation in time (which involves building an architectural model, subjecting it to violent oscillation, and documenting the result using high-speed video) then I can go to a social event tonight at the Live Art Development Agency. It's important to set goals.

Here are my seven maxims to live by:

- 1 Never put off until tomorrow what you can put off until the day after tomorrow
- 2 It's easier to apologise afterwards than it is to ask permission
- 3 It reduces the confusion about how to interpret a work of art if there are no signifiers to suggest that it's actually a work of art in the first place
- 4 Be a spanner in the works and a cog in the system
- 5 There's no substitute for a genuine lack of preparation
- 6 Some people deserve to be offended
- 7 If you see a three-light Hino truck – get out of the way!

(That last one is only applicable if you're on a Japanese highway.)

I like to travel... I tried to give up flying to save the world, but had to start again after 18 months because being in the same place too long drives me crazy.

When I travel I like to leave a trail of Richard DeDomenici products in my wake, so that if I get lost, I can find my way home. In this fashion, I am well on the way to establishing Richard DeDomenici libraries around the world (including the infamous Richard DeDomenici Internal Library in New York, which I shall not discuss here further on grounds of taste). In this manner, my archive will become decentralised and transnational, therefore making it invulnerable to terrorist attack.

If I could change one thing today it would be people's minds and/or my new haircut.

If I could keep one thing to carry through to tomorrow or the more longterm future, it would be my old haircut.

I write down all my ideas, as I have too many ideas and a bad memory. It's a good thing to have too many ideas. Many artists only have one idea, which they then repeat throughout their career. This is only excusable if it a good idea. I try and carry out the time-critical ideas first, write the other ones down for later, and not be put off when other people manage to carry out the same ideas before me.

Gadfly: Person who upsets the status quo by posing upsetting or novel questions, or attempts to stimulate innovation by proving an irritant.

Trimtab: System specifically designed and placed in the environment at such time and place where its effects would be maximised, thereby effecting the most advantageous change with the least resources, time and energy.

Quipnunc: Person who responds to current events, especially tragic ones, with quickly devised, sometimes callous jokes.

What keeps me motivated as an artist is public praise and plenty of it. That's what it said in a psychometric test I took recently, and you can't argue with those...

I'll be taking part in The Public Space Programme in Reykjavík this August, and this is my message to Iceland: Hello Iceland! I am very much looking forward to eating your rotting shark meat and drinking your Brennivín, so if you could please refrain from setting off any more of your volcanoes until at least 3 August 2010 I will happily assist you in erupting Katla upon my arrival.

The Public Space Programme is an offspring of the artFart annual Icelandic performance festival to be held in Reykjavík 5–22 August 2010. The programme will supervise all site-based public performances of artFart 2010 as well as offering workshops and talks. publicspaceprogramme@artfart.is Richard DeDomenici's *DeDomegamix* will run at the Forest Fringe, Forest Café, Edinburgh 14 Aug–28 Aug 2010

Richard Dedomenici was interrogated by Alexander Roberts.
www.dedomenici.co.uk



Camden People's Theatre, directed by Matt Ball (carus 2.0)

People Like Us

As Camden People's Theatre celebrates its fifteenth birthday, Matt Ball reflects on a personal journey that has taken him from supported artist to artistic director of this enterprising London venue

Camden People's Theatre (CPT) first came onto my radar in the late 90s. I remember leafing through the reviews section of this very magazine and the name would crop up every so often. At the time though I was a lot younger (still at Goldsmiths doing my BA) and Camden seemed a long way north of the river! Also, I suspect like many other would-be theatre makers, I wanted to see the Names: I would try to go anywhere to see Bausch, Wilson, Lepage, Complicite, Wooster Group and all the rest, but it wouldn't necessarily occur to me to support the small-scale sector unless it was a friend's show – a problem that any producer on the fringe will recognise only too well. Skip forward a number of years, and I'd worked as an assistant director, performer and stage manager, and worn out my knees through Suzuki training. I then went back to school and completed the MA in Advanced Theatre Practice at Central School of Speech and Drama. After that I came out ready to make work – but where was the support network, how did I begin? Unless you have a large chequebook (which I didn't) it's very hard to get work on anywhere.

At that time we were just starting to see the emergence of the Scratch culture which has had both positive and negative effects on the way work is made, but I wanted to make a finished piece which was sure enough of itself to say 'I'm ready to be seen'; a piece that could be judged without having to be called a work-in-progress. Again leafing through the updates section of this magazine I saw an open call for 2004's Sprint festival. With its call for devised and experimental work the festival fitted the bill nicely, and so I despatched a proposal. A few weeks later and an email arrived from Chris Goode (then artistic director) inviting me to participate in Sprint. As a result I made my first professional piece of work, got my first Arts Council grant, worked with an aerialist for the first time (yes in CPT, despite the low ceilings!), and *Ariadne* was born. Little did I know I'd just begun a relationship with the venue which would still exist now, six years later.

My first encounter with CPT was typical of my relationship with the organisation and its building. Arriving on a cold November morning I was greeted by two large blue metal doors which seemed to suggest austerity and unfriendliness, and I began to wonder what I was doing here. But moments later I was being made tea by Chris as he talked enthusiastically about the festival and the piece of work I'd proposed. It felt like I'd found a place to make work – and I can feel the same thing with companies today as I share that ice-breaking cup of tea with them.

“Point & Shoot, inspired by the photographs of Eadweard Muybridge, was developed at CPT – it was my first experience of what it was like to have the support and belief of an organisation in the making of a piece of work”

My first Sprint opened in March with companies like Brian and Momentum (now Tmesis) taking part. I remember feeling slightly fraudulent on the launch night, a little lost as these seemingly more experienced companies chatted and dove into the curry buffet (a CPT tradition which was sadly lost along the way). The next day *Ariadne* opened, and ran for three nights during which we got a good response from our audiences – not all of whom were our friends! And then came the important bit – Chris asked me to have a chat with him on the final night, and sitting in the CPT foyer he offered me the chance to have three weeks development time in their new rehearsal space to make another show for their 10th birthday festival in autumn that year. I was amazed and bit the hand off very quickly.

“I got the job as director of CPT and found myself on the other side of the fence, trying to relate my past experiences as an artist to my new role. What had I learnt from my experiences of trying to get work on in venues? What had I found helpful? How could I have made the path easier for me?”

Six months later I made the first version of *Point & Shoot*, a show that was inspired by the photographs of Eadweard Muybridge. Developed over a three-week period in CPT's then recently opened basement space, and with the support of CPT's staff, it was my first experience of what it was like to have the support and belief of an organisation in the making of a piece of work. Shown for three nights as part of the festival it was always intended to be the first impression of an idea, and it was. On the basis of this Chris invited me to come back in 2005 and further develop the piece. It was finished in October of that year, and ran for three weeks (the time dictated by the London and national press; many a young company feel the need to mortgage themselves to run for this golden length of time). The development of the show, over a longer period, in one space, started to enable me to develop and articulate my own practice – something which is becoming increasingly important as we all compete to write better funding applications than each other.

Jump to 2006 and CPT advertise for a new director. I apply, and am fortunate enough to get the job – the one I'd been dreaming of since I first realised this was the career I wanted. But reality is never as simple as the dream, and now I found myself on the other side of the fence, trying to relate my past experiences as an artist to my new role. What had I learnt from my experiences of trying to get work on in venues? What had I found helpful? How could I have made the path easier for me?

The first thing to say is that running a venue isn't easy. Making decisions about which companies to help is hard. But I hope there's a refreshing openness to the way we engage with artists. We try to respond to phone calls, emails, DVDs (or increasingly web-links) as soon as possible, but sometimes these things take time.

Sprint is for me one of the vital ways we open up opportunities for younger companies. We put out an open call for submissions through Total Theatre Magazine, New Work Network, Arts News etcetera, and see what comes in. Alongside this we'll work with artists we know on the development of new pieces of work, and invite work we've already seen to come to the festival. This balance is important as it allows new artists to be seen in the same festival as established companies, and to receive the same support as each other.

This year's line-up featured established companies and artists such as Rotozaza, Michael Pinchbeck and Search Party alongside companies I've seen the work of before like Sheila Ghelani and Idle Motion. Then there were the companies or artists that were new to us, but whose ideas were too strong to ignore, like John Hicks or Inconvenient Spoof. All of these artists have come to us different ways: Michael proposed his *The Long and Winding Road* for Sprint 2008 and I saw *The Post Show Party Show* in Edinburgh this year. Sheila Ghelani's *Grafting & Budding* I first saw at East End Collaborations in 2005. I saw Idle Motion's *Borges & I* at the Edinburgh Fringe (before it was shortlisted for a TT award) because I love Borges – and thought they were incredibly assured for such a young company. I saw Search Party at Depot Untapped and have been wanting to find a context to present *Search Party Vs* (a durational table tennis performance) since they told me they were planning it – and St Pancras seemed like a perfect fit. John Hicks described his show as 'One man's quest for spiritual enlightenment, through feats of amazement with toy elephants.' How could I resist?

What I'm trying to demonstrate is that there is no single way we programme work. People often ask if we're looking for work on a particular theme this year? No. We're looking for good work – work which is exciting and adventurous for artists and audiences. Some of it we'll have found on our travels, some of it we'll be supporting artists to



Sheila Ghelani

People Like Us | Matt Ball

develop, and some will arrive as an unmade piece in a written proposal. What's critical is the quality of the idea. Obviously it helps if you've got a track record, but it isn't crucial – two of this year's companies hadn't made anything professionally before. Of course what you or I like are different, what me and my colleagues like are different – but I'm confident I can remove my personal aesthetic preferences and focus on the quality of the idea. What'll we programme next year? Well that's up to you as much as me...

Founded in 1994 by a group of theatre practitioners interested in developing a collaborative working method, CPT continues to forge short- and long-term relationships with a diverse range of companies and artists. Each spring since 1997 CPT has presented SPRINT festival of contemporary theatre. SPRINT continues to provide a showcase platform of major importance for emerging theatre practitioners. In 2002/03, CPT piloted TONIC, a scheme for the Training Of New and Innovative Companies. With the support of Arts Council England, London, CPT now works with up to four emerging companies per year, providing support towards the development of new performance work.
www.cpttheatre.co.uk

The CPT company's own work includes *Icarus 2.0*, directed by Matt Ball, which was nominated for a Total Theatre Award for Devised Performance and a Stage Award for Best Ensemble at Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009. Matt Ball also directed the Fringe First award-winning *Paperweight* (2008). A work-in-progress of his latest piece, *Free Time Radical*, will be shown at the New Wolsey Theatre Studio, Ipswich as part of Pulse 2010. See www.wolseytheatre.co.uk

Memento Mori

Birthday celebrations and reminders of mortality: Robert Ayers and Dorothy Max Prior reflect on this year's National Review of Live Art, itself in a reflective mood

With birthday celebrations come expectations: Who'll be there? What'll they be wearing? Will there be balloons? And will there be jelly? Quick answers: 1 Everyone who's anyone in 'live art'; 2 All sorts, including plenty of birthday suits; 3 Yes, plenty – in shows by Marcia Farquhar, Michael Mayhew and Alistair MacLennan, for starters; and 4 Well yes, there was an offer of liposuctioned human jelly terrine from Zoran Todorovic...

Hot off the train and straight into The Arches, my first encounter of an artistic kind is with Richard DeDomenici, whose show kicked off with glasses of champagne all round – a good start to any birthday party. His piece, like much of his work, sat between a performance-lecture and a stand-up routine, and on this occasion circled around a reflection on archiving and the launch of the DeDomeNRLArchive documentation bank, which includes an interactive website and a nifty little 'unlimited edition' booklet containing '50% intentionally blank pages' so that we can fill in our own NRLA memories. Richard's own memories and noted key moments from past NRLAs include enigmatic notes like 'What's Gillian Wearing?' 'Cunty Nut Cornflakes – another Freudian typo' and 'It was like a Vegas magic show but without the tricks'.

Richard is one of the young bloods of the NRLA – and his work, being intelligent yet accessible, laced with humour and rife with popular culture references (where would we be without Richard to remind of us such iconic moments as the Kylie Nipple Slip video moment?), makes him tremendously attractive and sought after. So much so, he tells us, that he has, whilst at the NRLA, frequently been propositioned with lucrative offers of sex and/or money – this

revelation prompting a train of thought on commercialism and art and the choices to be made: 'being fucked by *a* man or being fucked by *the* man'.

Also adopting the performance-lecture format was NRLA veteran Neil Butler, who put a pile of bricks on the floor and called it Art (eat your (he)art out Carl Andre). And you're right Neil, it's not a pipe, or an altar, or a fountain, or a table. Not an oak tree, even! Neil is better known these days as a producer and street arts mover and shaker. The question taxing Neil was: Where is the art? In the artist, in the audience, or somewhere else altogether? The hour allocated speeds by as we are taken on an entertaining romp through Neil's personal take on performance history, interweaved with reflection on his own work as artist and curator, as well as key cultural moments that we've all lived through and been affected by (9/11 being the most obvious example). This Cook's Tour of performance art takes in his fascination with John and Yoko; his discovery of the Situationists and the notion of society as a spectacle; public 'but is it art?' outrage moments like those famous Andre bricks at the Whitechapel, and Manzini's canned shit; the founding of the Brighton Festival of Contemporary Art (and subsequently the Zap Club); and Neil's own Wrap the World continuous fax project ('a white line [of paper] around the Meridian').

To finish the first evening (for me anyway, lightweight that I am) was a beautiful piece from Juergen Fritz, who was 'Ringing a bell in dialogue with 10 bagpipe players'. Well, there were six actually, but six was plenty – Juergen slowly and rhythmically rings his school bell with pendulum arm sweeps, and one by one the pipers join in, playing a traditional tune. Then they stop, and he

continues, then they all carry on for a while, then they stop one at a time, leaving Juergen and the bell to slow down and come to a stop. Shamanic, mesmeric, soulful, spiritual: a lovely meditation on sound/silence, resonance/dissonance, stillness/movement – some shows are so simple and perfect they make you want to cry with joy and this was one of those!

As co-founder of the Black Market collective, Juergen Fritz could be described as one of the 'old masters' of performance art, a label that could also be placed on Belfast-based artist Alistair MacLennan, whose durational performance–installation piece is a tender evocation of a childhood lost and encroaching old age – enacted with the style and confidence of one who knows well what he is doing and how to do it. In a dim and quiet space we encounter two wood-and-glass display cabinets, one occupied by the artist (a middle-aged bearded man in a crumpled black suit, clutching a pillow and a blank-paged notebook, surrounded by white balloons, plastic toy birds, and black ribbons); the other by an arrangement of tarnished, abandoned objects (a child's old-fashioned metal scooter, broken doll parts, a set of false teeth, pebbles, more black ribbons). The physical actions of the performance are simple, ritualistic: he blows up the balloons (so that coming back a few hours later we find him almost obscured); he makes gestures of automatic writing in the air





Marcia Farquhar at NRLA. Photo Peter Chriss



Juergen Fritz. Photo courtesy of New Moves/NRLA

with an invisible pen; he readjusts his pillow, hugging it to his body forlornly; he softly sighs, his breath clouding the glass walls of his 'coffin'. Meanwhile the inanimate objects in the other cabinet just sit and sit, seemingly unchanging (although the rust on the scooter and the discolouration of other objects remind us that in fact everything is moving and changing, even that which seems to be staying still). The one thing we can be certain of is death...

'I haven't got my skulls with me – when death is in the air you don't need Memento Mori' says Marcia Farquhar at the start of her 30-hour marathon performance, which overlaps with the real-time, real-life experience of Marcia's mother undergoing a major operation – news of her progress being relayed to Marcia via her daughter, who was at the mother's hospital bedside in London. Oh happy days... 'You can be sure of nothing' she says, 'it's my age, I'm up to my waist in sand', then starting in on a review of her own 30-plus year performance history which parallels that of the NRLA – 'preserving the times, preserving the things' – starting with the Art Povera of her coat-of-mink-and-teddies (made at art school, which she attended as a mature student), which serves as a duvet cover when she finally exhausts herself and needs to sleep awhile...

But before we get to that point, there are hours of anecdotes, spattered with a

thousand quotable lines ('I was accused unfairly of being a shaman and went into a lavatory and cried', and, referring to Stuart Brisley, 'He's the one who sat in offal and vomited from the top of a tower'). All of this is interspersed with films from projects such as the Dead Art Festival in Margate, celebrating TS Eliot's *The Wasteland* (we witness Marcia declaiming the classic text in front of a white wall displaying an anagram of the great man's name – TOILETS) and the playing of 45s on a Dansette record player: *Puppet on a String* by Sandie Shaw who, we are told, was rude to the adolescent Marcia when she asked for an autograph; God Save the Queen by the Sex Pistols: 'That man [Malcolm McLaren we presume, still alive at this time!] is a disgrace to humanity but what a great song.' Oh, and there were balloons too...

Robert Ayers is better known these days as a writer and editor for numerous prestigious American art magazines (as well as for *Total Theatre!*), so it was good to be reminded of his noble heritage as a performance artist, one of the luminaries of NRLA. His piece, set late night in a bar, started out on predictable 'performance art' territory, with films from earlier years of him being tattooed, and moved into texts reworked from former performance work, including the Arizona Manifesto (for *Visceral* and *Virtual*): 'I believe in twigs, biscuits, and a long piece of string... I believe in the physical,

in the immediate, in direct, bodily contact... I am moved to tears by birthday parties, fireworks, pantomimes and circuses, magic acts, radio ventriloquists... carol singing, Halloween, Punch & Judy, and people in disguise during the day time...'. Then came the surprise: recent writings that were tender poems celebrating his new-found love and a renewed life, these texts delivered with a gently self-deprecating semi-striptease, a beautiful picture of vulnerability and openness.

Also surprising and confounding expectations was Forkbeard Fantasy's *The Colour of Nonsense*, a show I've seen before but had a completely different response to second time around. Perhaps because it needs two viewings to really take in and appreciate the marvellous *mêlée* of visual effects (much of it derived from the company's legendary 'crossing the celluloid divide' techniques of mixing live and filmed action), but perhaps it is also a question of context: delivered within a festival of live art to a 'knowing' audience, a show that has the absurdities of the art world and the consequences of the pursuit of commercialism as its central theme can really soar to new heights. It is a great delight to see a company like Forkbeard storming the performance art crowd...

This is a reflection on just a fraction of the work I saw in my three days in The Arches for this thirtieth anniversary edition of the NRLA. A very diverse range of works, with a common thread of reworking, reflecting and re-evaluating what it is to be an artist and to make art – both 'there and then' (at whatever point in the *National Review's* history they came aboard), and 'here and now', in 2010. A lot has happened, but a lot is yet to come.

Dorothy Max Prior



Zoran Todorovic. Photo courtesy of New Moves/NRLA

On something like the thirtieth anniversary of its first occurrence, and in what is rumoured might be its final manifestation, this year's National Review of Live Art, Nikki Milican's annual celebration of all that is current in contemporary performance art, was unlike any of its previous editions. For entirely understandable reasons Nikki had decided that this time, just this once, she would relax her commitment to seeking out the new, and instead indulge her enthusiasm for some of the artists that she has encountered along the way. Thus there was no programme of young artists fresh to performance (which has always been an essential part of the NRLA in the past) but instead a rather remarkable multi-generational line-up of artists who have had associations with this festival over the years. In addition we saw the launch of a magnificent new two-volume-and-three-DVD publication in which the history of the NRLA and its older constituent events was examined, documented, and celebrated from pretty much every conceivable viewpoint.

No surprise then that the event had a broad strand of nostalgia. Over-the-shoulder glances, both organised and instinctive, seemed to be offered every few minutes of the festival's five days. Despite this the overriding mood of what happened in Glasgow March 2010 retained the forward-looking and even experimental character that has made the NRLA's reputation since 1979.

Marcia Farquhar, for example, made her first (and possibly last) durational piece – a 30-hour conversation with her audience that included her going to bed for the night; Kira O'Reilly made an entirely unbloodied performance, which she described as 'a little dance'; Ian Hinchliffe (whom I first saw perform as long ago as 1974) performed sober; Forced Entertainment presented an

elaborate slideshow; Anne Seagrave staged an exhibition of paintings; and the always inventive Kate Stannard undertook a 860-mile bike ride.

There is, fortunately, something instinctively innovative in the DNA of many performance artists that means that even when they are making immediately recognisable work, there is almost inevitably something upliftingly novel in watching them do it. Thus some of the most memorable impressions that I take away from this year's NRLA (besides some of the things I've already mentioned) relate to artists doing whatever it is that they usually do, but doing it supremely well. Stelarc finally has his third ear – though it's grafted to his forearm rather than to his cheek as he had originally planned – and he made a little presentation about it that was very like all the other presentations I'd seen him do, but he's such an entertaining raconteur that I still loved every minute of it; Geraldine Pilgrim proved herself once again a true poet of installation art, and *Not Waving but Drowning* – all modernist design and eccentrically floating carrier bags – was a real treat; Esther Ferrer pushed the lecture format to the verge of absurdity and then way beyond it; and Akademia Ruchu (now in their 37th year, amazingly) used their bodies and a range of quotidian objects in such unexpected ways as to leave you uncertain of what you had just witnessed, but delighted to have done so.

Whether or not this turns out to be the last ever NRLA – and I sincerely hope that it does not – what this year's festival demonstrated all too obviously was the rude health of contemporary performance art. That this event is one of the principal reasons for this is beyond question, and it was a genuine privilege to attend its thirtieth birthday party.

Robert Ayers



Anne Seagrave. Photo courtesy of New Moves/NRLA

The National Review of Live Art (NRLA), part of the New Territories festival produced by New Moves, took place 17–21 March 2010 in Glasgow, Scotland. Key venues were The Arches, Tramway, Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), and Glasgow University. Dates for New Territories 2011 will be announced summer 2010 on the website. www.newmoves.co.uk

Dorothy Max Prior encounters a festival city with countless pleasures in hidden corners

Norfolk & Norwich Festival 2010



Kurt Perscke RedBall

Ah, a spiegelteint! Every festival should have one... Norfolk & Norwich Festival's Salon Perdu, like its sisters (there's a number of these lovely things wandering the world), is a splendid construction of wood and mirrors, furnished with red plush booths – a perfect setting for music, cabaret and the sort of theatre show that likes its audience close by and in-the-round.

La Vie, by Quebecois circus-theatre company Les 7 Doigts de la Main, is one such show – a breathtaking 90-minute investigation of lunacy, lust and lives lived in limbo, played out above and around (and often with) the audience. Death is a cabaret, we learn from our Master of Ceremonies, a white-suited demon with a penchant for pithy put-downs. (To coughing woman: 'You have something stuck in your throat? You want me to get it out with my tongue?')

Our joker friend is here to tot up the karmic accounts – we are all, performers and audience alike, dead and stuck in purgatory 'the flight to hell that never quite gets there'. We meet a succession of characters doomed to act out the last few moments of their lives, trying to buy their way out of limbo with the amazing graces of their circus tricks and turns: the DIY nut who fell from his roof (a rubber-legged clown with a tendency to stick nails up his nose); the woman who attempted to flee her apartment by shimmying down knotted sheets (a good excuse for a brilliant aerial silks act); the plane crash victim (a sensuous equilibrist who snakes around balance handles and wheelchair); the victim of the mental health system (a mellifluous

contortionist straightjacketed into a hospital bed); and the suicidal lady-of-the-night (a dance and acrobatics queen who pops up all over the place, noose always at the ready). The relationships between Mr Dodgy DIY, Mr Devil, and Ms Suicidal Burlesque provide the throughline to the show, played out through some of the best acrobalance, stage fighting and clown work that you are likely to see anywhere – astonishingly sexy, frantically funny and hair-raisingly visceral, at times almost to the point of nausea. Marvellous stuff!

So that was purgatory, and now back to the real world – although the garden world outside the spiegelteint has a rather surreal feel... For a start, there's a strange deconstructed car cum DJ booth parked up, vintage vinyl tracks booming out into the night (Radio Barkas). Then there's the carousel of carved fairy-tale creatures (Theater Froe Froe), a quizzical labyrinth (*El Laberint* by Companyia Itinerania), and a bandstand decorated with neon signs that exhort us to START A REVOLUTION.

Neon Signs is one of two solo projects by Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment featured in the festival. (The other is *A Short Message Spectacle* (SMS), an imaginary performance delivered by text message throughout the festival – 'virtual events taking place in diverse locations across an equally imaginary city'.) On the following morning I go on a quest to find the rest of the signs, cunningly sited across the city, and manage to locate three more. In the window of Jarrolds department store – flanked by a display

of espadrilles, gaily-coloured luggage, and Hawaiian shirts – red neon letters call out to the passer-by: WAIT HERE I HAVE GONE TO GET HELP. Just a few minutes away, in the window of the Book Hive, blue letters implore: PLEASE COME BACK I AM SORRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE, and in an empty shopfront on a busy road near the station is a sheet of plain white plasterboard on which red neon proclaims: YOU WILL LIVE FOREVER. The appeal of the project is the gorgeous play on public and private space – there you stand, held still by words that reach out and grab you by the throat, whilst busy shoppers and commuters scurry by, oblivious.

Public art is a feature of the festival, and another commendable piece is Kurt Perscke's *RedBall*, in which a 15-foot inflatable red ball appears daily in a different city site – on the day I saw it, wedged between the end-house of a Georgian terrace and a quaint pink-and-blue jeweller's shop. Of course it makes you look anew at the architecture it stands with or against, and raises questions about changing landscapes – but most of all it makes you grin with delight, and wish that you could be as unselfconscious in your appreciation as the three-year-old boy I witnessed punch the ball, then jump in the air shouting 'it's a big red ball, it's a big red ball!'. Yes, yes – I feel that way too!

The Norfolk & Norwich Festival 2010 ran
7-22 May. www.nnf10.org.uk

A threeway view of Karavan Ensemble's *A Ship of Fools* as seen at Coachwerks during the Brighton Fringe, May 2010

Being There



It's Monday (day five) and the show is still on its journey of becoming. Theatre has always been for me a magical experience and when working with such a big group – ten performers from various ages, backgrounds and nationalities – the objective is to find the fine-tuning, in order for them to have the pleasure of playing together like an orchestra.

A Ship of Fools is not only a performance, it is an event that invites the audience to make choices, to be curious and open for anything that might happen by slowly opening their hearts. As I put on my ringmaster's make-up, I can hear Rachel's kids helping Alex, our resident chef, preparing the oven for the pizzas. Renee Ansell, our jazz queen, arrives and I welcome her in my polished Russian gentlemen accent. The Big Lemon Bus arrives and I wait, as the ship is about to open its doors.

I loved this audience – they were totally open to receive the madness that we were offering. They were walking through the installations with patience and bewilderment. Our partners for the night were without preconceptions. I loved them.

The energy was nicely building up...

But when the show began a sadness filled my heart. The final magic did not happen; the instruments were out of tune and no fool was able to save the ship. Performance for me is a constant process of renewal – I am always looking for surprises and putting myself on the edge where there is no safety belt only a small vertigo from which the audience and the performers can live a unique experience that will bind us together.

After a slice of thin-crust pizza shared with some members of the audience on the long table at Coachwerks I knew that tomorrow would be a new day with new challenges and that this magic will eventually – possibly, hopefully – be there again.

**Yael Karavan, artistic director,
Karavan Ensemble**



All images: Karavan Ensemble *A Ship of Fools* at Coachwerks. Photos Paul Kondritz



The sense of special event is palpable as we are met on a busy main road in the centre of Brighton by an intriguing, delicate performance. Dancing in the late afternoon sun to the refrain of a goggled accordionist, a doe-eyed romantic twirls her full skirt wistfully whilst a sombre French bus conductor murmurs instructions.

Transported to the rickety charm of Coachwerks, Brighton's newest artist-run venue, we can't help feeling the caché. May Bank Holiday strollers stare as a barefoot male performer in a pea-green maxi-dress, carrying two buckets of rubber balls, chases the bus up the road.

It can feel tricky to renegotiate our roles as audience to the series of performative installations that inhabit the architecture and energy of the venue (using Butoh, dance and clown) after such an open introduction. There's a rich and committed atmosphere here as the space is animated.

When the audience are reunited, theatre-style, we are treated to a round of wartime classics from Brighton treasure, jazz singer Renee Ansell. It's a surprising and charming clash of performance styles that is somehow very right. Later, we are given a showcase of the emerging fools' characters, played out in delicately nuanced solos and duets with occasionally explosive ensembles, all scored live. This is a big group – eight fools (plus musicians) all jostling for our attention, and this can limit both our focus and the depth of exploration.

But the company create a memorable and meaningful experience that successfully harnesses the irreverent power of the fool to detailed choreography and an unleashing of site. The evening feels generously curated (Yael Karavan herself in a tour-de-force as the eccentric Russian ringmaster) and collides genuine experimentation with really engaging demotic entertainment.

Beccy Smith



The ship and its fools are on a constant reflective journey, navigating changing constraints and freedoms every time they set sail. Yael's initial reaction was to be dissatisfied with tonight's performance. Parts felt flat. In my opinion, this dissatisfaction is actually a tribute to the contradictions and risks of work focused on movement and interactions as they come into being, rather than pre-conceived notions of a finished product. By emphasising process the work is kept alive: the emotions and energy shared with the audience reflect the real-time emerging experiences of the artists. But of course there is a tension between allowing this experience to be unanticipated and the desire to ensure a particular engagement of the audience. Trying to provide structures that facilitate certain outcomes whilst not stopping the performance extending beyond these is an impressive task.

On these journeys something new can always be discovered and something previously found always lost. This evening the freedom given to my fool resulted in the acute expression of a personal anxiety which had been kept in check outside the performance by reflective rationalisation. Unexpectedly, the audience and I experienced a blunt exposure of myself. But if there ever comes a time when we know what is coming, when we are no longer dissatisfied or ecstatic at each particular performance, then it can only be because it has died.

Jo Donaghy, responsible for company critical documentation and first-time performer for A Ship of Fools

Karavan Ensemble's *A Ship of Fools* was presented at Coachwerks during the Brighton Festival Fringe 2010. The performance reviewed took place 3 May 2010.

Dorothy Max Prior gets her walking shoes on for Rachel Henson's *Flickers* and Dreamthinkspeak's *Before I Sleep*, seen at the Brighton Festival

Amongst the Cherry Trees



Dreamthinkspeak Before I Sleep. Photo Paolo Brandao

Chekhov's last play, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), is sometimes referred to as the first ecological play – informed by the playwright's witnessing of the destruction of carefully nurtured and preserved landscapes, including his own beloved cherry orchard, all in the name of 'progress'.

A century on, ecological theatre has moved towards environmental art, with a steady growth in outdoor performance centred around journeying that frames the natural environment as artwork.

One such piece is Rachel Henson's *Flickers: Off the Path* which takes its participants on a guided journey through Stanmer Park (less a park than a glorious swathe of Sussex countryside, incorporating an 18th Century village and farm). The 'guide' is a series of flicker books which offer clues to the trail, and provide a counterpoint to the live experience by creating a filmic alternative reality, in which the same landscape is occupied by an enigmatic 'other', a redheaded ghost girl who is there in our flicker books – jumping walls, peeping through branches, and (ominously) driving a tractor towards us – but an absent character from the 'story' of our walk. Like all good walking-as-art pieces, *Flickers* teaches us to look again at familiar things (Trees! Stones! Nettles!); to re-evaluate our relationship with our environment; and to understand that walking beside us on every step of every journey we take are

a host of ghosts – products of our own memories and imaginations, and resonances of everyone else who has walked this way in other times. You never walk alone...

Walking back, we pass the cherry orchard (in full bloom!) and Stanmer House, the site for Dreamthinkspeak's beautiful and haunting *Don't Look Back*, commissioned for Brighton Festival 2003. For this year's festival, Dreamthinkspeak take the cherry trees indoors in *Before I Sleep*, less a 'version of' than an 'homage to' *The Cherry Orchard* set in the derelict Co-operative department store on London Road, an area of Brighton that has been tipped for redevelopment for many a year. Chekhov's tragi-comic turn-of-the-century tale of the forces of change in battle with the status quo – played out around the auctioning of a family estate and subsequent destruction of a cherry orchard – transposes beautifully to a story of the doddery old guardian of a department store (the manservant Firs elevated to lead character in this reinvention) wandering his 'manor' in a sleep-deprived daze, terrorised by the onslaught of modern consumerism, which bursts upon his shadowy and musty world with alarming brightness and brashness.

The show is a carefully-orchestrated promenade performance in which the audience are led by sound and light through the building, encountering snippets of the play's narrative, echoes of its themes, and

evocations of its characters and actions – the whole building framed as 'the estate' (literal interpretation) but also providing a metaphor for the central theme of 'do nothing' decay versus aggressive regeneration (a theme that perfectly befits the dearly beloved old Co-op building, once the heart of this run-down shopping area).

Those who know Dreamthinkspeak's previous work will be unsurprised to learn that *Before I Sleep* makes very good use of film installation, employs lighting and music creatively, and manipulates the audience experience with cunning skill – we may seem to walk alone but an unseen guide leads us on, tugging us one way or the other.

Many familiar Dreamthinkspeak visual and aural motifs are here, and imagery is cross-referenced throughout the show with clever twists: dolls houses and miniature models in ever-more elaborate incarnations; empty beds and abandoned dining tables; mechanical music boxes and waltzing figurines.

Outdoors (trees, snow, ponds, birdsong) elbows its way indoors as an Arcadian ideal, a lost paradise, or a force to be feared; scenes are repeated live and on-screen with Sisyphus-like persistence; and shadowy figures seen only through glass reach out towards us.

Just that would be enough – another *Don't Look Back* would be an honourable achievement. But director Tristan Sharps has upped the ante in *Before I Sleep* – the collaboration with the building and the allusion to its original function throughout the performance is developed to an extraordinary level. Audiences are sworn to secrecy on leaving the show, so the 'reveals' shall remain undisclosed – all I can say is that the switches in the show's aesthetic are unexpected and beautifully realised, and at the heart of the piece is an interactive experience that is one of the cleverest and best-thought-through theatrical 'games' that I've encountered.

A fantastic show that raises the stakes for site-responsive theatre, and provides an audience experience to cherish long after the exit door slams shut.

Rachel Henson's *Flickers: Off the Path* at Stanmer Park, Falmer and Dreamthinkspeak's *Before I Sleep*, presented at the Old Co-op Building, London Road, Brighton, were seen as part of Brighton Festival 2010. Dreamthinkspeak's show has had its run extended to 4 July. www.brightonfestival.org

From heart-in-mouth acrobatics to lions in fishnets –
Charlotte Smith is left speechless at the Roundhouse

CircusFest



Compagnie XY *Le Grand C*

Circus at the Roundhouse... is there anything more to say? The place has history in its curves, as well as a snazzy rooftop bar today. A Victorian steam engine shed, then a gin warehouse, it became Arnold Wesker's Centre 42 in the 60s, named after the unions' article 42 stating that the arts should be for everyone. Peter Brook, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, the Ramones...

The newly renovated Roundhouse held its inaugural circus festival in 2006. This year, CircusFest presents live work by companies from Colombia, Brazil, France, Australia and the UK – from Trash City to Acrobat via Marisa Carnesky – alongside circus-themed music gigs, exhibitions, talks, and films, including a presentation by the legendary Gerry Cottle and a showing of James Marsh's acclaimed documentary film, *Man on Wire*.

Watching circus can defy words. Thrilling and humiliating, it sometimes takes me back to a jellyfish teenager, unable to do handstands and cartwheels, jealously watching others who can. I was warned

that Compagnie XY do 'pitching' – not sales or ships, but performers launched and flying like projectiles through the air. Yet nothing prepares me for the heart-in-mouth experience of watching *Le Grand C*.

The piece starts slowly. In semi-darkness, the company forms the first of their human pyramids, a stack of four plus four plus two. Snatches of accordion music and traditional costumes help conjure up a timeless village green in France. But as the pace picks up, the seventeen-strong company soars and dives in complex and breathtaking formations. Petite women are catapulted metres through the air from the teeterboard; they execute backward flips and somersaults from a column of two others, balance on a single leg or shimmy playfully, and are caught perfectly by groups.

Into this are woven gentle glances, quizzical or nonchalant looks, so the show has a warmth and connection throughout. Acrobalance and medieval song are combined, with the live patter of *Celle qui m'aime* as human totem poles are formed.

The performers climb up each other with great care; at another point, two simply hug near the teeterboard. And when an older member of the company talks the others through some of the final balances, it gives a glimpse of the technique involved, as well as the nerve, skill and danger. So *Le Grand C* is memorable not just for its myriad stacks, courage and heart-stopping movement, but also for the feeling that you only live through the people who support you, balanced precariously.

The Milkwood Rodeo by Sugar Beast Circus recreates the atmospheric, bizarre and gently sinister world of a traditional circus in India. It starts with a harlequin figure, with spangly clothes and a silky ruff, lying on stage. Flickering clips of circus artists are accompanied by tales of 40 degrees celsius at midnight, corrupt managers and the disappearance of Frank, who is dwarfed by his Sinatra-style name. Snatches of song become jarring and uncomfortable, as we hear about the animal trainer who lost half an ear or the management carrying the takings to their tent while the troupe goes hungry. The images can be funny (projections of dogs), evocative (a clown's face floating behind a gauze) and clever (as the angular body mirrors a starry constellation). But the piece has tantalisingly few tricks, with the movement instead suggesting a lonely figure after or before a show.

Sugar Beast Circus Show features longer, acrobatic sequences using aerial hoops to describe an imaginary meeting between PT Barnum and Charles Darwin. Its narrative can seem slightly unreliable. 'Infinity' is used when you expect 'affinity'; Darwin's masterpiece of 1859 is described as 'the evolution of species', not *On the Origin of Species*, and we are told about Schrödinger's bear, not cat. Three white-clad, sequined performers each have their own circus tent, which acts as a curtain. An aerial duet is particularly accomplished, and there is a disappearing act as two are gobbled up by a lion. The huge lion mask, on a petite dancer in beige fishnets, was perhaps the biggest beast of all in an evening of sugar and spice, tamed and wild animals. Words again seem clumsy compared with the physical grace of the circus.

Charlotte Smith saw Compagnie XY: *Le Grand C*, 19 April 2010 and Sugar Beast Circus: *The Milkwood Rodeo / Sugar Beast Circus Show*, 17 April 2010, as part of Roundhouse Circus Fest 2010 www.roundhouse.org.uk

The Forest Fringe has escaped from Edinburgh and is touring the country with a series of Microfestivals. Eve Wedderburn catches up with it all at BAC

Micro Magic



Stoke Newington International Airport at Forest Fringe Microfestival

Forest Fringe at the BAC is a brilliant marriage between space and event. BAC's peculiar boho qualities and performative architecture meld seamlessly with Deborah Pearson and Andy Fields' artist-led Edinburgh Festival Fringe venture. Given Fields' recent declaration in *The Stage* that 'experimental theatre is a question of space', this is a money-and-mouth moment for the project which it passes with honours. The Microfestival is an event so theatrically rich that it can carry and support its eclectic and sometimes bizarre range of works in an atmosphere that is genuinely buzzy and supportive, and where the attentive, young, interesting crowd become part of the experimental scenography of events.

It means that passing box office is pretty much like stepping through the looking glass. Across the chaotic foyer, there is a group of people in animated discussion over some coloured crayons and there are showbills taped with precision across some of BAC's vast pillars. People seem to have abandoned items of clothing in the rush to sign up to some of the intimate events and there is a time-share outfit running in the corner: buying and selling a minute of your time. The showbills (*Four Posters*, by Tim Etchells) are themselves fragmentary whispers about shows which seem to play out endlessly but are never actually seen ('the women with nothing to live for vs. the men who don't want to die'). The clothes are there with personal stories enclosed, for you to swap with your own (stories/clothes). I'm never

100% sure if I'm thoughtfully considering a performance or rudely eyeballing someone with an eccentric dress sense. (The piece is called *First Up Best Dressed* and is by Stadium Rock, a new Edinburgh-based company.)

It is this change in the nature of spectatorship – from the certainty of darkened rooms to an altogether more self-conscious presence of the audience – that marks the event. Take, for example, the first room we were ushered into (an installation by Charlotte Jarvis called *All American Hero*): apparently a front-room on a Saturday night, complete with takeaway on the table and reality TV on the box. As people enter and leave the installation, the parade in and out becomes itself curiously interesting. Visibly writ over the faces of everyone entering the room is the same uncertainty I experienced, wondering whether people already there were part of the installation or not. Under the discreet scrutiny of others we become brilliantly aware we have arranged ourselves over the furniture/set, blurring our own roles for subsequent spectators. You unwittingly position yourself as an established audience; your gaze at the unfortunate on screen creates a kind of permission for those that follow to watch while your own presence becomes part of the installation.

The experience of both viewing and being viewed reverberates around the building creating an atmosphere super-saturated by performance. This emanates from the multiple subtle rearrangements of audience

and performer relationships marked by individual pieces. Bill Aitchison's vicar (from his show *24/7/52*) charges through a crowd, handing out tape-recorders; we are forced to move carefully between two rows of spectators in Mischa Twitchin and Gudmundur Thorvaldson's *Interjections: a play of voices*; I must negotiate the cost of a minute of my time with Brian Lobel and Seasun Butler's *Carpe Minuta Prima*. All these new negotiations meant that even just queuing for Mamoru Iriguchi's *This Headlight Is The Only Hope In The Dark* – which I never made it into – became like watching a show. We can see side on as the performer and his single viewer stand hand in hand, apparently wrapped in something we can only speculate about – a projection cast from his glorious yellow helmet where he has a device wired and strapped. When music sporadically filters through the woman controlling the queue occasionally sings along. As the experience inside finished, participants turned to Iriguchi and thanked him with a warmth that joyfully affirmed the intimacy of this unconventional performance. It seems that it is not just the artists that Forest Fringe are prepared to reposition at the centre of practice.

Eve Wedderburn attended Forest Fringe Microfestival at Battersea Arts Centre, London 2 – 3 April 2010.

Further Microfestivals took place at The Arches in Glasgow from 16-17 Apr; as part of National Theatre Wales' Assembly programme in Swansea from 24-25 Apr; and at the Old Vic in Bristol from 8-9 May.

Alexander Roberts and Dorothy Max Prior discuss Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* as seen at Barbican BITE

Kontakthof – A Conversation



Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch *Kontakthof* for Teenagers Aged 14–19 (left) and *Kontakthof* for Ladies and Gentlemen over 65 (right). Photos Oliver Look

AR: First response – I just fell in love with the performers and despite the fact that none of them were under the age of 65, I could not help but find them sexy. There was nothing grotesque or aggressive in the way that this arrived at me, even if the imagery itself was at times very violent. They carried an anarchic childishness about them which went straight to my heart...

DMP: Interesting! It is still pretty rare to see older bodies on stage and certainly very rare to have the sexuality of older people addressed! And yes, *Kontakthof* is very much about 'how do I look?' and the mating game, so the sexual presence of the performers is key. The way Pina Bausch frames each person, and the games she gives the group to play, makes you really look, really see what is there. So yes, sex oozed from the stage! Two dozen people who've lived, there before us... acting parts but 'transparent' so that their real selves shine through... The version for teens, in contrast, felt sexless. The teens performed Pina Bausch's choreography beautifully and articulately. Yet all the time, it felt like watching children who've raided the dressing up box 'acting out' the conventions of courtship – it was fake, deeply ironic. Perhaps that was the point, but it made me feel uncomfortable.

AR: I didn't see the version for teens, but I think there is an element of

awkwardness in a lot of young people when it comes to sexuality. Older people maybe learn to use games to reveal themselves. Of course we are led to infer something quite specific from the content in relation to the age of the performers, for example in the scene with the rocking horse. I found that incredibly revealing and full of so many different meanings.

DMP: Ah yes the rocking horse... well, it was very different in the version for the teens! Teenager girls begging for 10ps to feed an electric rocking horse ride, then the sexy image of the girl riding the horse whilst the others queued and looked on longingly (I'll have what she's having...!) highlighted adolescence as the muddled space between childlike and adult pleasures. So it worked, yeah, but the older women going through the same set of actions was far funnier, more poignant, and more interesting, in my book... One thing I wanted to ask you is this: how did you respond to Pina Bausch's work as a 23-year-old who has grown up on theatre directly or indirectly influenced by Bausch? Do you feel it is all stuff you've somehow seen, even though you hadn't actually seen her work before?

AR: Well *Kontakthof* is seminal for me. I felt almost primed to see this piece. I had a feeling that the performance language was something I was familiar with and ready

to read. This was not only a performance language I felt I could read, but also a performance language I have also utilised and been influenced by as an artist. There was a sense that we were having the space itself revealed to us by the movement of the ensemble. That most of all, this performance was a reconstruction of space and place, which in turn captures and holds the people within it – a landscape (literally: a 'sculpted land').

DMP: And what of *Kontakthof* remains with you, a few weeks later?

AR: What I saw in *Kontakthof* was many of my own personal experiences of life being mirrored back at me by a cast of over-65s. Perhaps this was because I saw the work at a time when topics surrounding age, life, death and loss were all very poignant to me. (I was seeing *Kontakthof* very soon after my grandfather passed away.) The performers laid so much of themselves bare. Ultimately, I felt as though I left knowing many of the performers on a personal level, meeting people who had been and seen and done many things I am yet to even be aware of.

Alexander Roberts and Dorothy Max Prior both saw Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* for Ladies and Gentlemen over 65, and Dorothy Max Prior additionally saw *Kontakthof* for Teenagers Aged 14–19, at the Barbican Theatre, London, April 2010 as part of BITE 2010.

Lisa Wolfe gets down on the dancefloor

British Dance Edition 2010

Over the two days of my visit to the UK dance world's biennial showcase event British Dance Edition (which was oversubscribed, resulting in some difficulties in obtaining tickets to shows – frustrating, but it confirms a need for the event), the performances I see coalesce into certain themes:

THE EFFECTS OF WAR / POLITICAL STRUGGLE

Eddie Ladd sets *The Bobby Sands Memorial Race* on a running track. It's a strong visual metaphor, with resonance beyond the specific story being told here. We may be born into a certain faction or faith. We may find we have no choice but to stick with it, or lack the strength to break away. Bobby Sands (the Irish hunger striker who was also, apparently a keen runner – making the metaphor even more appropriate) was on such a track: he had no option but to keep to his lane. Eddie Ladd is magnificent. She has presence, confidence, maturity. The choreography fits the narrative with strong, defined movements and with grace. Eddie uses the machinery well, exhausting it as a resource and exhausting herself. We can forgive her running round in a circle at the start, and some over-literal interpretive moves: this is a very fine piece of dance-theatre.

ACE Dance and Music is a multicultural Birmingham-based company presenting a piece for an ensemble of six, called *Listen*. It's hard not to, as the music is thumpingly loud and relentless. The choreography, by Gail Parmel and Douglas Thorpe, is similarly brazen and leaves little space for the imagination. The theme is modern-day war and its effects on the psyche. The dancers are fantastically well drilled, tough young things giving 100%. but young dancers being soldiers on a stage, in woolly socks, their spoken voices high and light, just doesn't ring true. I applaud their effort rather than the piece.

MEN

dx Productions shows snippets of its reworked 2006 popular hit *The 5 Man Show*. It comprises three pieces, of which Arthur Pita's ...*And Then Gone* is the most diverting, the men in rat-pack mode seamlessly switching style and mood. Looks like it could be fun in full. The second piece, David Massingham's *With The Company We Keep*, is fluid and elegant but too conventional for my taste. Liam Steel's *Crazy Gary* is fast and furious with lots of his trademark holds and flings. Apparently it has a good disco scene in the full version. Everyone loves disco don't



Arthur Pita God's Garden. Photo Phil Conrad

they? Or don't they? What, though, is this trilogy saying about men – their relationships to each other, their physicality, their machismo – and of course their tenderness underneath it all? Anything new? They are wiry, fit men throwing each other around and stripping for their audience's provocation, ironically of course. They get a big cheer. A voice behind me says, 'that's very accessible'. She seems happy with that.

Company Chameleon cover similar ground in *Rites*. Their choreography has some real spark

of originality and they inhabit their roles convincingly, from child to father, teenagers to brothers-in-arms. This is their first major work together and it's a promising start. They just need to find a more challenging story.

INSPIRATIONAL DEAD PEOPLE

Just as Liz Aggiss pays homage to her favourite dance innovators in *Survival Tactics*, Simon Ellis in *Gertrude* is equally fascinated and inspired by dead choreographers. He performs an imagined conversation between

Eddie Ladd *The Bobby Sands Memorial Race*

Austrian Gertrude Bodenwieser and himself. It's electrifying and funny. The text is knife-sharp 'It's all so ugly,' she says in voice-over, as Ellis wrestles with some obscure dance sequence. 'Your solitude will engulf you... dancing will not help.' Grainy images are screened which hint at places and people, misdirecting us. Rachmaninov is played, the choreography becomes more bizarre – is it hers, or his? This is an elegant, conceptual piece, part of a collaborative trilogy called *Conversations with the Dead*. It has come about through an intense research process and through intelligent construction. More please.

FUN

Topsnot by Thomas Hall and Mark Parry at the Electric Cinema gives me the chance to move about in a personal spotlight, enhanced by a chorus-line of projected dancers. There are many different styles and formats I can join with and it's fun for a while. The soundtrack is limited though, and it's a bit weird only seeing the top of my head. Lying on the floor works if you want to do some beat-boxing.

Funny Bones gives us all a shower with *DanSense*, choreographed by Enrique Cabrera. Sat around the four sides of a blue plastic sheet, we're gently requested to lift the sheet and make small waves, and three dancers emerge from under it in various guises, until one turns the sheet into a dress, does a

lovely twirl and walks off, her long blue trail following, a beautiful moment. Then come costumes of percussive plastic spoons, some duets and trios that fill the space and finally big blue water buckets emptied for splashing and sliding on the watery floor. It is great to be entertained and included and not patronised (assuming I'm the target age of about six). Audiences must love this; theatre managers may need persuading.

AND FINALLY...

... the big show at the end. No, not our disco dancing at the end of fest party, marvellous though it was! Russell Maliphant and CobosMika Company at the Birmingham Hippodrome showed a triple bill to preview their upcoming tour. *Two x Two* is a duet; Anna Williams and Daniel Proietto on lit squares, she upstage, he down. They dance in isolation but are connected by their movement: reaching, graceful, exact. The lighting, by long-term collaborator Michael Hulls, is extraordinary, pin-pointing single limbs. The choreography builds to Teshigawara speed with arms twirling, flickering the white light about. At ten minutes long it is a real delight. *Choice* seems over-long in comparison and less original. Five dancers in what seems to be an extended contact-improvisation session – which it isn't, although the rolling, joining, lifting and athleticism give it that impression. The final piece is a stunner. *AfterLight Part 1*, a solo by

Daniel Proietto, commissioned by Sadler's Wells for its In the Spirit of Diaghilev season, does summon a spirit. Danced to Erik Satie, it has that effortless, smooth fluidity that characterises Maliphant at his best. Proietto is mesmerizing. It's dance that makes me want to dance, and for me that's the best critique of all. Not sure about the sports top though.

In summary, I think many delegates, national and international, will have found good work here that they can present, or new companies to keep an eye on. But there was a lot of work-in-progress which might not be enough to convince, and there was a definite lack of challenge, or intellectual rigour, or refreshing ideas, within much of the work I saw – though admittedly I only saw a small part of the enormous amount of work presented at this four-day event.

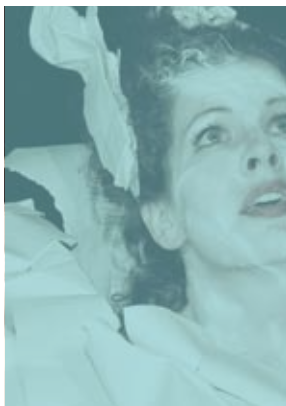
British Dance Edition is a biennial curated programme of performances, events, presentations and debate to showcase the British dance scene and provide a snapshot of the industry. The 2010 edition took place in Birmingham, 3–6 February. www.bde2010.co.uk

Further reviews from BDE can be found at the Total Theatre website www.totaltheatre.org.uk



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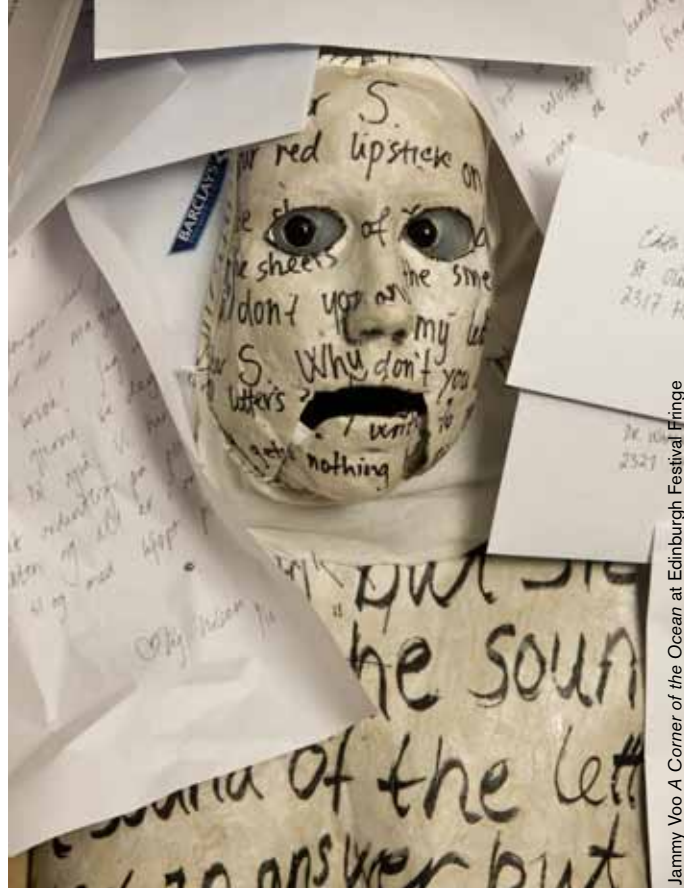


UPDATE

INSIDE

Rising phoenix-like from the ashes this year, the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) has a new website and a stellar programme, with all mention of the infamous but possibly mythical (did anyone actually see it?) LIFT Parliament scrubbed politely from the record. Instead this year's LIFT takes place within the ICA, the Barbican, the Southbank Centre, North Finchley's distant artsdepot, National Trust attraction Rainham Hall, a boat, a mobile Internet café, and several hair salons, bringing us a programme that crosses the space between, at one end, Catalyst Theatre's surreal, gothic Edgar Allen Poe musical *Nevermore*, and, at the other, the glorious and self-explanatory live art experience *Haircuts by Children* (overseen by Canadian company Mammalian Diving Reflex). If you like solid critical information before purchasing your LIFT tickets, then Rimini Protokoll's *Best Before* will have been seen and judged at Brighton Festival (see the Total Theatre website reviews section), the Zecora Ura & Para Active all-nighter *Hotel Medea* has been previously seen in various incarnations, and written about in this magazine (but has been fully reworked for its Trinity Buoy Wharf performance, and will anyway be substantially altered by the earlier dawn), and Back to Back Theatre's *Food Court* comes from Australia with reports of its cruel intensity and power.

Also in London, also in July, BAC are claiming a first for their upcoming One on One festival – the first major UK festival devoted to one-to-one performance. Too many presenting artists to list, but many will be excited by the return to BAC of agit-theatre-makers Ontroerend Goed, who bring previously seen two pieces *Smile Off Your Face* and *Internal* alongside new work *A Game of You*. (See our features section for more on this). Total Theatre favourites *Etiquette* (Rotozaza) and *Foot-washing for the Sole* (Adrian Howells) make an appearance, while from overseas there's the intriguing prospect of Roos van Geffen's *WE*, performed on a rotating wooden carousel. Also from abroad, also arresting, there's Hanneke Paauwe's *Rendez-vous*, where the lone participant will be nailed into a coffin (duration 15 minutes).



Jammy Voo A Corner of the Ocean at Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Good news: there will be an advice line you can call beforehand to find out which shows are brutally targeted to your phobias and weaknesses.

An incredible amount of stuff going on in Scotland this summer. With its programme released almost simultaneously with this magazine, there's not much to say about the Edinburgh Festival Fringe – massive, beleaguered, manic, self-absorbed. In navigating its dissimulating and treacherous programme you may want to take note of the company updates, over the page, for NIE, Shams, Theatre Ad Infinitum, Jammy Voo, The Paper Birds, and theatredelicatessen. The Fringe's parent festival, the Edinburgh International Festival, provides an alternative, smaller curated programme of much more lavishly produced shows, with Total Theatre's selective interests this year piqued by The Wooster Group's adaptation of the Tennessee Williams play *Vieux Carré*; Teatro Cinema's two film/theatre hybrids *Sin Sangre* and *The Man Who Fed Butterflies*; *Songs of Ascension*, a meditative piece by Meredith Monk and Ann Hamilton that sits at the crossroads of ritual, theatre, music and film; and of course Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch's contribution, *Água*.

Filed here in Inside but with an outdoor strand promised as well, Surge is a new Scottish festival of physical performance (encompassing street arts, physical theatre and circus) produced by Conflux and taking place at The Arches and The Briggait and in surrounding areas. Indoor work will include the remarkable Danish installation-performance *The Venus Labyrinth*, where audience members journey alone through a maze with 28 rooms containing 28 solo female performers; *Spokes*, a circus piece co-created by All Or Nothing and Strange Bird

Zirkus during a Conflux residency; and a performance of characteristic and exceptional tyranny from bouffon grotesque Eric Davis, aka the Red Bastard.

OUTSIDE

An important outpost in theatre's continuing campaign to infiltrate and convert the summer music festivals, Latitude is a purposefully various four-day performance festival set in Southwold's Henham Park. The theatre strand runs across a number of spaces – from the dedicated Theatre and Cabaret Arenas, to the Waterfront Stage (which floats on the park lake), to Pandora's Playground and the Faraway Forest (in the Estate's woodland) – presenting what programmer Tania Harrison describes to TT as a kind of sampler for new audiences to 'try out and see what theatre is'. Under stricter time-limits than the average indoor theatre (maximum get-in is 30 minutes, usually much less), Tania nonetheless sees programming for Latitude as similar to booking a dedicated theatre festival, with space for work ranging from the interactive pieces planned for the Playground to the 'intense, sit-down' shows programmed for the Arena. Items of note within the huge Latitude billing include Russian physical theatre icons Derevo performing *Wolves' Tango*, a large-scale piece located toward the dance end of their artistic spectrum; Les Enfants Terribles, who turn the Theatre Arena into the Empire Music Hall for classic whodunnit *Vaudevillains*; and Cartoon de Salvo, whose satiric *Pub Rock* sees an ageing band making a late, final gesture of rebellion.

Glastonbury (tagline: Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts) of course pulls in a little theatre and a lot of circus and street (/field) arts. Difficult to know everything that'll feature ahead of time, but two noteworthy billings are BlackSkyWhite,





Nats Nus Daisa Slor in Dancing City at Greenwich + Docklands International Festival



Derevo Wolves Tango at Latitude Festival



The Balloonatic at MintFest, Lakes Alive

who return with new show *E.S.M.* (regarded by artistic director Dimitri Aryupin as their strangest and most frightening work yet – buckle up); and Circolombia, who perform *Urban*, an uncompromising circus-theatre piece about the city of Santiago de Cali (first seen at the Roundhouse's CircusFest).

Moving back to the dedicated, and more genteel, theatre and street arts world, Greenwich + Docklands International Festival is on the second leg of its four-year elements cycle, with the 2010 theme, Earth, connecting with and drawing inspiration from Greenwich's role as home of the Prime Meridian. The festival offers the usual selection of large-scale, excellently-located spectacle (this year placing Catalan choreographer Toni Mira in Queen's House and Catalan aerialists Voala within the Royal Arsenal) as well as a dense programme of mid- and small-scale work and a one-day mini-festival, Dancing City, which takes over Canary Wharf for a Saturday. Amidst a broadly appealing line-up, of special note is a second collaboration between Graeae and Strange Fruit (who last year produced a festival highlight with strange, watery folktale *Against the Tide*), taking place in the de-consecrated churchyard of St Alfege Park and drawing from William Blake's vision of England as a 'green and pleasant' land.

Also in London are Paradise Gardens, situated in Victoria Park and one of the outright loveliest festivals (highlights of which include Footsbarn's *Sorry!*, which promises theatre, circus, and horses, and the premiere of Ragroof Theatre's boxing homage, *Gloves On*); and Watch This Space, the National Theatre's long-running outdoor strand. The WTS programme of free events (stretching from July to September) is still being finalised at time of writing, but the ticketed Square²

programme will be bringing back a couple of favourites – Basque company Markeliñe, with *Carbón Club*, and the Polish Teatr Biuro Podróży, makers of incredibly loud and close street theatre – as well as partnering with LIFT for Dries Verhoeven's *Life Streaming*, a show about the complexities of international aid, held within a mobile Internet café connecting to a second café in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka.

Outside of London, in the South, Kent's increasing interest in circus and street arts is celebrated by the Fuse Medway Festival, while Dorset's Inside Out proves the county's growing strength as a venue for total theatre, winning the first visit to England from French dance company Ex Nihilo and presenting a newly commissioned piece from Kimmo Pohjonen and Paper Cinema for Dorset and East Devon's Jurassic Coast. Not so far away, in Surrey, Farnham Maltings is organising two outdoor weekend events: The Art of Hiding, at Farnham Castle, a community performance project exploring the history of camouflage, and Theatre Meadows, a theatre and circus festival taking place inside a big top on Gostrey Meadows and programmed entirely by young adults. Then, just north of that, Ipsden's Braziers Park will this year house a new multidisciplinary outdoor festival, Supernormal, tied to the annual Braziers international artists workshop (BIAW). With the audience capped at less than 800, it aims to be 'less a conventional festival than a generated artwork itself'.

The North is meanwhile well served by Stockton International Riverside Festival, and in the Midlands the giant Lakes Alive season continues with events across Cumbria and the Lake District: Germany's fiery Theater Titanick visits Carlisle Castle, *The Cabaret of Dr Caligari* tours the towns and villages of West

Cumbria, and there's a festival of puppetry and animation in Penrith in August. Lakes Alive culminates in Mintfest, a four-day outdoor festival taking over the streets of Kendal.

And finally, over in Wales, in Newport, the Riverfront is putting on The Big Splash, a new street arts festival which, alongside circus, cabaret and burlesque from Invisible Circus and NoFit State, promises the spectacle of French tightwire artist Olivier Roustan performing Europe's highest ever wirewalk above Newport's suspension bridge – a rare chance to see true highwire in the UK.

LIFT: 23 June – 31 July | www.liffest.org.uk
 One on One: 6 – 18 July | www.bac.org.uk
 Surge: 19 – 25 July | www.conflux.co.uk
 Edinburgh Festival Fringe:
 6 – 30 August | www.edfringe.com
 Edinburgh International Festival:
 13 August – 5 September | www.eif.co.uk

Fuse Festival Medway: 12-26 June | www.fusefestival.org.uk
 Paradise Gardens: 19 & 20 June | www.paradisegardens.org.uk
 Glastonbury: 23-27 June | www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk
 Watch This Space Square2:
 23 June – 8 August
 Greenwich + Docklands International Festival:
 24 June – 4 July | www.festival.org
 Theatre Meadows: 23-25 July | www.farnhammaltings.com
 Stockton International Riverside Festival:
 28 July – 1 August | www.sirf.co.uk
 Supernormal: 21 & 22 August | www.braziersworkshop.org
 The Big Splash: 29 & 30 August and 4-5 September | www.newport.gov.uk/theriverfront
 The Art of Hiding: 10-11 September | www.farnhammaltings.com
 Inside Out: 10-19 September | www.insideoutdorset.co.uk



The Paper Birds



Raven Kallana

UPDATE PERFORMER + COMPANY

Amici Dance Theatre Company celebrate their 30th anniversary with a new full-company show, *Tightrope*. A travelling circus have stuck together through thick and thin, struggling against the odds to survive. A cast of 40 disabled and non-disabled artists welcome everyone as the circus comes to town. Playing at the Lyric Hammersmith 17-19 June, 7.30pm (with a matinee performance at 1.20pm 18 June).
www.lyric.co.uk | www.amicidance.org

Andrew Dawson: *My Street: Unlock Havelock* is a unique collaboration between performance artist Andrew Dawson and the University of Chichester, culminating in a street event with the residents of Havelock Road in Bognor Regis. Andrew was born on Havelock Road 47 years ago, and has not been back for 25 years. Now he returns to the street of his birth, to rekindle memories of his childhood and to create a collective response exploring what it is to live there. Havelock Road, Bognor Regis 12 June.
www.chiuni.ac.uk | www.andrewdawson.info

Angel Exit Theatre will be retouring their show *Moonfleet* in September and October 2010. After a successful tour in autumn 2009, this straggling gang of buffoons are back to tell a salty tale based on J. Meade Falkner's classic smuggling novel. Angel Exit are also in the process of developing their next show, provisionally entitled *Bluestockings*, which will be ready in 2011. They are seeking co-producers for this show. www.angelexit.co.uk

Bash Street Theatre: Just back from performing their silent movie show *Cliffhanger!* at the Macau International Theatre Festival in China, Penzance-based Bash Street Theatre will be taking the production to Porsgrunn in Norway at the end of June, then Stockton International Riverside Festival at the end of July. In July and August, the company has a 25-date tour of France with *The Station*, including two dates in Vitoria Gasteiz, Spain, and two in Heppenheim, Germany. For full tour listings: www.bashstreet.co.uk

Bottlefed's performance installation *Hold Me Until You Break* won the Jury Prize at the 100th Berlin Festival and will be shown again at Sophiensaele Berlin this September. The ensemble is now back in the studio working on *Ex-stasis*, which will premiere in London and go to the ArtFart festival in Reykjavik in August. Bottlefed's co-artistic director Kathrin will also be co-directing a performance for the Biennale Bern at Schlachthaus Theater, Switzerland (premiere 9 September). Recent educational projects run by Bottlefed members include a Creative Partnerships dance and literacy project, and Adobe Youth Voices, a film project for young poets and filmmakers.
www.bottlefed.org | info@bottlefed.org

Curious' latest performance, *the moment I saw you I knew I could love you*, made in collaboration with filmmaker Andrew Kötting, composer Graeme Miller and performers Claudia Barton and Joseph Young, completes its UK tour with dates at Colchester Arts Centre and Exeter Phoenix in June/July. The piece is about gut feelings; impulse, love and undefended moments. Audiences huddle snugly together inside salt-encrusted life rafts, while performers, soundscapes and fragments of film drift past. Playing Colchester Arts Centre 24 June, and Exeter Phoenix 6 & 7 July. www.placelessness.com

Faceless: Inspired by Olympic ideals of athleticism and healthy competition, and by the notion that going slow is a viable option in today's hectic society, Faceless' new walkabout show *Ready... Steady... Slow!* sees a couple of sporty snails trying to break the world record for the 50m dash – slowly. With help from Manchester International Arts, this summer Faceless will develop the walkabout into the *Snailympics* – a set show where the professional sports snails will host a series of participatory Go Slow heats for audience members, culminating in an Olympic-style medal ceremony.
www.facelessco.com | arts@facelessco.com

Gifford's Circus celebrates its tenth anniversary this year with a new show, *Yasmine – a Musical*, inspired by and starring the legendary equestrienne Yasmine Smart. Playing fast and loose with biographical and historical details, the production is a fantastical musical that harks back to the golden age of circus. Produced and written by Nell Gifford, the musical opened 20 May in Gloucester. www.giffordscircus.com

Hoodwink's latest production *Leap of Faith* celebrates the human aspiration to fly, with an assortment of paper wings, balloons, feathers and flying monks. Commissioned by Salisbury Arts Centre and Theatreworks with Arts Council funding, the show will be at Paradise Gardens, London 19 June; Mouth of the Tyne Festival 16 July; and Devizes Carnival 30 August. Hoodwink will also be performing *Pleasure Garden* at The Larmer Tree Festival 16-19 July and *Gastronomic* in Chatham 12 June and Milton Keynes 25 July. Full tour details: www.hoodwinktheatre.co.uk | info@hoodwinktheatre.co.uk

Jammy Voo: A man goes missing in a diving accident. The story of his mysterious disappearance strangely touches the lives of four women in their different parts of the world. Jammy Voo's new production, *A Corner of the Ocean*, comes to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this August – at The Big Belly, Underbelly, 5-15 and 17-29 August.
www.jammyvoo.com

Mimbre are continuing to tour their new production *Until Now* both indoors and outdoors in spring and summer 2010 and are looking forward to a great tour across the UK and Europe. The company are also beginning work on two new projects (*A10* and *Falling Up*) with ten other female physical performers. They will be researching the relationship between identity, physicality and creativity and developing these ideas into a mid-to-large scale production for 2011.
www.mimbre.co.uk | emma.forster@mimbre.co.uk

Natural Theatre Company: The Naturals are about to start their five-month street theatre residency at the UK pavilion of Expo 2010 in Shanghai. This involves a total of sixteen performers taking monthly shifts, and follows the recent annual Devising Week where over twenty of the company's pool of regular performers got together to invent new street scenarios for the year to come. Watch out for the Pigeon Poo people in a street near you! Recent events include *The Gala*, a site-specific one-off where the audience were treated to bizarre happenings in, over and outside the company's labyrinthine production centre – including a gigantic Chinese buffet! www.naturaltheatre.co.uk



Hoodwink



Natural Theatre Company



theatredelectablesen



Ockham's Razor



Red Ladder

NIE: Herald Angel and Total Theatre Award-winning NIE will be performing their Edinburgh 2009 smash hit *My Life With The Dogs* at Ruhrfestspiele in Germany 8-11 June. Follow the story of Ivan Mishukov as he is raised on the streets of Moscow for two years by wild dogs. NIE will also be performing their brand new promenade show *Everything Falls Apart* in Hradec on 23 June. Exposing hidden stories from the depths of new Europe's black economy, NIE invite you to join them on the London underground for a compelling clash of cultures.
www.nie-theatre.com

Nola Rae will be paying several visits to Stockholm from June to September to direct a production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* for clowns. She has also been invited to play in Berlin for the World Parliament of Clowns at the end of July and beginning of August, and her first book, *Circus Girl*, is out in June, published by Seagull Books of Calcutta and distributed by University of Chicago Press.
www.nolarae.com

Ockham's Razor: Experience the sweat, grind and grit of physical work in a wheel of wood and steel powered by performers suspended six metres in the air. After premiering at the London International Mime Festival, *The Mill* makes its way to Paternoster Square (outside St Paul's Cathedral) for two (free) performances as part of the City of London Festival on 1 & 2 July.
www.colf.org.uk | www.ockhamsrazor.co.uk

Phil Smith (*The Crab Man*) has just published *Mythogeography* (Triarchy Press, 2010) and begun three years funded 'practice as research' into mythogeographical performance interventions in heritage and tourist spaces. He is currently making three films with Siobhan Mckeown, as well as working with Simon Persighetti on *Water Walk*, for Spacex Gallery, and *Relics and Processions*, a Mis-Guided Tour for Queen Street, Exeter. Also in the works are *GeoQuest*, with Tony Lidington and Hugh Nankivell, and a project with Polly Macpherson to create small generic objects, inspired by Phil's own *Royal William Yard Twalk*, for carrying while walking and for exhibition at Plymouth Arts Centre.

Proteus Theatre Company are touring a new production of *Houdini* nationally in the autumn. This newly devised production concerning the life and times of Houdini involves plenty of magic and will be performed by Lee Garrett with the same production team that worked on *The Elephant Man* (which has just come back from a transfer to the Brits Off Broadway festival in New York). There are still a few dates in the tour schedule for booking if venues are interested. www.proteustheatre.com

Punchdrunk are currently collaborating with the ENO on the creation of an immersive opera, *The Duchess of Malfi*. Directed by Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, this new work is composed by Torsten Rasch with libretto by Ian Burton. The production features a cast of 23 and a 70-strong symphony orchestra. *The Duchess of Malfi* will be presented at Great Eastern Quay in Newham, 13-24 July, during the CREATE '10 festival, on a site kindly donated by Notting Hill Housing Trust.
www.eno.org/punchdrunk | www.punchdrunk.org.uk

Puppets and Dolls: Roll up, roll up, ladies and gentlemen, for *Take the Pose!* This participative family-and-friends outdoor event gives you the chance to have your 1930s-style seaside snapshot taken. Combining puppetry, art performance, photography and new technologies, it's fun for the young, the not-so-young, and the downright ancient. The summer tour includes Salisbury International Arts Festival 1 June, and Lakes Alive, Penrith 1 August. Full tour schedule:
www.puppetsanddolls.org.uk

Raven Kaliana: Revealed in flashes and glimpses, silent puppet children move alongside shadowy performers whose faces are never seen. Based on a true story and directed by Raven Kaliana, *Hooray for Hollywood* is a stark yet sensitive tale set within the child pornography industry. Live violin by Susanna Ferrar. Discussion with the survivor follows. Playing at the Rosemary Branch Theatre 29 June – 12 July.
www.ravenkaliana.com

Reckless Sleepers: In *The Last Supper* Reckless Sleepers invite you to dinner to sample the last meal requests of the famous and the not-so-famous. With real scenarios, invented scenarios, scenarios in the future, and scenarios from the past, *The Last Supper* is part performance, part meal, made up of half-remembered words and the forgotten last requests of inmates on death row. Each audience member is given a table number, their case number, their incident number. Thirteen of these are last suppers. St Mary's Centre, Chester 16 & 17 June.
www.reckless-sleepers.co.uk

Red Ladder: Reuniting the team that created the critically acclaimed *Forgotten Things*, *Ugly* is an absurd futuristic new satire about a world that is suffering an environmental eclipse of the heart. Telling the tale of four people who will have to kill their angels and embrace their devils if they are going to survive, *Ugly* is an emotional, intense and visceral play that breaks the rules – as well as your heart.
www.redladder.co.uk | stef@redladder.co.uk



Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre

Shams: *Reykjavik*, an intimate installation-promenade that explores the architecture of memory, is due to play this year's Edinburgh Fringe 12-29 August at the Bongo Club. The piece offers a refreshingly different experience to sitting in a small black box as audiences become accomplices and companions in an immersive, interactive performance. *Reykjavik* is supported by the Wellcome Trust and Escalator East to Edinburgh. Shams also have a new-look website (designed by Bullet): www.shams.org.uk

Sharmanka Kinetic Theatre: Hundreds of carved figures and pieces of old scrap perform an incredible choreography to haunting music and synchronised light, telling funny and tragic stories of the human spirit as it struggles against the relentless circles of life and death. Sharmanka (Russian for hurdy-gurdy) is a theatre of kinetic sculptures by Eduard Bersudsky. Currently Sharmanka can be seen at Trongate 103, Glasgow. The gallery is open Wednesday-Sunday 1-3pm; for performance times see the website: www.trongate103.com | www.sharmanka.com

theatredelicatessen: Drawing on interviews, archive footage and news reports, theatredelicatessen's *Pedal Pusher* combines docudrama and devised performance to tell the true story of the cyclists battling to become champion of the Tour de France. Through the mountains, the crashes, the sprints to the streets of Paris, *Pedal Pusher* captures the excitement, intrigue and danger of one of the most gruelling sporting events known to man. On at the Zoo Roxy for the Edinburgh Fringe; see the website for dates and times. www.theatredelicatessen.co.uk

Theatre Ad Infinitum: The award-winning company return to Pleasance, Edinburgh 2010 with a new piece, *The Big Smoke* (Jack Dome, 2.30pm), as well as last year's critically acclaimed *Odyssey* (Ten Dome, 3pm), which netted The Stage Award for Best Solo Performer 2009. *The Big Smoke* is the tale of a tormented woman whose search for identity becomes a descent into madness. One woman uses the rich nuances of her unique voice and a distilled style of physical performance to weave together this story of pain, beauty and unceasing internal conflict. Both shows are available for touring; see the website for more information. www.theatreadinfinitum.co.uk



Theatre Modò

Theatre Hebrides' new production *Roghainn na Daoine (The People's Choice)* intertwines two powerful stories: one follows a young Island woman who struggles to live with the choices she has made; the other follows the desperate social and political circumstances which provoked the emergence of a new spirituality-based belief system in the 1840s. This Gaelic-language physical theatre show is a radical contemporary evocation of Hebridean cultures, human tenacity and remarkable lives. On tour 27 May – 19 June, with dates including An Lanntair, Stornoway, Glasgow's Tron Theatre, Edinburgh's Netherbow Centre, and Inverness' One Touch Eden Court. www.theatrehebrides.com

Theatre Modò: Through the eyes of a clown, *Sick* follows a patient through the absurdities of a day in hospital, revealing her wildest imaginings and darkest thoughts as medication, boredom and illness give wings to her flights of fancy. The piece has been inspired and developed in collaboration with NHS and patient groups. Following a successful initial run in theatres and hospitals, Theatre Modò are looking to book a further tour for *Sick* later in the year. www.theatremodo.com

Théâtre Sans Frontières is touring its popular production in French for children aged 8-12 years, *Contes Dorés*, to schools throughout June and will be appearing at the Grassington Festival on 15 June. The company's co-production with Robert Lepage and Ex Machina, *Lipsynch*, continues its world tour in Taipei 21-28 August. Following on from the initial tour of *Islands* in northern England, TSF together with Teatro Tamaska (Canary Islands), Persona Theatre Company (Cyprus) and Theater Wahlverwandte (Germany) will be taking this co-production to Cyprus in early September. www.tsf.org.uk



Puppets and Dolls



Gifford's Circus

The Paper Birds are currently devising *Others* with the support of The Junction, Bath Ustinov Studio Theatre, Camden People's Theatre, The Showroom and Sheffield Theatres. *Others* will premiere at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 3.20pm in Pleasance Above. The show will tour to supporting venues in November and internationally in spring 2011. The company is also developing a site-specific performance, *Private Spaces in Public Places*, to be performed as part of the Cultural Olympiad. For tour dates, information on future projects, and education and outreach opportunities take a look at the company's new and improved website: www.thepaperbirds.com

Uninvited Guests: Let's raise our glasses to long lost loves and current lovers, to mums, to dads and to absent friends. Uninvited Guests stage *Love Letters Straight From Your Heart*, an event that is somewhere between a wedding reception, a wake and a radio dedication show. At Corn Exchange, Newbury 19 June. www.uninvited-guests.net | www.cornexchangenew.co.uk

Walk the Plank: Having said goodbye to The MV Fitzcarraldo, the UK's only theatre ship, Walk the Plank enter a new chapter with two large-scale events this summer. On 20 June, Manchester Day Parade will gather hundreds of individuals and community groups to create floats, performances, costumes and music celebrating everything 'Out of this World'. Then 16-18 July and 6-8 August, they will be working as creative producers on Liverpool's On the Waterfront, two weekends of free live events. www.walktheplank.co.uk | marketing@walktheplank.co.uk

UPDATE VENUES + ORGANISATIONS

Grid Iron Decky Does A Bronco at Warwick Arts Centre



NASA has now launched its Mainlining project – an initiative which aims to stimulate writing and critical debate amongst UK street artists through a series of organised meetings and the commissioning and distribution of articles and essays relevant to the development of the sector. For further information email missioncontrol@nasauk.org

Without Walls: In recognition of the success of Without Walls, the consortium of eight of the UK's leading arts festivals, Arts Council England has recently agreed a two-year, £1,000,000 funding deal with the consortium to carry their work forward. For the full list of Without Walls' 2010 commissions and details of supported touring companies and other projects: www.withoutwalls.uk.com

New Shunt Lounge: Retaining their space in the vaults underneath London Bridge for another year, Shunt have closed the old lounge and opened The New Lounge. Working with a mixture of both emerging and experienced artists, the New Lounge offers an opportunity to present new work to a wide range of audiences – film, live music, circus, visual arts, performance, theatre, installation and maybe the odd pole-vaulter. Open Thursday 6pm-1am and Friday/Saturday 6pm-3am. www.shunt.co.uk

Warwick Arts Centre is having an alfresco summer this year, hosting the Footsbarn tent for *Sorry!*, an anarchic Romany circus wedding with voltige from Pierre Byland and Cirque Werdyn (5 & 6 and 10-12 June), and providing a chance to see Grid Iron's classic 2000 production set in a children's playground, *Decky Does A Bronco* (21-26 June). www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

Pulse 2010 | New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich: This year's Pulse programme (27 May – 12 June) features Ontroerend Goed's *Internal*, Total Theatre Award winners *Everything Must Go* and *My Name Is Sue*, and the best of the East of England region - including the latest work from Analogue and the team behind Paperweight, plus a hefty selection of site specific work across the city. www.pulsefringe.com

TRAINING + PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Nomadic Academy of Fools Shakespeare's Richard II



The Nomadic Academy of Fools is both a school and a performing company, with students training by touring the UK and Europe, creating performances from day one. Headed by renowned theatre practitioner Jonathan Kay and based around his own unique Fooling technique, the Academy is currently touring Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Applications for auditions for the 2010-11 tour are now being invited; deadline 27 August. For an application pack: www.nomadicacademyoffools.com

Masks of the Gods: A week-long course run by Mike Chase, Masks of the Gods allows participants to create a mask inspired by archetypes from around the world while learning a revolutionary new mould- and mask-making technique. Using silicone rubber moulds and plaster polymer masks this newly developed system uses strong, flexible and rapid mask-making materials and methods to produce near perfect mask replication, with easy release on undercuts and mould longevity. 26 July-30 July.

£280/£250 concessions (including materials). At Glasshouse Arts Centre, Stourbridge, West Midlands. michael.chase@ghc.rmet.org.uk

The Performing Arts University — Torino is a cultural and training centre with a unique performing arts programme — founded on the principles of an American university system — which provides an intensive education in the performing arts by offering classes in theatre, dance, circus arts, music, puppetry, and much more. Based on the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq, the centre is tailored to the individual needs and desires of its students, offering a programme that has the flexibility to encompass their special creative interests. www.teatrofisico.com

Mick Barnfather's Clown and Comedy course is a five-day workshop that looks at what makes us laugh and the pleasure of being ridiculous. 9-13 August. £185/£160 concessions. www.mickbarnfather.com

Physical Fest is an annual physical/movement theatre workshop and performance festival run by Tmesis Theatre, at Hope Street Ltd in Liverpool. The line-up this year includes a three-day workshop with Chris Fittock and Tmesis Theatre; An introduction to Aerial Circus with black and blue; Creaturing (non-human movement) with Al Seed; Free Running with Airborne Entertainment; and Improvisation and Clowning with Javier Marzan from Peepolykus. There are also evening classes in Angola Capoeira, Taciturn

dance and Pilates, and morning classes in Tai Chi. Running 5-12 June. www.tmesistheatre.com | physicalfest@tmesistheatre.com.

Clown through Mask: Shams are offering summer workshops in Clown through Mask 12-23 July in Bethnal Green, London. The intensive workshop provides a thorough introduction to a method of contemporary, theatrical clowning based on a synthesis of Native North American and European traditions. www.shams.org.uk | +44 (0)7740 475879

Company Oncore would like to hear from companies looking for a creation space in the south of France. They have a rehearsal studio – 12 x 20 x 6 metres, capable of being rigged for trapeze and other aerial disciplines – situated 30 minutes from Nîmes airport. Accommodation is available in caravans. Oncore also offer artistic direction from Etty Eliot – contact ettyboop@hotmail.com for a CV and other information. +33 (0) 666 344 050

Forkbeard Fantasy are offering two six-day residential courses in 2010. These week-long Summer Schools enable participants to explore the wild and diverse array of techniques, technologies and artforms used in Forkbeard's multimedia stage, film and television work. At the company's Waterslade Studios; 2-9 & 16-23 July. £750 for each course (includes meals and accommodation). www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk

BOOKS AND OTHER MEDIA PUBLICATIONS + RELEASES

BOOKS

Mythogeography: A Guide to Walking Sideways

Anonymous

Triarchy Press

ISBN: 978-0-9562631-3-1

£28 Paperback | £15 'economical edition' available from the website
www.triarchypress.com | www.mythogeography.com

'The universe was made by a god who botched the job. Therefore, we must proceed by abstract and fanciful maps, rather than by empirical observation.' *Mythogeography* sets out to show us that the map is not the territory; but the territory is not even the territory – it's there to be crafted in the artist's mind by the journey through it and the framing of that journey, which can take many forms: here's an example: 'on a looped journey, as you cross an earlier part of your route, take a moment to contemplate your "20 minute ghost", the person you were 20 minutes before [or whenever] you were last there'.

Although no author is cited, it takes very little effort to ascertain that *Mythogeography* has been written by Phil Smith aka The Crab Man – founder member of site-specific pioneers Wrights & Sites, and instigator of many a mis-guide and journey-as-art.

Compiled 'from the diaries, manifestos, notes, prospectuses, records and everyday utopias of the Pedestrian Resistance', *Mythogeography* takes psychogeographical performance/art onto the next level. Includes The Mythogeographical Manifesto, extracts from the Handbook of Drifting, learned and oft-time cheeky references (to Eliade, the Situationist Derive, the Dadaist Deambulation, Richard Long, Iain Sinclair), and suggestions on things-to-do: (Shop Window Hollywood – 'create your own "movies" in the reflections of the windows of shops and offices. The reflected backgrounds are your locations and passers-by your actors')

Best approached in a non-linear way: dipping in randomly provides hours of entertainment and education.

Kantor

Noel Witts

ISBN 978-0-415-43487-4

Paperback £15.29

Marina Abramović

Mary Richardson

ISBN: 978-0-415-43208-5

Paperback £15.29

Routledge Performance Practitioners

Series Ed. Franc Chamberlain

www.routledge.com

Routledge Performance Practitioners is a series of introductory guides to key artists. The format is compact paperback of around 120–150 pages; the writing intelligent yet accessible; the content a lively and inclusive mix. Each book comprises: history/context; theory; key writings, performances, and/or major works of the artist; and practical exercises devised by the artist or by close associates. These guides are thus ideal for the undergraduate performing arts student, but Total Theatre would argue that they are of use and interest to anyone at any stage of their performance/theatre-making, studying or teaching career.

Two excellent recent new titles in the series are *Tadeusz Kantor* by Noel Witts, and *Marina Abramović* by Mary Richards.

The Kantor book includes material from 'insider' interviews with Cricot performer Krzysztof Miklaszewski; an account of the creation and presentation of legendary visual theatre 'play' *The Dead Class* (1975); and, in the practical exercises section, Kantor's own Milano Lessons.

Mary Richards' *Marina Abramović* features a chapter on 'transitory objects and spectator interactivity' and documentation of the artist's longtime collaboration with partner Ulay. Anyone hoping that the practical exercise section might contain information on raiding slaughterhouses for animal bones, or shooting arrows at one's lover, will perhaps be disappointed – nevertheless, the exercises on sensory awareness, receptivity, and memory are all good stuff, as is the reminder from John Cage via Marina Abramović of the Zen Buddhist dictum that 'if you find something boring after two minutes, try it for four minutes.... Then eight, then sixteen... Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all but very interesting'.

When Marina Abramović Dies: A Biography

James Westcott

The MIT Press

ISBN: 978-0-262-23262-3

£19.95

www.mitpress.mit.edu

More Abramović! We learn in the preface to this book that when Marina Abramović dies she would like there to be three coffins, one with her real body in, and two with imitations. She would like three burials, on different continents, and she'd like the funeral guests to feast on a marzipan effigy of her body...

The title of the book and this preface flag up the flirtation with death that has been an intrinsic part of Abramović's work as 'the grandmother of performance art'. Mortality, decay, duration, pain, woundings – for 40 years now she's played around with the dance between Eros and Thanatos.

Westcott's comprehensive biography is built around extensive interviews with the artist and 'unprecedented' access to her archive; and comes endorsed by all and sundry, from Laurie Anderson to Robert Wilson via Bjork. We get the lot: growing up in former Yugoslavia; the invitation to the Edinburgh Festival that brought her to the attention of the international artworld; the seminal long-duration performances – including the infamous one where she lay 'determinedly passive' for six hours while members of an audience did whatever they wanted to her; the twelve-year-plus collaboration with partner in life and work, Ulay; and the later solo work, including the time she lived for twelve days on show in an art gallery, not eating or talking. All good stuff – it is hard to fault Westcott's research and documentation skills, and if it's facts about Abramović you want, this is the place you'll find them. However, the 'normal' chronological biography format, and a slightly over-sympathetic tone, seem somehow to be not quite what one would want of the story of such an extraordinary life. But perhaps when Marina Abramović actually dies will be the right time for another sort of biography?

Theatre Histories: An Introduction, Second Edition

Phillip B. Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams,

Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei

Ed. Gary Jay Williams

ISBN 978-0-415-46224-2

Paperback £24.29

A new edition of *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* offers 'overviews of theatre and drama in many world cultures and periods together with case studies demonstrating the methods and interpretive approaches used by today's theatre historians.' Very much what it says on the label. Reasons to buy the revised edition? More colour pictures; more African and Asian theatre; a new chapter on modernism; other chapters expanded and updated. A handy tome to have on the shelf

for reference, although there are a few downsides, including unhelpful non-linear timelines (!); and a regrettable lack of inclusion of physical and visual theatre forms ('mime' is only mentioned in the context of Roman theatre; 'performance art' gets a mere one paragraph boxout; contemporary street theatre and circus don't seem to exist). And although this revised edition seems to go up to 2009, there is little of the 21st Century here: no reference to Complicite, Castellucci, or Lepage, for example. On the plus side: good to see a substantial chapter on Popular Entertainments, 1850-1920. Perhaps trying to chart all theatre everywhere throughout all time, to the present, is too big a task for one book?

Bad Reputation: Performances, Essays, Interviews

Penny Arcade et al
Semiotext(e) | The MIT Press
ISBN: 978-1-58435-069-9
£14.95
www.semiotexte.com | www.mitpress.mit.edu

'Sometimes I walk down the street and men yell "Hey Honey what's under that skirt"... and I say, "Go ahead! Just look! I'm like a Barbie Doll... See! No holes! No nipples!"' This is a line from *Bitch! Dyke! Fagbag! Whore!* by Penny Arcade: teenage runaway, performer in the New York City Play-House of the Ridiculous, Warhol Factory starlet, close friend of Quentin Crisp, self-proclaimed fag-hag, and one of the instigators of 'spoken word performance art' (for want of a snappier term) – a loose grouping of American artists emerging in the 70s and 80s that could include Spalding Gray, Lenora Champagne, Karen Finley, Laurie Anderson, Holly Hughes and Rachel Rosenthal. What we get here are play texts; an interview with Chris Kraus; and essays or introductions to the texts by Ken Bernard, Sarah Schulman, Steve Zehenter and Stephen Bottom. Throughout, Penny Arcade reaffirms her reputation as the feisty outsider of performance art with her working-class-girl-from-Connecticut no-nonsense take on the world, her bawdy play on sexuality, and her refusal to play the snobby college-grad-dominated art game 'properly'. But as her friend Quentin Crisp said to her: 'Not to worry Ms Arcade. Time is kind to the non-conformist'. Perhaps Penny Arcade's time has finally come?

Improvisation in Rehearsal

John Abbott
Nick Hern Books
ISBN 978-1-854595-232
£10.99 Paperback
www.nickhernbooks.co.uk

Improvisation in Rehearsal, the follow-up to John Abbot's *The Improvisation Book* (also published by Nick Hern Books) comes with a forward by Mark Rylance, and reveals 'how improvisation enriches and enlivens the creation of characters, back-stories, relationships, shared histories and emotional lives'. Whereas the first book was more about starting from scratch (ostensibly aimed more at students than professional actors), this volume aims itself at professional actors and more advanced students – with an assumption that thus people are working with pre-scripted plays rather than using improvisation as a starting point for theatre-making, with copious examples of how to apply the impro process to scenes/characters from existing plays (eg Arthur Miller's *View From a Bridge*). That said, there is plenty to interest anyone making theatre of any sort, with a wealth of exercises drawn from many sources.

ONLINE

In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies

Eds. Live Art Development Agency in collaboration with Live Art UK
www.liveartuk.org/projects.htm | www.thisisunbound.co.uk |

In Time is a new collection of ten case studies designed to reflect the innovative and pioneering ways in which live art has responded to many of the exciting cultural challenges of our times, and to act as a resource for artists, promoters and others working in the sector. The case studies cover issues of Infrastructure (Professional Development; Artist-led Activities; Networks; Economies of Live Art), Public Engagement (Programming and Curating; Audiences; Internationalism; Education) and Legacies (Critical Writing; Archiving), and are complemented by contextualising essays from cultural commentator Sonya Dyer and critic Lyn Gardner. Published by the Live Art Development Agency in collaboration with Live Art UK. Available as a free download from Live Art UK. (Also available in print from Unbound, see website address above).

DVD + OTHER MEDIA

The Magic of Amici

Dir. Alan Bowyer
www.turtlekeyarts.org.uk

This new 90-minute DVD, narrated by Ben Kingsley, tells the story of Amici, a unique dance theatre company integrating able-bodied and disabled performers which, amongst many other notable achievements, has had a major impact challenging conventional attitudes about disability and the arts. The company was founded in 1980 by Wolfgang Stange, who remains its artistic director. Stange is one of a number of progressive UK-based dance artists who trained with the legendary Expressionist Dance choreographer/teacher Hilde Holger, and one of the unexpected pleasures of this DVD is the inclusion of rare footage of Hilde Holger. It was Holger who instilled in Stange the notion that you can never be 'too' anything to dance. Not too old, too disabled, too tall, too heavy: dance is for everyone – as Hilde says, 'You want to dance? Then dance'.

This ethos has been taken into all of Amici's productions and workshops over the past 30 years – from the very first show *I am Not Dead*, through successes such as *Ruckblick* (The Place 1982) and *Stars are out Tonight* (2005, made in collaboration with Improbable), to current production *Tightrope*, which premieres June 2010 at the Lyric, where Amici have been based for many a year.

A fantastic film that should be watched by anyone interested in dance, not just those interested in so-called 'disability arts'.

Purchase from Turtle Key Arts admin@turtlekeyarts.org.uk; comes with written resource pack.

Rajni Shah: Polaroids, Masks, DVD

Ten Kinds of Dinner
Lucy Cash
Limited edition: 10 prints (6 remaining): £25.00

Special edition masks
Lucille Acevedo-Jones
£25.00 each

2010 Dinner With America DVD
Dir. Beccy Edmunds
£5
www.rajnishah.com

Two new limited edition items are available as part of Rajni Shah's live show *Dinner with America*.

During 2009, Lucy Cash carried out a photographic project in which she took one Polaroid image every day for 365 days. To support Rajni Shah Projects, she has created a series of ten signed Polaroid images with Rajni, called Ten Kinds Of Dinner. These are some of the final images created using the original Polaroid film, which has now been discontinued.

The limited edition soft latex masks are created by Lucille Acevedo-Jones using a cast of Rajni's face – mask and ribbon available in red, white or blue! Once you have placed your order, Lucille will contact you to discuss your preferences.

Also available is a DVD documenting one of the final performances of *Dinner with America*, filmed by renowned dance videographer Becky Edmunds. The DVD includes Lucy Cash's black and white film that was part of the performance.

Books & Other Media compiled by John Ellingsworth & Dorothy Max Prior

Send information on publications and releases to lisitngs@totaltheatre.org.uk
Review copies of books and DVDs can be sent to:
Total Theatre Magazine
The Basement @ Argus Lofts
24 Kensington Street
Brighton
BN1 4AJ

Out & About



If all the world's a stage, and the world needs to change, what does it mean for our stages? Pippa Bailey reflects on changing times

At the time of writing the new Conservative–Liberal coalition government in the UK is announcing its first emergency spending cuts to reduce the national deficit, whilst the Euro is threatened by several failing economies in Europe. The erupting Icelandic volcano continues to threaten disruption to our travel plans, and a private laboratory in America has succeeded in producing artificial life. Sitting at my desk on a sunny spring day in a small commuter town in Kent, there is the irrepressible scent of change in the air.

Discussion at the Producers Forum at the ITC in April, just prior to the UK election, was dominated by politics. I was struck by the generational difference between the producers in the room. There were those of us (cough loudly) older producers avidly concerned about the political campaign and sharing thoughts on scenario plans based on who might gain power. The younger producers were generally less engaged with this process and perhaps it is experience of different regimes that guides this trend.

Although many of the younger companies may not have benefited directly from the Arts Council and the wealth of public subsidy invested during the Labour years, there is no doubt the impact of cuts on our field will be great. Cultural Minister Jeremy Hunt has suggested that the share the arts will sacrifice to help reduce the national debt is 66 million pounds. For most people, this is an unimaginable sum but to get some perspective these savings could be made by scrapping three or four major cultural institutions (but I am *not* suggesting this is a viable or appropriate solution). It's early days and the new government is promising a fairer society less reliant on the public purse. It will be interesting to see how this plays out in performance.

Travel is of increasing interest to many performing arts companies – whether this is to widen audience and influence abroad

or deepen cultural understanding through collaboration. Presenters too are looking further afield and including the UK in their travels as the devalued pound has made our work more affordable. Caravan, held in Brighton in early May, was the second biennial event for this initiative, which was set up to bring international promoters to the UK, and share with them the best of performance work from the South East of England. The work featured this year was of a high standard and included previous Total Theatre Award winners Kristin Fredricksson/Beady Eye Productions (2009), Tim Crouch (2007) and Dreamthinkspeak (2005).

Several presenters were delayed by ongoing ash cloud disruptions from the Eyjafjallajökull Volcano in Iceland. I had been in Berlin during the initial eruptions in April, visiting the IETM (Independent European Theatre Meeting), and subsequently stranded with hundreds of others and left considering the environmental impact of our meeting.

The increased focus on international touring must be weighed up in this light, and the Icelandic volcano has been a salutary reminder of how dependent so many of us are on cheap flights. So should we be focusing our attentions closer to home? I found myself in heated discussion when an English dance company manager insisted there just wasn't the choreographic talent here and she *needed* to employ people from Spain. I'm not convinced. Perhaps we need to explore broadening skills and audiences at home rather than seeking like-minded folk in far-flung places.

I was at Caravan to pitch an international project I am developing that seeks to share ideas and encourage artists in different countries to create locally relevant shows based on the same source material. I will be chained to my desk, travelling virtually for the foreseeable future!

Pippa Bailey is director of Total Theatre, who produce the Total Theatre Awards at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2010

The Total Theatre Awards are delighted to be back in 2010 for another exciting month this August at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Here are the key dates:

Registration for shows presented at the Fringe wishing to be considered for an Award closes 30 July
Assessment period: 6–18 August
Shortlist announcement: 19 August
Winners announcement: 27 August

Total Theatre are very grateful for support from the following forward-thinking organisations: barbicanbite10, London International Mime Festival, New Wolsey Theatre & Pulse Festival, Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Royal & Derngate Northampton, University of Chichester & The Storerroom, University of Winchester, Wales Millennium Centre.

Further details of how to register shows for consideration, eligibility, the assessment and judging process, and of course the shortlist and winners announcements, can be found on the Total Theatre website. Enquiries to Pippa Bailey on awards@totaltheatre.org.uk www.totaltheatre.org.uk/awards

Image: Caravan artist and previous Total Theatre Award winner Tim Crouch, who is taking *The Author* to The Traverse Theatre for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, August 2010. Photo by Lisa Barnard.



EXPLORE

EXPLORE RURAL CREATIVE PERFORMANCE RETREATS AT
THE WEST BARN, BRADFORD ON AVON WILTSHIRE
AUTUMN 2010 / SPRING 2011

EXPLORE is a dynamic 2 day professional workshop for performance artists wishing to develop their practice.

SUKOSTA shares its expertise of theatre making and supports the exploration of creators in discovering and fulfilling their artistic potential. Through movement, and focus on 'the essential', professionals will explore their own personal direction through an encouraging group experience.

Cost £99: Workshop and food included;
Very reasonably priced accommodation available upon request.

EXPLORE 2: 15th/16th September 2010
EXPLORE 3: 5th/6th February 2011 (weekend)

To book or more information:
email: info@sukosta.com
Tel: 0117 230 3590

"Their work in my opinion is artistically strong and of an International standard and their working process, which seamlessly combines practical exploration with training exercises, is inspirational, both as an educational and as a creative tool."

Dr Ernst Fischer, Performance Artist and Creative Research Fellow at Roehampton University

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www.sukosta.com

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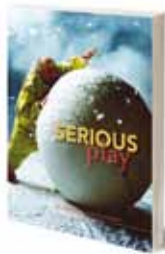
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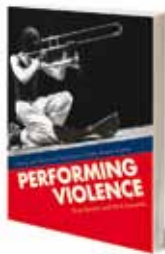
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