

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE



REACH FOR THE STARS WITH AWARD-WINNING ASTRONAUT JAMES BAKER

THE THRILL OF IT ALL! TIM ETHELLS IN HIS OWN VOICE

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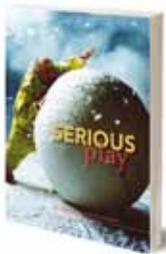
MY MATHEMATICS: MARTIN CREED AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE

YOU ME BUM BUM TRAIN - THE INSIDER STORY OF BITE'S SITE-SPECIFIC SUCCESS

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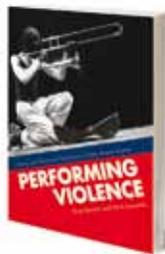
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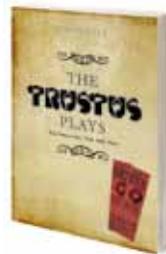
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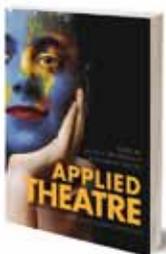
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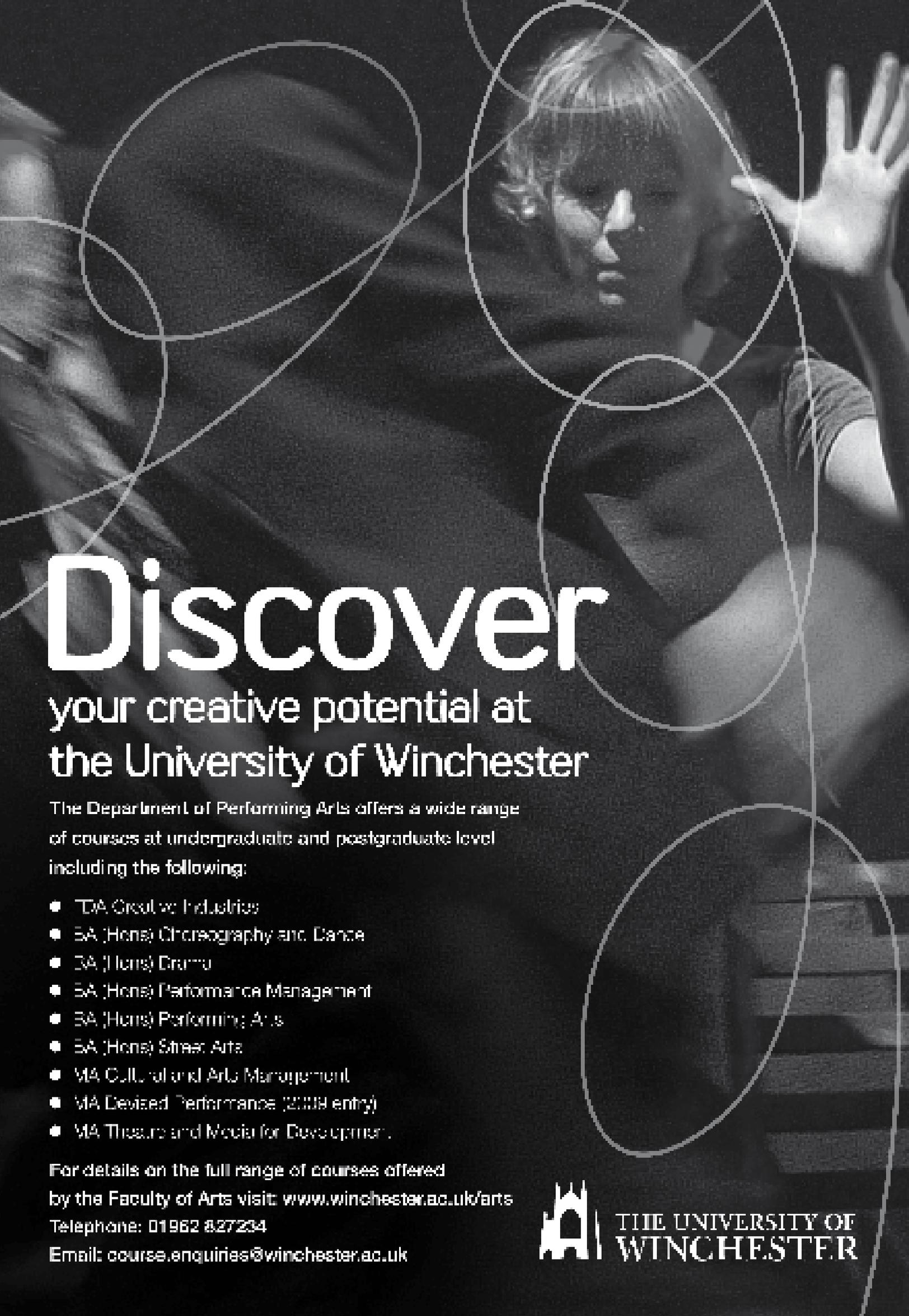
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1 issue per volume



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TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE

Volume 22 Issue 03 Autumn 2010

Do labels and definitions matter? On one level, not at all. Whether something defines itself as, for example, 'mime' or 'physical theatre' or 'visual theatre' wouldn't necessarily affect what it actually looked like onstage. Similarly, we could worry ourselves senseless over the 'performance', 'performance art' and 'live art' conundrum (and believe me, people do).

My usual kool-aid acid test is just to see how the artist defines themselves and their work: if the artist sees herself as a 'dance artist' then I see the work as dance (probably), regardless of whether it includes music or spoken text or narrative or abstracted movement or all/none of the above.

I'm musing on this in relation to two works by Turner Prize winning artist Martin Creed (reviewed in this issue of Total Theatre Magazine). One, perhaps as we'd expect, presented at an art gallery, and one – less obviously – a 'ballet' presented at the Traverse Theatre. And why not? An artist can surely choose his own materials to suit, and in this case those 'materials' were five ballet dancers, a stage and an indie rock group (his own). Then there's Adrian Howells' one-on-one works (*The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding* is reviewed in this issue) which some people struggle to see as theatre – but apart from any other considerations, and there are plenty, Adrian Howells is a theatre-maker so whatever he chooses to frame as theatre is, in my book, theatre – not 'merely' massage or therapy.

But what if an artist states clearly that he doesn't want a piece of work viewed as art? Is it down to the artist, or is it how it is received that makes it what it is? This is a novel twist on the tired old 'But is it art?' question.

A piece by another Turner Prize winner, Jeremy Deller, has recently gone on display at the Imperial War Museum. Entitled *Baghdad, 5 March 2007* it features a car wrecked in the bombing of the Mutanabbi Street book market, which resulted in the deaths of 38 people. The actual car, nothing more or less: an extraordinary sculptural image of the horrors of war. Deller, interviewed about the piece, said that he didn't want to show it in a gallery because he didn't want the problem of people thinking it was an artwork – although that hasn't stopped critics applauding it as the great piece of war art that it is. Double bluff to see off potential bad press about 'bad taste art', or an odd denial of the power of art to comment on war? All rather strange and interesting as the work, originally titled *It Is What It Is*, had been shortlisted for the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square (losing out, in the end, to Antony Gormley's disappointing *One And Other*).

So where does that leave us? Is it art because I'm an artist and I say so? And if I'm an artist and I say it isn't – am I right to do so? And can I make all the decisions about my work?

People sometimes get cross when artists stop making work, or destroy or hide away their own artwork or writings (as Ted Hughes did with the only poem he wrote about Sylvia Plath's death – recently released, after much soul-searching, by Hughes' widow Carol); or when artists change tack and make work in a different medium; or switch from comedy to tragedy or vice versa; or state that their work should be viewed in a certain way (as theatre not dance; or as performance art not theatre; or perhaps as something other than art).

This brings us back to the idea that ultimately it's the artist's choice. It's why we, at Total Theatre, resist narrow definitions and unhelpful labels, preferring to let the work speak for itself. So you'll find all sorts of ways and means within these pages. There's bread-making (at LIFT), horse-riding (at IF), ladder-climbing (at the Forest Fringe, Edinburgh – *30 Days to Space* winning a Total Theatre Award for Innovation), loitering at bus stations (at artFart in Iceland), and the giving away of money (Sara Juli disposing of her life-savings at Sacred). And to cap it all, Pippa Bailey (in Out & About) reflects on the heavenly goings-on that outdo anything theatrical we earthlings can produce.

Some of this might tally with your expectations, and fit your definition, of theatre/performance/art, and some might not – regardless, we hope you enjoy the mix.

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Published by:

University of Winchester in association
with Total Theatre

Total Theatre Magazine
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Winchester SO22 4NR

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News and listings items: listings@totaltheatre.org.uk

Copy and ads booking deadline for the next issue is 1 November 2010. Total Theatre Volume 22 Issue 04 will be published December 2010.

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Front cover image: Stacy Makishi The Making of Bull at Sacred, Chelsea Theatre, November 2010. Photo V Ryder.

Diary of a Spaceman

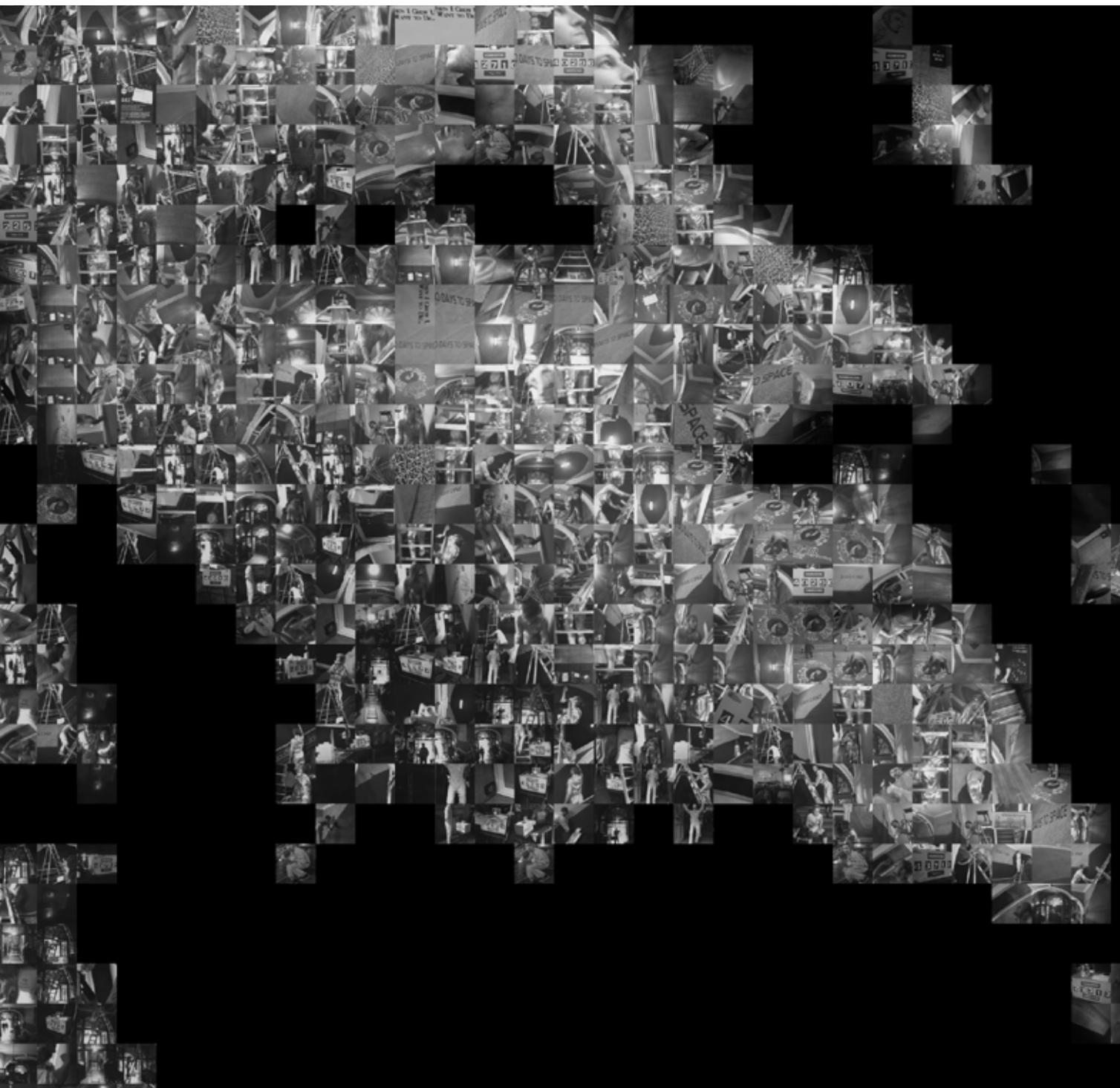
In August 2010, James Baker conquered space – wowing the Forest Fringe and winning a Total Theatre Award for his endeavours. Here, the urban spaceman's diary is opened to reveal how he did it



Spacemen need to watch what they say... On leaving the earth's orbit in Apollo 8 for the first time in humanity's existence Michael Collins prosaically states, 'You're go for 'TLL.' What could have perhaps entered the history books as the zenith of human achievement was sadly marginalised due to the lack of colour in Collins' orations. 'One Small Step for Man' this was not. In fact, a great criticism of astronauts is that they are often not the best equipped to document the experiential/phenomenological nature of their missions. How often has an astronaut waxed lyrical about the smell of the moon? It is with these instances in mind that I wonder what best to tell of my experiences of space in just a few hundred words. Here goes...

I've made the decision to fulfil a childhood ambition. I'm going to travel to space. I'm going to become an astronaut. And I'm going to do it all with a borrowed ladder, chalk pastels and an eBay bought silver suit. Or at least this is the idea.

The mission: Edinburgh festival is the location. By climbing a 6ft ladder 1467 times each day for 30 continuous days I will eventually reach a height of 50 miles: space. Each climb of the 6ft ladder will be documented by me drawing a chalk star onto the wall. After the 30 days the stars will have made a panorama of



space that surround the audience who observe from below. In the process of reaching 'Space' I will also have created it.

Before leaving for Edinburgh I post a letter to NASA. I tell them that I've calculated how many times I'd need to climb a 6ft ladder to equal the height of space; I ask whether they'd honour me with official astronaut status if I complete my endeavour. I even attempt to coerce them with the inclusion of complementary badges that read 'I want to be an astronaut'. Weeks after, when I begin my epic adventure to space, the response letter still hasn't arrived. I continue undeterred. Below are fragments of my diary entries over the 30-day project.

Start Time: 10:00am, 1st August 2010

Day 1: Extremely difficult first 100 climbs. Doubt the project already. A lady comments on what an environmentally friendly way it is to get to space. I wake up needing to wee throughout the night as I have drunk so much water in order to keep hydrated.

Day 2: Wake up to much stiffness in my legs. Stretch out. Although my body aches much more than the first day I am finding the climbing easier. A child calls me stupid. She wants to be a farmer

when she grows up. I wash my space suits and one of them has turned transparent in the wash. A ring of spots has appeared around my neck where my suit rubs.

Day 3: Aled Jones (of *Snowman* fame) pops in to see me. He returns with his daughter an hour later who was 'desperate to see the spaceman'. Andy Roberts (my Ground Control) now has a routine of treating himself to a cigarette after 800 climbs. We are both developing habits to get us through the day. Right knee beginning to twinge. Today's run is the quickest so far.

Day 4: I entered the Forest Café to find a tin labelled 'Space Cream'. The masseur, Alex, who works next door, had concocted a cream to treat my muscles at the end of the day; my first bespoke health product.

Day 5: Spaceman nourishment includes: 3 x Lucozades (I can suggest Cherry or Lite thus far), 3x bananas, 3x cereal bars and some kind of chicken wrap or fajita for lunch + my own weight in water. On popping out for lunch (in full astronaut regalia) I was met with broad Scottish shouts of 'How far have you got spaceman?' Word seems to be spreading.



Day 6: Receive some freeze-dried space food in post. I am coming to the conclusion that I will have to cover the ceiling in stars as well as the walls. I am now at the height of Concorde. It's getting lonely up in Space.

Day 7: Space chafing. My suit is now starting to rub in unspeakable places, there are calluses on my palms from drawing, and blisters on my feet from climbing. Broken the 10,000 climb mark; our first significant milestone.

Day 8: I will include here a word on a lovely chap called Brent who has visited me every day, and soon will be returning home. Brent doesn't say a lot but his presence nonetheless spurs me on. When quizzed on why he continues to come back he responded with, 'I don't know, but I feel like I'm helping somehow'. He's right, he is.

Day 9: The publication of an article in The Guardian about my endeavour marks a personal milestone.

Day 10: We are visited by a three- or four- year-old boy who watches me climb and descend for about 20 minutes. He tells his mum that he wants to be a spaceman so I gift him with a badge that reads, 'I want to be an astronaut'. My spacecraft is beginning to accrue minor damage with bolts coming loose from the ladder. She has been a trusty companion in this exploration thus far and I would be sad to see her replaced. I hope that the remaining journey is free of turbulence. I finished the day a third of the way to space. The journey continues.

Day 11: I have developed a new name due to my shifting physical shape. I have been re-dubbed 'The Ass-tronaut' due to my developing glutes. Quite the opposite effect to regular astronauts I believe, who tend instead to suffer from muscle atrophy. My body is definitely changing shape.

Day 12: The day ends with a text message from my mother who warned me of the incoming Perseid Meteor Shower (set to hit tonight). It would seem that even astronauts' mums worry.

Day 13: Lack of documentation today. Appeared on the cover of The Times and celebrated too hard resulting in hangover. Over and Out.

Day 14: Upon hitting 20,000 climbs Andy and myself mark the occasion with two audience members who, upon an agonisingly slow countdown began a sporadic victory dance. The elation was minor and unexpected but genuine.

Day 15: Deborah Pearson from Forest Fringe remarked upon how my canopy of chalk-etched space is similar to actual space in that no longer can you perceive it in its entirety all at once. I get a kick from artists noticing characteristics of my work that I hadn't seen myself. An American girl proposes to me. She suggests that if I were to become an astronaut certified by NASA, I would require American citizenship. I told her that I'd think about it. I am half way to space.

Day 16: The ladder is shredding my hands but on the whole I'm in good shape. I have experienced even more significant damage to my spacecraft. The third rung of the ladder's rivet (one of two) has flown off. It's a trusty vessel but I worry about its stability for the final leg of the mission.

Day 17: A lady came in this morning keen to get my contact details so that she could re-email a contact that she has at NASA. I accrue a new pain in a muscle above my right knee. This aggravates me on every descent of the ladder. Every ten or so climbs I was asking Rob (Robert Jude Daniels of Bootworks) for a countdown of how many left. I wanted to give up. Serendipitously on the final climb two girls entered 'The Forest' clutching a bag inside of which was a collection of space-themed sweets. They said it was to 'get me through tomorrow'. Every time I want to give up I find a new reason to carry on.

Day 18: Things are not well at space camp. After the initial 200 climbs my right knee begins to provide me with some serious problems. Every climb elicits a different grimace. It genuinely takes



all my resolve to carry on. The pain is mostly on the descent. I am determined to complete my journey – however, if tomorrow proves as difficult I need to consider the effects of permanent damage. I am able to alter my technique slightly and use my arm muscles to take some strain. The repetitive nature of the task also allows very little time for repair or rest. I am described by one Forest Fringe intern as ‘a well-loved dog that you should put out of its misery but can’t’. Because of the shift in technique my hands have developed sizeable blisters. At one point today I had to question whether the water running down my face was tears or sweat.

Day 19: Finally finish the ceiling of The Forest foyer. The last star chalked onto the ceiling sparked an impromptu round of applause, woop and cheer from an assembled audience who had been watching intently, waiting for me to finish.

Day 20: As with any space mission, I should imagine, boredom sets in today. My right knee begins to play up again. I am given an A4 piece of paper which reads, ‘THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS PAIN! PAIN IS WEAKNESS LEAVING THE BODY.’

Day 21: For part of my ascent a chap called Blue joins me. He climbs the stairs, keeping pace with my ladder climbing. He imagines

reaching great heights.

Day 22: One lady today remarks that the stars were akin to the counting of the years of internment by prisoners on their cell walls; counting away the numbers left.

Day 23: Met an astrophysicist, he will forward news of my journey to ‘The right kind of people.’ I may be an astronaut yet.

Day 24: A letter from the aforementioned Brent admonishes against the perils of falling into alcohol abuse once my mission finishes. Apparently it’s a common occurrence for astronauts to try and equal the dizzying heights of euphoria experienced through space travel with some form of intoxicating equivalent post landing. I shall take heed and enjoy in moderation.

Day 25: The only audience to speak of was a cheese-plant that’s been newly situated in the foyer; and even that looked nonplussed by the whole affair.

Day 26: An e-mail from the manufacturer of my ladder reads, ‘One of the most famous expeditions in the world, the ascent to the summit of Mount Everest in May 1953, was completed By Sir Edmund Hilary and Tenzing Norgay and involved the use of a Lyte sectional aluminium ladder. We also believe that ladder is still there today, so very appropriate in the circumstances.’ One audience member also gifts me with the motto *Per Ardua Ad Astra*: Through Adversity to the Stars.

Day 27: We’re now well over 39,000 climbs (our target 43,710) – the end is in sight. I was joined briefly by two young girls who raced me at climbing by using the stairs opposite my ladder.

Day 28: Today I fail (for the first time) to complete my daily target of 1457 climbs. I now have an extra 100 climbs to do tomorrow. I’m excited about finishing the mission but a welcome return to earth will be the real reward now.

Day 29: Due to a numerical oversight I manage to make up the missing 112 climbs from yesterday before lunch; an extremely happy accident. There’s still tomorrow to go. I have no idea if there’ll be anybody left in Edinburgh to celebrate with... I guess we’ll see.

Day 30: I put on my spacesuit with a mixture of reluctance and relief. The last leg seems to take forever. We decide to leave ten climbs for a countdown at 8.00pm. A smoke machine floods the stairwell and David Bowie begins to play on a guitar from downstairs. We heroically as possible try to negotiate a smoke-filled stairway and complete the endeavour to much elation.

I can only reflect positively on what has been a monumentally character shaping month of my life. I set out on this mission ignorant of what might follow. I couldn’t have envisaged it being as taxing, wonderful, moving and exhausting as what transpired. I’ve climbed through fashion shows, festivals, anniversaries, burglaries, birthdays, awards ceremonies and banquets (and all the while I’ve been supported by some of the most wonderfully generous people). And at the end of it all... I’ve failed. I have yet to hear from NASA. I am still not officially an astronaut. But at least for a fleeting moment in Edinburgh this year I felt like one... and I think some other people believed it too. This is the spaceman’s last transmission. The view’s beautiful up here and I have yet to come down from space.

Finish Time: 8:00pm, 30 August 2010

30 Days to Space was presented by Bootworks at Forest Café, Forest Fringe Edinburgh, August 2010. It won a Total Theatre Award for Innovation. www.bootworkstheatre.co.uk

Spaceman photomontage / artwork by Robert Jude Daniels.

Taking the Pulse

Stephen Freeman, director of Pulse, tells us how the feast that is his festival is brought to the table



Bryony Kimmings *Sex Idiot*



30 Bird Productions *Poland 3 Iran 2*

Pulse Fringe Festival, now in its tenth year, takes pride in its nurturing of new work and artists alike. For two and a half weeks each year the incubator, which takes twelve months to reach hatching stage, brings to life some of the rarest of breeds; a great deal locally produced, and most of it organic.

The festival, originally conceived as a platform on which to present a flavour of the region, is today brought together through a rigorous application and selection process, with a programme that includes a variety of international work, but is still home to the best of the region. The importance of such a festival is twofold. Not only does it feed a new-found audience who seem increasingly hungry for innovative work, but it also plays an important role in the industry – profiling artists and their work in a safe and structured environment, whilst providing makers of new work with the support, resources, and, in some cases, knowledge to present their work (at varying stages of development, including tour-ready) to a genuine, supportive and hungry audience.

The job of the festival director or programmer is varied and can include a multitude of tasks that can only be learnt by doing, but the most important elements by far are those of quality and balance. With so many theatre festivals arriving like fairgrounds on the horizon, it is no longer acceptable to present a pot-luck, mixed bag of work with no assurance on quality, and slap Fringe on the title somewhere. On the contrary, the best fringe experiences I have ever had may have been void of the customary devices employed in the presentation of theatre, but the importance of quality has always been acknowledged. Curating Pulse and selecting the works presented is tough, but

imperative for a festival like this to survive. Get the quality, balance and diversity right and you've a fighting chance of succeeding.

There is a given with Pulse, however, that offers a helping hand. Escalator – an Arts Council England, East initiative – is a talent development programme providing a rich array of high-quality emerging artists and work. It's important not to see Pulse as the stepping-stone to Edinburgh, but one can't help but acknowledge that for many companies, getting to Edinburgh is an important step. Pulse is ideally positioned to preview work and there's still time to nip back into the rehearsal room before the long journey up north. Escalator East to Edinburgh has become known as a benchmark of quality (as evidenced in the Total Theatre Awards winners and shortlists over recent years – Escalator shows always make a mark, with Shams' *Reykjavik* making it to the shortlist this year in the Innovation category, and Bryony Kimmings' *Sex Idiot* scooping the accolade in the Emerging Company category).

One might think that the presentation of new work or emerging artists doesn't always provide an opportunity to make prior assessment, but that is why regional RFOs (Regularly Funded Organisations) like the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich (producer of Pulse) are best placed to be collecting together this smorgasbord of delights, because they are already super-engaged. Any venue with such commitment to the development and presentation of work with a mission objective for quality should be (and is) already playing with these people.

Another major impact the New Wolsey has on participants of Pulse is the contacts it brings to the table. The theatre is producing, co-producing and presenting work all year round – now use that address book to put together an audience for an emerging company and it's got a fighting chance.

But there has to be balance: Tapas is far more exciting than a bowl of olives and naturally has something for a far broader range of palates. It's not always possible to be an up-to-date expert in every genre so recruiting the guidance and knowledge of your counterparts is fundamental. Pulse uses the breadth of regional knowledge to advise on programming, from the Town Hall Galleries' Visual Arts Curators to Dance Programmers from the Jerwood Dancehouse. It would, however, be unachievable to make a festival that means something to everyone, so Pulse, whilst it's in my hands, will encompass the character and personality of its programmer.

A key requirement to perform as part of the festival is that of sustainability. Work that has no intention of a future life will not



Shams Reykjavik

be invited to participate. Fringe Festivals should try to assume a nurturing perspective. Make the safest, free-st playground you can, even invest in bouncy tarmac, but always know that part of your job is to prepare your players for bigger games, where the tarmac might not be so soft.

Festivals and showcase events that know their role in the journey of the artist or work offer the company a far better experience and greater chance of achieving its ambition through an ethos and infrastructure that is totally focused on the artist. (This is the secret of the Forest Fringe's success.) I recently attended BiteSize Festival at Warwick Arts Centre – because of the line-up, I knew that the programmers were equally artist-focused. Work in development from artists like Bryony Kimmings and Caroline Horton got a much-deserved outing in front of great audiences. A sea of promoter pass lanyards is always a tell-tale sign that the organisers have done their work and served the artists well. It's very encouraging to see exciting work-in-progress performed for an audience that can offer a future life for the work.

Presenting work at a festival can be an expensive exercise for artists or new companies. Only by understanding this and removing as much of this risk as possible will we truly do our job in promoting new work. The last thing we want makers/devisers of new work doing is spending creative time on tasks that producing venues are experts at and so can readily advise or administer.

It's a complicated thing mounting Pulse Fringe, not least because of the number and variety of spaces occupied by work during its two-and-a-half-week run. The increase in applications from site-specific work must represent a growing interest and lure for theatre in less than traditional spaces; it's also pretty hard for a town with only a certain number of theatres to find spaces for so much work.

The key to Pulse's successes must lie in the uncompromising focus on quality, balance and diversity. An increase in ticket sales, a 200% rise in applications, 22 more productions than 2009 and six more venues is one way to measure the successes of Pulse Fringe Festival 10. However, you could argue the more important growth is represented in the number of regional artists presenting work, and the quality of the pieces presented is a far greater measure of the festival's successes.

Stephen Freeman is artistic director and programmer of Pulse, and general manager of the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich. www.wolseytheatre.co.uk

From Cambridge to Ipswich – via Reykjavik

Jonathan Young, artistic director of Shams, reflects on the making of Reykjavik, which was presented at PULSE festival in June 2010, and at Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August as part of the Escalator East to Edinburgh programme

It's almost three years since I moved to Cambridge. A couple of weeks after that move I took part in an initiative by the Escalator Creative Producers network for artists in the East of England – a site-specific workshop called *Out of the Box*, held at The Junction, and curated by the indomitable American artist Janice Perry.

I've come on this week-long intensive with no expectations and no experience of site-specific work except as a punter. To be honest, I'm also somewhat sceptical of a site-specific workshop taking place in *a theatre*... But Janice's no-nonsense attitude to creating and performing work in *any* space is so refreshing ('Make a piece of work in ten minutes') that I find myself excited by throwing out the rule book for what's usually possible in conventional theatre and by what another

kind of audience-performer interaction might look like. Right from the first afternoon, our group colonise stairwells, first-aid rooms, toilets, the bar's drinks store and photocopy room (in a wonderfully salacious piece on office relations by Ania Bas and Adam James); every space throughout The Junction except the theatre auditorium, it seems.

By day three, I am struggling to find an uncolonised space in the building and end up on the stage – my comfort zone, perhaps – when I notice the white cyclorama hanging by the back wall, and I discover there is an unused space here: a slim one-metre of space that faces a white obscurity through which shapes, colours and lights can be glimpsed. I've recently been having vivid dreams of living in Iceland seven years earlier and given the time pressure to just make work without reflection, I develop a simple text based on an episode from that period, paradoxically delivered intimately at a distance via the walkie-talkies we have by now totally appropriated from the gracious Junction staff.

I have no idea at the time that this piece of a few minutes duration will become the seed for a new show, *Reykjavik*, and an entirely new way of working for Shams. Janice leaves us with the invitation to trust and to follow our creative impulses 'as far as you can take them' for making work that does not necessarily require conventional theatrical forms, and I find this incredibly heartening. At this point, all I know is that I am excited by making an unconventional performance – more interdisciplinary, installational, with the audience's experience of the space at its heart, but it is the start of a voyage of discovery over the next two and a half years in search of a form, following Janice's inspiring proposition.

During the next year and a half, the piece has three scratch performances – from a ten-minute jam at the Junction, to a half-hour piece (again at the Junction) to a full hour at South Street, Reading (with the amazing gift of a three-week funded residency there) and an initial attempt at a complete show. I choose to start the intensive development with a team of designers and a dramaturg in the room as much as possible, and though over the entire process it is a struggle to maintain this relationship with the designers as much as I'd like, this early fortnight (again at The Junction) helps lay a foundation for experimentation – in the first week, Paul Burgess, our set and video designer brings in a pair of cardboard specs like those old 3-D ones, but the lenses are tracing paper. Six months down the line in Reading, this inspires me – in conjunction with Anthony Gormley's *Blind Light* installation – to spray-paint goggles for the audience to wear towards the conclusion of the piece, to give them an experience of 'white out' and a recapitulation of their initial experience behind the white curtain; it's a small example of a collaborative, evolving creative process that produces surprising possibilities for developing a multi-sensory experience just not possible in end-on, sit-down theatre.

At this point – early 2009 – I hear that Roger McCann from the Arts Council has been asking: 'Will *Reykjavik* ever be finished?' This is after a total of five weeks of development. However, it's not through a desire to keep tinkering that will take us another year before entering final rehearsals, but the formidable task of raising funds and building relationships with interested venues to realise fully the creative vision 'as far as you can take it' and to tour the finished piece around the South-East and East in May 2010. This is, after all, a piece for limited audience numbers, technically sophisticated with bespoke sound, lighting and video – I wouldn't necessarily recommend that combination as a typical *modus operandi* for obvious logistic and financial reasons, but again I have been heartened since by discovering that if a piece of work is sufficiently distinctive and memorable, venues and audiences respond well to that experience.

Fortunately, Pulse director Steve Freeman has seen the piece in its early form two years earlier, and is one of these people who are sufficiently excited by it to talk about its inclusion in Pulse 2010. Steve locates the Town Hall Galleries in Ipswich as the site for *Reykjavik* and I somewhat nervously dispatch production manager John to check it out. He reassures me that we will make it work. It is just as you'd imagine: a large, high-ceilinged room with paintings on the wall. Come the first weekend of Pulse, though, we have transformed

it (with the help of an immense truss) into the white box that the audience enter, as through a glacier, into the performance. The space is almost too cavernous, and like some other venues on the tour, the first of our two shows is largely about discovering the characteristics of this particular space, and how audiences react to it.

Skip forward three months, and we have swung the other way as we try to accommodate the show into a space half that size in the Bongo Club in Edinburgh. It has been a challenge to identify a space at Edinburgh that is both feasible and affordable for *Reykjavik*, given that almost all Fringe spaces are typically structured around an equation of 'max bums on seats per sq metre' whilst *Reykjavik* requires no fixed seating at all. But despite the challenges of sharing the space with a busy nightclub, an epic daily get-in and get-out (longer than most Fringe shows in their own right), and the smaller space, we manage to make these work in our favour, by playing on the space's capacity for intimacy. And there is also the benefit of a routine, running a show repeatedly in the same space, where you come to realise to what extent the way audiences behave is a function of the use of space, and just how one particular group dynamic can differ from another.

As with many artists, themes recur in my work, and so it's no surprise that *Reykjavik* is ultimately a lot about memory – a subject explored in both an earlier show, *The Garden* and a piece now in development, *Darkroom*. What was so rewarding with *Reykjavik* was the search for its form, so that when Janice Perry shows up unexpectedly in London in April to attend our first stumble-through, it's wonderful to celebrate with her the piece's evolution and how as a result it has changed the way I think about audience, space and performance forever.

Reykjavik's creative development was supported by a Wellcome Trust Art Award, Arts Council England East, and the Escalator East to Edinburgh programme. Shams also acknowledges the support of South Street, The Junction and Dance Digital in providing rehearsal space.

Reykjavik was shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010 in the Innovation category, and is due to tour nationally in Spring 2011.

More details of this and the company's other work at www.shams.org.uk

Go East!

Dorothy Max Prior heads to Ipswich for a Pulsating weekend

Ah, a weekend in sunny Ipswich – who could resist? Pulse festival comes at the start of the summer, hot on the heels of a swathe of May festivals – Brighton, Norfolk & Norwich, Bristol's Mayfest, and Manchester's Queer Up North – with a packed programme that spans end-of-May to mid-June. It's an eclectic mix, covering new writing, physical and devised theatre, dance, live art, circus – and some things that are all or none of the above.

My brief weekend sampling the festival's delights gives a pretty good picture of the remit: there's a great spread of artforms and modes of practice; there are premieres, work-in-progress showings and touring shows; there is work that has been developed in the East of England region, work from other British regions, and a smattering of international companies – including the renowned Ontroerend Goed, here with their controversial speed date cum group therapy show, *Internal*.

I arrive Friday night, in time for a Paine's Plough presentation of readings from four writers – Molly Davies, Joel Horwood, Ian McHugh, and Niki Werenowska – presenting under the banner 'Come to Where I'm From' (a six-month national project involving 61 playwrights from

New Wolsey Theatre *Orpheus and Eurydice*

across the UK, each invited to return to their home towns to write plays about the places that shaped them). So a sense of place, and in most cases a use of the self as a starting point, is on the menu. Interesting in a Radio 4 short story kind of way...

Later that evening, I'm on more familiar territory with the New Wolsey's circus-theatre project, *Orpheus and Eurydice*. The company pulled together for this project are theatre director Peter Rowe, aerialist/circus director Vicki Amedume, video designer Mark Morreau, together with numerous luminaries of the physical/devised theatre and contemporary circus world, including Sandy Grierson, James Roberts, and various members of Ockham's Razor. The myth is one which has been used as a starting point for many physical/visual theatre companies – dreamthinkspeak, Wildworks, and Faulty Optic being three that spring to mind instantly – but this doesn't put me off: if anything, I am excited to see what next could be done with this archetypal story of love, loss and the pull of worldly desires.

This time round, the story is set in the world of rock stardom and high fashion. God of music Orpheus (Alex Poulter) is just that: a contemporary god, singing his heart out high above us (on a scaffold bridge across the upstage area). Eurydice (Meline Danielewicz) is the queen of the catwalk: strong and sassy yet with an edgy fragility (the balance played with great skill and sensitively). She's never off-camera, and Mark Morreau's excellent live-feed video captures its intrusiveness beautifully. Pre-recorded film is also integrated wonderfully well into the performance text – in particular a harrowing descent for Orpheus who seemingly hurtles down the side of a block of flats. Circus and theatre are often uncomfortable bedfellows, but the company pull it off beautifully: there's nothing in this show that doesn't have a good reason for being there, and everything is executed with flair and confidence. If there is a criticism it is that the show as seen has something of a 'trailer' quality, précising or short-handing much of the story. But of course it is early days...

Later that evening, sex and love were again on the menu, but served up in a very different recipe. *Sex: Idiot*, by East of England artist Bryony Kimmings, is not for the faint-hearted. It weaves Bryony's pre-existing cabaret sketches and performance art vignettes together into a one-woman theatre show reflecting on her sexual history – all kick-started by her discovery that she had a common sexually transmitted infection. (At least, the presumption is that this is all autobiographical, although now that she's crossed over the line from performance art to theatre, who knows?). It's a merry melange of costume changes (from birdwoman to camp matador); bad-taste songs; comic dances;

ironic performative actions that reference all sorts of other artists, (from Annie Sprinkle's speculum to Bob Dylan's Subterranean Homesick Blues – this reworked as a litany of the vast array of words and phrases for female genitalia, some less familiar than others: 'velvet sausage wallet' was new to me). Toss in a no-holds-barred audience participation episode (moustache made from donated pubic hair, anyone?) and you have a show that is about as far removed from a nice night out at the theatre as you could imagine. This is the first outing here at Pulse, and on this showing there is still a way to go, so it was great to see what a month at the Edinburgh Fringe did for the show – by the end of the run there it had really settled in, with the cricks in the structure eased out, and Bryony confidently in charge of her material.

The following day starts bright and early with a rehearsed reading of *Invisible*, a co-production between Transport Theatre and the New Wolsey. Written by Croatian playwright Tena Štivičić and directed by Douglas Rintoul, it tells the story, on the one hand, of a group of immigrants struggling to survive in the UK, and on the other, a trio of well-to-do English liberals struggling with their relationships. Darren Johnston of Array is credited as choreographer, but it isn't apparent from this showing quite how that is working – although we are reassured in the post-show discussion that his influence is there.

Also from the East of England region, 30 Bird Productions' *Poland 3 Iran 2* is about football (appropriately enough, this being a Saturday afternoon in World Cup month). But it's more, so much more – a beautiful exploration of boyhood, of family eccentricities, of migration, of political resistance, and of a father-son relationship as experienced by two men, one of Polish heritage (visual artist Chris Dobrowolski) and one Iranian (30 Bird's director, Mehrdad Seyf). The show takes the form of a performative lecture set in a (real) Ipswich pub, the two men eagerly swapping the remote control to take charge of the Powerpoint. Delights include an onsite 'toilet in a shed' kitted out with a model train track; in-depth on-screen analysis of Subbuteo accessories through the ages; and some wonderfully distressed film footage of the legendary Poland-Iran football match that is the uniting moment for our two heroes.

And so the final whistle blows, football shirts are exchanged, match over – time to leave. My 36-hour sojourn in Suffolk is done. There was so much that I missed at Pulse – but I'm glad to have at least made it to the opening weekend, where the focus was on locally-made work. What I saw showed me a vibrant festival offering a little something for everyone, right across the board.

Pulse 2010 ran 27 May to 12 June. Dorothy Max Prior attended the opening weekend 27 & 28 May 2010. Applications for Pulse 2011 are open now. See www.pulsefringe.com

Correction/clarification:

In the last issue of Total Theatre Magazine (Summer 2010), we mentioned that a work-in-progress showing of *Free Time Radical*, a co-production with the New Wolsey Theatre, would be appearing at Pulse 2010. Sadly this wasn't possible because of injury, and the show will now premiere in 2011 (venues tbc, but will include a run at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe). We would also like to correct the mistaken credit to Matt Ball as director – the piece is directed by Jamie Wood for The Frequency D'Ici (previously known as Top of the World). Apologies to both Matt Ball and Jamie Wood for the mis-information!

Mother and Daughter Flying

Director, site-specific theatre maker, aerialist, mother...
Daniela Essart from Scarabeus reflects on how she reconciles parenthood with her artistic career

In 1988 my partner Søren Nielsen and I formed Scarabeus with a vision to make site-responsive multi-disciplinary aerial and visual theatre performance in unusual places. In 1999 (when the company was eleven years old) we had a child together. The birth of Naissa made me realise that being a mother is the most important thing in my life and work. This is the story of how the company's artistic practice has changed since the birth of our daughter, and how having a child has enhanced and enlightened our work.

Over the years the company has created some amazing projects, both touring shows and large scale site-responsive aerial commissions for major UK festivals; as well as dipping abroad to Shanghai for the First Grand Prix of China, abseiling the mountains around Belo Horizonte in Brazil, taking over a castle in my native North Italy, and 'flying' (aerial dance/creative abseiling) from a satellite dish in Trinidad...

But after more than a decade of touring, the birth of Naissa brought substantial changes, as it became increasingly more difficult to balance the demands of being an artist and a parent. Not least were the practical considerations such as: how do you tour when you have a child at school? Here we had our best 'project' ever, not a Scarabeus project, but a personal one: how to reconcile the needs of the child and those of the company?

Naissa had been attending the Archway Children's Centre for over a year when the headteacher Nassou Christou, a visionary woman with whom we have collaborated ever since, commissioned us to devise a pilot programme for pre-school children, aimed at boosting self-esteem and confidence in taking risks, and inspired by the theatre and circus techniques we employ in our performances. She already had the funding and four centres in Islington lined up for the programme! It was fantastic, the programme was very successful; and we ended up with a lot of happy children, a network of parents very interested in us, both as parents and artists, and a number of schools wanting to access the project and to see it adapted for primary schools. This was the beginning of our journey into creative learning.

Part of our work has become more local. Søren and I moved the Scarabeus base from Circus Space in Hoxton to Hargrave Park School, a primary school in Archway near where we live, and we started to focus more on our community, wanting to invest in it and make it better and safer for future generations (including for our daughter); and to refocus our activities, by devising and developing engagement and participation projects with children and young people, and their families.

Exciting and high quality participation and engagement work for young people and families has now become integral to what we do, applying our knowledge of yoga, theatre and aerial skills to creating amazing projects in the community – an example being the creation of a site-specific aerial theatre production based on Luis Sepulveda's book *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly* which was staged in various areas of the school including the arts workshop, the school corridor, an outside junk area, and the main hall for the flying

scenes. The production was created with the staff, looking at various techniques to implement creativity within the curriculum and promote tolerance towards differences in multicultural schools.

With a group of students at Chingford Foundation School, we explored the theme of the rise of violence and disengagement amongst teenagers. Rob, one of the participants, expressed the soul of the project better than I can do: 'When I first heard about the *Beyond Flying* project, I thought I would just be learning about performing on harnesses. But during the project, everything changed and I mean everything. The way I perform, the way I express my views as an artist, have all changed... it's shown me that a lot of us need to speak out more and say what's wrong.'

Recently we have been proud to have run two substantial 2012 Skills Fund Projects with Redbridge and Newham Councils, training young people in aerial, stilt skills, and physical theatre – and giving them employment support so that they have the confidence and skills to



Mothers and Daughters Flying / Airborne Families – image from a Scarabeus workshop



Scarabeus Shimadai site-specific performance
Images courtesy of the company

gain long-term employment in the arts or other industries. We are also training young professionals, supporting their career development.

A particularly important project for us is *Airborne Families*, our parents and children programme which runs in Islington once a week for eight to ten weeks. Families come because they are curious about physical theatre and attracted to the idea of ‘flying’, as well as enjoying a bit of yoga! The programme is aimed at strengthening the bond between parent and child, allowing them to connect them at a deeper level, and to have special time together.

Airborne Families was originally devised a few years ago, when my mother was unexpectedly diagnosed with cancer. I felt during the journey when I was preparing to let go of her in this life that I wanted and needed to nurture even further the bond with her and with my own daughter, and stimulate other mothers and daughters to find ways of being together that create joy in our daily life. *Mothers & Daughters Fly!* was part of my artistic research and development process towards *Shimadai - When Orchids Fly!*, a site-responsive outdoor promenade piece performed in forests around the UK (the name taken from a Japanese variety of orchids). The piece explored my relationship with my (by then) late mother, and its epic cast featured three generations of women – performers in voluminous gowns hanging suspended from trees, and included a fully functional overhead kitchen...

I felt I had a number of very unusual techniques to offer to the participants, and in exchange I wanted their stories. I wanted to access their deep connection and find a way to reproduce it in a large-scale promenade performance; the intimate moments and the love we want to shout about to everyone. Our best pieces are born of our greatest joy and loss – and my daughter Naissa is one of my most faithful and critical collaborators!

We are still continuing to do exciting performance work: so far in 2010 we have created commissions for the Fuse Medway Festival and The Big Dance. *Heartland*, created through a collaboration with CandoCo integrated dance company and young people’s writer Nicky Singer, recently (September 2010) opened at Liberty Festival and filled me with the excitement and anxiety that new shows do. Sometimes it’s not easy: last year the balance shifted too far towards the engagement programmes and much less towards performance. It’s times like this that I start to panic, and must remind myself that I still have a lot to

express as an artist... but on the whole, these days, I enjoy the process of transformation that happens hidden in school halls as much as I enjoy performing to hundreds of spectators, with the glory and pride that comes with that.

Often when walking on the weird and urban Holloway Road, in my local neighborhood, where both vehicles and people go at a considerable speed day and night, I am stopped and hugged by children and parents who have been ‘doing Scarabeus.’ It’s my community, the one where I live, where I create work – and it’s where I belong the most.

Daniela Essart is Artistic Director of Scarabeus Theatre, which she co-founded with Søren Nielsen.

Scarabeus Theatre are one of the foremost exponents of multi-disciplinary aerial performance. They create performances outside conventional spaces using physical theatre, stilts, abseiling, dance and acrobatics – with sites ranging from the Natural History Museum in London to a giant satellite dish in Trinidad.

Past touring shows have included *Hajar*, *Arboreal*, *Landscapes*, *Al Amor del Agua*, and *Shimadai*. They have received commissions from: Greenwich & Docklands Festival, Winchester Hat Fair, Brighton Festival, Salisbury Festival, The Baltic in Newcastle Gateshead, Newham Olympic Torch Relay, and the launch of the Cultural Olympiad in Barking and Dagenham. They have also created many one-off site-specific projects in the UK and abroad.

Some of Scarabeus’ work in schools (including Keys Meadow Primary in Enfield and Hargrave Park Primary in Islington) has been funded by Creative Partnership North. For more on Creative Partnerships see www.creative-partnerships.com

Airborne Families in Islington is funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.

www.scarabeus.co.uk



Richard Maxwell Ads



Sara Juli The Money Conversation

A Sacred Connection

The Sacred season at Chelsea Theatre this autumn features a special collaboration with PS122. Our man in New York, Robert Ayers, gives us the inside story on the legendary NYC performance venue's GLOBAL vision

Performance Space 122, or more usually PS122, is so called because it occupies an abandoned school house on Ninth Street in the heart of the East Village, and for those reading this who aren't native New Yorkers, PS stands for Public School (the equivalent of State School in the UK), and 122 was the school's number – all the schools have a number. PS was adopted to mean Performance Space – and PS122 has been a mainstay of the New York performance scene since it began presenting work in 1980.

Yes, this season marks its thirtieth anniversary. Its fortunes have waxed and waned in that time, as have those of radical performance here, but its heroic longtime artistic director Mark Russell (he worked there 1983-2004) kept it in the forefront of daring and provocative live practice. Mark was succeeded by the irrepressible Vallejo Gantner who has, if anything, further enlivened the place. Vallejo is an instinctive internationalist – as an Australian with a name like his is more or less obliged to be, I suppose – and their collaborations with Chelsea Theatre are the beginning of what he is calling PS122 GLOBAL, 'a collaborative touring programme designed to create roving mini-festivals of New York City's most important contemporary performance companies'. PS122 GLOBAL has been gestating for some time, really: they did a Norway in New York festival in 2005, and the next year there was BAIT – Buenos Aires in Translation, when they

presented four Argentinean playwrights, their premiere translations, and their premiere US productions by New York City companies. Now though, Vallejo is convinced that the time has come to go official with his scheme for global partnerships, which he says 'provides a viable and valuable two-way touring model for local and international companies, and spotlights a unique and vibrant cross-section of both PS122 and New York City'. Chelsea Theatre's Sacred Season is first up, but there are 'relevant and robust cultural exchanges and international collaborations' with Bristol and Berlin in the pipeline, all 'designed to provoke new ideas, dialogues, and opportunities,' and you can't say fairer than that, really.

For their collaboration with Chelsea, Vallejo and his team really have picked the brightest and best of contemporary American performance. First up is Young Jean Lee's Theater Company's *Pullman, WA*, which the company describe as 'a play about what to do if you're unhappy and everyone around you is kind of an asshole, including yourself.' Next, there is Richard Maxwell & NYC Players' remarkable piece *Ads* which led Ben Brantley in the New York Times to call Maxwell 'one of the most innovative and essential artists to emerge from American experimental theater in the past decade'. *Ads* has no live action whatsoever; it is performed by projections. One of my dear friends at PS122, who has seen every production there since the dawn of time called it 'one of my

top ten eye-openers – not just in terms of love-love-loving a show but also in terms of what it means to be truly, rigorously and fearlessly formally innovative'. That same weekend Cupola Bobber offers *Way Out West The Sea Whispered Me*. Cupola Bobber are a pair of Chicagoans who have performed in London before and were International Artists in Residence at the Nuffield Theatre Lancaster in 2008, though any duo who are described as 'like Laurel & Hardy channelling Gilbert & George' are probably worth seeing more than once. Then to round up the New York invasion there's Sara Juli's *The Money Conversation*, a brilliant, uniquely American piece in which, as the New Yorker explained when it was first staged here, 'over the course of the performances, she is giving away her entire savings (five thousand dollars) to members of the audience'. You probably don't need to know any more than that, do you? Go see!

The fourth SACRED season at Chelsea Theatre runs 26 October to 20 November 2010 – a four-week programme of dynamic, innovative, contemporary performance.

Chelsea Theatre is at World's End Place, London SW10 0DR. Bookings: 020 7352 1967. See www.chelseatheatre.org.uk

Home Truths

HoiPolloi Hugh
Hughes: Story
of a Rabbit



The Canny Granny has a few words to say – in actual print – about blogging

I was just perusing a few blogs on the Internet the other day, when – ha! Got you there. Bet you thought I was too old for the Internet. Well, stop age stereotyping! It's not all twinset and pearls: one only has to glance at the OAP-chic feature in last week's *Grazia* entitled 'You've nailed it, Nana-ista' to understand why I'm currently reading blogs in see-through trousers.

The Internet is eclectic in the extreme, like a big Reader's Digest in the sky, and the blog is a wonderful genre. Great for recipes and... What did you say? Knitting patterns? Oh come come! It's not all scones and scarves. I mean theatrical recipes: Hugh Hughes' *Roughbook* includes a hilarious analysis of a recipe he found on the street, while David Gale's *Strength Weekly* informs you (as Tim Crouch's *The Author* fails to) of the components of fake blood. I've got a painful on the stove right now. It's blog-curdling.

A blog – like a new exercise regime – is very easy to begin. As with jogging, it's all too easy to have one big burst and then lose the will. Little wonder that only 59% of bloggers make it to the two-year mark. George Hunka's *Superfluties Redux* has made it to its eighth! If I'm still jogging in eight years I'll be elated.

Theatre blogs come in three basic kinds: diaries, scrapbooks, and reviews. If you've just started a blog and it's not one of these, you've probably unearthed some debate that cuts deeper than that on the Guardian theatre blog (*The Edinburgh Festival – How Was It For You?* or *Has Fringe Theatre Died?*). If so, you should definitely persist. NB: the worry on that site surrounding the proliferation of blogs hits a fascinating nerve: *Can You Trust Unpaid Theatre Critics?*

Diaristic theatre blogs are like a confession booth where the priest has wandered off. Chris Goode's king of blogs, Thompson's *Bank of Communicable Desire*, displays (as Chris Wilkinson remarked on *guardian.co.uk* in 2009) 'brutal honesty' in questioning why he is doing theatre and what the audience's relationship is with it. *Third Angel* keep a blog exposing their working process, along with lots of images and illustrations. For these confessors, there is no penance, just joy. No doubt there are many would-be-priests listening through the electronic grille.

Don't write a confessional blog if you are a woman, unless you are *Belle du Jour*. The rules around confession and autobiography are different for men and women. Everyone wants to see men cast off the armour of masculine mystique, whereas everyone wants to see women cast off their normal clothes. In fact, don't write a theatre blog at all if you are a woman, unless you are *Lyn Gardner*. No, do – but don't expect anyone to read it. Statistics show that only 0.0004% of blogs are actually being read by anybody, and most of those are only being read by people compiling lists of blogs you should read, such as the list of theatre blogs written by women on *dramadaily.wordpress.com/2010/01/10/women-theatre-bloggers*.

When reading theatre blogs, avoid following links to the blogger's friends-from-art-school's blogs (often called obscure things like 'order Japanese sea monkeys'). Otherwise you'll begin with a little something about transgender in performance and end up mail-ordering freeze-dried pets from Tokyo.

Blogging is what you do if you drink more than two cups of coffee a day. Blogging is practically the only reason anyone ever sees dawn who isn't under the narcotic influence of a *West Wing* box set. The prolific *Matt Trueman* (*Carousel of Fantasies*) and *Andrew Haydon* (*Postcards From The Gods*), who both also post reviews variously on *Culture Wars* and the *Guardian*, probably never sleep. Their review sites are so well established that they get a lot of free theatre tickets. This is called *blogging*.

It is bad form to comment on other people's blogs, even if they have comment facility turned on. This would be tantamount to strolling into someone's boudoir uninvited and taking your coat off. Needless to say, I do this anyway.

If you'd like to leave a comment in response to this, you can't. I don't have a blog. If I did, it would probbly resamlbe advancedstyle.blogspot.com. Sorry for the typign. Too much coffee. Perhaps I should take my driving gloves and sunglasses off too. Oops – there's the door. That'll be my delivery of sea monkeys.

Laura Eades is the Canny Granny

GRANNY'S NETWATCH

There are too many blogs to mention! Too many to read! Here are a few nice things, and there are many many more out there...

Ant Hampton or *Rotazaza* describes a marriage proposal that someone made during a performance of *Etiquette* (*guessbook.posterous.com*)

Chris Goode's (*Thompson's Bank of Communicable Desire* *beescope.blogspot.com*) provides insights into performing *The Author* at *Edinburgh Fringe 2010*, amongst other delights.

Tim Etchells's notebook, on *timetchells.com*, has some very poetic error messages posted around it.

Tassos Stevens's *allplayall.blogspot.com*, discusses notions of play, in a typically playful way.

George Hunka's *Superfluties* has moved, but still hosted at *georgehunka.com* – 95 Sentences About Theatre is well worth a read.

David Gale's *Strength Weekly* (*strengthweekly.com*) is a haven of idiosyncratic writing. So good, even *Miranda July* links to it. (*mirandajuly.com*)

Less abstractly, *Sinead MacManus* writes much on new media for *London Theatre Blog*, including articles on how to use facebook, blogging and twitter for your theatre company: *londontheatreblog.co.uk*

HoiPolloi's blog is quite mega and shows what you can do with Blogger: *hoipolloitheatre.blogspot.com*. The *Canny Granny* particularly likes the *Hugh Hughes's* *Rough Book* page.

Andrew Haydon's *Postcards From The Gods* (*postcardsgods.blogspot.com*) has lovely reviews, says *Gran*, because they are not just evaluations but reflections on what the theatre proposes.

Matt Trueman's *Carousel of Fantasies* (*carouseloffantasies.blogspot.com*) also digs deep into every show, and makes you wish every audience member gave every show such thought.

Culture Wars is at *culturewars.org.uk* and has great essays on various genres (not just theatre) as well as reviews.

Unverified blogging statistics courtesy of *thefuturebuzz.com*

Japanese sea monkeys. Order them dried, and when you put them in water they come back to life. For serious. Just wait till the *RSPCA* get a loada that! *logi-net.org*



Anna Asplind's Dancewalks on the streets of Reykjavik, artFart 2010. Photo: Asgerður G. Gunnardóttir

Just Here and Now

Dorothy Max Prior reflects on artFart – an Icelandic art explosion – and its place in the continuing Anglo-Icelandic creative exchange

Arrival! A late plane, a mad dash from Keflavík airport to a gloriously modernist hotel in Reykjavík, then a short car journey to the harbour for the opening party of artFart festival at Útgerðin, a former fish warehouse by the dock. Up the metal stairs and into a vast open space: one bicycle (the festival's mascot), a five-metre long cake (one metre for each year of the festival's existence), and 99 Red Balloons (courtesy of guest artist Richard DeDomenici). Oh and of course scores of revellers, here to honour the opening of Reykjavík's hippest performance art festival.

'So, have you been to Iceland before?' asks the person I've just been introduced to. 'No,' I answer, 'but...'. How to start on my complicated relationship with Iceland, a country I'm visiting for the first time, but with which I've had numerous strong threads of connection over the years?

Let's hop back to London in the mid 1980s. I'm performing with an experimental music cum art collective called Psychic TV, led by the legendary performance artist Genesis P Orridge, and featuring Icelandic musician/composer Hilmar Örn Hilmarsson, Scriabin devotee and pioneer of sampling and electronica. We've created a one-off event called *The Fabulous Feast of Flowering Light*, drawing together our friends and associates for an evening of what would nowadays be called 'inter-disciplinary cross-artform practice', but which then we just saw as tearing down barriers between art, music, dance, literature, and film. Some cultural moments seem auspicious even when they are happening, and this was one of them, although quite how special a convergence of talents this would prove to be we could hardly have guessed at. Films were by Derek Jarman and John Maybury. Dance by Micha Bergese. Readings by Kathy Acker. Music by Psychic TV, with support from a young Icelandic band called Kukl, fronted by two close friends of Hilmar, Einar Örn Benediktsson and Björk Guðmundsdóttir.

In the mid-80s a great horde of Iceland's vibrant young punks and poets came to London, and some of them stayed. Mostly in Einar's tiny flat in Stoke Newington. 'Hilmar asked if he could stay three nights and was there on my floor for nine months' says Einar when we re-meet in Reykjavík a quarter of a century later. When in London, media arts student Einar was very much the lynchpin for the burgeoning Anglo-Icelandic artistic exchanges (first a one-way traffic; later, friends of Einar such as Damon Albarn making the journey the other way) that were to bear fruit so successfully in the years to come, and which would launch Reykjavík into the world spotlight as a city of culture and influence.

Einar subsequently became the founder and co-leader (with Björk) of Iceland's most successful band, The Sugar Cubes, this propelling Björk to enormous worldwide success. Hilmar went on to become an acclaimed composer of film scores, for Jane Campion and others, in 1991 winning the European Film Composer of the Year for his work on the Oscar-nominated

Children of Nature. He has off and on collaborated with Sigur Rós, the most successful Icelandic band since the Sugar Cubes. Einar – a natural-born bringer-together of people – continued in his magnificent role as musical frontman with numerous bands, as a composer (working with Damon Albarn on the soundtrack to the film *101 Reykjavík*), and as a mover and shaker in the Reykjavík art scene, culminating (perhaps oddly) in his recent high-profile appointment to the city's arts and culture department – a result of the landslide victory of the alternative Best Party. To the Icelanders, having an anarchist-punk in office at the town hall feels just right for the current mood. Post economic crash and national bankruptcy, there is a desire to do things a different way. Towing the line is out; radical solutions are in.

Einar and I meet in the Boston bar on Laugavegur, Reykjavík's main drag – a long-established haunt that has been aptly described as 'part Victorian bordello, part hunting lodge'. Many of Reykjavík's bars and cafes sport an endearing mix of *objets trouvés* and vintage décor – 60s teak cabinets, Bakelite fittings and mammoth old wireless sets are firm favourites elsewhere, but here the aesthetic bends more towards the gothic-Romantic: black-painted walls, mother-of-pearl inlaid mahogany tables, art nouveau glass, and taxidermy. We move from the Boston to a sushi bar near the waterfront, right next to the whaling boats (as in the battered rust-red old vessels in which the whales are hunted, and the prettily-painted tourist boats that conduct the commune-with-the-whales tours). It seems typically Icelandic that they are moored side-by-side, practically rubbing shoulders. 'Sometimes,' says Einar gleefully, 'the crews get mixed up...'

Just a little way along the waterfront is Útgerðin – one of a number of requisitioned warehouses hosting artists' studios and projects. When the crash happened, the endless onslaught of redevelopment throughout Reykjavík and its suburbs ground to a halt. Bad news for some, of course – but a parallel here with London in the late 70s and early 80s: it was the various crashes of the property market and lurches of the economy that provided an opportunity for artistic occupation of disused warehouses all along the Thames waterfront, and the East End. These areas became the flowering ground for the enormous amount of artistic activity – from post-punk and rave culture, performance art, street arts, and the regeneration of the visual arts scene – that was the reason young artists (from Iceland and from all over the world) were so drawn to London.

Once inside the Útgerðin warehouse (central hub for the artFart festival), it does – for us oldies anyway – feel a little like a trip back to that heyday of the London performance art scene. In the centre of the large space an effete young woman is standing inside a circle of broken glass. On the walls is a narrative sequence of 80 or so photos depicting a series of minor and/or surreal domestic disasters, and from the PA comes an electronic



soundscape (fifteen minute loop – perhaps an assumption of the average amount of time each audience member was likely to stay). Called *Hvernig var þinn dagur?* (*How was your day?*), this 'live short film' as it is rather nicely described is a collaboration between three female artists who are collectively called Fjöllistahópurinn KÁV. There is a slightly self-conscious air to the piece, which suggests violence and fragility, but feels rather too safe – or as my companion put it: 'We both know people who would have been rolling in that glass by now...'

Two other pieces, presented together at Útgerðin on another night, are more successfully realised. Smári Gunnarsson's *I'm a Cop* is a one-man show exploring the tripwires of 'status' and 'self worth' that's a playful cross between physical theatre, performance art and comedy. Smári's clown alter-ego (like a Beckett character) finds himself in a world defined by the room in which he is trapped with a small array of physical objects – desk, chair, plastic bucket – desperate to convince himself (and us) that his whole self adds up to more than the sum of its parts. Smári is a confident



physical performer, and his use of the space is admirable. Occasionally the text falters – probably due to the difficulty for me as an English speaker hearing someone with an obvious Icelandic accent playing an American cop. It's a dilemma facing many of the young artists here: perform in your native language or in English? Smári's choice to perform in English is understandable (and this was one of two artFart shows to subsequently be shown at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010), but I did end up wondering if there was a strength and resonance to the delivery of the text missing that would be manifested if the show were to be performed in Icelandic.



Side-stepping the spoken language issue is Snædís Lilja Ingadóttir. Strongly influenced by Pina Bausch, Snædís is interested in expressing ‘something that I couldn’t express with words at all’. *Just Here!* explores personal space and safety; a three-person absurdist movement piece that, to my eyes, is as much Station House Opera as it is Tanztheater Wuppertal in its perversely funny interrogation of interpersonal relationships, its bordering-on-violent physical play, and its surreal use of everyday objects like cups and saucers. The choreography, although occasionally derivative, shows a sophistication beyond that expected of an artist in the early stages of her career, and there is an impressive soundscape, veering from a Satie-like piano to an intense electronic section, played/mixed live, that switches mood beautifully. It was no surprise to learn from Snædís that the sound and movement had evolved side-by-side as they work so well together.

Snædís and Smári are just two of the artists in the programme who have graduated from Rose Bruford’s BA in European Theatre Arts, which has managed to attract a large number of Icelandic students in recent years – Sidcup being the new Stoke Newington, perhaps? Although the artFart festival was originally set up (in 2006) as a showcase for emerging Icelandic artists such as these two, it has gone from strength to strength in its five years of existence, with a programme that has grown from eight shows in its inaugural year to thirty in the 2010 programme. The festival’s current remit is to programme performance work that may otherwise be underrepresented in Iceland – including performance art, site-responsive work, visual theatre, and contemporary circus.

It’s now punching well above its weight, attracting visits from established international artists such as the UK’s Bottled and Mischa Twichin of Shunt, and a whole swathe of Scandinavian artists, including the renowned circus-theatre company Stella Polaris.

Reykjavik Public Space Programme (RPSP) is a new aspect of artFart, presenting site-specific works made – yes – for public space, and it is hoped that the Public Space Programme will develop a life of its own, moving to merge with festivals in other European cities. International artists contributing to this year’s programme included Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment, Gob Squad and Phil Smith of Wrights & Sites, all of whom supported the programme by providing a series of rule sets – for example, Gob Squad sent a set of instructions for an anti-art dinner party. Richard DeDomenici provided a more hands-on experience in the form of an intensive workshop for art in public spaces entitled *It Doesn’t Take Much to Change the World* (the final denouement featuring chalk drawings, yellow body paint applied to performers’ bodies by passers-by, ‘beggars’ giving away change, and anarchic interventions in the local supermarket).

Also operating in the public space of the city was Berlin-based dance artist Anna Asplind, whose *Dancenwalks* is an MP3-relayed journey piece which for Anna has three major aspects: the physical experience (and participants can set their own bar for this!); the psychological challenge, with all that ‘being on the street’ brings up; and thirdly what she calls ‘the social information’ aspect: ‘living in a city, we go from A to B, without thinking, hearing what we want to hear, seeing what we want to see’. From my perspective, it is the first of these that is the work’s USP: it differs from other walking pieces using MP3 relayed directions in its choreographic intent and starting point – it is very much about the physical body’s relationship to the environment.

A very different use of public space was seen in Homo Ludens’ *Fjöllengi*. Homo Ludens is an ensemble of artists from different disciplines working under the direction of Hlynur Páll Pálsson (who is also one of the 16 Lovers theatre group). *Fjöllengi* is set in Reykjavik’s BSÍ bus station – a busy terminus where the airport buses arrive and depart. It starts with a series of ‘invisible theatre’ interventions, performers slowly emerging from the crowd (Is he one? What about her?), shadowing and mimicking passers-by or fussing with objects in the space – reading timetables, opening maps, adjusting glasses, undoing bag straps. It builds nicely, introducing what we might call ‘performance mode two’, a more upbeat and obvious street arts style, with the arrival of far brasher new characters who are in direct interaction with members of the public. Meanwhile, the tannoy system broadcasts are growing ever more surreal: ‘Here is a security announcement: today is a good day.’

Moving up the intensity scale, enter an angry man who argues with the help desk assistants about timetables, then pitches a tent inside the bus station; a guitarist with a rose between his teeth who serenades a young woman; and a ‘bag lady’ who blows bubbles out from a rubbish bin.



Finally (in acknowledgement that – yes – we are watching a performance) there’s a whole-ensemble jittery dance and Stomp-like playing of whatever is to hand. This carefully managed build, orchestrated finale, and clever complicity with the growing-ever-more-aware audience, makes for a superb piece of public space theatre.

But what strikes me as most interesting is that use of the PA system – I struggle to imagine a similar set-up in the UK, where, say, National Express would collaborate with the theatrical game to the extent of allowing interventions to their tannoy announcements. Again, I am struck by the thought that there is something very different and special about Reykjavik. A quarter of a century ago, my Icelandic friends in London struck me as being both wild and wildly proud of their country and cultural heritage – I remember someone (Einar? Hilmar? Björk? Or perhaps their madcap poet friend Johnny Triumph?) pointing out that Iceland has more bookshops per capita than anywhere else in the world. I remember being humbled by the breadth of artistic knowledge, intelligence and experience they all seemed to carry with them – something I am seeing again in the next generation of young Icelanders.

In my brief time in Iceland I encountered a nation that rather than being cowed by its economic problems was instead seeing the economic and political mayhem as an opportunity for revolution: punks in charge at the town hall; performance artists in control in the bus station – seems just fine to me.

ArtFart 2010 and the inaugural Reykjavik Public Space Programme took place throughout August 2010. The co-directors/curators are: Alexander Roberts, Arna Ýr Sævarsdóttir, Ásgerður G Gunnardóttir, and Sigurður Arent Jónsson. www.artfart.is

Special thanks to the artFart directors for their hospitality, and to Einar Örn Benediktsson of Reykjavikurborg (Reykjavik City Council). www.reykjavikurborg.is

Dorothy Max Prior travelled to Iceland as a guest of the Trade Council of Iceland. www.islandsstofa.is/en

For more on the BA (Hons) European Theatre Arts course at Rose Bruford see www.bruford.ac.uk



VOICES

Thrills and Spills

Tim Etchells of
Forced Entertainment,
in his own words

***The Thrill of it All* is a return to our more theatrical and more chaotic work**, in contrast to the last few things that we have done. We seem to operate in a slightly bi-polar way, so that after time spent on very still or stripped down performances there's almost an inevitable explosion – a desire to take the stage in much more theatrical terms.

One of the desires was to look at something that involved movement and dance. For me, I have been working with various choreographers and dancers over the last few years (Meg Stuart, Fumiyo Ikeda, Kate McIntosh, Wendy Houston) and movement is an ongoing interest, the flip side of my general preoccupation with language.

There is a comic potential in the way that things go wrong and any bar we set up we expect to tumble. In the case of *Thrill of it All* we meet failure in the form of collisions and falls, but we also seek for something achieved to come out of it. It's important to us that we drag something out of the mess. Failure is always on the agenda, but alongside it, or though it, we're looking to find something of value...

Sheffield is not the cultural capital of the world and basing ourselves there was a bit random. We consciously chose to be away from London, though, and there was a political element in the desire to be in the North, where the resistance to Thatcherism was at its strongest. Ironically – in the mid-eighties, in the recession of that decade – it was easy to find large industrial spaces to work in. We managed to get hold of a 24-hour rehearsal space, an abandoned factory, within a year of starting to work – something that we'd find hard to come by now. The city is a base for most of us still, and in some ways an inspiration, certainly for some of the works.

I made a decision a long time ago that I can work anywhere – it means, regardless, if I am on a train; waiting at an airport;

sitting in an office; or grabbing 15 minutes in between rehearsals I can get my laptop and work on something. My laptop is where I am comfortable, which means as long as I have a plug socket, I can work.

It's possible to collaborate remotely now in ways that were unthinkable ten years ago. I have just been developing a piece with Ant Hampton and an enormous amount of our work together was communicated via the Internet and Skype. The paradox of this of course is that you still need to find time to be in the same room for performance projects.

***The Thrill of it All* was created through a process of five months together in a shared space.** A space where you can work for long hours and share the air – see where the group is, see where it's headed, see what the interests are.

The work is fundamentally slow. You might get lucky sometimes in improv and appear to create twenty minutes of material in twenty minutes, but any breakthrough like that is always built on weeks of preparation and error – the group work is slow. We don't know any other way.

Over time, you have more experience to draw on, which can be both a benefit and a curse. To think that the work you're doing is related to something you've done before might be useful – but just as often that kind of recognition is mistaken – the new work is different and you're mis-seeing it. The challenge is to ask yourself what is actually happening in the room, in the work; what is it that is really being presented.

Each new encounter with the work you are working on reduces you to the state of an idiot. You're always starting afresh.

Over the course of five months in the rehearsals we will have made an arrangement of scenes, fragments and events – that arrangement is an investigation,

a journey, an event – but the presence of an audience is then the element that really reveals what you have made.

An audience will animate and expand what you present – they will add water to the powder. I am not saying I like to be in the theatre with the audience – it makes me nervous, but it is very important. I used to be at every show, and still now, I'd say I'm there about 75% of the shows.

Forced Entertainment is Robin Arthur, Tim Etchells (Artistic Director), Richard Lowdon (Designer), Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor.

Since forming the company in 1984, the six core members of the group have sustained a unique artistic partnership. The company's substantial canon of work reflects an interest in the mechanics of performance, the role of the audience and the machinations of contemporary urban life. Forced Entertainment's trademark collaborative process – devising work as a group through improvisation, experimentation and debate – has made them pioneers of British avant-garde theatre and earned them an unparalleled international reputation.

The Thrill of it All (conceived and devised by the company) continues Forced Entertainment's work both on the spectacle of theatre and the spectacle of the contemporary world, exploring the ways in which we live, breathe and tell stories in the circumscribed space of late capitalism.

Co-produced by Kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brussels), Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin), PACT Zollverein (Essen), Les Spectacles vivants – Centre Pompidou in collaboration with Festival d'Automne (Paris). Forced Entertainment is regularly funded by Arts Council England and supported by Sheffield City Council.

Autumn tour dates include: Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster (UK premiere, 12–13 October); Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield (15–16 October); Warwick Arts Centre (19–20 October); Riverside Studios, London (26 October–6 November); Contact Theatre Manchester (16–20 November).

Additional dates and further information on the company: www.forcedentertainment.com

Tim Etchells spoke to Alexander Roberts, September 2010.
www.timetchells.com



Kneehigh Theatre's transient theatre space, The Asylum

Theatre To Go

Heralding the arrival in London of The Jellyfish Theatre, Charlotte Smith reflects on transient buildings and nomadic theatre companies

If you go down to the river today... the Jellyfish may surprise. A temporary theatre built near the south bank of the Thames, it has an eerie beauty: a beached whale of a building; a wooden collage of flotsam and jetsam, salvaged in Southwark; an ecological dinosaur. Built by about a hundred volunteers, it housed two new plays for the Oikos ('ee-kos') Project for six weeks (26 August to 9 October 2010), to be destroyed after. Wander round at dusk to the twinkling bar, and you see water-cooler bottles transformed into mask-like sculptures by primary-school children. Pallets from New Covent Garden fruit and veg market, glittery boards, theatre sets, and desks make up the main structure.

The Jellyfish Theatre aimed to be a 'human-scale response to climate change', the UK's first theatre made professionally from recycled and reused objects. 'A jellyfish is a washed-up thing that can appear and disappear again,' says producer Bryan Savery of The Red Room. 'It's not about how we fix things but how we are constantly moving and removing.' The architects, Köbberling and Kaltwasser, had read the treatments of the two plays to be staged in the space *Oikos* by Simon Wu and *Protozoa* by Kay Adshead, and the writers saw the structure as it was developed. So the idea was to create 'a whole, visceral experience'. Whether or not this succeeded, the building is more striking for its short life. By the time you read this, it'll be gone...

But the notion of a transient performance space is nothing new. 'A circus tent by its very nature is a transient building,' says Tom Rack of NoFit State Circus. 'That's the magic.' The company arrives in a field late at night, marks out a symbolic circle, builds, then creates a furore, parades, and gets adopted by the community. 'All we really leave is just a ring of yellow grass,' says Tom. 'We are very emphatic that we leave just that: no litter, and a hole in people's lives.' Although they travel in old trucks, drive hundreds of miles between venues and run generators – green technology would be better, but slips down the priority list financially – the simple lifestyle means their carbon footprint is small.

Footsbarn have also been travelling since the 1980s, famously with a horse and cart, and later with their own large tent (and a school for their children alongside). 'The main reason was to see other cultures,' says artistic director Paddy Hayter. 'The tent was to get near a public that wasn't a conventional theatre public. We can take our work where theatre doesn't exist.' The company is increasingly aware of how much diesel it uses, but still does only 8,000-9,000 kilometres per year, much less than a commuter. Like NoFit State with its training centre in Cardiff, Footsbarn have also set up a permanent base at La Chaussée,



The Jellyfish Theatre, a temporary venue in London

Allier, France, which enables them to pass on their experience. However, the company is still on the road for about seven or eight months every year.

Kneehigh traditionally create work in barns, woods, by firelight and on the cliffs at the Minack Theatre, Cornwall. They now also play spaces from Broadway to a lavish opera house in Colombia. 'We come from a tradition where anything can happen,' says founder Mike Shepherd. 'So the idea that we have a nomadic structure where all things are possible is central.' Kneehigh's new space, The Asylum, means they can offer a 'good night out' to a non-theatre audience, running everything including the car park, toilets, bar and food themselves. 'It enables the work to fly rather than be hampered by restrictions of the building. The other beauty of a nomadic venue is that you can be gone like smoke.'

So who needs a building? Street theatre companies like Whalley Range All Stars tour with a giant pig or a compost heap. The National Theatre of Scotland says that with no building, it is free to make theatre wherever it can connect with an audience. National Theatre Wales is using thirteen scattered venues in its first year. So there are different sorts of nomadic lifestyle: green or conventional spaces that are reclaimed, redesigned, removed... Ephemeral theatres like the Jellyfish seem to be here to stay.

The Jellyfish Theatre www.oikosproject.com
 NoFit State Circus www.nofitstate.org
 Footsbarn www.footsbarn.com
 Kneehigh Theatre's The Asylum www.kneehigh.co.uk/asylum/

Total Theatre Awards 2010

Barrow Street Theatre *Flesh and Blood & Fish and Fowl*



Vic and Esther from *The Author* collect their award from judge Donald Hutera



Plasticine Men Keepers



Since 1987 the Total Theatre Awards have honoured the best theatre-makers performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. A dedicated team of assessors see all of the registered shows; then, an esteemed panel of critics, producers, programmers, academics and artists judge the Total Theatre Awards, which are recognised nationally and internationally as a benchmark of achievement.

The 2010 Total Theatre Awards were announced on Friday, 27 August at a ceremony held at Fringe Central in Edinburgh. Six awards were given across the three categories of Emerging Company, Physical/Visual Theatre and Innovation instead of the expected five. The judges could not decide which shows to award in the innovation category and instead awarded an additional award. A call was quickly put in to glass artist Lucy Swift, who set about making another award! There was additionally an Award for Significant Contribution to the field of Total Theatre.

This year, the Awards received a record 417 entries, an increase of 56% on last year, including an increase in applications from shows listed as comedy in the Fringe brochure.

The 2010 Total Theatre Awards are supported by the Barbican London, London International Mime Festival, New Wolsey Theatre & Pulse Festival, Norfolk & Norwich Festival Festival, Royal & Derngate Northampton, The Showroom / University of Chichester, University of Winchester, Wales Millennium Centre.

Many thanks to the following people, who gave their time and efforts so valiantly:

Assistant producer Becki Haines, for her tireless goodwill and even temper.

Assessors:

Chloe Preece, Gael Le Cornec, Flavia Fraser Canon, Lily Einhorn, Marie Kenny, Matt Rogers, Lisa Wolfe, Charlotte Smith, Alex Murdoch, Richard Medrington, Andy Roberts, Ezra LeBank, Dan Koop, Gareth Jones, and Joanna Mackie.

Judges:

Fiona Allan *Artistic Director, Wales Millennium Centre*
 Matt Burman *Executive Producer, Norfolk & Norwich Festival*
 Steve Cramer *Theatre Critic, The List, Edinburgh*
 Jo Crowley *Producer/Total Theatre Board member*
 Robert Jude Daniels *Senior Lecturer, University of Chichester*
 Stephen Freeman *Artistic Director PUL.SE Festival, Ipswich*
 Ben Harrison *Artistic Director, Grid Iron, and Total Theatre Board member*
 John Lee *Course Leader in Street Arts, University of Winchester*
 Donald Hutera *Critic, The Times*
 Dorothy Max Prior *Editor, Total Theatre Magazine*
 Tina Rasmussen *Director of Performing Arts, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto*
 Laurie Samson *Artistic Director, Royal & Derngate, Northampton*

Chair of judges: Pippa Bailey *Director, Total Theatre Awards*

Thanks also go to: Edinburgh Fringe Society; Fringe Central staff; and to Edinburgh Festival Theatre, for providing a venue for the judging meeting. Last but not least: thanks to all the producers, presenters, venues and especially all the artists of Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010

Please see the following pages for the winners and shortlist of the Total Theatre Awards 2010.

Director Pippa Bailey at the Total Theatre Awards ceremony (photo Alex Brenner)



Les Argonautes *Pas Perdus*



Ontroerend Goed *Teenage Riot*



Total Theatre Awards are produced for Total Theatre by Pippa Bailey. Reports on winning artists and shows by Dorothy Max Prior, with additional material by Pippa Bailey, Charlotte Smith, Robert Jude Daniels and Chloe Preece.

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS FOR INNOVATION

THREE SHOWS WERE AWARDED IN THIS CATEGORY



ROADKILL BY CORA BISSETT / ANKUR PRODUCTIONS/ PACHAMAMA PRODUCTIONS (TRAVERSE THEATRE, OFF-SITE)

Award presented by Fiona Allan, Artistic Director, Wales Millennium Centre

Roadkill, written and directed by Cora Bissett, is a multimedia play about the Scottish sex-trafficking industry, staged (for this production) in an Edinburgh flat, and on the bus journey to that flat.

Issue-based theatre can often put the message above the medium, resulting in worthy but drab performance work, and/or can assault audience members with graphic 'naturalistic' images, leading them to switch off. *Roadkill* avoids both of those pitfalls. The way the sexual violence is handled in this piece is exemplary: true to the spirit of Brecht, the terror is brought to us through the one-step-removed theatrical devices of projection, animation, shadow theatre, and stylised physical performance. We can see and understand the brutality, but we are not brutalised.

The play is also to be commended for giving its characters complexity. 'Auntie' Martha (played by Adura Onashile) is party to the abuse, but we gradually learn of her own terrible journey into her current position as trafficker and 'madam'. The young Nigerian girl she brings into the country, Mary (Mercy Ojelade), evolves from victim to survivor as the play progresses. A note of commendation here also to the third actor of this piece, John Kazek, who plays all the male characters: pimp, punter, policeman, father.

Beautifully scripted, staged, performed, directed – a truly 'total' theatre, and an inspiring example of how to make theatre from harrowing true-life stories.
DMP



THE AUTHOR BY TIM CROUCH / NEWS FROM NOWHERE (TRAVERSE THEATRE)

Award presented by Donald Hutera of *The Times*

News From Nowhere present the work of actor-writer Tim Crouch, with a repertoire that includes solo work and plays with small casts, often presented with very little 'stage furniture', relying on the talents of the performer(s) to create the theatre. News From Nowhere were previous recipients of a Total Theatre Award for *England* (2008). The company's latest Edinburgh presentation, *The Author*, is a play (set in, and previously performed in, the Royal Court Theatre in London) that explores the atrocities committed in the name of 'theatre'. 'Is this all right?' says playwright/actor Tim Crouch repeatedly throughout. 'Shall I go on?' We are presented with a reflection on the making of a highly violent play, framed within the story of how exposure to obscene violence can corrupt those who immerse themselves in it. We are constantly asked to evaluate how far we are willing to go in the search for artistic truth, and 'the real story'. Would you push the button, or click the mouse? Would you?

The staging for *The Author* is all auditorium and no stage: two banks of seats face each other, with nothing inbetween. Everything that happens, happens here. The structure and rhythm of the piece is exquisite – the four actors (Chris Goode, Tim Crouch, Vic Llewellyn, Esther Smith) emerge from the audience with carefully-orchestrated precision, shifting into performance mode with clarity.

As the play progresses, it is starkly illuminated that there are no 'monsters', there's only you and me and the person we are sitting next to – and the darkness is always there to welcome us...

The Author is inspired writing, expertly realised, and a clever investigation of the blurred lines between fiction and reality; of the way 'reality' is mediated in our world; and of the nature and responsibilities of 'theatre'.
DMP



30 DAYS TO SPACE BY BOOTWORKS THEATRE (FOREST FRINGE AT FOREST CAFE)

Award presented by Laurie Sansom, Artistic Director, Royal & Derngate Northampton

30 Days to Space is a durational performance piece presented under the auspices of Bootworks Theatre, who were previously shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award for their instant-film-for-an-audience-of-one series of miniature shows, *The Black Box*.

At 24, James Baker realised that his childhood dream of becoming an astronaut was yet to be fulfilled. So, how to launch himself into space? NASA defines space as starting 50 miles up, so he calculated that to achieve this distance of 50 miles would mean ascending and descending an average size stepladder eight hours a day for 30 days. With little more than a ladder and a shiny spacesuit, James installed himself in the foyer of Edinburgh's Forest Café for the

month of August. Ground control in the form of Andy Roberts provided support (literal ladder-holding as well as moral support!) and recorded the climbs count with his clickerboard; each climb also marked by a chalk-drawn star on the café ceiling, providing a semi-permanent record of the endeavour.

Throughout August, James and his ladder become one of the abiding images of the Edinburgh Fringe, and a symbol of the spirit of innovation that should always be at the heart of this festival.
CP/DMP

For more on this show, see James Baker's artist diary elsewhere in this issue of *Total Theatre Magazine*.

Shortlisted in this category: *The Ballad of Backbone Joe*, The Suitcase Royale (Pleasance Courtyard); *En Route*, One Step at a Time Like This & Richard Jordan Productions (Traverse Theatre, off-site); *I, Claudia*, Crows Theatre / Guy Masterson/ TTI (Assembly @George Street); *Like You Were Before*, Deborah Pearson (Forest Fringe @ Alphabet Video Store); *Odyssey*, Theatre Ad Infinitum (Pleasance Dome); *Reykjavik*, Shams/ Escalator East to Edinburgh/ Time Won't Wait (The Bongo Club); *Teenage Riot*, Ontroerend Goed (Traverse Theatre).

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS FOR PHYSICAL & VISUAL THEATRE

TWO AWARDS WERE GIVEN IN THIS CATEGORY



WHITE BY CATHERINE WHEELS (TRAVERSE THEATRE @ SCOTTISH BOOK TRUST)

Award presented by Toni Racklin, Acting Head of Theatre at the Barbican, London.

The magic starts before we enter the performance space. Down the cobbled close, we weave through strings of white bunting; in the gorgeous circular garden we note the little white bird-boxes in the trees; and as we mount the stone staircase, we see a row of objects that shouldn't be white – a rubber duck, an apple, a telephone box...

Inside, we find ourselves in a lovely cave of whiteness: muslin drapes; birdboxes of every size; a tepee made from white levis and cream woolly jumpers; and a man ('Cotton') dressed in white lederhosen and a woolly hat. A cuckoo clock chimes and Cotton says 'time to get up' to his companion, Wrinkle, sleeping in the tepee.

The show, with a logic and rhythm that would warm Beckett's heart, then divides itself into day one and day two. In day one, the world is as it should be – white – and our two friends spend their time dusting and tweaking and disposing of any minor aberrations such as the odd bit of coloured confetti. Nighttime (lights dimmed; glitterball on) and we see that all is not as it should be – the boxes are glowing with strange new

colours. Day two sees our pair of guardians-of-the-white failing to hold off the invasion of colour, and at last admitting that they love orange and purple and red and blue. A row of rainbow-coloured egg cosies is lined up, and a cannon of multi-coloured paper confetti is shot into the air...

It's a show perfectly pitched for its young audience: practically word-free, it relies on visual narratives and sound to tell the story (on-tap milk that turns blue; eggs that chuckle with children's laughter). Although it is not a puppet-theatre show, puppeteer/designer Shona Reppe's scenography lends a puppet-esque quality to the piece: the animation of the stage world by the performers is intrinsic to this design-led show. The audience are acknowledged, in a gentle way – just the odd little exchange here and there: 'It's magic!' says one little boy when the eggs arrive from nowhere. 'It certainly is' says Wrinkle. Magic, indeed – *White* is a near-perfect piece of theatre for very young children.

DMP



TABU BY NOFIT STATE CIRCUS (NOTFIT STATE CIRCUS TENT, LEITH WALK)

Award presented by Virginia Hyam, Director of Contemporary Performance, Sydney Opera House

Glee and transgression are just two of the elements in NoFit State's spectacular circus-theatre show, *Tabú*, written and directed by Firenza Guidi, and set in the company's own 'spaceship' touring tent. It's a promenade show, with the audience gently herded into place for the circus set-pieces, performers moving through, above, and around them at all times.

'Dare to live' seems to be the main message, or perhaps 'Feel the fear and do it anyway', with the medium for that message ranging across the circus spectrum: swinging, flying and static trapeze, German wheel, Chinese pole, straps, hula hoops, tightwire, fire and dance. NoFit State squeeze maximum emotion from the performance, while keeping physical lightness.

A score of remarkable characters populate the tent, too many to mention, but including a number of feisty female characters such as Remedios the Beauty (Marcella Manzilli), who clowns and plummets from the flying trapeze, and the irrepressible Amaranta Ursula (Adie Delaney, on swinging trapeze and hoops).

Costumes, designed by Rhiannon Matthews, fuse grunge, cabaret and Edwardiana. The live music, composed by Peter Swaffer Reynolds for saxophone, accordion, clarinet, trumpet, guitar, piano, voice and bass, gives a definite kick.

All-in-all, an exhilarating and unforgettable contemporary circus experience. 'We didn't expect to win,' said NoFit State on accepting their Total Theatre Award. 'Circus doesn't usually win awards'.

Well, it does at Total Theatre – a deserving win for this previously shortlisted company! CS/DMP

Shortlisted in this category: *Cargo*, Iron-Oxide Ltd (Leith Links); *Flesh and Blood & Fish and Fowl*, Barrow Street Theatre (The Traverse at St Stephen's); *Harlekin*, Derevo (Pleasance Courtyard); *Julien Cottereau: Imagine Toi*, Julien Cottereau (Assembly @ Princes Street); *Pas Perdus*, Les Argonautes (Zoo Southside); *Maria de Buenos Aires*, Teatro Di Capua (Zoo Southside); *The Life and Times of Girl A*, Scottish Dance Theatre (Zoo Southside); *Sticks, Stones, Broken Bones*, Bunk Puppets and Scamp Theatre (Underbelly).

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD FOR AN EMERGING ARTIST OR COMPANY



SEX IDIOT BY BRYONY KIMMINGS (ESCALATOR EAST TO EDINBURGH AT ZOO ROXY)

Award presented by Jonathan Holloway, departing Artistic Director of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival and recently appointed Director of the Perth International Arts Festival.

Sex Idiot is an hour-long show that incorporates short works previously presented as performance art or cabaret pieces, now reworked into a coherent theatre show exploring the artist's sexual adventures and misadventures, all circling round the discovery that she was carrying a common sexually transmitted infection.

It feels like a piece that is developing, but not 'unfinished'. There's a roughness to this open form: part live art, part cabaret, part theatre performance, with some absurd, twisted songs and poems bridging and bookending each stage of the narrative. The style and staging fits the content and subject matter, and she is clearly developing (you could say 'bedding down') a style and register.

There's risk-taking and an edge to this piece and to her form, structure and content that is both exciting and playfully refreshing. RJD

Shortlisted in this category: *Keepers*, Plasticine Men (Pleasance Courtyard); *Lip Service*, Becki Gerrard (C Soco); *Operation Greenfield*, Little Bulb Theatre (Zoo Roxy); *Threshold*, 19;29/Roxy Art House/Richard Demarco (Zoo Roxy); *When We Meet Again* (introduced as friends), Me and the Machine (Forest Fringe/Dance Base)

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION



David Bates of The Famous Spiegeltent at the Awards ceremony. Photo Alex Brenner

Pippa Bailey writes: David Bates, maestro of The Famous Spiegeltent, was presented with a special Award for a Significant Contribution in the field of Total Theatre. This award was given in recognition of the role he has played as 'Spiegelmaestro' in bringing forward cabaret, burlesque and new variety, and also in recognition that The Spiegelgarden creates a fantastic environment for artists and audiences alike.

My first contact with David Bates and the Famous Spiegeltent was in 1997. I was sitting in a bar in Melbourne Town Hall at the Melbourne Comedy Festival. I chatted to a man I knew, a musician, who told me he had just bought a tent. I thought he was crazy. Little did I know what this man, David Bates, and his 'tent' would subsequently achieve. The 'tent' turned out to be the beautiful Spiegeltent, a transportable venue that is a gorgeous construction of wood, glass, and mirrors – legendary home to Marlene Dietrich and others – which under his guidance has become a nomadic home



Miss Behave, star of the Spiegeltent's La Clique

for a new wave of cabaret, circus and music-theatre performers.

Kath Mainland, Chief Executive of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, presented David with his Award and read this tribute on behalf of the Total Theatre Award judges:

'This man has changed the face, not only of the Edinburgh Fringe, but of festivals in the UK and in other places in the world. In 1996 he hired the Famous Spiegeltent and it first appeared as a venue at the Fringe. Now its proud owner, he has toured extensively ever since to festivals such as Brighton, Avignon and all the major cities in Australia.

As a theatrical producer and accomplished musician, David Bates is responsible for bringing many artists to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, including Meow Meow, Camille O Sullivan, and Ali MacGregor who have all graced the stage of the Famous Spiegeltent. He has played a significant role in the resurgence of circus, cabaret, burlesque,

contemporary vaudeville and new variety, all forms championed by Total Theatre, helping to bring this work to the attention of the theatre establishment and to honour these artists. This work now plays a significant role in the Edinburgh Fringe landscape – and *La Clique*, a show that David produced in the Famous Spiegeltent, has developed a life of its own, travelling all over the world, and in 2009 winning a prestigious Olivier Award for Best Entertainment following a long season in London.

In 2009 the Famous Spiegeltent did not come to Edinburgh, but in 2010 the tent and its gardens were back. Just as there is a magic and mystery in a really great show, there is also a magic and mystery in creating a great environment for artists and their audiences.

David has mirrored the care, passion and beauty built into the mirrored Spiegeltent in the way he constructs the audience experience, and from the moment you step into the gardens you are transported. Staff are stylish and friendly; you can get a massage, buy locally-made jewellery and vintage clothes. There is charm and heart in the atmosphere as well as the shows. Climate change and the environment were clearly on his agenda in 2010 with biodegradable plastic cups and locally sourced food stalls.

This is a breath of fresh air in our fiercely competitive commercial market places and it's very clear that, as a producer, David is motivated by more than just making money. The Famous Spiegeltent has an artist at its heart'.

See www.spiegeltent.net

On/off, open/closed, black/white, yes/no:
Lisa Wolfe explores the mathematical enigma that is Martin Creed

One two, one two



Martin Creed *Ballet Work no 1020*. Photo Ben Dowden

On strolls Martin, in his maroon hipsters and Fair-isle tank top. He crosses the stage to where his guitar is poised and plugs in his microphone. 'I didn't know whether to start with the curtains open or closed,' he says, 'so I'm doing both.' And he opens the curtains.

To those familiar with Creed's controversial Turner Prize winning exhibition *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* (Tate Britain, December 2001), this is a nice little in-joke. The performance builds on the binary on-off theme, and several other partnerings or counterpoints are set up over the seventy minutes of music, dance and film, all of which, in one way or another, explore mathematically-minded interests in patterns, groups and systems.

Martin Creed is essentially a visual artist/fine arts practitioner. *Ballet Work No 1020* is his first stage work, and first dance work – originally commissioned by Sadler's Wells, with the show here at Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre concurrent with an exhibition at the Fruitmarket Gallery. All of his works, in whatever medium, are numbered rather than named, so they are all seen as part of one whole body of work. Although this is his first dance piece, Creed has worked with live 'performers' before: in 2008, for the Duveen Commission at Tate Britain, *Work No. 850* featured runners who sprinted through the gallery at 30-second intervals.

For *Ballet Work No 1020* there are five dancers, graduated in height, and the stage is marked out as a grid. All are young, and competence differs. The choreography is based on ballet's five positions, plus simple walking patterns of progressing round the stage, and some added lunges and leaps. It appears simplistic but must be quite a

challenge, building geometrically through its use of time, speed and direction. Patterns emerge; systems are set up and disrupted. The five-strong band provides bursts of punk/thrash in Martin's short songs which again have repeated phrases or numbers. In one he recites the alphabet, in another he counts from one to a hundred. One is called '*What's The Point?*' and the finale is *Fuck Off*.

Entrances and exits are important. At one point Creed muses on what could be the least required for something to constitute 'a dance'. Answer: the dancers coming on, and getting off. So that's what they are instructed to do, in silence, their bare feet thudding on the ground rhythmically.

The films provide an interesting diversion from the formality of the staging. Not that they vary much themselves: all are shot on white backgrounds and are beautifully framed with vast depth of field. They include *Girl Vomiting*, *Girl Poo-ing* and *Penis Going Up and Down*. Some people leave at the penis film, at which the two older ladies next to me exclaim 'they're missing all the action!'

The dancers – who are constantly stopped, started and instructed with tasks which vary from the mundane to the ludicrous ('roll off the stage!') – keep admirably straight-faced through this. I smile for the whole seventy minutes. Seemingly shambolic but actually very tight, it is a very enjoyable meander through ideas of 'opposition' and provides some interesting displacement for the Traverse audience.

Meanwhile, over at the Fruitmarket, Martin Creed's exhibition *Down Over Up* is a combination of recent and commissioned pieces and coincides with the publication of

a book, *Martin Creed Works*. The exhibition features early sculpture work, paintings, film, and numerous constructions that could perhaps be described as interactive sculpture, including the staircase to the top floor which is fitted with sound triggers, so that gallery go-ers can play a tune with their steps.

As with *Ballet*, his interest here is in mathematical concepts like ordering, sequencing, grouping, steps, and progression. He has an ongoing interest in everyday materials, and in providing a new way of looking at things – planks, cacti, chairs. The disarmingly simple visual aesthetic throws questions out to the viewer. How deep is the thinking behind this? Is the laugh on us? It is a light touch, teasing and charming, particularly the up/down sounds in the lift. Creed maintains he is striving for perfection and is never satisfied with his own work. He is entertaining and self-effacing in interviews, and this carries through in his art.

But how far that too is a contrived construct, as flimsy as his ziggurat of tiny boxes, or the joke of the final missing note on the key of the musical staircase, is up for grabs.

Additional reporting by Dorothy Max Prior.

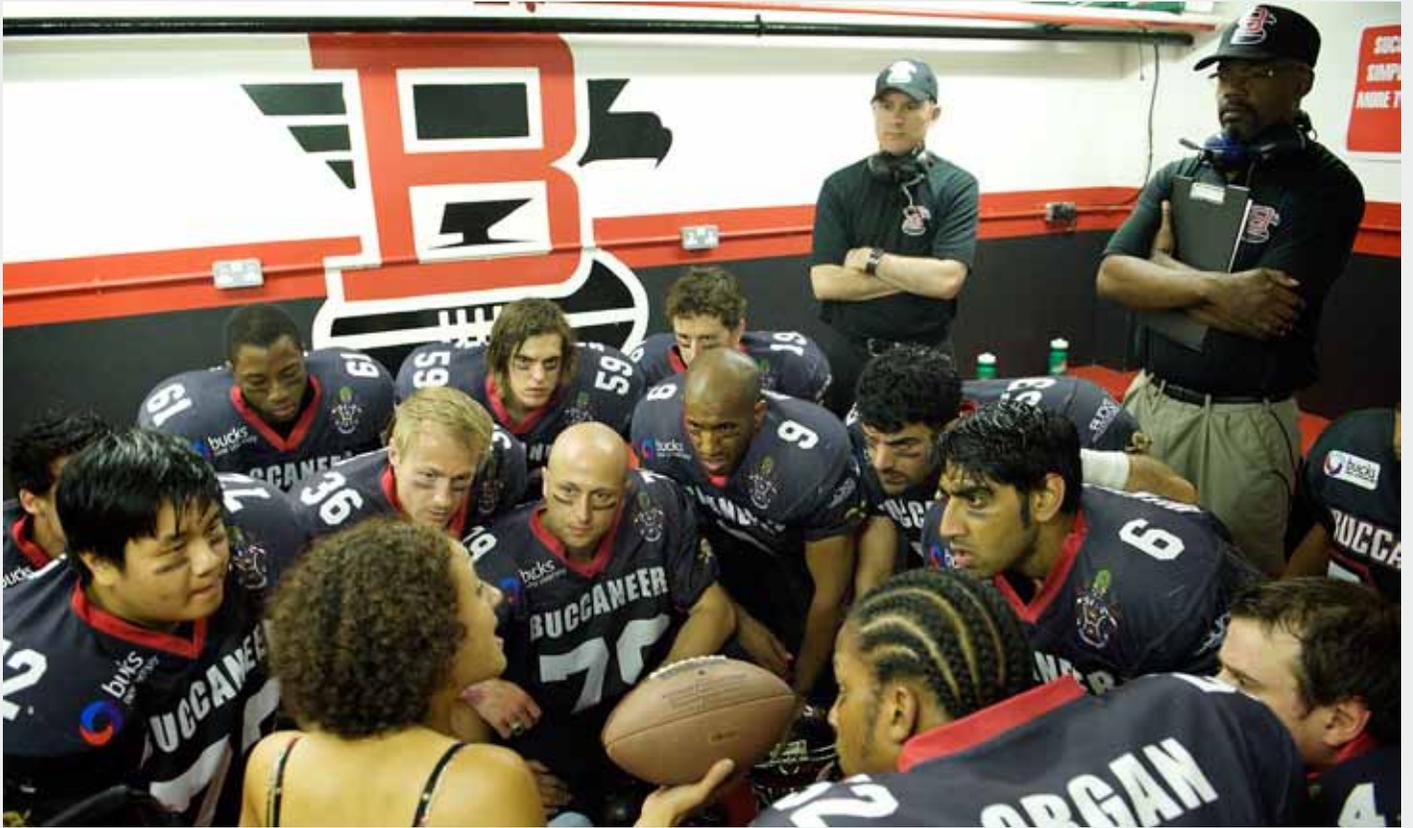
Martin Creed Ballet Work No 1020 was presented at Traverse Theatre as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, August 2010. www.traverse.co.uk

Martin Creed Down Over Up, Fruitmarket Gallery Edinburgh, 30 July to 31 October 2010. www.fruitmarket.co.uk

Martin Creed: Works (hardback) is published by Thames & Hudson.

A threeway view of a rollercoaster theatre experience at BITE 2010

Being There You Me Bum Bum Train



Immersive theatre is of course a la mode at present, and YMBBT continues the trend, offering up a fragmented and gently invasive experience that feels in equal measures both delicately crafted and roughly hewn. Arriving in the scruffy reception you warily hand over your possessions before entering the 'train'. Riding on wheelchairs and gurneys, as well as crawling through air ducts and rushing down narrow corridors, you encounter scenarios in rapid succession, journeying from American football coach to karaoke singer via job-seeker and politician.

Where the general idea of immersive theatre is an attempt to get the audience to *feel* part of a wider experience, here, in role, you 'live' an experience, whether alone as a newsreader or assisting a burglary. Although this transition from spectator to performer is daunting for some, there are a number of subtle strategies in place to support you – for example the drip-feeding of information by a civil servant and the 'gentle' encouragement by a burglar. These tactics all serve to elicit responses from you that drive your own narrative forward.

Through this, YMBBT manages to effect a semi-democratisation of performance: you are not just subjected to the narrative and



shape of a piece but, firmly in the tradition of theatre, you are the final part of the jigsaw. Hurlled from scene to scene this is the closest I have come to a dream-like experience in theatre, the twists and surprises eliciting thrilled titters, whether crowd surfing or giving a sermon. It is a rare, and touching, opportunity to have a significant connection with performers and their worlds.

Particularly memorable moments include turning to hear an improvised choral *a capella* rendition of your sermon as you close the scene – a real ego booster; and the final

scene, in which you emerge into a Karaoke bar, sing your number and then realise that the audience are your fellow audience members – devilishly cheeky stuff.

What makes all this work is the immense generosity of spirit of the huge cast, they enable you to respond to the work, and feel part of an ensemble. *They* carry you along, gently depositing you back into the real world feeling like you've had the ride of your (and other people's) lives.

Tom Wilson



If I'm honest, weariness was the predominant feeling before last night's show. We had spent most of the day laying a new carpet in our scene. The previous one had a tendency to creep across the floor and up the wall when no one was looking.

The room is decorated to look like a rather swanky hotel suite in which I play a government spin-doctor. With a barber, manicurist and shoeshine boy to complete the very impressive picture, we are ready just minutes before the first passenger appears from the next-door scene, where they have just been crowd-surfed by dozens of sweaty young people.

In staggers a rather perplexed looking lady who is about to become the Energy Minister. She slumps into the chair like she may never get up again and, while the rest of the team pamper her, listens bemusedly to me eulogising about the brilliant speech on climate change she can't quite remember making this morning.

Just as we intended the lady soon starts to feel rather powerful. One of the many reasons I love Bum Bum Train so much is that I get to play the same scene 80 times a night and I can observe with delight the realisation dawn on the passengers that they are likely to be confronted by a pack of press hacks all demanding a quote – and their resignation following their decision to allow BP to drill oil wells off the British coast.

Moments later, thanks to the preparation by me and my team, the lady is able to passionately justify herself to the journalists and she sees no reason to resign. She heads for her next encounter beaming a self-satisfied smile, just as we intended. In scene after scene, that's what the Bum Bum Train does for people.

Five hours later my work is done and I can go home and sleep... But wait, is that the sound of the final scene, the party in the bar? Maybe just a quick one...

James Clossick is an actor and writer who performed a lead role throughout this run of *You Me Bum Bum Train*.



I arrive at the LEB building at 9.00am to meet the team with partner Kate Bond, stage and cast management, and the core workers to do the usual audit of what we need to get us through to tomorrow. We are short of American footballers; we have no mechanic, shoe shiner or barber; we have new co-ordinators on front of house who are as yet untrained on the crucial timings of the show; the carpets in three of the scenes are totally destroyed; we are still missing a real sushi conveyor belt; the wheels on the bouncy ball room are perishing.

After the intensive preparation for the show and the manic build I was hoping that by the mid-show date our days would be more predictable with more of a daily routine to follow. That is not the case: we constantly need to find and train new actors for our 200+ voluntary cast, and we never feel that our sets are fully finished; so throughout the show we are improving the set, adding new parts, and in some cases adding more scenes. There is no routine: every show brings different demands

Time flies with trying to fix and improve the set and before I know it, it's minutes to showtime. The actor for the role of the captain in the American football scene is late. Being the only person who knows the lines I have no choice but to step in. The first passenger enters the scene just as I announce to the other actors that I'll be joining them.

It's a thrill to don one of these brilliant outfits, empowering, but the scene is exhausting. We want it to feel serious and real therefore it requires a massive burst of energy from the players towards the end. You have to be prepared to shout till your voice wears out. I have to commend all the actors who took part in this scene, it's achievable only through the understanding that each passenger is worth it.

At the half-time break I quickly shower and change in time to join Kate for our cast break pep talk on the roof. We make sure that they all know how grateful we are for their level of commitment to the project and deliver the best bits of feedback from passenger's testimonials. When the cast are all together

like this it is exciting, a large group of enthusiastic people dedicated to an altruistic cause – wearing an unusual range of outfits.

The second half feels more settled: you can always tell when things are good; there is no activity on the walkie-talkies. Either that or your walkie-talkie's not working.

I join the church congregation, book signing entourage, bouncy ball room backstage operators; I check in regularly with stage managers and become an extra Minister's assistant. Other than give the odd bit of feedback to actors I wasn't in demand and things were running smoothly.

Show dates are always rife with unexpected challenges, especially when working with a giant voluntary cast. Only three more nights till our last show date then we don't have to recruit any more cast members! That is something I can't fathom right now.

Morgan Lloyd is the Joint Artistic Director of *You Me Bum Bum Train*

You Me Bum Bum Train was presented at the LEB Building, Bethnal Green, London July 2010. Funded by The Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award and co-produced by barbicانبite10 and CREATE10. The performance reflected on in *Being There* took place 21 July 2010. www.barbican.org.uk/theatre

CREATE is the cultural partnership of the London boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. You Me Bum Bum Train is supported by Tower Hamlets Council.

You Me Bum Bum Train were winners of the 2010 Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award. The OSBTT Award is in its fourth year of collaboration with Barbican BITE. It is currently an award of £32,000 for a company or individual to create a site-responsive, non-traditional show to take place in one of the five host boroughs for the Olympic and Paralympic games. Details of the 2012 Award will be posted in November 2010. www.osbttrust.com

All images of You Me Bum Bum Train at LEB for Barbican BITE. Photos Elliott Franks

Rebecca Nesvet goes to the London International Festival of Theatre, and sees three works that reflect contemporary Middle Eastern experiences

Eat, Play, Love



Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen *Aftermath*

Since the summer of 1981, when LIFT, then known as the London International Festival of Theatre, first presented its unique range of international premieres, it has brought Londoners together whilst bringing the surrounding world into the city's view. This year, LIFT had a brand new artistic director, former Fierce! festival director Mark Ball, and a stated mission to present 'contemporary theatre of beauty, expertise and audacity' and to give 'a focus for a raft of artists collaborating to produce theatre that links London with the rest of the world'. This new mission, or, rather, this return to the festival's original mission, begs an intriguing question: Can theatre help audiences to understand experiences far from their own? This year's festival tests that hypothesis with several dramatisations of contemporary Middle Eastern experiences: Iraq exposé *Aftermath*; Tunisian multimedia 'love story', *Hobb Story*; and Israeli deaf-blind actors' devised show *Not By Bread Alone*.

Compiled by Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen from dozens of Iraqi refugees' testimony, *Aftermath* shares the stories of several Iraqi individuals and families. A pharmacist, a couple who run a restaurant, a brazenly posh dermatologist, an elderly imam, a Christian housewife and a pair of chipper theatre

artists greet the audience from a refugee camp in Jordan, to which they have all fled from their war-torn country. Each refugee tells his or her tale to the audience, as if we have travelled to Jordan to hear it. Their speech is mediated by an affable young Iraqi translator who is himself a refugee.

As journodrama, *Aftermath* succeeds, reporting obscure news and showing gaps in historical record. We learn that after the American takeover of Iraq, conversion between denominations of Islam became illegal for the first time and that, under Saddam, theatre companies were allowed to perform antique Western classics. (Whether modern Iraqi life could be staged is decidedly less clear.) This and other calculated omissions show that in current events, truth may often only be found in the unspoken and the untranslated. When a woman hunts for the word 'rape', the translator politely offers 'to be impolite to'. In revealing this moment, *Aftermath* thoughtfully subverts its own authority as testimony.

Staging the LIFT production of *Aftermath* in the Old Vic Tunnels, a shadowy, creepy, apparently crumbling labyrinth underneath an active railway line, is risky but truly inspired. The monstrous rumble of passing

trains intermittently smashes holes in spoken dialogue, but in *Aftermath*, that thunder sounds like distant bombing or the sonic booms of fighter planes. The effect drags the spectators into the action, as we and the characters struggle to achieve understanding in spite of all sorts of interference.

Translation, revelation, and trauma also loom large in *Hobb Story: Instructions for Arab Love*, brought to LIFT by the Tunisian multimedia group Artistes Producteurs Associates and performed in Arabic and French with supertitles. The set design is striking: a projection screen, an Edenic field of golden barley and a giant apple that gleams in hemispheres of candy-apple red and envy green. The juxtaposition of these timeless archetypal images with the screen, symbol and window of modernity, promises a bravely complex investigation of *hobb* ('love' in Arabic) in Tunisia. It begins with a revisionist Scheherazade video-recording her recollections of the evolution from being arranged bride of a psychopathic mass murderer and serial rapist to the confident *de facto* ruler of an empire and covert lesbian lover. This sets up the expectation that the 'love stories' that follow will be similarly nontraditional, transgressive or even subversive. However, that expectation is not

entirely fulfilled. As the show continues, a parade of interviews and skits showcase apparent cultural beliefs: on screen interviewees and characters portrayed by live performers assert that ‘every man loves a woman, is loved by another, and marries a third’, and that ‘women are granted the freedom to operate in their field of genius’ – the home. A girl finds her school’s sole out lesbian tolerable ‘because there is nothing we can do if she’s sick’ and an absent, philandering husband blames his son’s transvestism on his wife, a physically ‘masculine’ woman played, notably, by a man in a *chador*. Her son compounds his mother’s misery by agreeing that she is to blame for his identity.

The play is effectively disturbing, but the intention behind the chill is unclear. Taboo topics are frequently discussed. Medical men list Latin names for different hymeneal shapes while women in wedding gowns demonstrate by doing origami with their veils. A guitar-accompanied rock song mourns a career woman deliberately burnt to death by her unemployed husband after she dared him to prove he is ‘a man’ by setting her aflame. He blames his actions on possession by a *djinn* (genie) and she proclaims undying love from her grave. At the very end of the performance this song is reprised, illustrated onscreen in jokey animation. Is the implication that many contemporary Tunisians espouse such heterosexism, pseudoscience and homicidal misogyny? By the play’s end, the actors have trampled down the field of barley, suggesting that the knowledge of desire, sex, marriage, and love that they have just imparted is indeed a force of destruction and waste, just as in Eden. Thus uncritically offered, this point, like Adam’s apple, is hard to swallow.

Like *Hobb Story*, Nalaga’at’s *Not by Bread Alone* is an expose of usually undescribed sensual experiences: the everyday lives of people who are both deaf and blind. According to a post-show speech given by non-deaf-blind director Adina Tal, the acting skills of the deaf-blind Israelis who make up the company have been developed as part of the ten-year-old company’s mission. The only deaf-blind theatre troupe in the world, the company communicate their impressions in a tapestry of smell and heat, and demonstrate how they explore and interact via touch, the sense that largely connects them to other people.

At the start, performers knead dough and put their loaves into the oven to bake. As bread-scent and heat waft across artsdepot’s staid proscenium, autobiographical monologues reveal the performers’ aspirations: to attend a film or to marry. In some cases, the characters’ aspirations also reveal cultural assumptions highlighting specifics of Israeli culture more opaque even than the contours of the sightless-soundless world. For example, one performer wishes to share her bread with ‘soldiers’ – and we are left to join the contextual dots. At the end, the audience is



Artistes Producteurs Associates *Hobb Story: Instructions for Tunisian Love*



Nalaga'at *Not By Bread Alone*

invited to share a communal meal: together, cast and spectators eat the just-risen bread. A multi-sensual group experience, this breaks down the boundaries of ability but also breaks the proscenium arch, turning audience and actors into a crowd of people sharing a meal. It is a lovely symbol for live performance’s ability to transform a group of strangers into a temporary community.

Overall, however, *Not by Bread Alone* is weakened by didactic dialogue. The cast constantly reiterate that the deaf-blind wish, dream, and imagine because ‘we do not live by bread alone.’ Clearly, people with disabilities have imaginative lives: recall Milton, Beethoven, Keller and Hawking. In a show that adroitly uses sensual evidence to reveal experiences beyond much of the audience’s knowledge, reliance on dogma is ironically dismaying.

Aftermath, *Hobb Story* and *Not By Bread Alone* evoke cultural experiences of which most London theatregoers have no personal knowledge, and yet all three plays optimistically suggest that theatre has the potential to guide audiences partway into unfamiliar perspectives, energies and lives. Coincidentally, the trio of plays combined reveals challenges and enigmas inherent in the transcultural presentation of theatre. From *Aftermath*’s American representation of Iraqi ordeals and opinions to Nalaga’at’s journey into silent, soundless, yet busy worlds, the mirror of transcultural theatre aims for authenticity whilst questioning what authenticity is, and how, or whether, an observer can know if authenticity has been achieved.

Led to the outer edge of the familiar, the transcultural spectator might experience judgmental responses to some of the attitudes and assumptions on display, experience embarrassment at the regressive beliefs that may be prevalent in other cultures, or our own inability to be as tolerant of difference as we might wish. Are some people far away very misguided, or, in considering this, do I patronise or exoticise them? At LIFT, are they under the microscope or am I? By presenting three performance pieces about life in the contemporary Middle East, each very different in style, theme and outlook from the others and each intensely concerned with the subjectivity of witnessing, storytelling and interpretation, LIFT 2010 introduces London theatre audiences to this region’s cultures without deceptively homogenising them. Both London-rooted and international, LIFT at its best encourages audiences to explore the world, and also to question our own ‘home truths,’ perspectives and judgments.

New York Theatre Workshop *Aftermath* seen at the Old Vic Tunnels, 10 June 2010. Artistes Producteurs Associates *Hobb Story* at Riverside Studios, 10 June 2010. Nalaga’at *Not By Bread Alone* at the Arts Depot 11 June 2010. All presented as part of LIFT (the London International Festival of Theatre). www.liftfestival.com

Dorothy Max Prior has an intimate encounter of a special kind

Care of Adrian Howells



Foot Washing for the Sole

BAC's festival of one-on-one performance exposed the strengths and weaknesses of this currently popular mode of practice. It's all down, essentially, to the trust between performer and audience member. As far as I'm concerned, the maestro of the form is Adrian Howells – when the intimate encounter is with Adrian, the trust is absolute.

In his earlier work, *Foot Washing for the Sole*, you are invited to spend time with Adrian whilst having your feet lovingly attended to. His latest one-on-one piece, *The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding* (seen at BAC's One-On-One Festival), ups the ante – inviting the audience member to surrender him or herself to be 'fully bathed, fed and held in a long embrace'.

Challenging? You know you're in safe hands, so it doesn't feel that way. Every stage of the process is carefully thought through. There are a series of ante-rooms: in the first, you sit quietly by yourself and read about the process. You learn that you'll next go into a room where you will undress, and that you will have swimsuit or shorts available to wear if you wish, or you can choose to be bathed naked. When you're ready, clad in your bathrobe, you then knock on a door which is answered by Adrian. So finally you come to the bathroom – a beautiful installation piece, womb-red and lit by candlelight, with a freestanding Victorian bathtub, rose petals floating in soapy water, as its centrepiece.

In *Foot Washing for the Sole*, Adrian's patter is a key part of the performance; in *The Pleasure of Being*, he does not speak unless spoken to, so that the focus stays almost completely on the sensory experiences: the sight of the flickering candles, the smell of

the oils, the warmth of the water, the touch of the washcloth and towels, the taste of the chocolate in your mouth, and the feel of two strong arms wrapped around you. It is – everything. To be cared for so totally, so intimately – a level of care so rare it hurts.

There have been numerous other artists who have similarly used the actions of physical therapies such as massage and aromatherapy as their palette, but never, in my experience, with such success. For example, Anish Kapoor's *Imagined Monochrome* (seen at Brighton Festival, May 2009) takes the form of a head, shoulder and arm massage, enacted by professional masseuses, which you experience whilst lying on a treatment couch in an all-white environment, eyes closed but under a very bright light, with the expectation that you would then experience a whole rainbow of colours through your eyelids. The whole experience feels remarkably un-nurturing, and the masseuses seem uncomfortable in their odd 'art worker' role. It is reflecting on what didn't work in Kapoor's piece that reveals why Howell's intimate pieces work so well. The key factor is the actual presence of the artist: Adrian Howells is a highly experienced performer who knows how to 'hold the space' perfectly. This is not work that can be set up and walked away from – it is Adrian's wonderful energy that makes his work what it is.

His sense of how to hold an intimate moment with confidence extends beyond his one-on-one work into other pieces. *An Audience With Adrienne*, takes the form of a small party, for up to twenty people, in someone's front room (in this case, in the flat above Brighton's Nightingale Theatre). The audience are greeted, sat on pink sofas, and



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



Adrian Howells: *An Audience with Adrienne*

offered sweets or ice-lollies. We form teams and create collages from old copies of *Take a Break!* magazine, and Adrian's drag alter ego Adrienne entertains us with a few songs and dances, and shows us home-movies of Adrian's elderly parents reflecting on their son's childhood. We also get to select autobiographical stories from a menu, and after Adrian/Adrienne has shared a story of, say, a sexual fantasy about a schoolfriend, we are invited to contribute our own stories. Adrian's perfectly pitched, warm and open performance creates a safe environment for shared intimacies, and people open up readily with their contributions. This of course could be a dangerous slip into a free-for-all, but our capable host/ess stage-manages the whole thing beautifully, moving us on when need be into the next section of this carefully choreographed evening.

It's the loving care of the small details that make Adrian Howells' work the experience that it is for audiences: an enriching intimate encounter – one-on-one or otherwise.

BAC's One-On-One festival took place 6–18 July 2010. www.bac.co.uk

An Audience with Adrienne was seen at The Nightingale Theatre (Brighton Fringe, May 2010). www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk

Beccy Smith reports from the brand new IF festival in Milton Keynes

inStallation



This year saw the inauguration of a new festival of international work colonising the public spaces of Britain's fastest growing city, Milton Keynes. The emphasis of the programme, spearheaded by local venue The Stables with the support of veteran public arts programmer Bill Gee, was on a magical transformation of the city. A substantial free programme that featured a melange of established outdoor experimenters and favourites, including Kompany Malakhi, Metro Boulot Dodo and The World Famous, reflected a curatorial commitment to reinventions of public space (Artichoke's beautiful carousel *The Magical Menagerie* in an industrial-scale car-park was a case in point). Artistic director Monica Ferguson defined the approach as producing ten extraordinary days for the city in 2010.

inStallation didn't form part of the free programme but certainly hit the ambition for unexpected reinvention and a magical atmosphere. Described somewhat ambiguously as 'a very special kind of theatre' there's a sense the show's been a bit of a conundrum for marketeers. But in many ways this is classic circus, albeit with a twist. The nostalgic flavour of traditional circus is evoked by the sand-filled ring, complete with pendant chandeliers; the company's own touring big top; a strong diabolo presence; and animal acts.

The twist is the company's unexpected collective – combining their diverse skills in an original format. A collaboration between four acrobats, a composer-musician and an equestrian artist whose shared Swiss rehearsal space formed the inspiration for an intriguing show, *inStallation* started life as a showcase for friends keen to better understand the skills

of these travelling artists, and the show still retains some of the demonstrative flavour of this form. Many of the sequences are tours de force of acrobatics or horsemanship but, with the exception of the wonderfully eclectic score that operates as a near constant dialogue with the work on stage, it wasn't clear to me to what extent the collaborative parts had really fused to create something theatrically new.

Performers climb over guest artist Stefan Hegi's beautifully designed doorway, tumble around the ring or appear on different peripheral stages playing double bass, mini pipe organ and guitar, and it's clear that multiple creative minds have riffed on the possibilities of space and idea, tinkering with it to provide something that best served them all. For me, the linked sequence of acts, which didn't build narratively in any meaningful sense, didn't need to be anything more than what they were – spectacular circus, beautifully rendered.

Individual scenes often felt effortlessly theatrical. Imaginative gestures transformed effective scenes with theatrical artistry: exiting the stage with a bundle of back silks dropped down from a rope sequence, the female performer wears them trailing like a veil and her collaborators throw handfuls of sand over her head as their mournful bride's confetti. There was real respect on display for materials as well as bodies: a rope swings across the ring with its own spotlight as the opening image, and the textures, weight and movement of fabric, sand and light, as well as music, are given their own space. This is a company confident to compose with silence and space as much as with action and noise. One of the most successful diabolo scenes – a

frenetic duet atop a black grand piano – felt like an animated Cubist painting.

The equestrian art sat with a certain unease within the show and felt less integrated (presumably due to practical reasons) than the rest of the programme. A rather stern injunction about disturbing the horses at the start, although making us conscious of their power and unpredictability as they cantered around the suddenly small ring, set a slightly nervous tone. Horse sequences that progressed from simple choreography to more elaborate feats of sitting, walking backwards, and hind-leg dancing, challenged the audience's cultural mores but were limited in their ability to really integrate with the performance material surrounding them.

What the equestrian scenes did exult in, however, was a sense of mystery and majesty to proceedings that felt fragile and rare. From the silent opening scene of a single horse standing patiently whilst her master sweeps sand centrestage greeting us as we entered, instantly dispelling any expectations of a rambunctious big top extravaganza, to the show's powerful closing scene – where a single diabolo mimics the preceding tightrope act by pirouetting down its length of string and 'dancing' atop the grand piano accompanying it, closely observed by the full cast and a single sombre horse – this was a show powerfully steeped in the atmosphere of awe and wonder the IF festival so wanted to bring to the city.

inStallation was a UK premiere at IF: Milton Keynes International Festival 16-25 July 2010.
www.ifmiltonkeynes.org

Donna Close sees what's on offer at the bijou festival with a reputation for its arts programming

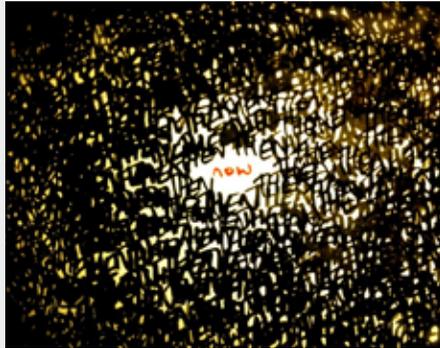
Latitude



Derevo Wolves Tango



Ida Barr at Duckie's Masked Ball



Daniel Kitson *It's Always Right Now Until It's Later*



Les Enfants Terribles Vaudevillians

riff: a painstakingly detailed observation of the heroism of the everyday romantic and the hugeness of small things. This audience division was summed up by the reaction of an elderly couple sitting next to me. The man looked at me and, smiling a smile of complicity, slowly took off his glasses and wiped the tears from his eyes. His wife turned to him and said, 'Typical, you've made me late for David Soul now.'

Elsewhere, over at the Waterfront stage, the Dance programme included Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Faan*, and Ballet Boyz (all presented by Sadler's Wells), and a piece by Russian physical theatre supremos Derevo, *Wolves' Tango*, which is a collaborative work between the core company and guest dancers from the locality.

In the Cabaret tent and area, Duckie presented a mask-making workshop (yes really, queens on sewing machines and all) run by the irrepressible Scottee, all in preparation for a wonderful late night Masked Ball with a cabaret that featured star performers Christopher Green (as Ida Barr) and Ursula Martínez (of *Hanky Panky* fame).

What unfortunately disappointed was the outdoor performance programme of Pandora's Playground, and the installation/live art pieces of the Faraway Forest were neither edgy nor of particularly high quality (with the exception of a few key works such as Gavin Turk's *The House of Fairytales* and Les Enfants Terribles's *Vaudevillians*). Frustratingly, events (throughout the festival) often did not start on time, and up-to-date information was hard to obtain, and the stewards – sorry, Customer Support Officers – although smiley and friendly weren't able to advise. In this aspect, Latitude has a lot to learn from Glastonbury. As it does on its outdoor arts programming... Cie Quidams were enchanting but where were the big names and the young Turks of UK outdoor performance and site-specific theatre, digital art, and temporal public art? Latitude, you are their natural festival home and an opportunity to bring the exciting world of fresh new cerebral spectacle to a new audience. Go get 'em.

Additional reporting by Dorothy Max Prior.
Latitude 2010 took place 15-18 July,
Henham Park, Southwold, Suffolk.
www.latitudefestival.co.uk

This year's Latitude was its fifth and my first. Set in glorious Suffolk countryside and populated by psychedelically coloured sheep and Guardianistas in search of cultural kicks, the highbrow arts line-up looked promising.

The Theatre and Spoken Word programmes were particularly strong with some big hitters on the bill, some making the most of the opportunity to confound expectations and reach a new audience. The RSC in particular proved they were still the Daddy, with a dark and knockabout late-night comedy, *The 13 Midnight Challenges of Angelus Diablo*. Sandy Grierson revelled in the demonic titular role, pushing both cast and audience to the edge of farce. You were never sure if the show would lose its way or descend into anarchy, but in the capable hands of this talented group of clowns and *ac-toors*, the play remained the thing. If the Latitude organisers needed a demonstration of how to be edgy and keep your core audience on board – this was it.

And hurrah to Latitude for providing such a feast for Daniel Kitson fans – with midnight

storytelling every night on the Waterfront stage (in collaboration with Gavin Osborn), and a pre-Edinburgh work-in-progress of *It's Always Right Now Until It's Later*. The former were the perfect setting and timing to send you up the stairs to Bedfordshire with a warm glow, even with the occasionally clunky rhyme-smithing. The latter was Kitson at his best, with the work-in-progress context seemingly giving him freedom to relax into the curious mixture of openness, confrontation and self-deprecation familiar to his stand-up audiences. This made the already potent pragmatic romanticism of the coming story more profound. The story uses a simple but brilliantly effective construction of zooming in on individual moments of the two protagonists' lives, retold in that moment, with the same level of hindsight, foresight and self-awareness that we have in these moments (none). It's an incredibly immersive and engaging device: the revealing of two unconnected people's stories and the seemingly random order of the reminiscences – hurtling towards an incidental shared moment in time – makes you do the work in finding causal connections between past, present and future; working out what is important and what is not. And of course it's funny, and sad, and profound, and prosaic – and sometimes the most seemingly innocuous moments end up being the most vital.

I imagine Daniel Kitson divides opinion. Much of his work is on the same riff which you either get or you don't. But oh what a

BOOKS AND OTHER MEDIA PUBLICATIONS + RELEASES

BOOKS

So You Want To Be A Theatre Producer?

James Seabright
Nick Hern Books
ISBN 978-1-854595-379
£12.99 paperback
www.nickhernbooks.co.uk

Yes! A good book on producing theatre, written by a successful theatre producer! *So You Want To Be A Theatre Producer?* describes itself as 'a comprehensive guide to every aspect of producing a show, from raising the money to creating a hit'. And that is indeed what we get: valuable insights on everything from the creative issues of coming up with the ideas and casting a show, through to tackling touring costs, insurance, marketing, PR and so forth. The emphasis is more on the mainstream/potentially commercial sector rather than the experimental theatre/live art sector – but there is valuable information for anyone putting on a production of any scale in any setting. After all, 'success' takes many forms but surely, if we are putting work in front of an audience, we want to do this successfully? So here's how... And one marvellous idea is the addition of companion website with downloadable contract templates, marketing packs and budget spreadsheets – all for free at www.producerbook.co.uk

Key Concepts in Drama and Performance

Kenneth Pickering
Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 978-1-403934-369
www.palgrave.com/theatre

Aimed at undergraduates in drama, theatre or performing arts, Pickering's *Key Concepts* describes itself as 'an informative and accessible guide to the subject'. Each of the five chapters (textual concepts, performance concepts, production concepts, staging concepts, critical concepts) begins with a brief introduction to the concepts it embraces, followed by an alphabetical listing of those concepts. For the most part, it does its job nicely, and is a genuinely useful reference book. But it is sometimes hard to understand the entry allocations under the given chapter separations: what, for example, makes 'carnival' a performance concept, and therefore in chapter two, 'site-specific' a production concept (chapter three) and 'street theatre' a staging concept (chapter four)? Why is absurdism in chapter one and surrealism in chapter four? Wouldn't it be easier just to place everything alphabetically? And there is far too great an emphasis on playwright-led theatre for this to be a truly comprehensive reference work: the entry on 'dramaturg', for example, gives no indication of any potential role within physical, devised or visual theatre. But interesting and informative, so worth having on the bookshelf.

Theatre & Sexuality

Jill Dolan
Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 978-0-230220-645

Theatre & Interculturalism

Ric Knowles
Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 978-0-230575-486

Theatre & Ireland

Lionel Pilkington
Palgrave Macmillan
ISBN 978-0-230574-625

Each volume £4.99 paperback
Series Editors: Jen Harvie and Dan Rebellato
www.palgrave.com/theatre/tand.asp

The Theatre & series brings us a set of pocketbook-size explorations, all around 100 pages and all priced at just £4-99, each investigating one particular mode of practice, body of work, or burning question.

The batch that recently arrived at the Total Theatre offices included: *Theatre & Sexuality* by Jill Dolan, which brings us a reflection on gender issues in theatre, as well as an analysis and celebration of key lesbian, gay and transsexual work; *Theatre & Ireland*, an 'innovative survey of theatre in Ireland [that] covers a range of drama and performance, from the 17th century to the present'; and *Theatre & Interculturalism* by Ric Knowles, which asks: How are hybrid and diasporic identities performed in increasingly diverse societies? How can we begin to think differently about theatrical flow across cultures?

A mixed bag, certainly. If there is a criticism it is that this series – unlike, say, the Routledge Performance Practitioners series – is just a little too eclectic, erratic and unfocused in its intent. Some titles, such as Jill Dolan's excellent little book, are firmly rooted in theatre practice. *Theatre & Sexuality* is academically rigorous yet full of interesting information and reflection on contemporary queer theatre-making. Others (such as *Theatre & Interculturalism*) read more like a dissertation, with just passing reference to contemporary practice – heavy on names and dates but not really going much further – and excessive referencing of political tracts and cultural studies / performance studies tomes on the subject of interculturalism. And it is hard to see where a title like *Theatre & Ireland* fits into the series' stated remit to raise key issues and to represent 'the latest critical thinking in the discipline' – it's a potted history of Irish theatre; good and interesting but sitting rather uneasily in this series. The disparate styles and purposes of the individual volumes make it hard to recommend the whole series, but at less than a fiver a go, hard to be too critical!

MEDIA

Louder than Bombs: Over the course of seven weeks, the Stanley Picker Gallery in Kingston handed over its entire exhibition space to host a series of week-long live art residencies. Co-curated with the Live Art Development Agency through an open call for proposals, Louder than Bombs: Art, Action & Activism was an ambitious programme of public workshops and live events that focused on challenging social, political and global issues of the day, addressed through the seven invited artist/activist's individual working practices and the Gallery audience's direct participation and responding involvement. The artists were: Steven Levon Ounanian and Thomas Thwaites, Áine Phillips, Sean Burn, Ansuman Biswas, Stacy Makishi and Yoshiko Shimada, Prick Your Finger, and The Vacuum Cleaner. A full archive of the seven projects and short films about each week can now be viewed on the Stanley Picker Gallery website: www.stanleypickergallery.org

Unfinished Histories: Unfinished Histories: Recording the History of the Alternative Theatre Movement is proud to announce the launch of their long-awaited website. Central to the site are interview pages with information on the topics they cover, audio and video extracts, galleries of leaflets, programmes and photos. You will also find extensive lists of companies, venues, key individuals and links to specialist archive collections. The site's managers hope that users will volunteer to write their own recollections and entries on companies. www.unfinishedhistories.com

Le Nuancier du Cirque: Published by the French organisation Circostrada, *Le Nuancier du Cirque* is a six-hour double-DVD collecting short extracts from 178 contemporary circus shows (with a few trad ones thrown in for comparison). It's been put together principally as a teaching aid and an advocacy tool, with the clips divided into sections and subsections that support a simple aesthetic taxonomy developed by critic-writer-researchers Jean-Michel Guy and Julien Roseberg. There is some amazing footage here, without a doubt. Some of the most extraordinary scenes of the last few decades are represented, but cut from their wider context and with no supporting information other than a company and show name. It's like visiting an enormous library maintained by an indifferent archivist: there's nothing like a decent index; casual interest will be titillated but soon exhausted. Rather the DVD is principally useful to teachers, researchers and perhaps to festival/venue programmers – for now. In the future Circostrada and partners plan to put the material online with a superior search function, and then perhaps it will be a more approachable project. www.circostrada.org

Books & Other Media compiled by Dorothy Max: Prior (books) and John Ellingsworth (other media)

*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*

UPDATE AUTUMN SEASON 2010



Cupola Bobber Way Out West, the Sea Whispered Me

As we move into autumn, the festivals of summer give way to longer, slower-burning seasons of work. Chelsea Theatre's **Sacred** is among the most impressive, a 'season of contemporary performance' which investigates the flickering existence of live art at the outer edges of theatre, music and dance. For this edition (its fourth) Chelsea Theatre joins forces with New York's equally venturesome Performance Space 122 to import a few of the pioneers of US experimental performance. In *Ads* Richard Maxwell collaborates with photographer Michael Schmelling and Bozkurt 'Bozzy' Karasu of the prestigious (post-EIF 2010: *extra* prestigious) Wooster Group to create a digital cast of 3D projected video-beings who talk about who they are and what they believe in. Chicago-based duo Cupola Bobber bring a piece that looks at the sea as artistic muse by touring seaside resorts of the early twentieth century, *Way Out West, the Sea Whispered Me* – if nothing else, we can agree, beautifully named. Korean-born New Yorker Young Jean Lee hits the UK with *Pullman, WA*, and in *Money Conversation* artist Sarah Juli invites the audience to take the money from her pockets (only two performances for this one). Alongside the US artists, there's a new work from Marisa Carnesky, *The Quickening of the Wax*, commissioned for Sacred but sounding as though it's building on her piece *Dystopian Wonders*, which premiered at the Roundhouse in May; with *Suspended* Natasha Davis pursues further her path of solo-object-installation-theatre (see the TT website for a review of her last show, *Asphyxia*); and there are appearances from Sacred regulars Julia Bardsley, Ernst Fischer & Helen Spackman, and Stacy Makishi.

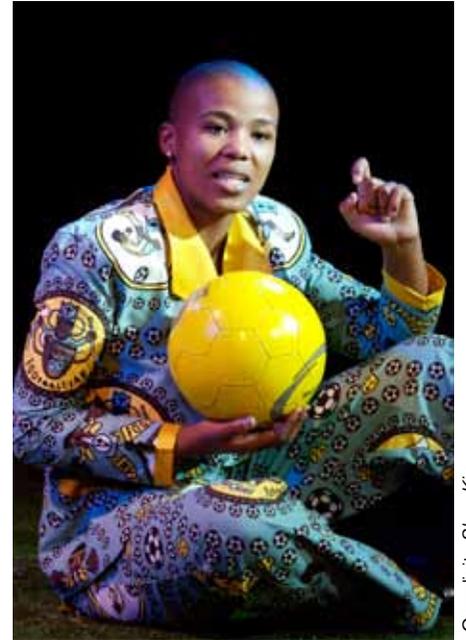
Elsewhere, the Barbican's perma-season **Bite** runs on. Ultra-serious Polish Grotowski



Natasha Davis Suspended at Sacred



Afrovibes Ncamisa! Kiss The Women



Complicite Shun Kin

acolytes Song of the Goat Theatre are visiting with a version of *Macbeth* that combines Shakespeare's verse with their own muscular language and technique of polyphonic singing. For the brave there's also a two-day workshop, *The Body of Macbeth*, aimed at hardy performers who want to work in an integrated way with text, movement and song; for the more sedentary there's a symposium, 'In search of the human essence – the aesthetics and the method of Song of the Goat Theatre'. Also of note, Complicite perform their deviant love story, *Shun-kin*, about the relationship between blind Shamisen player Shun-kin and her servant Sasuke; and, trailed incomprehensibly on the Barbican website, TR Warszawa present *TEOREMAT*, an interpretation of Italian poet, activist and intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini's film of the same name, and a follow-up from their last Barbican show *4.48 Psychosis*.

With performances in London (at The Albany, Deptford) but presence also at Manchester's Contact Theatre and The Drum, Birmingham, **Afrovibes** is a festival/season of contemporary South African performance curated by dancer and choreographer Gregory Maqoma. Among the shows being presented are Paul Grootboom's *Welcome to Rocksburg*, a gritty view of township life; Baxter Theatre's

A Face Like Mine, which explores black femininity by observing relations between black women and white men; *Ncamisa! Kiss The Women*, directed by Peter Hayes and performed by Pam Ngwabeni, the story of a football-playing black lesbian growing up in one of the townships of South Africa; and *Via Volcano's Mzobane*, a dance performance in association with *Breaking Cycles*, choreographed by William Mbambo and directed by Benji Reid.

Then taking us to the end of autumn and the edge of winter, **National Theatre Wales'** inaugural season weaves once more from text-based work to visual theatre with a piece by Fevered Sleep, *The Weather Factory*, created entirely on location in a house in Pen-y-groes, and celebrating the natural geography that makes Snowdonia the engine room of the Welsh climate. To pique your interest take a look at director David Harradine's weather research in the winter of last year, documented on the NTW Community site.

Sacred, 26 October – 20 November | www.chelseatheatre.org.uk
Bite, until December | www.barbican.org.uk
Afrovibes, 5-23 October | www.ukarts.com
The Weather Factory @ National Theatre Wales, 7-21 December | www.nationaltheatrewales.org

UPDATE VENUES



Tobacco Factory: As the excellent autumn/winter programme at Bristol's Tobacco Factory continues, Trestle Theatre visit with *Burn My Heart*, a piece set during the Mau Mau uprising in 1950s Kenya that draws on African music and movement styles to create a powerful mix of text and physical storytelling (7 & 8 October). Then later in the season Stan's Cafe perform *Tuning Out with Radio Z*, an improvised night-time broadcast from within the studios of Radio Z, with the audience as the call-in listeners (4-6 November).
www.tobaccofactory.com

The Basement: Bryony Kimmings' Total Theatre Award-winning show *Sex Idiot* is at Brighton's Basement 15 October – a tour through Bryony's true-life sexual misadventures and self-realizations, told through vignettes of performance, dance, song and spoken word, all gaffer-taped to some rough chat and acts of slight danger! Then at the end of the month, on 30 October, there's a free all-night event called *Divine Passage: White Night* that opens a portal between two venues, Lighthouse and The Basement, to take audiences on a journey into their own twisted sexuality, gender confusion and transgressive yearnings.
www.thebasement.uk.com

Riverside Studios: Two total theatre shows at Riverside Studios this autumn: Forced Entertainment's *The Thrill of it All* sees nine performers in grubby tuxedos and tarnished sequins play out a comical and disconcerting vaudeville to the strains of Japanese lounge music (26 October – 6 November); and Forkbeard Fantasy's *The Colour of Nonsense* is an exuberant satire on an art and theatre world always in search of the New (9-21 November).
www.riversidestudios.co.uk

Stratford Circus: A rich programme of theatre coming up at Stratford Circus this season: Frank Wurzinger's solo clown show *The Confetti Maker* records a day in the life of a full-time confetti factory worker (15 October); Rotozaza come to the Stratford Circus cafe with *Etiquette*, their delicate and haunting headphone piece for two participants (15 & 16 October); SCLOWNS' *The Spaghetti Horse* draws together an international cast of clowns corralled by director Jon Davidson (16 October); and Leo and Yam Aerial Circus' *Panoramic* roams the blurry edges of gender and sexuality in a piece taking inspiration from melodrama, vaudeville comedy, 1930s glamour and circus splendour (26 & 27 November).
www.stratford-circus.com

Spare at New Diorama



Frank Wurzinger The Confetti Maker, Theatre Royal Stratford East



Twin Peaks Weekender: To mark the 20th anniversary of the first UK broadcast of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, Battersea Arts Centre are holding a 'Lynch lock-in' on 23 & 24 October: a weekend-long programme of theatre and film inspired by the seminal TV series. Includes a 30-hour, all-night screening of every *Twin Peaks* episode; dressing up is 'highly recommended'. If the prospect of it all sounds closer to appealing than terrifying then head to the BAC website for more:
www.bac.org.uk

Blue Elephant Theatre: At the base of Mount Fuji lies an ominous stretch of forest known locally as The Sea of Trees. Centuries of secrets lie hidden under the mossy earth, where rivers of lava have hardened over to form the cavernous forest floor. Thousands of people who have entered these woods have never been seen again. Some simply got lost... others intended to disappear. Theatre Témoin, in collaboration with taiko sensei Ikuyo Conant present *Jukai*, a movement-drumming piece which incorporates Japanese traditional drumming with mask and physical theatre. *Jukai* follows the story of three women, linked by their shared connection to Aokigahara, a forest at the base of Fuji renowned for its natural beauty and haunted by its reputation for being the biggest hotspot for suicide in Japan. Running until 16 October.
www.blueelephanttheatre.co.uk

Old/New Theatres: An evolution of the Diorama Arts Centre – itself an echo of the old Diorama building in Regent's Park which



Theatre Témoin Jukai, Blue Elephant

during the 70s was squatted by a turbulent community of artists and theatre-makers (among them Graeae and Ra Ra Zoo) – the New Diorama Theatre opened its first full season in September with *Spare*, a play where actors were matched to characters at random before each performance. The programme for the autumn is mostly text-based theatre, though in the run-up to Christmas there's a puppet show for the 3-5s, *Grandma's Christmas Journey*.
www.newdiorama.com

South east of the New Diorama's Euston location, possibly named after a first-glance evaluation of its structural integrity, The Jellyfish Theatre was erected in August: an ecologically sustainable venue designed by architects Köbberling and Kaltwasser and built with the help of volunteers using only recycled and reclaimed materials. It's a squat, bowed rectangle, slightly reminiscent of a mead hall, with an exterior shell composed mostly of wooden pallets; it's very striking to look at. Kay Adshead's play *Protozoa* runs until 9 October, at which point the theatre will be dismantled and its materials reused. The whole project has been instigated by The Red Room in partnership with The Architecture Foundation and in association with The Junction.
www.oikosproject.com

Unity at The Point



The Point Announces New Associate Artists:

After a lengthy and rigorous audition process that saw graduate and emerging artists from across the South East vying for a coveted place, The Point has selected its new Artists' Quarters members. They are interactive performance artist Nicky Bellenger; Milk Presents, an avant garde theatre company who dissect and reinterpret classic text; young political theatre company Black Propaganda; contemporary dancer and choreographer Charlotte Spencer; dance company VMDance; and digital artists Mighty Drive. They will each start a year-long residency at the Eastleigh theatre in September. Artists' Quarters is one strand of The Point's Domicile Project, an initiative that creates opportunities for graduate and early career companies as well as developing new productions with established artists. As part of the progressive programme, the new AOs will receive professional and creative mentorship, marketing and press assistance, and business direction as well as industry networking opportunities and performance platforms. www.thepointeastleigh.co.uk

Rich Mix: A couple of interesting items coming up within the wilfully scattered programme at Bethnal Green's Rich Mix. *EAT*, by Peter Edwards, is the multimedia journey of a gay, disabled man in search of his heart's desire. Combining innovative movement and images with bizarre and poignant anecdotes, *EAT* follows James in his surreal quest to find the fat man, eat some spaghetti and live happily ever after (6 December). Then, leaping to an entirely different register, Rouge28 Theatre's *Urashima Taro* is a piece inspired by Japanese mythology and aesthetics, using a combination of human-size Bunraku-style puppets and paper theatre to tell a fascinating story of lust, betrayal and loss (18 December). www.richmix.org.uk

PANeK: Two workshops and a showcase from Performing Arts Network Kent this autumn: pioneers of splicing film and animation with performance, Forkbeard Fantasy will be giving a workshop/demonstration 22 October at the University of Kent, Canterbury; street supremos the Natural Theatre Company will be running a two-day course 28-30 October that will culminate in street performances on the final day; and on 19 November PANeK present an evening of work-in-progresses from a selection of Kent-based companies (get in touch if you'd like to be one of them) at

UPDATE ORGANISATIONS - OPPORTUNITIES - INITIATIVES

Urashima Taro at Rich Mix



Performing Idea



Gulbenkian Theatre, Canterbury.
www.panek.org.uk | cathy@panek.org.uk

Performing Idea is a series of events exploring the shifting relations between performance practice and discourse, event and writing, through a public programme of workshops, presentations, discussions and screenings taking place across Toynbee Studios and Whitechapel Gallery in East London this October. Contributions from Tim Etchells, Janine Antoni, Rabih Mroué, Anne Bean, Peggy Shaw, Matthew Goulish, Shannon Jackson, Joe Kelleher, Jonathan Burrows, Fred Moten, Wafaa Bilal, and Boyan Manchev amongst many others. Performing Idea is the first year of Performance Matters, a three-year creative research project rethinking why performance matters through the matter of performance. www.thisisperformancematters.co.uk

Central School's Accidental Festival at BAC



The Culture Diary: Another online presence to manage: the Greater London Authority has opened a site, The Culture Diary, to provide a directory of cultural events happening across the UK in the year 2012. They're looking to record activity from the very large-scale right through to smaller community initiatives, but if you want to be included in the diary you have to register your event by 31 December 2010. The principal benefits are touted as being that you'll get publicity from the site, plus will be able to search other events in your area/artform to facilitate collaboration and joint marketing. www.theculturediary.com

Fuel at the Roundhouse: Fuel continue their successful relationship with the Roundhouse in Camden this October with *Autobiographer*, a new work in development by Melanie Wilson. *Autobiographer*, a sound poem for multiple amplified voices, combines the highly crafted polyvocal textures of a live chorus with a richly detailed soundtrack, Underpinning the sound work is a tender investigation into the condition of dementia. At the Roundhouse, London 22 & 23 October. www.fueltheatre.com

Accidental Festival Applications: From 4 October, applications are open for artists and companies wishing to present work at the Accidental Festival. Organised by students at the Central School of Speech and Drama, the Accidental Festival will take place at the Roundhouse, London 19-22 May 2011. The festival isn't able to pay artists, but can offer technical and production support and other benefits. See the website for full details: www.accidentalfestival.co.uk

UPDATE TRAINING + PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Theatre Training Initiative



Airhedz aerial workshops continue in the QEII Jubilee Centre, Whitstable Road, Faversham, Kent on Sunday mornings, with training time available for experienced aerialists on Wednesday evenings. For specific dates, times and costs contact Tina Carter via: www.airhedz.co.uk | www.exfeat.com

Theatre Training Initiative has a couple exciting workshops planned for autumn 2010. First is Frank-Suzuki Performance Aesthetics, led by two internationally recognised teachers of the Suzuki actor training method, John Nobbs and Jacqui Carroll – practitioners who have added some insightful and challenging evolutions to Suzuki's original canon of exercises to develop the physical, vocal, energetic and creative potential of the actor (2 & 3 October, £75 / £65 concession). Then 30 & 31 October there's a workshop with Lorna Marshall, author of the book *The Body Speaks*, and weekly training with Fran Barbe moving into November 2010.

www.theatretraining.org.uk | info@theatretraining.org.uk

Puppetry Course at CSSD: The three-year BA (Hons) Puppetry course at The Central School of Speech and Drama is now open to applications for 2011-12. The course focuses on live theatre, supporting students' individual creative projects and developing their technical skills. Students from the previous year participated in a Philippe Genty masterclass as part of the Suspense Festival and undertook work placements with the BBC, Blind Summit, The Little Angel Theatre and Great Small Works in New York. Students are encouraged to tour their own work, and two pieces from current students are performing at this year's World Festival of Puppet Theatre Schools in St Petersburg. www.cssd.ac.uk | contactadmissions@cssd.ac.uk

New Moves International Winter School: Part of New Territories and produced by New Moves International, the International Winter School 2011 invites artists working in live art and related arts practice to take part in a series of professional skills development projects. These opportunities are open to both emerging and experienced practitioners, to independent artists and students in tertiary education; artists based in Scotland can apply to Creative Scotland for assistance toward costs. To see prices and course details, visit the new moves site: www.newmoves.co.uk



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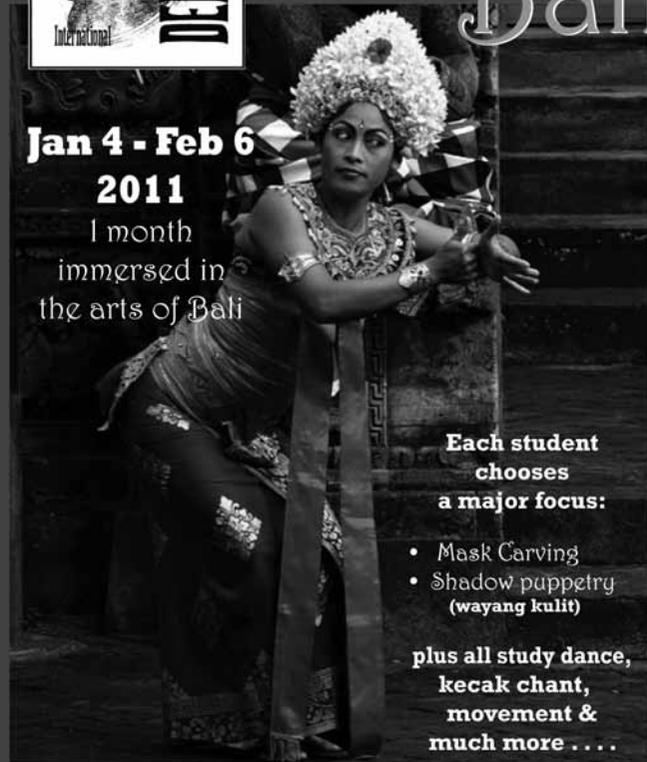


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UPDATE PREVIEW: IETM BIENNIAL PLENARY

The IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting) in Glasgow, 4–7 November 2010

Founded in 1981 as, quite literally, an informal gathering of producers and programmers representing independent venues across Europe, the Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM), coming to Glasgow this autumn, is a network of exchange outside of official, government-sponsored organisations. As the European Union has changed with the passing of the Cold War, the IETM has since become more formalised, with a secretariat in Brussels that acts as an agency for the performing arts within EU policy forums. Besides this engagement with developments in regulation (how EU employment law, for instance, will impact on theatre-makers), the organisation still serves fundamentally to broker the biennial regional meetings of its members. These are hosted by different national performing arts organisations each time, with ‘satellite’ meetings (often outside of Europe) occurring in between.

Usually oriented around themes and proposals of specific concern within the different member countries, one of the main interests of the IETM meetings is precisely the opportunity to learn about – and, of course, from – local perspectives on problems in common internationally. The past two meetings, for instance, have been held in Vilnius and Berlin, with continuing questions about the difficulties of exchange between the theatre cultures of East and West – and, of course, questions of funding – in the spotlight. Always with an associated programme of performance work, the meetings also create an exciting opportunity to see the host cities through the lens of the local theatre scene. Crucially though, organised by and for its members, and thus essentially intended to be participative, the meetings remain a unique occasion for informal, international networking. Indeed, perhaps the real benefits of IETM membership only emerge over time, through repeated visits to its meetings, allowing for the development of individual contacts, collaborations, conversations and friendships, internationally (and these not only within Europe).

Recently the categories of membership have widened to include individual artists, alongside the existing representatives of companies, organisations and venues. Through their participation might also come a widening of the kinds of knowledge and experience being shared at the IETM, not as an end in themselves but as providing a platform for the development of new initiatives. The official language of the IETM is now English (the organisation having previously been bilingual with French), which means that the meetings offer an extraordinary forum for British participants particularly to engage in the performing arts scene internationally. With the theme of ‘Voices’, to discover those already there and to contribute with your own, the next meeting will be held in Glasgow in November, with a promise of *faillte* – welcome!

For the Glasgow event, participants will have the opportunity to see Nic Green’s *Trilogy*, which will be shown in full for the last time; Adrian Howells will invite visitors for *An Audience With Adrienne* (see the reviews section for more on this work); and Glasgow-based Ankur Productions will present *Roadkill*, which won a Total Theatre Award in the Innovation category. The performance programme of the IETM is open to the general public. For further info, see www.ietm-glasgow.eu

Report by Mischa Twitchin
Additional reporting by
John Ellingsworth



Ankur Productions Roadkill at IETM Glasgow

UPDATE CONFERENCES

Inquest: Inquest – 2nd National Outdoor Arts in Practice Conference – An Enquiry into Content, Engagement and Provocation in Outdoor Performance will be held 27 & 28 October at Carriageworks, Leeds. It is funded by Arts Council England and produced by the Faceless Company in partnership with Promenade Promotions, Yorkshire Festivals Network, UK Centre for Event Management and York City Council. £85 for both days, or £50 for one day, including lunch and an evening meal on the 27th. There will be a civic reception at Illuminate York Festival on the evening of the 27th. www.facelessco.com | arts@facelessco.com

Big Ideas: Concentrating on ‘the artistry of large-scale animation’, Big Ideas is a conference event at which artists and creative producers take centre stage. Showcasing the latest developments in large-scale live animation structures as used in carnival, street arts and puppetry, the conference will give insight into a field of practice that includes such productions as *Warhorse*, *Big Man Walking* and *The Lion King*, and the work of companies like Handspring, Mandinga Arts, Kinetika, Compagnie La Machine, Emergency Exit Arts and Imagineer Productions. For attendees there will be hands-on experiences and chances to try out how things work, as well as time for companies to present their work to producers at an Ideas Summit, and opportunities to hear from some of the biggest players in the sector. Big Ideas is a project of The Puppet Centre, Independent Street Arts Network (ISAN), UK Carnival Centre for the Arts (Luton), and Emergency Exit Arts in collaboration with University of Winchester. 7 & 8 October at UK Centre for Carnival Arts, Luton. For prices and booking see: www.puppetcentre.org.uk



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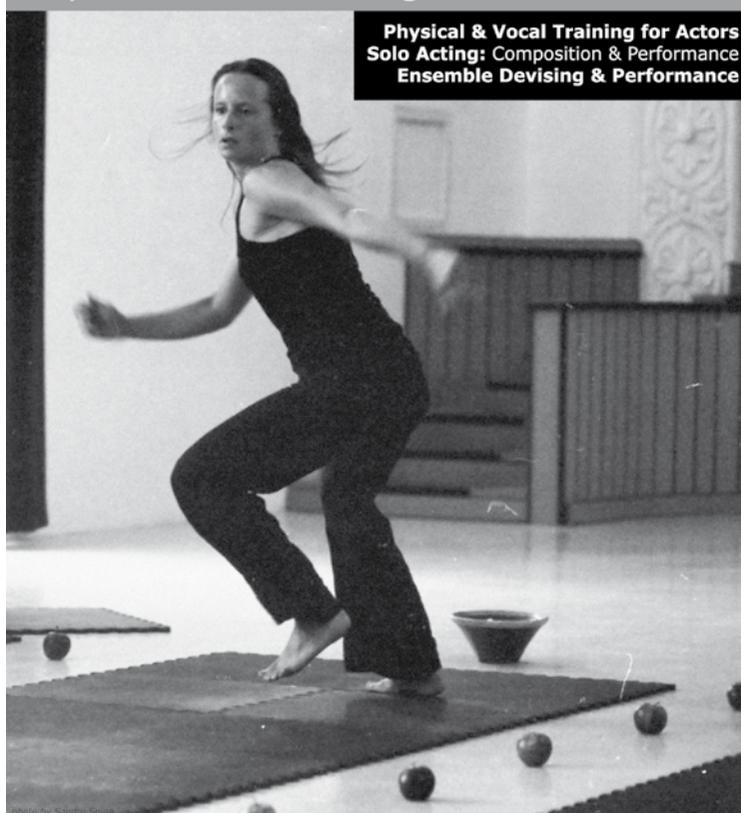
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Nola Rae

UPDATE PERFORMER + COMPANY

Actors of Dionysus are back on the road this autumn with their first full-length, no-holds-barred comedy, *Lysistrata*. In an eye-popping, trouser-dropping romp, Aristophanes' masterpiece is brought bang up to date. Follow our heroine, Lysistrata, and her troupe of titillators in their mission to bring a bloody war to peaceful climax. Touring nationally 13 September – 26 November 2010. www.actorsofdionysus.com

Bottlefed: After performing in Reykjavik, Berne and Berlin in August and September, Bottlefed will keep travelling this autumn and winter: in October the company perform with local musicians in Bergen at the Feitaboogie Festival and in Oslo at Innvik, Blå. Complementing their performance work, Bottlefed will also run workshops at Huset and Nordic Black Express. For November/December the company have been commissioned to develop a performance at Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchatel, Switzerland as part of their concert series *Concerts Résonances*. The performance will be created site-specifically at the gallery together with Austrian and Swiss improvisers (double bass, trumpet and voice). www.bottlefed.org | info@bottlefed.org

Canopy: Launched spring 2010, Canopy is the brainchild of North-based freelance performer Sonya Moorhead. Delivering oddball shows and events in the least likely locations, the company's aim is to saturate imaginations and inspire interaction. They are also working hard to become the only performing arts company in the UK with its own orchard. By 2015, alongside their available shows, Canopy will be producing on-site performances, events and crops, combining high quality performance with the art of growing good food. For information regarding Canopy's current touring show, *The Preeners*, and updates on the orchard project see: www.canopyintheorchard.com



Strangeface



MetaMorpho Theatre Company



Proteus Theatre

Clod Ensemble: *Under Glass* is a performance which takes place within a series of glass jars and cabinets. The latest work from Suzy Willson and Paul Clark, *Under Glass* blends visual imagery, choreography and an original score with text by TS Eliot Award-winning poet Alice Oswald to create an animated exhibition of human life. *Under Glass* is produced by Fuel and was the winner of the 2009 Total Theatre Award for Visual/Physical Theatre. At Studio 31, Arts at Dartington 2 November; Nuffield Theatre, Southampton 4-6 November; Bristol Old Vic 8-13 November; and The Basement, Brighton 19-20 November. www.clodensemble.com

Fevered Sleep's *On Ageing* is a theatre piece about time, change and ageing, performed by children. From the moment we're born, we're growing, we're ageing. Nothing ever stays the same. As an empty room is filled with hundreds of memories, a group of extraordinary performers create a portrait of a lifetime, capturing those fleeting moments when we feel most alive, rediscovering what it means to grow, to change, to age. Co-produced by Fuel and the Young Vic, *On Ageing* will be at the Young Vic, London 27 September – 9 October. www.feveredsleep.co.uk

Forkbeard Fantasy: Don't miss the last chance to see Forkbeard Fantasy's *The Colour of Nonsense*, their hilarious satire on an Artworld always in search of the New. Set in the studios of has-been cutting-edge conceptualists Splash Line & Scuro, aka safart.com, it concerns the career-saving arrival of a mysterious multi-million pound commission for an Invisible Artwork. *The Colour of Nonsense* is touring this autumn to Lighthouse, Poole 8 & 9 October; Halliwell Theatre, Carmarthen 13 October; The Clocktower, Croydon 20 & 21 October; Theatre Royal Margate 23 October; stage@leeds, University of Leeds 28 October; Greenroom, Manchester 29 October; MAC, Birmingham 3 & 4 November; Lakeside

Arts Centre, University of Nottingham 6 November; and Riverside Studios, London 9-21 November. www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk

Gonzo Moose: As lightning flashes across the sky, the rugged silhouette of a crumbling castle looms out of the darkness. Lost in a storm, this seems like the only possible refuge – but what happens when you hear mysterious moaning in the middle of the night? Behind every door lurks unimaginable horror... Inspired by Gothic horror movie classics of the 1930s, *Is That A Bolt in Your Neck?* is a fast-paced, rollicking ride mixing spooky paranoia, surreal nightmare and farce. Featuring three fearless actors playing twenty madcap roles in 75 minutes of frantic fun and thrilling action, *Is That A Bolt in Your Neck?* is now on national tour until 31 October. Check the site for dates and venues: www.gonzomoose.co.uk

MetaMorpho Theatre Company: In a rundown part of town, a devious landlady and her ambitious daughter make ends meet by renting out a small apartment. Not satisfied with a single rent, they manage to let the flat to two men who never meet, as one works days and one works nights. To maintain the deception and keep their double pay, the conniving pair must keep the men apart and refurbish the room twice a day... *Devil in the Detail* is the first production of MetaMorpho, the new project from Toby Wilsher, co-founder and until 2004 artistic director of Trestle Theatre Company. MetaMorpho's future is bright with a range of new work in the pipeline, from mask pieces to musicals, from small- to large-scale. See the website for more info on their productions and education work: www.metamorpho.co.uk

Natural Theatre brings its five-month residency at the UK pavilion at Expo Shanghai to an end in October. Reports tell of the street theatre team being mobbed by thousands of excited visitors anxious to get



Tmesis Theatre



Canopy



Touched Theatre

a photograph of the stereotypically British characters on display. The Cartwheeling Copper has been a particular favourite! Elsewhere the company has been performing at street festivals in Portugal, Hamburg and across the UK. Now the company are concentrating on raising the last £40,000 towards their rebuilding scheme, which will see a street theatre school and updated production facilities inserted into their current historic HQ.
www.naturaltheatre.co.uk

News From Nowhere: Coming out of Edinburgh with a Total Theatre Award for Innovation (among other plaudits), Tim Crouch's play *The Author* heads out on tour with Chris Goode, Vic Llewellyn, Esther Smith and Tim Crouch in the cast. Venues include Northern Stage, Newcastle; The Cube @ Project as part of Ulster Bank Dublin Theatre Festival; Warwick Arts Centre; Trafo House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest; The Workshop Theatre, Leeds; The Door, Birmingham Repertory Theatre; The Royal Exchange, Manchester; and Culturgest, Lisbon. For full details see the website:
www.newsfromnowhere.net

NIE: In a shop in the middle of Peterborough a strange and wonderful transformation has taken place. NIE and Eastern Angles have turned a former Waterstones store into a shop that sells stories, fairytales and even nightmares for *Tales From The Middle Of Town*, their new site-specific show for young people. You can expect lots of live music, clowning around and fast-paced excitement as NIE's actors from all over Europe tell tales from all over Peterborough! At Queensgate Shopping Centre, Peterborough 6-16 October, with daytime and evening performances.
www.nie-theatre.com | www.easternangles.co.uk

Nola Rae: Four dates in three countries in October for Britain's hardest working mime: 6 October Nola Rae is at Trinity University College, Wales for a performance of *Elizabeth's Last Stand*, then it's off to Simmerberg, Germany for *The Clown Speaks without Words*



Bottled

17 & 18 October, before finally heading on to Catalonia for *Mozart Preposterous* at Teatro Principal, Valls 22 October and Vallromanes 23 October.
www.nolarae.com

PLaY Theatre Company will be taking their experimental sound installation *Time Dilation* to The Arches in Glasgow this November. They are currently booking further dates for the piece in 2011. They will also be undertaking a period of development to finish and premiere their new show, *'Til Someone Gets Hurt*, working with director Pete Reed. On its outreach side, the company will be working with a group of young people not currently in employment, education or training to make an original piece for Leeds City Council's Light Night. More information on all the company's projects can be found at:
www.sometimesweplay.co.uk

Proteus Theatre: Following huge success with *The Elephant Man*, Proteus are marking their 30th anniversary with another one-man show, this time exploring the life of Houdini. Escapologist, magician, secret agent, lover, husband, devoted son, enemy of the establishment, Harry Houdini was all and none of these. His life remains a mystery. His greatest trick remains his ability to escape interpretation – until now. Proteus explore his tricks and escapology spectacles in a show that tours nationally 17 September – 31 October 2010. For tour dates and more info see: www.proteustheatre.com

Proto-type Theater: During the Great Depression, young lovers Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow went on an infamous three-year spree of bank robbery and murder which ended abruptly in 1934 when they were ambushed and killed by police in Louisiana. In Proto-type's *Third Person: Bonnie and Clyde Redux* the electric meeting of these two icons is retold through evidence, personal stories, rumours, re-enactments, video and drawings, exploring the motivations that drive our fascination with the life and death of these notorious lovers. Developed at Battersea Arts Centre, London and the Storey Creative Industries Centre, Lancaster. Supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Touring throughout the autumn with dates at Exeter Phoenix, Axis Arts Centre, The Arches, Leeds Met Studio Theatre, and other venues.
www.proto-type.org

StrangeFace Mask Theatre Company, just back from an award-winning tour to Iran, will be bringing their adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* to venues nationally from November. The piece was a sell-out in 2009 and features the company's trademark half-masks, plus puppets and original music played live. The company will be in residence at The Stables, Milton Keynes across the Christmas period. Other dates and ticket details are available online at:
www.strangeface.co.uk



Third Angel



Thingumajig Theatre



PLaY Theatre Company



Faceless Theatre Company

Théâtre Sans Frontières is touring its production in Spanish for children aged 6 to 10 years, *La Pelota Mágica*, to schools and venues throughout the autumn. *Islands*, TSF's collaboration with Teatro Tamaska (Canary Islands), Persona Theatre Company (Cyprus) and Theater Wahlverwandte (Germany) will be touring Cyprus early September and the Canary Islands in October. The company's co-production with Canadian actor/director Robert Lepage and Ex Machina, the epic nine-hour-long *Lipsynch*, has recently picked up two awards: the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Touring Production in 2009, and the Golden Mask for Best Foreign Production presented in Russia in 2009. www.tsf.org.uk

The Faceless Company: With the help of Manchester International Arts and Bradford Mela, Faceless have developed two new street shows this year based on the theme of snails and going slow. *Ready... Steady... Slow* is a walkabout act in which two athletic snails compete for the 50m dash... slowly, and then the *Snailympics* is a static outdoor show in which two athletic snails train three members of the audience into the track and field Olympics of the snail world, complete with salt, escargot eater and snail pellet steeplechase. www.facelessco.com | arts@facelessco.com

The Paper Birds: Following its success at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, The Paper Birds will tour *Others* to supporting venues this autumn, and more widely in spring 2011. In the meantime The Paper Birds would like to welcome their new Education Officer, Danica Grijak, to the team. At the end of the year the company will be laying the foundations for the creation of their next piece, so keep an eye on their (brand new) site for news of that and for full tour dates and information on their various workshop programmes: www.thepaperbirds.com | info@thepaperbirds.com

The World Famous will be providing the fire and pyrotechnic effects for Periplum's *The Bell* during a Mexican tour that starts in Mexico City and runs 24 October - 7 November. *The Bell* is a mesmerising tale of war, hope and redemption. It tells the story of warring clans in a warring land where enemies, blinded by mutual hate, want to raze each other to the ground. Inspired by Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* and Kurosawa's *Ran*, the show has the power to awaken awareness of how bloody the price of fighting for one's freedom and moral choices can be. *The Bell* builds a suggestive dreamlike reality which creates astonishment and fear, but also admiration for its beauty. For tour dates see: www.theworldfamous.co.uk | www.periplum.co.uk

Thingumajig Theatre have had a full summer touring their new street theatre piece, *Hippochondriac*, which features a walkabout giant hippo puppet with built-in puppet shows, as well as co-producing the Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade. In October they will be returning to the INCANTI International Figure Theatre Festival (Turin, Italy) to perform *The Vertigo of Sheep*. www.thingumajig.info

Third Angel: Throughout 2010 Third Angel, along with Portuguese company mala voadora, have been collecting stories from around the world – stories of fakes, replicas and facsimiles; the inauthentic used in the everyday. Their research culminates in the theatre piece *What I Heard About The World* at Sheffield Theatres Studio 13-30 October. The three narrators set out to catalogue every country, to share stories and to name names, attempting to map a spherical planet onto a (very big) flat piece of paper, in a show that wonders if we have to fake the world to understand it. www.thirdangel.co.uk

Tmesis Theatre: This autumn Tmesis are touring their current piece, *The Dreadful Hours*. The show premiered in February and is a collaboration with the Liverpool Everyman, directed by Javier Marzan (Peepolykus). A painfully funny dinner you can't afford to miss, *The Dreadful Hours* combines Tmesis' trademark physicality with new writing from acclaimed North West playwright Chris Fittock. Tour dates: Rose Theatre, Ormskirk 30 September; Carriageworks, Leeds 6 October; Canterbury Festival, Kent 25 October; Scarborough University 27 October; The Junction, Cambridge 24 November; The Civic, Barnsley 1 December. www.tmesistheatre.com

Uninvited Guests: As at a Quaker Meeting, we wait attentively in silence for someone to feel moved to speak. In these times of crisis Uninvited Guests make a collective ministry with you, Bristol Old Vic's secular Society of Friends. They convene a one-off Meeting of Sufferings, to voice stories from the news and listen to your concerns. Commissioned and developed by Theatre Bristol, Bristol Old Vic and BAC, and produced by Fuel, Uninvited Guests' *Make Better Please* is at Bristol Old Vic 18 – 20 November. www.uninvited-guests.net

White Rabbit are a London-based company who run a monthly themed storytelling event, *Are You Sitting Comfortably?*, at Toynbee Studios in London and The Basement in Brighton. Each month they welcome submissions of around 1000 words on the given theme, submitted two weeks before the show date. Writers must attend, and they receive a comp and a book of their story, which is read by White Rabbit actors. Homemade fairy cakes, sweets and treats are passed around, and there are competitions and prizes, beautiful visuals and great music from the 20s-60s. It's half deranged children's party, half 1950s teashop; fun, supportive and light-hearted. For dates and associated themes see: www.thewhiterabbit.org.uk

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22 OCT
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30 OCT
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0113 224 3801

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0191 261 0505

10 NOV
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01933 270 007

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Out & About



Life Streaming by Dries Verhoeven, presented at LIFT 2010.
Photo Zhang Huan.

Pippa Bailey reflects on theatre in the heavens – and here on earth

Out & About | Pippa Bailey

A 'solar tsunami' celestial light show is one of the highlights of the astronomical calendar, and the show in August this year was reported to one of the best in recent history. The bright streaks of light are caused by tiny particles of debris left by a comet hurtling into the atmosphere at 135,000mph. The particles range from the size of a grain of sand to a pea and create white-hot streaks of superheated air when they burn up.

Nature often surpasses human endeavours to create spectacle. Who are we to compete? Yet with so much concern over the effects of climate change, it is small wonder artists are attempting to make the connection. *3rd Ring Out – Rehearsing the Future* by Zoe Svendsen and Simon Daw has been touring outdoor festivals this summer. It was shown at Greenwich + Docklands Festival in London, presented in two shipping containers, each for an audience of twelve. This project imagines the year 2033: a time of emergency planning, a scenario in which you get to make decisions, voting for outcomes that determine the fate of your area. It is an interesting exercise in social democracy.

In the same week, *Life Streaming*, by Dutch artist Dries Verhoeven, opened. Presented by LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre), it investigates issues of 'compassion fatigue' and the media presentation of individuals as passive victims and statistics. For *Life Streaming*, Verhoeven has built an Internet café 5,000 miles away where 20 performers from that unnamed location can interact online with an audience of 20 participants at a temporary internet cafe in a shipping container at the National Theatre on London's Southbank. Each audience member is led into the container and sat at a computer where, through a screen, we make live connection with someone far away.

Their whereabouts remain a secret but as our Internet chat progresses the conversation shifts to loss, and then to water, and to fear of water. The experience is both intimate and remote, asking questions about our relationship both with technology and with other people who are strangers to us, as through this new relationship we consider disaster in remote parts of the world.

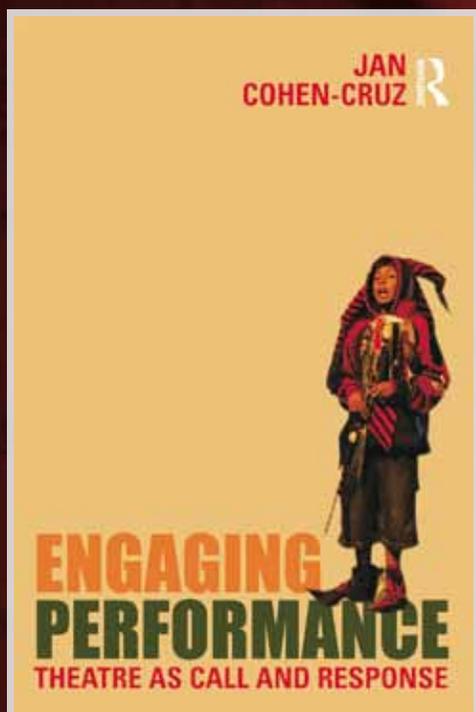
I was invited to join a panel for LIFT, discussing the role of theatre in raising awareness of climate change. Do we need a big theatre project about climate change or is local action the answer? My response was that it would certainly help raise awareness. I am concerned that these two very interesting pieces of work at LIFT mentioned here were for such tiny audiences, and predominantly addressing those who already know there is a problem. I won't get started on my frustration with outdoor festivals taking up the mantle of indoor theatre by narrowing their audience, targeting the cultural elite and preaching to the converted. Perhaps this is a sign of the times.

Swiftly on from the environmental to the economic climate and funding cuts threatened by the new CON-DEM coalition government. Total Theatre was a casualty of Arts Council cuts in 2008 when the organisation lost its RFO ('regularly funded organisation') status, and I remember well the period of uncertainty three years ago as many waited with bated breath for the axe to fall. As now, we were campaigning for the arts: scenario planning; rehearsing a different future. As a sector we have an extraordinary capacity to endure. Prospects may be bleak but the arts have a vital role to play as people in other sectors lose their jobs and homes, as lives get tougher. They need our hope and imagination for a different future.

And as a tribute to political performance, an exhibition to launch the Thames Festival remembered the twenty years past of anarchist clowns Archaos. Created by Pierrot Bidon in 1986 and first brought to England in 1990, this alternative theatrical French circus without animals featured dangerous acts with chainsaws, and motorbikes, music, film, and totally explosive performance (literally and metaphorically!). Adrian Evans, director of the Thames Festival, produced the company for many years and PR guru Mark Borkowski helped create the legend behind Archaos through outrageous stunts, creating a notorious brand. There were many great showmen at the exhibition launch, including Michael Eavis, founder of the Glastonbury Festival, and circus legend Gerry Cottle, reminding us all of a time when these arts offered an alternative way of life. Sadly Bidon died earlier this year, and this exhibition was a fitting tribute to his memory.

I didn't see the celestial show in August for cloud cover, but here on earth – despite the environmental and economic challenges we face, and despite the loss of pioneering artists like Pierrot – the shows must go on...

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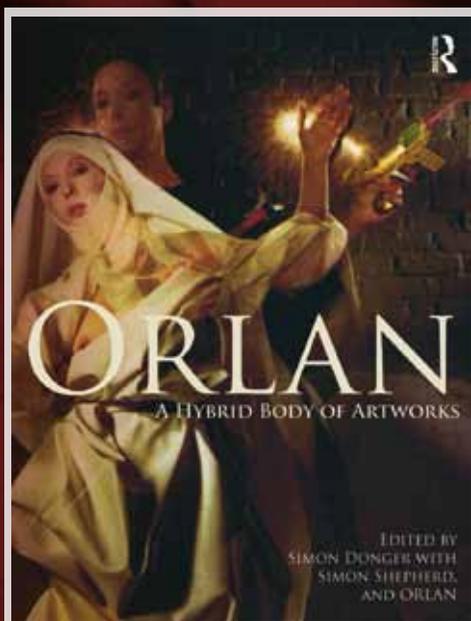
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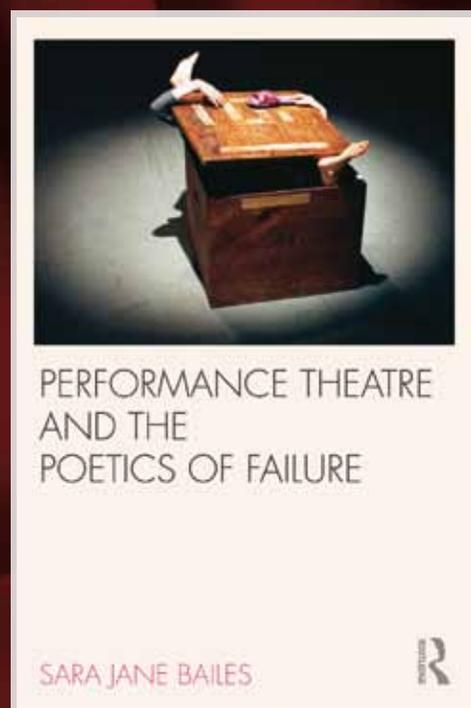
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