

Summer 2012 Volume 24 Issue 02

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TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE



HIT THE ROAD, JACK - 30 DAYS TO EDINBURGH WITH THE BOOTWORKS BOYS

BITCH! DYKE! FAGHAG! WHORE! PENNY ARCADE IN HER OWN WORDS

ACTION ON THE STREETS, ACTION ON THE CAMPUS - THE ART OF DEMONSTRATION WITH PERIPLUM

SONGS OF THE SIREN: GRIST TO THE MILL'S KISSING THE GUNNER'S DAUGHTER AND ANN LIV YOUNG'S MERMAID SHOW

MORE WATERY DEATHS: HAMLET REIMAGINED BY DREAMTHINKSPEAK

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TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE

Summer 2012 Volume 24 Issue 02

Ahoy there my hearties!

The Summer 2012 edition of Total Theatre Magazine has something of a nautical theme. We feature the third and final part of Living Structures' Work in Progress, in which the company reflect on the making of their new work *Leviathan*, a physical and visual theatrical exploration of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Also featuring not only *Moby Dick* but also Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, WB Yeats' *The Caged Souls*, and Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner* – along with verbatim reportage from the loss of the Titanic (1912) and Costa Concordia (2012) – comes the award-winning Dip Your Toe commission *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*, an outdoor peepshow set in a facsimile Edwardian Bathing Machine, mixing puppetry, animation with spoken text, multi-instrumental music, and sampled seafront soundscape. The show, by Grist to the Mill, is the subject of this issue's Being There feature. A very different sort of mermaid can be found at on the review pages in Thomas Wilson's reflection on Ann Liv Young's *Mermaid Show*, amongst many other interesting new performance works seen at this year's Fierce Festival in Birmingham.

Back on dry land, we have reviews from the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, Sprint, Forest Fringe at the Gate, and CircusFest 2012. Brighton Festival gets a look in too, in the form of a reflection on festival favourites (and supported artists) dreamthinkspeak, who are the subject of The Works – their most recent work, *The Rest is Silence*, commissioned for Brighton Festival 2012, is a re-imagining of *Hamlet* set in the round (or more precisely in the square) in a shoreline warehouse (ah, we seem to be back on a sea theme again!).

Also in this issue you'll find an inside-eye view of Periplum's *The Art of Demonstration*, which explores the relationship between protest and performance, and a reflection on prisons as both subject of and site of contemporary theatre. Elsewhere you'll see reports on the Juncture festival in Leeds, a dance-theatre event curated by Charlotte Vincent; and the Terra LUME month of performances and events in Campinas, Brazil.

Another of our regular features, Voices, takes as its subject the legendary Penny Arcade – Warhol starlet, New York-based performance artist, writer, and flag-flyer for a queer theatre that challenges conventional heterosexual (and homosexual!) views on sexuality and sexual identity. Her seminal work *Bitch! Dyke! Fagbag! Whore!* is, this summer, playing the Arcola Theatre in London. Penny has plenty to say about her quite extraordinary life and work.

And talking of summer shows, we couldn't really get by without more than a mention of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This August sees the Bootworks boys on a performative journey, walking from Sussex to Scotland – read all about it in *30 Days to Edinburgh*. We also have a substantial round-up of the Edinburgh Fringe and other summer festivals – including Milton Keynes' IF Festival and the Stockton International – in our Out There section.

Finally, it brings me to say that this will be the last print edition of Total Theatre Magazine – at least in the current format, at the current time. Who knows what the future may hold? But for now, we are switching to a wholly online format. It is sad to be leaving print behind, but the editorial team (Deputy Editor John Ellingsworth, Reviews Editor Beccy Smith, and myself) are excited to be working with our publishers University of Winchester in the development of our online presence and the amalgamation of www.totaltheatre.org.uk and www.totaltheatrereview.com into one very wonderful new website that will run features and other new content, in addition to the current very successful menu of reviews, news and blogs. Go to either of those URLs this summer and beyond to find reviews and reports from the Edinburgh Fringe and from many other festivals and events across the country, and from further afield.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you for all their generosity and hard work over the years to the editorial team and the editorial forum; to our writers, photographers and other contributors; to Professor Anthony Dean, Christian Francis and Richard Cuming (our new Associate Editor) at University of Winchester; to Pippa Bailey and the Total Theatre board; to our loyal advertisers and subscribers; and to all of you reading this for your support of Total Theatre Magazine throughout the years.

Please do look out for Total Theatre Magazine online which will continue to fly the flag – as the print edition has for more than a quarter of a century – for physical, visual, and total theatre!

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Front cover image: Bootworks Theatre's *30 Days to Edinburgh*, a theatrical journey culminating at Summerhall during the last days of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe
www.bootworkstheatre.co.uk
Photo: Emma Critchley

30 Days to Edinburgh

The Bootworks boys – James Baker, Robert Jude Daniels and Andy Roberts – take us on the trip of a lifetime



A Spaceman, a Cowboy and a Disco-Dancer are going on a journey. A journey undertaken in the spirit of discovery. There's a gig that they've got to get to and they're the performers. The gig's 468 miles away and they've only their feet to get them there; this will be 30 Days to Edinburgh.

A Spaceman, a Cowboy and a Disco-Dancer are walking to Edinburgh. It sounds like the start of a bad joke and it's already beginning to feel like one...

It's day one of training for the journey; after 14 miles Andy's shoes already have a hole in them, Rob's feet are bleeding, and all of our hands smell of the sea. It has been a very ordinary day on the road and we're already beginning to realise that we might not be cut out for the journey.

We've proposed, for this year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe that we're going to make a pilgrimage, on foot, from our home in Chichester, West Sussex to Edinburgh's Summerhall, arriving in time to celebrate the closing of the Festival Fringe. Oh... and James will be dressed as a Spaceman, Andy a Cowboy, and Rob a Disco-Dancer; but that we'll explain later.

What's more important is that on the way we'll be making a performance to share at the end of the journey, documenting our experience as we go. Each day's journey (around 20 miles, give or take)



will be articulated as a two-minute performative response. Perhaps more, maybe less, depending on what happens. We will condense our findings, discoveries, labours and trials into a digestible fragment to share with our audience upon arrival.

We've drawn a straight line up the country and it seems that we'll cross eighteen counties in all – a fair cross-section of the populous and the country's geography. In all that, we imagine, there must be something of interest. We've not quite worked out our route, but we know that we'll cover all manner of landscapes, walking through a range of cultures, communities, climates and conditions.

We have a 'common' sense of what to expect in this but we're also hoping that we'll discover – or learn – something else; something perhaps only microscopic and barely significant but something unique and worth sharing with others. This is also where the audience's participation and intervention will help.

The idea of walking into the unknown excites us, but having people in Edinburgh to help us, call us, advise us, give us things to do, and tell us about their favourite places and personal insights, is the real goal. In essence this piece can only realise its potential through its engagement with audiences, in and beyond Edinburgh. We hope we can do justice to the ideas and stories we share at the end.



It's intentionally not the most glamorous of journeys, nor the most epic or adventurous. In a culture rapt with the hyperbolic – the largest, fattest, longest, fastest, most extreme, world-famous (etcetera) – this would initially appear problematic. Indeed in many ways the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is a manifestation of our desire for the extraordinary and absurd. Every year the performing arts industry descends on Edinburgh – a crazy, immediate, liminal, extraordinary, unregulated and anarchic community appearing, every August, to share the fantastic and sublime.

What we're attempting though is intended as an alternative to this extremity. The walk is not particularly long or arduous. Instead it's a humble feat that attempts to explore the overlooked, the landscapes and cultures glimpsed as flickers in the windcreens and windows of cars and trains racing towards the festival. It's an attempt to elevate the pedestrian, everyday experience of living and walking the country.

Last year, whilst doing our 'thing' in Edinburgh, all comfortable in our art-making and ware-selling, enjoying the frenzy of the festival, the riots raked the country below. It was days before any of us discovered what was taking place. The schism between 'Edinburgh' and the outside world became uncomfortably apparent in these moments of wider crisis. This then is our attempt to deal with, or respond to, that sense of disconnection.

We want to bridge that gap on our travels, in a small way connecting the rest of the country to a festival that we love so dearly. Our intention is not to change or challenge any of those idiosyncratic characteristics that make the Fringe so special, but instead offer a small token, a mnemonic, of the *elsewhere*.

Whilst we walk we're going to try to encourage our audiences to contact us through an installation set up in Summerhall, which, we hope, will build throughout the festival with shared stories, sketches and ephemera that documents our progress through the country.

We don't fully know what the show will be, though what you'll see at the end will be something from nothing. We envisage an open-form performance lasting 45-60 minutes. It will be a storytelling experience about place, people and adventure, though not simply a 'story' of the journey. The performance will be a culmination of our experiences and our responses to the audience's contributions. We will respond, abstract and compose performance material, combining and synthesising stories, texts, images, and objects. A D-I-Y piece, busked together in a tent, on a field, along the way.

If we're honest, until a piece transpires we always feel a little like bullshitters and blaggers; cultural tourists with borrowed methodologies. This new piece also traverses a path well (perhaps





better) trodden. We follow in the footsteps of comparative giants of walking practice: Marina Abramović and Ulay, Hamish Fulton, Alex Kelly, Carl Lavery, Lone Twin, Richard Long, Graeme Miller, Wrights & Sites... the list goes on.

Along these paths, in this instance both literal and metaphoric, we follow our heroes, retracing their legacy and forming new tracks. We can empathise with Samuel Beckett, who bought the same size shoes as James Joyce and literally walked 'in the master's footsteps' – until his feet got too sore that is. We acknowledge that alongside our heavily laden rucksacks we also carry the weight of influence and provenance, of all the other great artist-travellers who ventured for the sake of discovery. For us though it's never been about *just* trying out a form and seeing what happens; we go to great lengths to find an ownership, to find out what's in it for our audience and us. In this instance though, much of that purpose and politic will be discovered along the way by listening, watching and fumbling around in the dark. The excitement is from not knowing. Not knowing what will happen, who we will meet, and how the show will work (if indeed it does). As ever, it all starts with a moment, an idea, which just won't go away.

And here's another home truth: as a company we have struggled with the idea of having to define a concrete artistic practice regarding *who* we are and *what* we do. Mission statements seem too constricting and artificially rigid to accommodate our tendency to be artistic magpies. We're more interested in getting out of our depth and 'having a go'. As a result, this will be our fifth Edinburgh Festival Fringe and each

time we've come up it's been with a completely different project: a narrative-driven story, street theatre, a durational performance, and a children's show/installation. The appeal, perhaps, is that whatever the project, however disparate the format, Edinburgh obliges. And therefore in previous years we've been fortunate enough to be welcomed into a variety of artistic contexts: The Arches, Mock Turtle, Forest Fringe and The Pleasance, respectively. What we love about the Fringe is its madness and ability to cope with our relentlessly capricious ideas. This year we find ourselves in bed with Summerhall. Their theme this year is 'journeys'. Another fortuitous moment in our Fringe history, and proof that it really does oblige.

It goes without saying that our relationship with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe over the years has been 'irregular' at best. Our first experience was way back in 2000 with a devised 'mask' show, *Munchausen*, at The Pleasance. A modest run, and success. We were there as a young crew of artists (then led by Joff Chafer) and just there to 'cut our teeth'. Rob was part of this first crew, and was to take the company over the following year. James and Andy were still at school, doing their GCSEs!

The interim years saw Bootworks mutate and evolve, with new company members joining (significantly James and Andy in 2007) and other projects explored. From then, much of our work moved into the outdoor arts sector, and focused around shows for our well-known Black Box installation. The Fringe didn't seem like a viable option. The Black Box's unique format didn't seem to 'fit' well with the structure



and mechanics of the Fringe. Though Rob, Andy and James visited the Fringe with other projects in other guises, it wasn't until 2009 that 'the company' found a strong enough reason to give it a crack and venture up together.

After an opportunity to present our work at Caravan (a showcase organised by Farnham Maltings and Brighton Festival) we found a new set of contacts and opportunities. The Black Box (and our then producer Emily Coleman) was encouraged to migrate 'indoors' as well as outdoors and we enjoyed a hugely busy couple of years touring all over the country and internationally.

An impromptu gig at BAC (arranged by Andy Field after we met him at the Dublin Fringe in 2008) presented our work to the British Council who immediately asked us to be a part of their Edinburgh Showcase. We found ourselves desperately searching for a venue that would be able to house our work. A venue that didn't prioritise numbers and sales. In swooped Forest Fringe – an 'artist-centered' home for experimentation where artists can present their work in a cost-effective and supportive environment.

At the Forest Fringe we found a solid platform to present two Black Box pieces that year, *Little Box of Horrors* (an homage to the contemporary horror film genre), which was also shortlisted for a Total Theatre Award, and *Une Boîte Andalouse* (a parody of Dalí and Buñuel's 1920s classic, *Un Chien Andalou*). As fresh-faced, wide-eyed underlings we were cutting our teeth at the Fringe once again, and, off the back of presenting at the Showcase, we were later able to tour our work to a further nine countries. This year was a gruelling one for sure. Strangely, despite this, we had caught the Edinburgh bug. Badly.

The relationship forged with the Forest Fringe (run by Deborah Pearson and Andy Field) allowed us to launch *30 Days to Space* the following year (2010) – this time with an equally untenable and unfeasible project conceived by James Baker. The premise was that James would journey to the height of space using only a ladder over the course of 30 days. Each 7-8 hour day was spent repeatedly climbing the six-foot ladder in the pursuit of a confirmation letter from NASA, acknowledging the achievement and ordaining him an honorary astronaut. Although he got to space, the letter never arrived; nonetheless we received some flattering attention and warm audience support, and this time we got that coveted Total Theatre Award too!

It seemed inevitable then that we'd return a year later. In 2011 we stretched our legs and made our first show for children, *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*, based on Oliver Jeffers' illustrated book of the same name. We also started working with a new producer, Becki Haines, and were generously supported by The Pleasance who, with a curated programme of children's work, provided us with a space in their crèche courtesy of Candida Anderson and Cass Mathers.

And – by way of cutting a long, and irregular, story short – we find ourselves here and now. As a company we are now in a strong position, and able to take real risks with our work and practice. The choice to undertake this new endeavour is obvious for us. It's partly a chance to extend our interests and ambitions to explore durational actions and experiences, and partly because we want to do something different, and something we've not been fully able to take a risk with until this point. The Black Box is still going, and we still have a foot in the outdoor arts sector. Other solo and collective projects are also firming up our creative identity as a company and giving us opportunities to take more risks, play more and – for lack of a better framing – do things like dress up in silly costumes and walk to Edinburgh.

And on that note, why the silly costumes?

Well, following advice from Crab Man & Signpost (of Wrights & Sites), we 'wear something that sets [us] apart and gives others permission to approach [us]'. Our costumes are a performative presence in place and context: helping us stand out. They are indexical: they point to another 'walk', another 'walker'.

James is a Spaceman. He continues his interest from previous performance *30 Days to Space*. He sees this as an unresolved personal journey. This time it's for Michael Collins, who never quite 'got there', and the 'small steps, giant leaps' of the golden age astronauts. For James this is a sequel, a second chance. And like all sequels this is bigger, badder, with more explosions, and better action. New characters are introduced and the stakes are higher. This also marks the start of James' PhD.

Andy is a Cowboy. He wants to be the man-with-no-name; a wanderer, moseying cross-country and into a new world. Andy has visions of saloon bars, tumbleweed and stand-offs, Leone-esque vistas and journeys into the unknown. He looks forward to the end and the romantic notion of riding off into the sunset.

Rob is a Disco-Dancer. He turns 36 on day 2 of the walk. This is an attempt to rescue his mojo by evoking the spirit of Tony Manero and strutting his way to the city with the coolest walk ever. We don't think the iconic white suit will be so pristine by the end of the journey. He's not likely to want to do the dance either.

But we will instead, no doubt... go on an adventure, see, look, hear, smell, experience, taste, eat, speak, talk, tell, banter, chat, shit, argue, sing, shout, dance, laugh, cry, hurt, a lot, play, a lot, fight, sometimes, make, make more, and more, wear costumes, perform, read, write, draw, play again, fail, get lost, sleep in tents, by the road, in a field, maybe a bed if we're lucky, try again, fail better, get found, find ourselves, find you, talk to you, play with you, go somewhere, be nowhere, sit, think, imagine, wonder, reach, climb, run, jog, wander, meander, mosey, strut, step, leap and walk, and walk, and walk more.

So... 'A Spaceman, Cowboy and Disco-Dancer walk to Edinburgh...?' The punchline? Find out whether we have one on the 26th August. You are most welcome to join us at Summerhall, or on our travels.

See you in Edinburgh, hopefully,

Andy, James & Rob

30 Days to Edinburgh starts from Bootworks' home in Chichester on Saturday 28 July, and ends at Summerhall (Venue 26) at 7pm on Saturday 26 August.

Throughout the Fringe you can catch up and participate with the project, and track Andy, James and Rob's journey. Look for the installation at Summerhall, or keep in touch through [#30DTE](https://twitter.com/bootworks)

Bootworks are James Baker, Robert Jude Daniels and Andy Roberts, produced by Becki Haines. The company are resident at The ShowRoom Theatre, University of Chichester.
www.bootworkstheatre.co.uk

All images are of *30 Days to Edinburgh*, courtesy of the company



Voices

The legendary performance artist
Penny Arcade, in her own words

I am a performance and theatre artist, a poet and writer, and an entertainer. Sometimes when I am working at my highest ability I am all those things at once...

I was an imaginative child. My very first obsessions were based on fairytales, and I lived in the metaphysical realm, with imaginary friends that were either fairies or angels. This also included intimate relationships with inanimate objects like rock formations, fields, swamps and groves of trees, based on fairytales and magical stories from my pagan southern Italian culture. Later, I was obsessed with Hollywood and fashion. I compulsively read movie magazines and hairstyle magazines and tabloids which I discovered when I was allowed to go to church on my own, using the 25 cents my mother gave me to put in the collection box to purchase the tabloids.

I dreamt that I had been discovered as a child movie star (like my mother's favourite actress Shirley Temple) and that I was going to bring my family out of poverty by being a movie star. The crisis each night was that I believed I had to also write the movie, which kept me in a perpetual state of anxiety because I believed that this was how I'd save my mother, a single-parent sweatshop seamstress with four children.

By the age of nine I was completely submerged in a fantasy world – I was actually convinced that I was in the television series *Bonanza* and *Zorro* and that roles had been written especially for me on those shows. I was brought screeching into the real world when another nine year-old girl told me she no longer wanted to be friends with me. I looked at her and said, ‘That’s OK but you can’t be on *Bonanza* anymore!’ She looked at me with the strangest expression and said ‘*Bonanza* is not real!’ and I burst into tears and shouted ‘*Bonanza* IS REAL! It is REAL!’

‘I was 13 when I started, ran away and I departed, from that town where I was martyred.’ By the time I was eleven, the entire town was wrongly convinced that I was having sex with everyone. It was a very painful time in my life as I had no one to appeal to, no one to take my side or protect me, least of all my own family. I was an outsider among outsiders, which moved me increasingly further and further away and out of any society. I was a loner compelled to follow my destiny.

I was told I was bad by nature, that I had ‘bad blood’. But I don’t think of myself as a bad girl or as a rebellious person. I think of myself as a good person in a bad society. Am I still a ‘bad girl’? Do I still get cut out and left out of parts of society that are based on maintaining the status quo by pursuing at all costs my personal truth? As a woman in our culture that hates women – that especially hates smart and strong women – and as someone who could not hide my difference, my queerness, I was belligerent when faced with the petty lies and hypocrisy of the bourgeois world.

I became an artist because I was compelled to express myself. This was my earliest sense of myself, my desire to create my own reality and to escape oppressive emotional circumstances which I had no control over, and couldn’t deal with in a conscious way. Creating theatre deals with these subconscious feelings in a conscious way, making use of them in a transformative way.

Being an artist was not a career choice in any sense: even when I was a Warhol superstar at nineteen and was told I had a career, it made little impact on me. It was much, much deeper than that, and it has only gotten deeper as I have grown older. I now, many years later, see it as my role in life. Everything in my life was and is funnelled through my imagination and creativity. It is the only way I have ever known how to make sense of life.

I met Andy Warhol through ‘Superstar’ Jackie Curtis. Andy was a friend of John Vaccaro’s and a fan of his theatre, The Playhouse of The Ridiculous, where I was performing. Andy came to see all our shows. Andy asked Jackie to bring me to the Factory because he had seen me on stage and was looking for new ‘stars’. I was the ‘It’ Girl of the downtown art scene in 1969 because of my performance style and my youth and my ability to communicate verbally with anyone. By 1969 Edie Sedgwick was quite diminished by drugs and mental illness. Viva had moved on to other things. They were all a lot older than me. I was precocious. I had met Taylor Mead on my own, on the streets of the East Village which is the way one met most people in those days. I wanted to be like Taylor. He was a comedic genius.

Andy Warhol didn’t pursue content. It was we who brought content to him, and that was why he needed us. None of us were interested in ‘real life’ but Andy was the least interested. Andy was like a metal detector. He detected ideas. He didn’t actually work from his own ideas. He found ideas in other people. That was the genius of his mind. His ability to find, follow and act on other peoples ideas. It is this quality of his mind that makes me say that Andy convinced the art world he was an artist when he actually was an art director. You see his influence and a great deal of his legacy in advertising, because there is so much art in advertising today, and so little art in art.

Glitter, that is what is left from those days. And the magic that resides in some people’s spirits that nothing – no hardship, no criticism – can remove, then or now. A twenty-something drag performer was at my house the other night changing for a performance in a nearby club. She said, ‘I have to warn you, I leave glitter everywhere.’ I replied, ‘Don’t worry about it. I can take you to East

Village apartments where people are still annoyed by the glitter I left between their floorboards in 1968.’

I will say that very little has actually changed in ‘sexual politics’ over the years. It has just shifted, and in some ways the situation is worse because the issues have been deflected. Transgendered people are still on the lowest rung of both the gay world and the straight world. Bisexuals are still considered aberrant and lesbians are still invisible and do not have the cachet that gay men have long enjoyed.

My sex and censorship show *Bitch!Dyke!Fagbag!Whore!* still has a massive impact today, even though it was written twenty years ago. People routinely come up to me after the show and say: ‘No one is saying what you say in this show! It is so contemporary. I can’t believe you didn’t write it this year.’ The show started as a solo fellowship audit for the National Endowment for The Arts in 1990 at the height of the Censorship Crisis, what is now called The Culture War – a war that incidentally has never ended in the USA. It was meant to run for four performances. It sold out immediately and continued to run for two months. It began as an improvised show, like all my work, with just ideas that I take on stage with me and two women strippers, Arlana Blue and Diana Moonmade – both staunch freedom-of-speech advocates and feminists. In 1990, in NY’s downtown art scene, which was highly politically correct, strippers were simply unacceptable. You could play a stripper in a play but you couldn’t actually be one without being seen as pandering to the patriarchy. In 1992, Mark Russell, of Performance Space 122, which had lost its funding (like every other theatre that presented queer work during that period) and was looking at having to close the venue, unable to pay salaries, asked me to bring *B!D!F!W!* for the summer. It ran and ran...

I decided that I needed to include men in the show if I was serious about my feminism, because feminism that doesn’t include men and strippers is not a feminism I can be part of.

It was a queer show, based on political humanism that said: We are all equal. We are free, and so don’t use your gay liberation to oppress my gay liberation or my inclusion in the human race. The show represented ideas and values that did not have a voice in the theatre or anywhere else. The queer politics that I espoused in the show were in complete contradiction to the ‘gay’ world that either sought to distance itself from anything that seemed unseemly, or had completely capitulated to a very narrow ghetto marketing mentality – to the point where it was creating the same institutions of distrust, hatred and oppression towards heterosexuals, bi and transgendered people that decades of gay people had suffered from.

Of course Quentin Crisp was a big advocate of the show because he had been the victim of so much oppression by the ‘politically correct’ gay world. It was, and remains, a very important show about personal freedom and individuality. We played at the legendary Village Gate (which had launched Lenny Bruce). Many, many people saw that show at least three times and as much as 25 times, bringing everyone who mattered to them. It is a show as much about the audience as it is about me, my ideas, and the dancers.

The question the show has always asked is: How do we live now? How do we really live? How do we find the freedom to inherit our natural legacy of joy and fulfilment? How to love ourselves and stop feeling oppressed and tortured by other people? How do we stop hurting others, stop limiting others because we ourselves feel hurt and limited?

The truth is that someone will always be ‘queer’ because humans are pack animals, herd animals, and humans want other humans to fit in with the crowd. Humans don’t like outsiders, but then conversely humans admire outsiders when they are at a great distance, not in their midst – and they especially admire outsiders once they are dead. Look at what dying did for Jesus Christ, Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo!

The kind of censorship that two decades ago was rampant in America, and is still rampant today, has infected the whole world.





BID!F!W! is grounded in separation of church and state. When I performed in Britain twenty years ago, the British press was shocked by how narrow-minded America was. They were stunned by the fact that no American newspaper, or radio or television show, dared use the title, except for the Village Voice. From The Times to the Guardian to local British newspapers, the title twenty years ago was not an issue in the UK. This year I was a guest on the Joanne Good show on BBC1 and before I went on the air the producer took me aside and said: 'I am afraid we can't say the title of your show on the air. BBC rules.' Jo Goodman and I spent the rest of the show speaking about the censorship that has crept into Britain. Twenty years ago there was no Born Again Christian movement in Britain. Now it is everywhere.

I see very little real politics in performance art today. Politics meaning what we do to one another in the world, culture meaning how we talk about what we do to one another in the world. Most of the work I see among young people is about personality, their own. The values of any given era are reflected in the work of that era. There is a big focus on becoming famous, and successful. The work is very career driven, which limits how political people can be or want to be. The artists I know who are political are marginalised. It seems there is a haze of political meaning to work, like a veil cast over the concept of it, but most of it is about themselves – not all of it but a great deal of it. This is natural I suppose when people come directly out of school into 'Performance': there is very little life experience to draw from, so much pressure to be successful and to have a career, with art being taught as a profession – when art is in fact a lifelong vocation.

There is nothing in the world that compares to seeing the work of artists who have consistently made work for over 25 years. Art is one of the things that one gets better at doing. I have long loved the work of Richard Foreman, The Wooster Group, Lee Breuer of Mabou Mines, Bill Forsythe, Meredith Monk, John Jesurun, performance poet John Giorno, Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver... Amongst younger artists, I admire David Hoyle, Robert Pacitti, Taylor Mac, Meow Meow (amongst many others), and I am often as influenced by painters, photographers and musicians (from Leonard Cohen to Patti Smith and beyond) as I am by theatre-makers – perhaps because I am fundamentally a conceptualist.

I do not think and then speak. I think as I speak; I find out what I am talking about as I speak. Every good line, every powerful line

in my writing, was born by my speaking it to someone in real life, long before it was spoken on stage. Or it was born on stage while I was supposed to be saying something else. To improvise is to be a medium, to be an antenna. It is a somewhat frightening thing to do because you have to relinquish control on certain levels.

I am very happy. I grew up to be the kind of person I wanted to be. I am very proud of my work... Everything is next!

Penny Arcade is a writer, poet and theatre-maker/performance artist. Always a keen documenter and observer of people, she wrote her first play when she was fourteen years old in reform school (*Borstal*).

She started performing professionally aged eighteen, creating improvised theatre with The Playhouse of The Ridiculous, and then joined Warhol's Factory aged nineteen. She continued to work with various different experimental theatre groups (as a performer, poet and singer) until she was 34 years old, when she launched her own work as a performance artist. Although she moved on to create scripted work, she has always maintained a high percentage of improvisation in her live shows.

Penny Arcade's seminal work *Bitch!Dyke!Faghag!Whore!* premiered in 1992, and ran to great acclaim at PS122 and the Village Gate in New York City, subsequently touring to twenty cities around the world between 1993 and 1995, with an itinerary that included two tours of Australia and a successful run at the Edinburgh Fringe. She retired the show in 1995 and created four other full-length shows. The show was revived in 2006 and has enjoyed great success since. It will be performed 27 June - 22 July 2012 at the Arcola Theatre, London.
www.pennyarcade.tv

Penny Arcade also creates 'hosting monologues' for Pussy Faggot, a performance art party she has hosted over the past three years for Earl Dax.
www.pussyfaggot.net

Apart from her performance appearances, theatre-making, acting and touring, Penny Arcade currently also writes poetry, essays, and magazine articles. Her long-running video documentary series – The Lower East Side Biography Project, Stemming The Tide Of Cultural Amnesia – was created with long-time collaborator Steve Zehentner (Steve is also dramaturg on *Bitch!Dyke!Faghag!Whore!* and the designer of Penny Arcade's work). It broadcasts weekly on cable television on Wednesdays at 11pm NY time, and is also available online at the same time. See www.mnn.org

p.10 Penny Arcade, *Bitch!Dyke!Faghag!Whore!*. p.12 Penny Arcade with Patti Smith and Jackie Curtis. p.13 Penny Arcade in the Ridiculous Theater. All images courtesy of the artist.



Up the Juncture

Lisa Wolfe takes a lunge into Leeds and offers an insider viewpoint on a season of experimental dance and performance curated by Charlotte Vincent

Juncture was a new venture for Yorkshire Dance, an opportunity to reaffirm the organisation as one that supports the creation of – and presents the best in – contemporary performance. The first edition set out with some clear goals: to stimulate the practice and thinking of established and emerging artists across Yorkshire, to develop new audiences for ground-breaking contemporary dance in the region, and to support the artistic and curatorial practice of the lead artist and collaborators involved.

Under Wieke Eringa's direction, Yorkshire Dance worked with colleagues at Leeds Met and Northern Ballet to present the season, while Charlotte Vincent of Vincent Dance Theatre was invited as its programmer. And, as I found on my own brief trip to Juncture, Charlotte went for it with gusto, programming an ambitious season of workshops, seminars, debates and performances, with an emphasis on female-led work that crossed disciplines and reflected a mature and maverick outlook...

To war

If it had been a war-zone my position at Juncture might be termed 'embedded'. My badge, however, says 'contributor' and I prefer that; it's a good term, a good signal with which to start my four days of immersion in dance performance.

My first event, at 7pm on the evening of my arrival, is *Blurred Vision* by V&A Artefacts – the 'nom de plume' of Charlotte Vincent and Liz Aggiss (the latter an artist whose dance output I produce and

manage). It's the second part of a planned trilogy of collaborative duets (following on from 2009's *Double Vision*), a short and snappy piece purporting to explore, scientifically, the idea of nothing. At the start we are given our ticket money back as their expectations for discovering anything of significance are so low. Then, playing with their stage personae as mover (Liz) and thinker (Charlotte) they begin to pose questions about process, value and method. The stage frame is a V-shape of pegs on the floor, with two flat-pack stools, a ball of twine, and some brooms at its apex. Repeated motifs of sweeping in time to an extract from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, of chanting 'om' in unison, and of discussion interspersed with toil provide the performance's structure. Liz feels a need to make some dance-moves and Charlotte feels a need to read out philosophy as they push and tease each other, attempting to explore their thesis. As expected, no conclusion is reached, but as theatre *Blurred Vision* is a pleasure to watch. At the end we are asked to return our money if we have found anything of value in the show; that they are left only £15 short is a fairly good measure of audience satisfaction.

There's a full house for the 8pm performance of Wendy Houston's solo performance *50 Acts* in the Northern Ballet building. It begins with her motionless, in front of the rolling text of the Futurist Manifesto. She then begins to populate the large stage with moving image on film, projected and spoken text, and feisty, dynamic dance. As a retaliation against ageing this is powerful and persuasive stuff; the body shifts and leaps brilliantly and the thoughts are clear and succinct. Stand-out scenes include smashing LPs with a hammer to a written score, trying to hide herself on a stage with no props, getting repeatedly shot, and



sprinting in unison with film of fast-moving crowds. It is a funny, angry, eccentric and altogether thrilling act which ends with stillness, with defiance but not ego, and with the trace of a smile.

Outside the theatre is an unexpected treat – Morris Men! These are the Leeds Morris, with owls embroidered on their waistcoats (owls are everywhere; it's the Leeds emblem). Before them, though, is BrightFurnace, a new company formed by Harry Theaker to revive rapper dance – that's bendy swords not baggies, bling and swearing. A team of six vigorous young contemporary dancers, BrightFurnace have the choreography well into their heads and bodies and perform a spirited clog/tap sequence to a lively fiddle that delights us all.

Exciting performative process-practice

Billed as a session for recent graduates and practitioners, 'What do Venues Want From Artists?' kicks off at 11am on Friday 24th. Taking my seat I realise I have broken one of my own rules, 'know your audience', as the room is full of venue managers, marketers and programmers with just a sprinkle of young dancers. Ceri Brierly, from the Riley Theatre / Northern School of Contemporary Dance, kicks things off with her ten minutes – a concise overview of what a marketing department requires to properly sell a dance show. I then launch in with my unashamedly biased proposition, 'never let a dancer write their own copy'. I give examples of words to avoid, do readings of really bad copy, and make suggestions of alternative phrases and expressions. I am heckled. I get some laughs. The dancers, reassuringly, take notes.

Dave Edmunds of Dep Arts doesn't hold back either, explaining how touring is changing and outlining the best methods for getting known and making relationships. Victoria Firth from the Lawrence Batley Theatre is open and honest about how programmers respond to mountains of proposals and the complexities of meeting a venue's particular mission and needs. A good debate follows, taking in audiences, residencies, location, format, technology and funding. Charlotte reminds us not to forget the artist at the heart of all this; that



it is their creativity and vision that matters here, as much as the target audience. Wise words; just avoid describing it as work, or practice, or performative, or process, or exciting.

The first show of the day, Eddie Ladd's *Llain*, focuses on an airstrip near her Welsh home that has been used by the Israeli airforce to test unmanned drones. In text and movement Ladd draws parallels between Wales and Israel, sketching their outlines on a blackboard, then broadening the topic out to take in the treatment of Palestine and themes of homeland, alienation and conflict. Ladd is a lithe, versatile dancer with an admirable interest in politics, and I've been interested in her work since I saw her last show, *The Bobby Sands Memorial* (performed with exhilarating conviction on a running track and one of the most memorable shows at British Dance Edition 2010), but *Llain* is a complicated premise that doesn't yet coalesce into a satisfying whole. Early days.

Next up, Wendy Houston proves her mettle yet again in *Small Talk*, a piece made with and performed by Antonia Grove that's described as a screen test for a range of aspiring B-movie actresses. Each is given a persona, a style, a physical language. Their names are familiar – Reece, Rene – and it is their words that Grove delivers direct from her iPod earphones. She is pitch perfect in intonation and delivery. There are changes of shoes, wigs and hat, slugs from beer bottles. There is talking out to us and talking to herself. It is a funny and sad and revealing text. The choreography takes her from chair to dance-hall, from rodeo to disco. Her dancing has personality, is defined, technically faultless and continuously interesting. It's a bravura combination of all its elements and with a bit more bedding in (it's done a nine-date tour so far) should be a real hit.

The view from inside

The day begins with a Two Wrongies dance workshop at 2pm. There are six participants, well matched in height if not in ability (with me to blame for that). The Wrongies are good teachers – clear, playful, careful. After an hour of dance-based games and exercises we are choreographed into a Busby Berkeley style lunge routine, with air guitar, partner posing, and a final nightmare at the disco tableaux. It was fun to flex my dance muscles, mentally and physically. At the time of writing I can just about walk again.

After the workout, it's on to *Traces of Her* by Claire MacDonald and Charlotte Vincent, a piece with an interesting premise laid out in the Juncture brochure: 'In 1983, when Claire MacDonald was 28, she made a show called *The Carrier Frequency*, with Impact Theatre. In 2000, when Charlotte Vincent was 32, she played Claire's role in a production of it by Stan's Café. Carrying with them all their scars and back stories, left with just half remembered phrases and some grainy video footage, *Traces of Her* is an attempt to make something out of what is



remembered and has been lost.’ They approach this largely through speech, using the text of the original piece as well as repeated phrases and snatches of songs. At one point Charlotte performs an excerpt using a plastic tub of water instead of a huge pool. She is scarily fierce. They are both highly watchable and Claire has a gorgeous reading voice, but I did wonder who gained the most from doing this – them or us. It left me wanting to know more about *The Carrier Frequency*, which looked startlingly mad when we got to see the footage at the end of the piece.

The Saturday night shows are both close to my heart as I’ve been involved in the making of them. The first, Liz Aggiss’ *Survival Tactics*, has been through several mutations, developing from a performance lecture initially given at her Professorial Inauguration ceremony. It certainly woke up the academics back then. Now a fulfilling fifty-minute performance, it combines film, dance, talk and song to tell how Liz has maintained her diva status in the world of contemporary dance – against all odds. Best known as the doyenne of dance for camera (or screen dance, or whatever it’s called today) in academic circles, Liz has yet to reach a more mainstream dance audience. *Survival Tactics* should be the breakthrough show – it is warm, instructive and playful. The audience goes wild for it, queuing up to receive a little handmade booklet of survival tactics to ensure their own longevity.

The World of Wrong, by The Two Wrongies, is the final Juncture show. The audience has thinned a little by 10pm, which is a shame, because Janine Fletcher and Avis Cockbill should be required viewing for dance students and practitioners. There is a defiantly visceral and provocative double-act which rarely gets performed in dance environments; it’s more usually programmed as live-art. It is an episodic piece, with skits around synchronised swimming, air sex, and ballet, among

other subjects. These are interspersed with the Wrongies’ rather naïve animated and live films, and a fictional phone-call scenario (voiced by me; and I always forget that I recorded it until I hear the phone ring). The film bits don’t work for me; I think they downgrade the performance quality. The humour and daring of *World of Wrong* is not without its dark moments, and provides sufficient challenge, coupled with excellent technical ability, to prevent it from becoming a novelty act.

With hindsight

So after four full days, which included a fair bit of sociable networking, some helpful meetings, and the necessary end-of-festival dancing in a bar, what do I conclude about Juncture?

The balance of the programme in terms of workshop, debate and performance seemed about right; it was a good mix and well-scheduled, with sufficient space (just) for recovery. The offer of a Festival or Participant pass made it good value. It was a shame that fewer than hoped for students rolled up, but in my experience it is ever thus.

I see a curator’s main role as providing the vision, shape and presentational aspects of a season or exhibition. Charlotte accomplished this admirably, but was also actively engaged in much of its delivery, including making two new pieces of work. I am in awe of the energy, but question this approach. It seems to allow too little time for reflection and interaction with the invited guests and audiences. It will be interesting to see how Charlotte and the Yorkshire Dance team learn from the adventure and what shape the next Juncture takes.

Juncture was held 8-30 March 2012 at spaces within the Yorkshire Dance building and Northern Ballet theatre. The event was developed by Yorkshire Dance in collaboration with the choreographer Charlotte Vincent, and the aim is now to develop and extend Juncture over a period of four years, with a new curator coming in for 2013. Yorkshire Dance is supported by Arts Council England and Leeds City Council.
www.juncturedance.com

p.14 Liz Aggiss, *Survival Tactics* (photo Matthew Andrews). p.15 left to right: Antonia Grove, *Small Talk* (photo Matthew Andrews); Lisa Wolfe enjoying tea. p.16 clockwise from top left: BrightFurnace & imove, *The Traipse* (photo Tim Smith); Wendy Houstoun, *50 Acts*; Eddie Ladd (photo Keith Morris); V&A Artefacts, *Blurred Vision x2*.



The Art of Demonstration

Hannah Sullivan has been following site-responsive and outdoor theatre company Periplum as they discover parallels between protest and outdoor performance

In the quiet city of Winchester, in a dark vault behind a wooden door, a young woman with red hair is swinging a lantern. She peers through the darkness at us, and chants:

In a state of emergency state of mind
We're the ghosts of protest rising...

When the blockade burns we beat retreat
We're the ghosts of freedom hiding

This young woman, who speaks with such confidence and conviction, is a student on Winchester University's BA in Street Arts course, and she is taking part in the first phase of research and development for Periplum's latest work, *The Art of Demonstration*.

Periplum are a Brighton-based, internationally renowned company specialising in site-responsive and outdoor theatre work. Though they collaborate with a wide range of actors, designers and composers on their various shows and projects, at the heart of the company are two people: Periplum founders and co-directors Claire Raftery and Damian Wright. Their past works have included the large-scale piece *The Bell*, which incorporates pyrotechnics by The World Famous, and which has toured extensively worldwide (including a six-week stint in Mexico in 2010); *Arquiem*, a mid-scale outdoor theatre piece; *1,000 Revolutions Per Moment*, which takes the form of a journey through a city, investigating the transformative relationship between music, people, and place; and *Navigator*, a work for one person at a time that uses iPhone film technology.

Claire says of her company's creations: 'Throughout these works is a desire to give the audience a role in the action, and to evolve the tradition of audience interaction into content-driven work by looking at the dramaturgy of public space through the movement, psychology and actions of crowds. When we make street arts we share a space with the public. Their voice isn't to be suppressed but encouraged, and itself becomes part of the work. The narrative is the journey and experience of the audience.'

Damian adds: 'To explore social actions and demonstration is a natural evolution in our performances. We've looked to create a form of audience-responsive spectacle, opening out a dialogue where the answers of the audience are crucial to the emotional progression of a piece.'

This interest has led them to *The Art of Demonstration*, which explores political demonstration in its many forms and investigates how it can translate into immersive performance. The topic is close to Claire and Damian's personal passions, as Damian explains: 'Periplum's desire is to actively immerse the audience in a performance where transformation seems possible; where performers and audience go on a journey together.' This mirroring of protest and performance interested me greatly, and so I joined Periplum and the BA Street Arts students at Winchester University to see how these ideas were being realised – how the parallels between street arts and demonstration would play out; and how the company would celebrate, in an outdoor theatrical setting, freedom of expression and the right to congregate in public space.



The idea for this latest Periplum project began in Mexico (while touring *The Bell* with an Anglo-Mexican team in 2010). ‘We were navigating Mexico City looking for a performance site,’ remembers Damian. ‘We turned a corner and saw 50 people kneeling on the steps of a grand old colonial government building. The protesters had black hoods on their heads and held yellow flags, acting out symbolic surrender, claiming their rights had been taken away. Another day, we saw a demonstration by naked 60+ year-olds in the city centre – the farmers were demonstrating that they’d been stripped of their land. These actions bordered on performance. Thinking about the ways actions by UK Uncut and Occupy also cross borderlines into performance, we were fascinated by the cultural differences between how Mexicans demonstrate and how we demonstrate in the UK. Then we saw a news report on a Mexican TV station – 50,000 students were marching in England. Events in Britain are rarely reported in Mexico. This was inspiring.’

In October 2011, on a return trip to Mexico, the company began developing *The Art of Demonstration* with students from ENAT, The National School of Theatre Art, with support from The Anglo-Mexican Foundation. Damian describes the project as ‘inspired by UK and international events – the way movements have erupted, galvanised and synchronised with each other recently – drawing on our experiences in Mexico and the UK’.

Supported by the Creative Campus Initiative – a consortium of South East universities – as one of its flagship projects in response to Cultural Olympiad themes of courage and determination, *The Art of Demonstration* moved its research and development to Winchester University in early 2012. ‘What’s the point in Protest?’ was the question posed by the Street Arts students through this stage of the project – a question that I feel is strongly relevant to my generation. There is a feeling that young people of my age have grown up in a politically apathetic era, and have perhaps lost the art of protest – although very recent history has seen something of a turnaround, and perhaps the early years of this decade will in future be viewed as the dawning of a new era of protest, with Green issues coming to the forefront and the rise of the Occupy movement. Protest is now suddenly a hot topic amongst students and twenty-somethings – one that I have discussed many times with my peers. Sometimes I hear expressions of defeat, or cynicism about the potential for change.

It appears that this feeling of hopelessness is often the overriding response from the younger generation, but Claire and Damian are interested in a sense of rebellion and passion, and a celebration of protest. Stories of protest old and new began to emerge in the students’ work as the project progressed, but the focus was then to find the art in demonstration; to construct a performance that concentrates on the form rather than inciting one political intention. This is tricky, but a valuable lesson for performance students in how to work with turbulent subjects. Periplum are interested in the ways in which demonstration manifestos are manifold and often very creative – sonic, visual, symbolic, and subversive. ‘We’re interested in all forms of protest and how ideas are communicated,’ explains Damian, ‘whether graffiti on a wall, an occupation, the spreading of a computer virus... A key inspiration was Dr. Gene Sharp’s *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action*. We challenged the Street Arts students to try and encompass all 198 in their devising. Other inspirations were seminal figures like Welfare State International and Jeremy Deller.’

The residency at Winchester was designed to stimulate students’ responses to the subject, while Periplum were simultaneously exploring the influence and power of interpretation carried by press and media. Parkour, clowning, installation, drama, audience participation, rap, poetry, music, song, and pyrotechnics were just some of the forms that featured in the students’ work, which was threaded together by Damian and Claire into a trail piece sited throughout the university campus.

The visual team, led by Claire, created 100 miniature protesters cut-out from magazine pages and placed into jars. They were presented along the route as a collection of antique protesters, as if they were relics of a generation past, preserved for posterity. In a moment of synchronicity,

the very day that this action was taken in Winchester, news came from Russia that anonymous protesters had placed miniature doll protesters made of small toys holding placards to demonstrate on their behalf, for fear of persecution if they’d protested in person. These sorts of meetings between real life events and the work made by students kept arising throughout the *Art of Demonstration* project. The ‘Russian doll’ protesters were eventually outlawed for being non-Russian residents.

Damian: ‘We’re interested in the borderline between legality and illegality in protest and performance in public space. It comes back to ownership of public space: who really owns this space, who do we have to answer to – both Periplum and the communities we work with – and how far can we push forms of expression within it. This is an ongoing issue in the mechanics of protest, including in the new “digital public space”.’

Watching Claire and Damian work with the students, I could see precious advice being given – the kind that could only come from experienced practitioners – including tips on how to deal with a moving audience, how to create holding activities for the moments when the show is running slower than expected, and knowing when to take breathers!

The trail itself was an exciting experience. We started on a mini-bus, which took us on a trip outside the campus grounds, on a mission to reclaim the streets.

When we pulled back into the campus and got off the bus, we were met by a kerfuffle of noise made up of broken news stories played through iPhones and a group of people with surly demeanour. They led us to a woman in a balaclava who summoned us inside a building. In a frantic but hushed voice the woman explained that the media lie. I was told to keep close, to move fast, and to sign a petition. Scuttling along corridors and being beckoned through doorways, we reached what the woman called ‘the media studio’. Enjoying the fun of an undercover mission, I did as I was told and ran inside. I was then left with a hostage sat tied to a chair and told to watch a large TV screen. As the screen flickered into action, the twist was revealed: the woman who had led the raid turned out to be a news presenter; the event had been a set-up, and I had now been caught on camera as a violent protester taking a hostage. As I exited the building with my hands in the air two performers playing a reporter and cameraman followed me asking, ‘What is it like to be an activist, a radical, a terrorist?’

The next step of the trail led us to a grassy hill where, after a pyrotechnic display, a young street poet called Caspa appeared and spoke his own words, accompanied by a drum beat by musician performer, Mike:

Last year I stood with a thousand people
Fighting to be equal
Put away the guns, put away your needles
But this was a prequel
To police brutality...

This section of the trail really highlighted how music and words have a powerful role within protest – inciting action, encouraging participation, and creating a lasting legacy of what has been.

The trail continued, and I next met three clowns conducting a series of marches and drills, with a mock-military air. The subject of protest works well within a clown routine, as rebellion is part of the very essence of clowning. The clown is a character who meddles with hierarchy, who through foolery reveals our structured world as bizarre, as ridiculous. The student clown-protesters were inspired by the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA), who have reclaimed the art of anarchist clowning, staging protests and demonstrations for political agendas.

The trail drew a circle and so I finished where I started, at the bus, my head full of powerful speeches and my body overtaken by the adrenalin rush of such a fast-changing journey. Afterwards Claire said that the students’ work was all they could have asked for, ‘exciting,



provocative, evolved imaginatively from research, and giving the audience various roles in the action?

Building on all this, Periplum are now moving into the second phase of *The Art of Demonstration*, which is called *Transmission*. Damian: 'We're about to start working with digital artists VisuoSonic, based at Southampton Solent University, who specialise in interactive "responsive environments". We'll work together to create an outdoor responsive environment where a live spectacle will unfold. Here, the voice of the audience will be literally heard and represented, as sound-sensitive digital projections respond to the calls and movements of audiences. People say that nobody's listening. Our challenge will be to capture and represent the public's voice.'

Underlying this phase is the building of both online and face-to-face international exchange: by working with young people and professional artists, the aim is to bring together a collective in which international exchange can occur. This phase aims to reflect the role of crossing boundaries or borders within demonstrations, and is inspired by transmedia or multiplatform storytelling, using a variety of artforms and technologies that can be witnessed in modern demonstration. Claire explains: 'Part of our work with young people will be to encourage international friendship. We will encourage young people to create and film interactive journeys through their neighbourhood, perhaps identifying, or crossing, lines within it. These journeys will be exchanged, transmitted, with international friends over the Internet.'

Periplum as a company have an educational focus, often working with young people and students, and this project seems particularly apt for the involvement of a rising generation of artists and would-be protesters.

Expect uprisings of *The Art of Demonstration* throughout 2012!

The Art of Demonstration is being developed for the Big Day Out Festival, Bracknell, 15 September 2012, and will also be appearing as part of the Mexico Week at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton in late October (both dates pending funding).

Periplum's *The Bell* is appearing as the finale of the 25th Stockton International Riverside Festival on 5 August 2012 and at Newbury Corn Exchange on 10 August 2012, featuring the company's Mexican collaborators and supported by The Anglo-Mexican Foundation and Conaculta.

Creative Campus Initiative continues to support *The Art of Demonstration* and other professional-educational collaborative projects in the South East region in response to London 2012 themes and values. It has won the Podium award for Best Creative Cultural Project.

Winchester University's BA Street Arts is headed by John Lee and offers expert teaching in basic street arts practice, whilst helping students further connections within the UK and internationally, including creating performance opportunities and internships with the Winchester Hat Fair, Britain's oldest established street arts festival, which now works in partnership with the BA Street Arts course. Winchester University co-ordinates many excursions to Europe, and also brings in visiting UK companies of note, such as Periplum, Membre, Desperate Men, and Wildworks. The course is an opportunity for street artists to formulate a practice, make connections, and build a viable career.

University of Winchester: www.winchester.ac.uk
course.enquiries@winchester.ac.uk

Hat Fair: www.hatfair.co.uk

p.17 Periplum & University of Winchester Street Arts, *The Art of Demonstration* (photo SJC Photography). p.18 *The Art of Demonstration*, ENAT, Mexico (photo Karina Ballados). p.19 Periplum, *The Bell* (photo Ray Gibson).

THE WORKS

A personal view of the works of dreamthinkspeak by Dorothy Max Prior



The Works | Dorothy Max Prior

It's the Brighton Festival, but this isn't the Brighton we know and love – no piers or pavilions, and not a tea-shop in sight. I'm in a warehouse, on the coastal road west of Brighton, in the no-man's-land between East and West Sussex. And when I say 'warehouse' I don't mean a romantically decayed and weathered old brick building at the water's edge, but an anonymous modern block of metal looking rather like an abandoned shipping container – one of many such buildings along this desolate stretch of road. 'It is a slightly featureless landscape,' says the programme note, 'not a destination, but a route to other destinations. As you may have discovered, it's not easy to find!' Too right! I almost don't make it to dreamthinkspeak's *The Rest is Silence*, and fear at one point that I will be found years from now wandering aimlessly through the streets of Southwick.

The site has been chosen to 'mirror the sense of transition or undefined identity' that is at the heart of this particular take on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for indeed that is what this production is – a commission by Brighton Festival with LIFT and the Royal Shakespeare Company as part of the World Shakespeare Festival. Five hundred years after it was first performed, *Hamlet* remains a supremely contemporary play: the sense of fragility and transience brought on by political turmoil, the moral exhaustion brought on by social upheavals, the struggle between 'belief' and 'disbelief', the issues of family loyalty and betrayal, men's distrust of female sexuality and their wish to control it, the labelling of 'mad' of anyone who talks out of place, the puritanical anger of the young – listening to Shakespeare's words, it feels like this play could have been written yesterday.

For dreamthinkspeak's artistic director Tristan Sharps, the interest is in a world that 'on the surface appears relaxed, confident and shiny' but which underneath is 'rudderless and riddled with doubt'. Tristan has always been a director for whom scenography is not the icing on the cake, but the cake itself. As in earlier dreamthinkspeak productions, *The Rest is Silence* relies on the visual setting – the site, the set, the lights, the films, the placing of bodies in space, the furnishings and objects that are less 'props' than installation works – to tell the story and to give theatrical meaning. In this production, we are (as in previous shows by the company) standing and able to move freely round the space (a generously sized, perfectly square room, black carpeted and sharp-edged), but we remain 'trapped' within the boundary of four glass walls, and the inhabitants of Elsinore are themselves trapped like a family of shop-window mannequins behind the glass walls surrounding us. Their world is fitted with everything their hearts could desire – shiny new Apple Macs, sleek white leather sofas, and glass-and-chrome coffee tables sporting cut-glass whisky tumblers – a world of supreme good taste to the point of blandness, a showroom world. But the glossy veneer belies the unease just below the surface. And the notion of 'surface values' is explored throughout – the actors are live, there in 3D, but they are cut off from us, behind the glass, their voices rendered through mics, so it often feels like we are watching a movie – or indeed seeing something 'through a glass darkly'. When the glass 'boxes' go dark, we see ourselves reflected dully in the glass. The glass fronts are also used as surfaces for film, most beautifully for a recurring image of the orchard where Hamlet's father meets his dreadful fate...



Throughout the 90 minute piece, Shakespeare's text is rendered faithfully – but often not as it appears on the page. Words are transposed from one character to another, scenes overlap, and are often played at opposing or adjacent sides of the room, the 'windows' lighting up and going dark in turn to move our attention around the space. In one particularly beautiful moment, we witness a kind of Mexican wave of 'To be or not to be' soliloquies, as first one 'window' then another is lit up, and Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius, Ophelia, and Hamlet himself all deliver the immortal words.

The Rest is Silence is not Tristan Sharps' first take on *Hamlet* – dreamthinkspeak's first major production, *Who Goes There?* (premiered in 2001, two years after the company was formed in 1999) was a deconstruction of *Hamlet*, circling around Gertrude and Claudius' imagined wedding party, that took the audience on a promenade journey through Brighton's Gardner Arts Centre (and later BAC in London). *Who Goes There?* established dreamthinkspeak as front-runners of promenade-style site-responsive theatre, and featured many elements that were to become the mainstay of the company's working practices: an exploration of the relationship between architecture and performance, an integration of object installation, a use of a classic text that is then fragmented and presented in pieces, a clever use of light and darkness, the skilful integration of live and filmed action – and, most importantly, the awareness that visual images can tell stories just as easily as words.

Also seen at the Gardner Arts was the 2003 Brighton Festival show *Don't Look Back*, a reworking of the Orpheus myth. This show featured a heartbreaking image of Eurydice clad in a white dress, fading away before our eyes – an image that is echoed in Tristan's beautiful film of Ophelia's drowning in this latest show. Many visual motifs seem to move on from one show to another, in the way that painters often return to key images that haunt them.

Don't Look Back seemed so suited to its setting of the decaying mansion house in Stanmer Park that it was hard to believe that it could ever be staged anywhere else – but it has subsequently been presented in many different places. It was originally co-commissioned by Brighton



Festival and South Hill Park Arts Centre, then recreated for numerous other sites in the UK and abroad including Somerset House in London, Register House in Edinburgh, a vast disused print factory in Moscow, and the abandoned Majestic Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. The company worked with the local community in each location, so that the show became accepted by and integrated into the community in which it was sited.

I had the pleasure of seeing it for a second time at Register House in Edinburgh, where the crumbling plaster and tiled airy corridors of Stanmer House were replaced by the registry office's mahogany-panelled library shelves and steep staircases leading to dusty lofts. It was a radically different show in the new space, yet it worked perfectly. It was particularly interesting to see how dreamthinkspeak managed to stage the piece in the Register whilst it remained an open, working building – Register employees dressed in black gowns were even used as 'extras' in the show! This version of the show won a Total Theatre Award in 2005.

Dreamthinkspeak have, since the production of *Don't Look Back*, had an ongoing strong relationship with the Brighton Festival, who have continued to commission and support their work to this day. Another major work for Brighton was *Underground* (2005), which was inspired by Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The production was originally created for the labyrinthine interconnecting backstage and basement areas of the Theatre Royal Brighton, and was then recreated and redeveloped for a vast underground former abattoir in Clerkenwell (for The Barbican). I saw the production in both settings, and was again impressed with how Tristan's vision played out in different yet equally successful ways in each location – although I especially enjoyed it when set within the faded opulence of the Theatre Royal, particularly as this version featured a wonderful coup-de-theatre where an enormous red velvet curtain raises and the audience suddenly realises that they are onstage...

Even more breathtaking in its use of space and play on the audience's perceptions was *Before I Sleep*, commissioned by Brighton Festival in 2010. Inspired by *The Cherry Orchard*, *Before I Sleep* was set inside the



abandoned Co-operative Department Store building on London Road in Brighton.

Chekhov's tragicomic turn-of-the-century tale of the forces of change in battle with the status quo – played out around the auctioning of a family estate and subsequent destruction of a cherry orchard – transposes beautifully to a story of the doddering old guardian of a department store (the manservant Firs elevated to lead character in this reinvention) wandering his 'manor' in a sleep-deprived daze, terrorised by the onslaught of modern commercialism, which bursts upon his shadowy and musty world with alarming brightness and brashness. Reflecting both Chekhov's themes and director Tristan's long-time obsession with the romantic and the melancholic, the show is infused with images of lost childhoods, bereavement, obsessive love, nature's revenge, and the relentless forces of change as time moves ever forward.

Before I Sleep was the biggest selling production in the history of the Brighton Festival, and was seen by 21,000 people. It is fair to say that it raised the bar for site-responsive performance in the UK – although there is also the problem that once you have such a groundbreaking and successful production on this scale, there is pressure to meet the demand to do the same over and over again. Given that pressure, dreamthinkspeak have taken a different tack with their 2012 commission...

The Rest is Silence is a rather different sort of production to much of the company's previous work. Whilst remaining true to the company's dedication to a scenographic approach, and valuing the importance of site, it is nevertheless a 'version of' a text, rather than an 'homage to', which was the case in the productions I've previously seen – *Who Goes There?*, *Don't Look Back*, *Underground*, and *Before I Sleep*. This has led to some critics and audience members feeling a little disappointed that they weren't there to see 'Before I Sleep – Encore!', creating the interesting situation where the new show has converted previous sceptics to dreamthinkspeak's vision, whilst some 'old faithfuls' have jumped ship.

For my part, I enjoyed the show greatly, and applaud the company's decision to try something a little different. It may be more reliant on the spoken word than previous productions, and more loyal to the original text, but the visual storytelling remains key to the experience: Ophelia's drowning face as she floats (on film) above us; the dead king's accusing eyes everywhere, on walls, monitors and screens large and small; the recurring image of Arcadian delights sullied by dastardly deeds (Tristan clearly likes orchards!); Hamlet banging relentlessly on the glass wall, like an animal trapped in a scientist's lab – these are images from this dreamthinkspeak production that I am sure will haunt me for a long time to come...

Dreamthinkspeak's *The Rest is Silence* was commissioned by Brighton Festival with LIFT and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and was presented at Malthouse Estate Warehouse, Shoreham 2 May – 8 June 2012. See www.brightonfestival.org

The show is then presented at Riverside Studios, London 12-23 June 2012, and at Northern Stage, Newcastle 27-30 June.

For more on the company's past, present, and future presentations of this and other works see www.dreamthinkspeak.com

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p.21 dreamthinkspeak, *The Rest is Silence* (photo Jim Stephenson). p.22 left to right: dreamthinkspeak, *The Rest is Silence* (photo Jim Stephenson); dreamthinkspeak, *Underground* (photo Stuart Walton). p.23 top to bottom: dreamthinkspeak, *Don't Look Back* (photo clickclickjim); dreamthinkspeak, *Before I Sleep* (photo clickclickjim).

BEING THERE

A three-way reflection on *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*
by Grist to the Mill



I bend awkwardly on the shaly beach at Brighton, my eye pressed to a barnacled peephole behind which is only deep blackness, somewhat aware that my skirt isn't really meant to be deployed at this angle. I'm scrumming in awkwardly next to a slightly embarrassed young man whose ear is near my chest, with a small child wedged in front of his shins. We have all been drawn closer by the distant sound of a ship's horn, the roll of the sea and a cracked voice singing a shanty, emanating from an unlikely looking seaweed-begrimed hut on large wheels resting near the top of Brighton's steep pebbly beach.

This year's innovative and award-winning commission set up by Fringe venues the Nightingale and Marlborough Theatre saw six new performance venues created in the form of Edwardian bathing machines. Originally designed to protect bathers' modesty, these small wooden sheds on wheels became pop-up venues playing host to indoor and outdoor performances, travelling around various locations across Brighton and Hove each weekend of the Festival.

Witnessing Grist to the Mill's richly sea-themed *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter* on the beach itself, with seagulls overhead and sun-bathers in the background, feels like the show's natural habitat. This is an expressionistic show, with images – puppets, objects, fragments of set – rising and falling from view like waves. The show is driven throughout and held together by Foz Foster's beautifully researched sound design, which draws together testimony from the Titanic, sea shanty's

seemingly sung by real sailors, bells, waves, foghorns, and pieces of Dorothy Max Prior's dramatic text from the perspectives of various denizens of the deep.

The peepholes are a brilliant idea, conjuring the end-of-the-pier entertainments skilfully suggested by the show's graphics and context, but still needing some working through to make them tolerable for the show's fifteen minutes. And there are some interesting puppetry discoveries made here too: certain images, such as beautifully crafted figures and ambient effects like the bubbles, the water, and corners of mast and treasure, work really well as glimpses, heightened through the small apertures. Others, such as the object animation and lighting, are much harder to effectively achieve close-up. I found myself especially confused by the presence of the unmasked puppeteer, so close to us yet never acknowledging our presence or playing with the intimacy demanded by her show. It was deeply atmospheric though – and at its best moments, peering through those peepholes was like glimpsing into another world.

Beccy Smith
Reviews Editor, Total Theatre

It's a sunny Saturday in Brighton and the last weekend of the festival. We are on the beach next to Madeira Drive surrounded by the other five bathing machines. All four performances are pre-booked and our



'front of house' job of the day is: gather the audience; make sure they are not disturbed by passers by; thank them at the end and ask them to sign our comments book. Today everything is ship shape and goes swimmingly – very different from the rest of the festival...

The real art of working a street performance, like sailing a ship, is not the sunny day and perfect conditions but the unexpected and uncontrollable nature of the weather and the general public, which we had our fair share of over the previous three weeks. We were based outside the Fishing Museum, next to a Whelk Stall, a perfect location for a bathing machine distressed to look like it had been on the bottom of the sea for the last hundred years. In fact too perfect as it looked so authentic people walked past without batting an eyelid. Although the show was pre-booked, because tickets were free, we often had no-shows when it rained and therefore had to drum up an audience at the last minute, so our front of house job was very different.

I dressed in my best old haggard sailor garb, and packed a musical saw and a ship's bell. Just before each show I sat in front of the machine playing saw until I had attracted enough interest, then rose with the ship's bell and announced the start of the performance. This worked well with full audiences. Then came the unexpected and uncontrollable, including a child going missing while the parents watched the show and the large fishing boat next to us catching fire, which we managed to put out with buckets of sea-water resulting in wet trousers and waterlogged shoes. The stuff you come to expect when working a street performance!

James Foz Foster
Composer, Sound Designer and Front-of-House

I pour the second bucket of water into the tank inside the barnacle-encrusted bathing machine and slam the door closed, shutting out the bright sunshine and plunging me into darkness.

Shafts of light make bright patterns on the floor and spots on the closed black blinds. Crouching amongst sails, fishing baskets, ropes and seaweed, I top up the bubble mix, hoist up the sails, and place the mermaid in the violin case and the unconscious Jonah puppet on the whale bones, paper boat at the ready. Champagne bottle and silverware are ready to float. Glitter refilled. Chandelier – up; mirror ball – up. Rabbit, white gloves and glitter are ready in the top hat. Souls back in their pipe cases. Switches, torches and black gloves all within reach. Foster bashes on the outside of the machine and I see shapes and



colours gathering behind the peepholes. Foster's evocative soundtrack creaks into action as I put on my gloves and say a prayer to the great puppet gods.

On the fourth foghorn I pull up the blinds and we're off!

Eight dismembered eyes are peering in. I have plenty of time to observe them as they take in the scene – a perk that I hadn't anticipated while devising the show. A shiny-eyed child peeps through a lower hole and her toy rabbit is watching too.

The outside world ceases to exist as the puppet enchantment takes hold – and we continue, Jonah, the audience and I, through the storm to the bottomless deep where mermaids flick through the water, knives flash and shadows dance across the sails. I lower the chandelier as the Titanic tilts and lurches, we time travel to the costa concordia, and when the magician's hat reveals a white rabbit I float it slowly past the button-eyed toy bunny and its wide-eyed owner.

Finally the bathing machine fills with bubbles and Jonah sails safely home in the magical hat.

I close the blinds and pull the handle that releases a gush of water at the audience's feet. Pausing to turn off the bubbles and remove my gloves, I kick open the door and the blinding sunshine floods in.

Isobel Smith
Puppeteer and Artistic Director, Grist to the Mill

Grist to the Mill's *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter* was one of six Dip Your Toe commissions for Brighton Festival Fringe, presented by The Nightingale and The Marlborough Theatre to celebrate the maiden voyage of Lone Twin's *Boat Project* (part of Artists Taking the Lead).

Dip Your Toe was awarded the Star of Festival and Most Groundbreaking Act at the Latest awards, as well as the Argus Critics Choice for Outstanding Original Performance.

The performance written about here took place on 26 May 2012.

www.xgristtothemillx.com / www.dipyourtoe.wordpress.com

All photos of Grist to the Mill's *Kissing the Gunner's Daughter*. Credits: p.24 and p.25 left Peter Chrisp; p.25 right Isobel Smith.

Earth, Air and Fire

Dorothy Max Prior spends time at Terra LUME 2012, a month-long season of performances, workshops, symposia and events





February 2012: I am in Brazil, in the São Paulo region. Zooming in on the map, in Campinas district; and zooming in even closer, in a small town that is, to all intents and purposes, a suburb of Campinas – Barão Geraldo.

‘If you shake a tree in Barão Geraldo, a few clowns will fall out,’ says my host for the month, Carlos Simioni, the longest-standing member of LUME Teatro. It’s that sort of place – and it seems that everyone I meet here is a clown, actor or musician. Of course, that is partly because this is the month of the LUME workshop season and Terra Lume programme, but year-round it is a town with a particularly large number of artist-residents.

LUME have been in Barão Geraldo since 1985. They are linked to and supported by the local university (Unicamp), but nowadays are housed in their own very lovely building, the Sede do Lume. And it is a proper home, complete with a kitchen with a percolator of coffee almost always bubbling on the hob; egg-yolk yellow rooms with gorgeous original feature fireplaces, sofas and bookshelves; and a wooden veranda boasting tables used for shared lunches or creative meetings. An adjoining space is converted into a fabulous costume department stuffed with Harlequin suits, net skirts, and velvet cloaks; and in yet another building, there is an airy workspace cum performance area, with beautiful natural light but also the potential to rig theatre lights/blacks if needed. There’s also a children’s room, which gives you some idea of the company’s ethos (many of the team have young children, and their care and inclusion is considered paramount). All of this is set in a generous garden, which at this time of year – late summer in the southern hemisphere – is filled with trees heaving with golden guava fruits and rich-red berries.

The company, dedicated to the art of the actor and to the role of the actor-creator, is led by seven actors and supported by a dedicated

team of producers, technicians and administrators. In February, they open their doors to the world for a series of professional development workshops for performers, led by company members and guest artists, and this programme of workshops is supplemented by Terra LUME, a season of shows, showings of work-in-progress, lecture-demonstrations, symposia, and panel discussions.

In this latter category comes Critical Theatre in the Press: Interior/Exterior, a presentation and panel discussion – led by Carlota Cafiero, LUME’s press officer; a Campinas-based independent journalist; Valmir Santos, of São Paulo based Bravo! Magazine; and yours truly, editor of Total Theatre Magazine – to look at the local, national, and international viewpoints on critiquing and supporting contemporary theatre.

I’ll start here, as the discussion throws up some interesting reflections that set other things seen and experienced in Terra LUME in context. First that when we say ‘national’ in Brazil it is worth noting that this is a continent-sized country. Thus, there are many, many extremely well-established artists and companies that are not known outside Brazil, because touring their own country – with journeys of thousands of miles from one end to the other – is a more than full-time job. I also perceive that there is an issue with disseminating information across so broad a base as Brazil. ‘We have nothing like Total Theatre Magazine here!’ is a cry heard many times, and for many theatre practitioners, there seems to be a sense of insularity from both the national and the international theatre scene, due in part, but not exclusively, to geographic reasons.

Which is why the February month of workshops and the Terra LUME programme is valued so highly in Brazil. There is an international aspect, with involvement from visiting workshop leaders, performers and students from Europe and other countries of South America, but the majority of participants are Brazilian, drawn from the length and breadth of the country. The month is an opportunity for those artists – local, national and international – to share ideas, make new connections, see work, and make theatre alongside each other. Many of the February workshop courses end with showings of work-in-progress, and students also have the opportunity to take part in LUME’s legendary Trueque carnival cortege (more on that later). Integral to the Terra LUME programme are the lecture-demonstrations and performances by company members. At the end of the first week of the programme, we have the pleasure of seeing Ana Cristina Colla’s solo work *Você (You)*, presented at the SESC theatre in Campinas. *Você* is directed by Butoh master Tadashi Endo, who also directed the company’s renowned ensemble piece *Shi-zen 7 Bowls*.

Você reverses the natural order of life and takes us on a journey from withered old age to vibrant youth – a universal ‘everywoman’ journey, presenting archetypal pictures of femininity, yet also a specific expression of Ana Cristina Colla’s own biography. The techniques of corporeal mime, Butoh dance, and contemporary visual theatre combine to create a haunting and beguiling piece of theatre, rich in images and sounds, with words used in an interesting, illustrative way – fragments of text spoken at the beginning, then as the performer moves further back into the world of dreams, memories, and imagination, words appearing scrawled onto unfurling scrolls that hang ceiling to floor, or as illuminations written on the body. Ana Cristina Colla is a wonderfully versatile performer, who is as convincing as an old woman with bent knees and curved shoulders as she is as a sensuous woman at the height of her sexual prowess, and then again as schoolgirl literally bouncing with energy. The soundscape is a wonderful mix of electronica, Brazilian popular music, Koto, and Japanese lounge, and all aspects of the piece – from staging and lighting design, to projections and sound, to choreography and the riveting performance itself – is carefully worked into one harmonious whole. A show worthy of the tag ‘total theatre’!

The performances are of course the crux of LUME’s work, but another core element is what the company call their ‘technical demonstrations’ – each of the seven company members having created a kind of lecture-demonstration about their personal journey as an actor-creator. Two of the company were represented in this year’s programme: the company’s



newest member, Naomi Silman, who presented *Não Tem Flor Quadrada* (*There are no Square Flowers* – previously seen and reported on by Total Theatre when presented in English at the Nightingale Theatre, April 2011); and the company’s oldest member, co-founder Carlos Simioni, who presented *Prisão para a Liberdade* (*From Prison to Freedom*). Both of these were presented at SESC Campinas.

Simioni starts in confessional-narrator mode, telling the audience that he has spent 27 years in search of his own personal actor’s technique, and joking that he hates to do demonstrations. Having established his resistance to the ‘technical demonstration’ form, he goes on to make a brilliant demonstration of his journey from protégé of Luís Otávio Burnier (the inspirational founder of LUME who sadly died at the height of his life), through his ‘apprenticeship’ to Odin Teatret’s Iben Nagel Rasmussen, to the present moment and his ongoing work with LUME.

He describes his work with Burnier, painstakingly developing the Decroux-inspired principles of corporeal mime, and then exploring the emerging ‘matrix’ forms, which we could view as the embodiment of core images that are often elemental and archetypal. Examples of these ‘matrix’ forms are shown to us, Simioni moving easily back and forth between the conscious and lucid role of narrator and the almost trance-like state of the matrix embodied (the ‘Lion Mouth’ – a compelling transformation, an image of rage, power and desire held on the brink of explosion into chaos).

He then moves on to the experience of first seeing Odin Teatret’s *Marriage with God* (performed by César Brie and Iben Nagel Rasmussen, and directed by Eugenio Barba). This was a moment of epiphany: ‘I wanted to be like these actors!’ Although at this stage of his life a highly experienced and talented physical performer, Simioni’s work under Iben Nagel Rasmussen’s guidance altered radically, as everything

he knew was torn apart and reassembled: ‘I don’t want to see your body,’ she said to him, ‘I want to see the light...’ He went on to learn how to create ‘a spider’s web of light’ whilst yet learning how to ‘move like a stone’. Back in performance mode, Simioni gives us a beautiful demonstration of moving through contrasting modes of being, using the Samurai and Geisha archetypes developed with Iben.

Ultimately, he says, his work with LUME and beyond has been ‘to reveal yourself; to work outside of your fears’, and part of that is to face the acknowledgement that no matter how much work is done, he is ‘uma merda’ (‘a shit’). This acknowledgement seems to move us very easily into another key strand of Simioni’s professional life – his clown work – and we briefly see a flash of his alter-ego Carolino (co-star of LUME’s *Cravo, Lirio e Rosa*), who we had the chance to meet more fully in a cabaret appearance with partner Teotonio (Ricardo Puccetti) at the Almanaque Café, at the end of the month.

Simioni ends his demonstration with a maxim that glues together the work of past, present and future: ‘My work right now is to try to find a way to move with all of my body, all of my self’, and we are given a few brief moments of harmonious, truly embodied movement from his most recent solo show, *Sopro* (*Breath*), which is directed by Tadashi Endo.

Back at home base – Sede do LUME – two performances by visiting artists shined brightly. *El Funeral*, performed by Janko Navarro and directed by Erika Mata (both of Costa Rica) is a one-man show about a man who tries to cheat death by employing death’s tactics. Determined not to be taken unawares, he learns to mimic a catatonic state, until there comes a point when the pretence and the reality overlap. There are echoes of Edgar Allan Poe both in the concept and in the gorgeously gothic realisation – all intense shadows and uplit, frozen expressions – and Navarro is a riveting performer, with a presence and



control of his physicality that is a pleasure to watch. It is deliciously dark and bursting with moments of twisted humour.

A Beira do Nada, is a Brazilian piece, directed by Claiton Manfro (from the south of the country) and performed by Eduardo Aranbula. It's something of a tour de force, taking the form of twenty short pieces on a connected theme – a study of the effects of dementia and the physical manifestations of learning disabilities. In each of the twenty vignettes a character is presented as an abstracted observation, judgement free.

Eduardo Aranbula has a very strong stage presence, and delivers the work with physical prowess and an admirable care and attention to detail. I particularly enjoy two scenes that feature a pair of highly polished black patent shoes. In the first, the shoes are handled with almost fetishistic desire. The second circles round the desire to wear the shoes vying with the worry of putting dirty feet into such lovely new footwear – resulting in a painfully, poignantly funny repeated ritual of trouser removal, foot washing, shoe donning, and attempts to get trousers back on whilst wearing the shoes – then taking the shoes off, but dirtying the feet in the process of putting the trousers on, this setting up another desperate cycle of foot washing, etcetera...

Elsewhere in the programme came a lecture-with-beer (the Brazilian answer to the symposium – which originally meant 'with wine!') led by LUME's Renato Ferracini, who bridges the gap nicely between the academic and the practice-led concerns around *The Body in Art*; numerous practical sessions on producing and touring work, led by LUME's ace producers, Cynthia Margareth and Dani Scopin; and a fantastic Carnival cortege, a project led by Ricardo Pucetti on the theme *The End of the World* that embraced not only LUME's company members and students, but also other performance artists in the region – including the female clown Lily Curcio, who I also managed to see performing in a wonderful two-woman clown show,

De Malas Prontas (which you could loosely translate as 'Bags at the Ready') by Florianópolis-based Company Pé de Vento. It's a great twist on the classic 'two clowns with suitcases and time to kill fighting over a single bench' wheeze, set in an airport lounge, and featuring a battle of the clown divas to die for.

I will also squeeze a mention in here of my small contribution to the cortege – a 'dance at the end of time' Bolero devised with Ricardo and a team of Brazilian street artists and students resplendent in evening wear, performed to a live rendition of *Besame Mucho!*

The Trueque cortege marks the official end of the Terra LUME programme, and the beginning of the Carnival holiday week. In its glorious embracing of so many artforms and modes of practice, bringing together seasoned practitioners with novice performers, it seems a perfect reflection of LUME's approach to theatre-making: eclectic, inclusive, and illuminating.

The section on *A Beira do Nada* and a few other lines in this article first appeared in a post on <http://terralume2012.blogspot.co.uk/> The blog has extensive coverage of the Terra LUME and workshop programme 2012 by LUME Teatro.

LUME's new show, *Os Bem-Intencionados*, premieres 1 August 2012, in São Paulo, at SESC Pompeia's Espaço Cênico. For further details on this and other shows in LUME's current repertoire, and for plans for the 2013 workshop season, see www.lumeteatro.br.com

p.26 Ana Cristina Colla, *Você* (photo Vitor Damiani). p.27 Ana Cristina Colla, *Você* (photo Adalberto Lima). p.28 LUME, *Os Bem-Intencionados* (photo Alessandro Soave). p.29 Carlos Simioni, *Sopro* (photo Adalberto Lima).

WORK IN PROGRESS

Moby Dick - The Formless Phantom

In the final instalment of a three-part feature, Living Structures document their research and development process in the creation of new show *Leviathan*



Leviathan is a homage to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and takes the audience through a journey including spatial transformation, large installation, physical theatre and original soundscape.

In the first two parts of this feature we told you about our initial research phase at The Pinter Centre and some of the practical challenges and turning points of our rehearsals at Trinity Buoy Wharf. In this final instalment, we'll delve a little deeper into our approach to Melville's novel and into some of the influences that helped shape the content and staging of our production.

Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* was first published in 1851. Initially received with severe criticism, it only gained vast popularity in the 1920s, becoming widely recognised over the years as one of the greatest novels in world literature. Throughout the decades, as well as being drawn by the fascinating accounts of the whaling adventures of the Pequod and its crew, readers have interpreted Melville's tale from a variety of perspectives: political, homoerotic, biblical, psychoanalytical, philosophical – to name a few.

As the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges once famously wrote, *Moby Dick* is an 'infinite novel' – a narrative that 'page by page, expands and even exceeds the size of the cosmos'.

When we began to dive into the story as a group, some of us had already read *Moby Dick* as children, others knew only the main plot line and were reading the book for the first time. From our initial brainstorming it

became evident that a literal representation of the characters and their voyage would simply not do justice to the vastness of the images and issues that the story conjured in our minds. We wanted the 'translation' into an immersive theatre experience to be achieved with a high degree of independence from realistic nautical references, offering a firm alternative to the more common literal, comical, theatrical and filmic interpretations of this novel. We aimed to transcend naturalistic and literal readings of the text and to embrace in a more abstract and visual way some of the complex and deeply existential themes that seemed to excite and move us the most in Melville's story: something to do with the universal struggle of man against the irrational, against one's own strength and weakness, or even of man against nature itself...

These ideas were playing in our mind as we searched for an aesthetic way of conveying them in the work. This is when we began to find connections with Russian Constructivism...

The Rational vs The Unknown

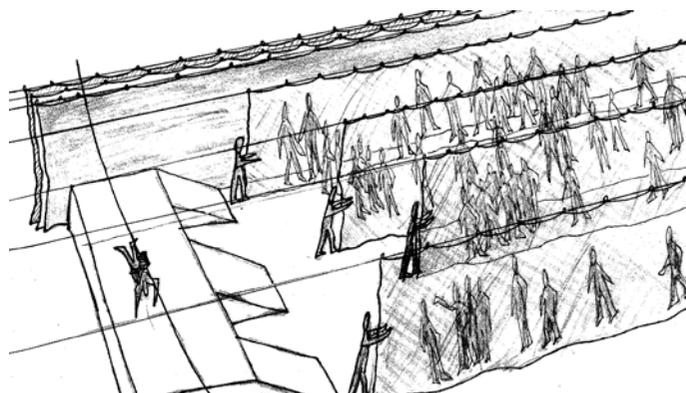
Constructivism stands at the origin of abstract art and rejects traditional forms of representation. It creates a new pictorial language in which complex and multifaceted natural shapes are translated into patterns often consisting of absolute geometrical forms such as circles, triangles, squares and basic solid colours. The geometrical form, the clearly defined, that which is reproducible and controlled by human logic, stands in opposition to the unknown and formless.

These concerns resonated enormously with our wish to abstract the text in the novel, to translate it into a performance that utilised concrete elements of spatial transformation, manipulating volume, mass, colour and rhythm in order to involve audiences on an emotional, haptic and intellectual level. Along with Constructivism, Suprematism and the Theatre of the Bauhaus also became major aesthetic inspirations for our work.

Moby Dick, The Formless Phantom

From a very early stage it transpired that we – in common with most *Moby Dick* readers – were hugely fascinated and intrigued by the white whale. But as DH Lawrence once stated: 'Of course he [Moby Dick] is a symbol. Of what? I doubt if even Melville knew exactly. That's the best of it.'

According to the American philosopher Hubert L. Dreyfus, the land and sea in the story are metaphors for divided views of the world: the firm ground representing the logical and analytical; the boundless and bottomless sea signifying the emotional and spiritual. Along these lines, the Whale seems to represent (or recall) the mysterious, unknown aspects of existence. Moby Dick is an ungraspable, formless and indefinable phantom that takes shape only in the imagination of each individual. In many ways, by embodying the formless, uncanny and



physical boundaries allows us to create multiple locations in the same volume of space as well as a general sense of activity and (a)temporality in the surrounding environment.

The overarching spatial trajectory of the audience in *Leviathan* is a good example of the kind of audience positioning and spatial transformation strategies that Living Structures employ for the communication and making of meaning.

The set's different levels (the ditch, the surrounding stage, adjacent platforms, etcetera) correspond to the physical and metaphysical voyage of the Pequod, the whaleboat that Melville describes in *Moby Dick*. Above, the ship or land; below, the depth of the sea and its various connotations. Shifting the audience's position naturally also leads to different viewing experiences, often acting as an allegory for different views of the world, some more rational (frontal/clear) others more emotional or sensorial (immersive/chaotic).

The R&D Taster Showings and the Upcoming Premiere at Old Vic Tunnels

At the end of our time at Trinity Buoy Wharf, we had three nights of work-in-progress showings to a selected audience. Nearly 300 Living Structures supporters attended and many of them gave us valuable feedback in the Q&A sessions that took place each night. A sense of the *Leviathan* journey, in a nutshell:

As audiences enter the performance space they come to look upon a vast horizontally suspended sail. The sail functions as a projection screen for a large-scale video of rolling waves. During the initial scene, the audience looks upon the water; Ishmael, the survivor of the shipwreck, emerges from beneath the screen in the centre of the projection. He swims across the sea and when he reaches shore with the famous words 'Call me Ishmael', he begins to tell his tale. The theatrical journey unfolds around the audience who are led into a series of spatial, visual and sonic shifts culminating in a sort of metaphorical ritual of communal drowning where the audience, huddled together, collectively brought to its knees, recalls the fate of the Pequod's crew.

We were very pleased with the results of what was achieved in our R&D and are now in the process of devising some very exciting developments in preparation for our winter premiere at the Old Vic Tunnels. We look forward to seeing you all there!

supernatural, the creature stands in opposition to its pursuer, 'Captain Ahab', who can be seen to represent a modern scientific approach that aims to disenchant nature to a point that it no longer fills us with wonder or terror.

We began to explore different versions of the white whale. We created a scene inspired by an El Lissitzky 1920s propaganda poster featuring a huge white circle being pierced by a red triangle (at the time it represented the Bolsheviks striking the ruling class) and another work based around a huge inflatable cloth sculpture that emerges and engulfs captain Ahab. We also explored the fact that whale fat was used to create candles and reversed this process to connect it to an early scene in the novel, where Elijah's character prophesies a bad ending to the Pequod's voyage: a bucket filled with melted white candlewax is poured into water, and the rapid cooling freezes the wax in an unpredictable and indefinable shape. The action of pouring wax or molten lead into water and predicting the future by interpreting its shape is an old pagan tradition that is still commonly practiced in wide parts of eastern and central Europe today. The interpretation of the formless is also used in psychological studies and projective tests. The Swiss psychiatrist Herman Rorschach produced ten diagrams made from inkblots known as Psychodiagrams (1921). The associations that a patient would have in relation to these would provide an insight into their personality and enable diagnosis. Similarly, the way in which characters in Melville's story respond to the image of the white whale, or the doubloon (a golden coin promised by Ahab as a reward to whoever captured the beast), gives the reader an insight into the nature of their personalities.

The Animated Materiality of Space

We like to think of how we play with our structures as being a similar relationship as that between a musician and his/her instrument – the animated materiality of space seen as an instrument for artistic expression.

Living Structures' fluid approach to storytelling aims to engross the audience in an emotive and physical experience, rather than just conveying a narrative. In *Leviathan*, 'changing spatial reality' is used as a tool to convey a physical and emotional journey and becomes a key to enter into a world where elements clearly referencing Melville's novel coexist with other more loose translations of *Moby Dick* into visuals, sounds, movements, objects, landscapes and sequences.

Walter Gropius famously stated: 'If it is true that the mind can transform the body it is equally true that structures can transform the mind.'

The designs for Living Structures' performances aim to establish a sense of location through the envelopment of audiences in physical structures that provide defined yet transitory boundaries. The shifting of these

This article is the third of a three-part series that documents the development of *Leviathan*, with this instalment written by Ula Dajerling, Klaus Kruse and Dani d'Emilia. The show will premiere in winter 2012 at The Old Vic Tunnels, London.

Living Structures was formed in 2007 by Klaus Kruse, Dani d'Emilia, Ula Dajerling, Verity Standen and Dugald Ferguson.

For more information about *Leviathan* and other LS artists and works see: www.livingstructures.co.uk

Leviathan has been in development with the support of Arts Council England, The Old Vic Tunnels, University College Falmouth, Trinity Buoy Wharf and The Pinter Centre (Goldsmiths University of London).

All images and sketches are of the work in progress, Living Structures' *Leviathan*. Photos by Aleksandra Karpowicz; sketches by Klaus Kruse.

An Inside Job

Aylwyn Walsh on performing prisons, performing punishment, and the banality of the cell in contemporary theatre



Prison has a strong hold on the public imagination. Its stark brutality and implicit dangers serve as cultural reminders to respect and obey the rule of law, while its features of containment and surveillance have made it a fertile site for exploring moral and political issues in popular forms. On television we've seen shows like *Porridge* and *Bad Girls* in the UK, and *Oz* and *Prison Break* in the US, yet it's theatre that's proved one of the most important tools for turning the interrogative gaze back on the means of punishment and control.

We might argue that this is the job of theatre in general. Why is its function in the case of prisons any different? Theatre's unique capability to provide audience experiences – both imagined and embodied – means that situations of extremity can be viscerally understood in ways that can disrupt stereotypes and engage empathy.

Most images and stories about prison encountered by the public highlight (and perhaps exaggerate) the divide between acceptable and transgressive behaviours, relying on stereotypes that are inevitably inscribed by race, class and gender – and the power of theatre lies in its ability to reveal the mechanisms by which these easy tropes are maintained. Tanika Gupta's 2005 play *Gladiator Games*, for instance, explored the story of Zahid Mubarek, a young man who was fatally attacked by his cellmate in Feltham Young Offender's Institute, adopting a drama-documentary style that marked it as one of the first in a wave of productions based on court testimonies.

Working with the same subject material as new writing, site-responsive productions nonetheless take different routes in engaging audiences with experiences of imprisonment, dehumanisation and coercion. Hydrocracker's critically acclaimed work *The New World Order* (at Brighton Festival 2011) set five of Pinter's short plays in underground

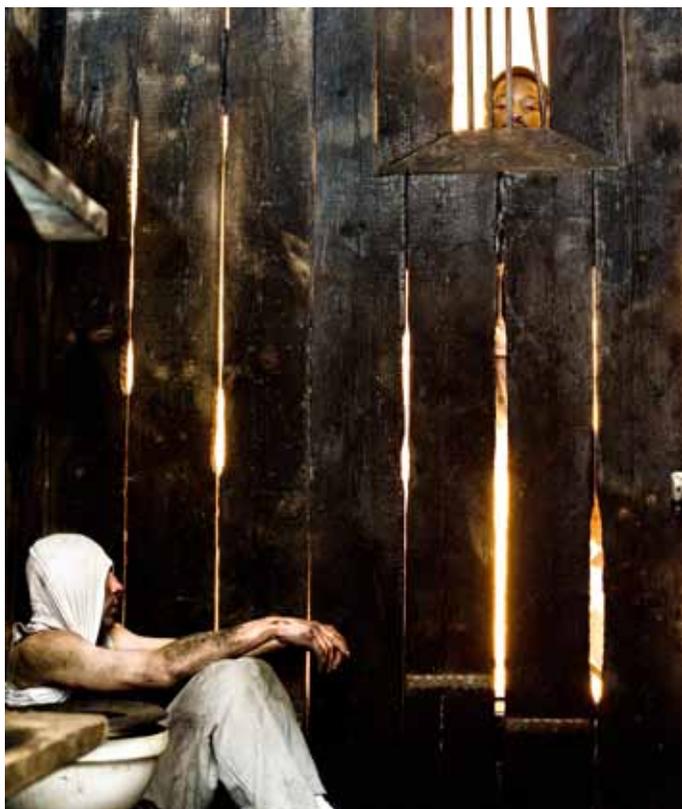
police cells to chilling effect, while Badac Theatre's *The Factory* (first appearing in the UK at the 2008 Edinburgh Fringe) viscerally highlighted the prisoner/guard relationship in a piece about the Holocaust that turned on the audience's role as witness.

They have very different approaches, but it's looking out from these two vantage points, site-responsive theatre and new writing, that we can start to see how prison and its effects have been articulated – and challenged – in popular and experimental theatre.

Staging Gay Men in Prison: Mark Storer's a tender subject

A tender subject, produced by Artangel and created by Mark Storer, staged experiences of gay men in prisons in a site-responsive installation. The work was developed over three years through residential workshops in prisons around the UK exploring the place of tenderness in the harsh world of the institution.

When approaching the prison service, Storer was told there 'weren't any' gay men in the prison – which proved his suspicion that there was a stigma attached to being gay. Ultimately it took a connection with GALIPS (the support organisation for LGBT staff) to navigate the thorny issue, and to provide Storer with a second group of gay men with which to work – prison officers who may or may not be 'out' at work. Storer's approach was to build visual metaphors by conducting research and development in the form of miniature devising residencies. Each group of prisoners (recruited because they were anti-homophobic rather than saying outright they were gay), worked through creative tasks and curated installations that provided views of surprising moments of tenderness. In one workshop, a prisoner slow-danced with a prison uniform that was suspended in the window.



Following the long development phase, Artangel forged a relationship with Only Connect, a theatre company in North London working with ex-prisoners. They, alongside prison officers who volunteered to participate in the performance, played the roles.

The first third of the piece is thrilling: a pick up in a blacked-out prison van, transportation to an unknown place, a feeling of indeterminacy while waiting for orders from the prison officers. The audience is finally led into a labyrinthine series of corridors, where we wait, hearing far-off noises of flesh, and gates slamming shut behind us. It smells of disinfectant and mould. The officers lead the small audience from room to room – each one providing a glimpse into the sensory landscape of incarceration. We have encounters with prisoners in the shower room: two men navigating a slippery floor scattered with a hundred bars of soap, and another man throwing water all over them. I'm reminded of waterboarding as a form of torture, and recall *those* images of Abu Ghraib, in which prisoners are objects of ridicule in their postures of fleshly indecency. Recollecting the discomfort I felt, it's not certain that the performance adequately unpacks the power of viewer/viewed. Rather, the prisoners are under the surveillance of both the stern and silent officers and ourselves.

The performance invites witnessing, but does not allow for intervention. The audience sees a gay officer climb back into a closet Trojan horse. Ultimately, we are not able to distinguish what counts as tenderness in this underworld. Nor do we have insight into the issues that being gay in a 'homonormative' space raises. The stereotypical images are counterpoised with the uncanny – a house made of Mother's Pride bread, a field of flowers. Storor's triumph in this work is not so much the exploration of the gay male experience of prison, which remains obscure, but in communicating the unexpected sensory stimulation and deprivation brought by denial.

New Writing: Clean Break Theatre Company

Clean Break Theatre Company has been developing theatre and education programmes for over thirty years. In their annual new writing commission, writers are invited to explore any aspect related to criminal justice and women. This means that most of the writers are able to avoid direct representations of prison life, and the trappings of voyeurism that approach might entail. (I call this the banality of the cell.) In most Clean Break plays, crime itself is not directly represented, I believe, because it is so ubiquitous that it loses impact in the theatre. Rather, the more subtle machinations of conflict, belonging and not belonging seem to run through the plays. The opportunity to explore crime and punishment and their causes and effects leads, I think, to



creative, challenging contemporary new writing.

In *Fatal Light*, for example, which was part of the Charged programme at Soho Theatre in 2010, Chloë Moss uses a reverse time sequence to indicate the consequences of imprisonment. The first scene shows a mother being informed by a police officer that her daughter has killed herself in custody. The narrative shifts from the ways in which the daughter, Jay, is trying to cope with being in prison (scared and lonely on her first night with an unsympathetic pad-mate and no one to talk to) to how the mother had been threatened with losing her daughter, tracing back family divisions to before Jay's birth. The reversed structure gives the audience a sense of the fragility of space and time inside, particularly highlighting the difficulty of separation of mothers from their children as a major problem in prison. The play constructs a delicate structure of maternal feeling which is examined as a kind of reversed legacy: loss that is repeated through imprisonment and suicide, and emotional despair that seems like a bloodline.

Challenges of the Cell

While there is obvious aesthetic and ethical merit in exploring prison as a trope in contemporary performance practice, there remains an important challenge for performance makers in how to engage adequately with the issues raised by incarceration. The very real impacts of prison, its deprivations and ongoing ramifications on family life, employability and reintegration in society need sensitive and imaginative handling. When this is done, theatre has the radical potential to break open the hidden world and remake it anew.

Chloë Moss' *Fatal Light* was performed as part of Charged, a collection of six short plays presented by Clean Break at Soho Theatre 10-27 November 2010. www.cleanbreak.org.uk

Mark Storor's a tender subject was performed in London 16-31 March 2012 and was produced by Artangel. www.artangel.org.uk

Prison representations in theatre – further information:

Main stage productions:

Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Softcops* (Barbican, London, 1984)

Tanika Gupta, *Gladiator Games* (Crucible, Sheffield, 2005)

Installation/ *Promenade*

Lucy Kirkwood / Clean Break, *It felt empty when the heart went at first but its alright now* (Arcola, London, 2009)

Installation/Intervention:

Rideout, *Gotojail Project: The Cell* (Southbank Centre, London, 2011)

UK Companies producing work in/about prisons:

Clean Break Theatre Company, London: <http://www.cleanbreak.org.uk/>

Dance United, National: www.dance-united.com

Only Connect, London: www.onlyconnectuk.org

Rideout, Stoke: <http://www.rideout.org.uk/>

Synergy Theatre, London: www.synergytheatreproject.co.uk

TIPP, Manchester: <http://www.tipp.org.uk/tipp>

p.32 Clean Break, *Fatal Light* (photo Sheila Burnett). p.33: Mark Storor, a *tender subject* (photo Stephen King) x2.

Thomas Wilson goes to Birmingham for another exciting edition of the annual Fierce Festival

The Siren Sounds



Ann Liv Young, Mermaid Show (photo Jaskirt Dhaliwal)

Founded in 1998, Birmingham's Fierce Festival is one of the highlights of the UK live art calendar, situating itself firmly in its geographical context, and, since the installation of Laura McDermott and Harun Morrison as joint directors, utilising a 'slow burn' model of programming. In practice this means the festival works with artists in the year leading up to the festival. This approach to programming appears to have allowed the work to feel connected to the venues and locations in very specific ways, the geography and topography of the spaces providing a definite framework for the mixture of performances and events.

Particularly noticeable in this regard is Ann Liv Young's *Mermaid Show*, set in the deconsecrated Methodist cathedral that is now The Q Club. Ensnared in a plastic paddling pool, bare-breasted and fish-tailed, a blend of renaissance nude and Seaworld attraction, Young exudes a mixture of snide disdain and simmering violence. Around her three sailors perform her bidding, trapped in her Siren's song. The Siren, the oft-forgotten facet of the Mermaid myth, erased and sanitised by countless Disney-esque representations, serves as the bedrock for Young's reclamation of this mythical female body, and more importantly voice. *Mermaid Show's* précis highlights Ann Liv Young's provocation via 'corporeal rather than linguistic dialogue', and this work is certainly physically provocative, but it is the sonic qualities that drive it forward.

A silenced organ looming above the cold oval space, the audience on raked steps, *Mermaid Show* is part Victorian freak-show and part-disrupted pop-oratorio. Throughout, Young's work vociferously meshes fragments of Mermaid narratives with violent and expressionist

movement. Young, like a queen of the sea, soaks in her pool, whilst her sailors sing along to iconic tracks of pop-sirens. This intermingling of live and recorded voices recalls adolescent escapism – the combined embracing of heightened emotional states and desperation for release from childhood restrictions.

At times witty, at others wilfully invasive of the audience's space, Young plays artfully on the gaze to which the Mermaid has been subjected, overtly reclaiming this mythical female figure with barely contained rage and ironic parody. Young's work does not let the audience off lightly. She leaves her pool and drags herself into and through the audience, dismembering and spitting mackerel, settling in the lap of one (un)fortunate; all the while accompanied by her sailors spraying water from buckets. And whilst the audience might escape a soaking the screams and Siren's songs that reverberate through the space pursue them.

In stark contrast, Mette Edvardsen's *Time has Fallen Asleep in the Afternoon Sunshine* lulls audience members into a different state. Hosted in Birmingham Central Library, it saw audience members booking 30 minutes with 'a book' from a short menu. The book is then recounted from memory, one-to-one with the audience member who has chosen it. Settled in the Chinese section of the library, J.G. Ballard's *Crash* was a faintly disturbing experience. Its rich and complexly textural landscape of body parts, sundered and marked by mechanical components, was delicately delivered by its reader Philip Holyman. It is the small decisions in this process that make it resonate: a momentary pause to remember, a shift in gaze as a paragraph shifts trajectory, and the insistence of the reader to speak only of themselves as the

Ron Athey, *Gifts of the Spirit* (photo Jaskirt Dhaliwal)Subject to_change, *Cupid* (photo Jaskirt Dhaliwal).

book. The act of listening to someone recount a story is a charged and moving experience in itself, but when the book is one that's reputation proceeds it, the sense of the unfolding story is made richer. This is compounded by the texture of the speaker's voice, imbuing the narrative with the speaker's sense of the text.

The sonic thread of *Fierce* was the explicit focus of *Curious Sounds in Curious Spaces*, co-produced and hosted by Birmingham's Symphony Hall. *Curious Sounds* was an eclectic series of acoustic installations, performances and tours. The installations inhabited both front of house and the backstage areas. Ray Lee's collection of automated and electronic sound sculptures were the most striking. Inhabiting the basement Band Rooms, each constructed a different ambience, with one a series of tiny electric motors rotating plastic stubs against lockers, and whirring electronic blades humming in another. Despite the stream of visitors these installations retained a delicate resonance.

Graeme Miller's *Picture and Piano* had a different kind of understated quality. This was a stately procession of a single piano from centrestage of the Symphony Hall, pushed by Miller, through the backstage, scene dock and on into the outside. A single camera feed projected above the stage recounted the piano's view as it slowly receded from sight. All the while it accompanied itself with lilting phrases.

Stephen Cornford and Bill Leslie's *Tuning Up*, ostensibly a sound piece that aimed to make the 'auditorium hum' through releasing deflating helium balloons with harmonicas attached, found itself overtaken by the visual event, the mainly family audience cooing at the floating balloons skittering upwards. Consequently the audience made more noise than the balloons, and whilst this charged excitement had a pleasant quality, it somewhat overshadowed the more evocative possibilities of the work.

Serving as a little respite from the hubbub of the other events, SOUNDkitchen's *The Theatre of the Mind* was an installation of vintage radio and conservatory furniture, gently meandering through time and place – evoking simple images from simple sounds.

Away from Symphony Hall at the mac, Subject to_change's *Cupid* was a tender evocation of love and stars. Framed as a field trip, the audience paint large modroc hearts, gaze at constellations and take in a little archery practice. Abigail Conway and Lucy Hayhoe are the most gentle of guides, with a delicate delight in revealing each new moment. Like

all good field trips it reveals as much about yourself as the subject matter, plus the chance to leave with another's heart brings a delicious frisson to proceedings.

Rounding off the weekend, Ron Athey made something of a departure from his usual practice with *Gifts of the Spirit*. Where Athey's previous work has principally rooted itself in body art, dealing particularly with 'extreme' images and activating the body as a political and social site, this work concerns itself with the nature and processes of the mind and of language. *Gifts of the Spirit* though retains Athey's interest in ritual practice, religious imagery and 'alternative' states.

Fusing images of 'medium-ship' with processes of automatic composition *Gifts of the Spirit* was as much about the process of abstracting, generating and reforming fragments of text as the final product. Using the automatic writings of a large group of young volunteers in response to Athey's autobiographical provocations, Athey 'processed' these through a group of assistants cutting-up and typing out sections of these writings, before compiling the typed fragments into a series of texts, to be read out by Athey at the climax of the work.

The rich ritual form of this work, with performers clothed to varying degrees of white and black, sat tantalisingly alongside the rough austerity of TROVE, a now abandoned museum. As with the rest of the weekend, the sound of this work was the most gripping component. A slow pulsing of urgent typing, scratchy writing and improvisations on grand piano, all tied in by a repetitive and overlapping series of countdowns from Athey and his acolyte-like companions. This discordant clash of sonic and visual landscapes bought a disorientating quality to the event, one not easily quantifiable in linguistic terms and instead sitting uneasily beneath the skin.

Live art frames much of its practice within a network of conceptual models, tying the physical and visual experiences into linguistic and intellectual frameworks. What is noticeable from the final weekend of this year's *Fierce* Festival is the importance of sound across the artistic work on show, particularly in the ways in which the speaking of words, voice and music embody experience in ways that the signifiers themselves cannot.

Fierce, Birmingham's international festival of live art, took place 29 March – 8 April 2012 at sites across the city.
www.wearefierce.org

Dorothy Max Prior goes 100 % Norfolk and Norwich Festival

I'll Be Your Mirror



Rimini Protokoll, 100% Norfolk (photo Andi Sapey)

Another May, another Norfolk and Norwich Festival! Can it really be a year? 2012 saw the first N&N firmly under the wing of (relatively) new artistic director William Galinsky. Of course, with his great track record at the Cork Midsummer Festival, it was a given that Galinsky, like predecessor Jonathan Holloway, would be keen to showcase an eclectic mix of contemporary performance that would include a healthy amount of site-responsive theatre, street arts, circus and hybrid arts – and it was good also to see so many Total Theatre favourites featured in the three-week programme, including Tim Crouch, Paper Cinema, Little Bulb, and Quarantine.

Outdoor arts attractions this year included the Without Walls commission by Requardt & Rosenberg, *Motor Show*, the follow-up to *Electric Hotel* (*Motor Show* was reviewed by Beccy Smith at the Brighton Festival, see www.totaltheatrereview.com); and Close Act's *Invasion*, in which huge beasts apparently strolled down the delightfully-named Gentleman's Walk (a sight I missed, sad to say – any interested readers can note that I will be seeing this show at the Winchester Hat Fair, review to be posted on the website!). The big site-specific show of the festival was 'Time Circus' *Air Hotel*, in which audience members were invited to spend a night in the treetops in 'pods'. I also missed this adventure, but it sounds wonderful!

Well, that's what I *didn't* see. So, what did she actually get to? I hear you cry...

I spent two weekends at this year's Norfolk and Norwich. On my first trip, 12 and 13 May, I found myself plunged headfirst into The Garden Party, held at the Festival Gardens, Chapelfield. The gardens (with the lovely Spiegeltent centre-stage) were jam-packed with picnicking families, who'd come along to catch The Strangelings in their spooof acrobalance show, *Tandem*, or the ever-delightful *Insect Museum*, or perhaps the dementedly ironic community radio station, *Bramble FM* – 'so local you can smell it' – featuring, on this occasion, a special Jubilee 'decorate the throne' competition in which small children stick plastic flowers onto a

gold-sprayed toilet, DJ 'Chris Evans' entertaining us with a dismal sock puppet, and pink-lycra-clad MC Maureen (who in another life is the irrepressible Flick Ferdinando) and her sidekick Les running expressive dance competitions to Abba's Dancing Queen. 'It's immersive theatre,' says Maureen at one point, and no doubt she's right. Bramble's PA system is given a run for its money by the extremely loud music belting out from the beer tent, and also from a rather odd family show by Erth Visual and Physical Inc called *Dinosaur Petting Zoo*, in which a strident Australian woman lectures onlookers about the feeding habits of various prehistoric beasts, whilst her colleagues don whole-body-mask creature costumes, or puppeteer a selection of large and small dinosaurs, to illustrate her words. Sitting somewhere between street arts show and theatre-in-education, I found it all just too gung-ho for my taste, and retreated after about ten minutes to a quieter spot, where I encountered a talking post box telling gentle little stories – much more to my taste. Sadly I never did find out who made this piece of work (answers on a postcard please!)

My one trip away from the gardens that weekend was to see the National Theatre of Scotland's production *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*. This also proved to be a rather boisterous affair, although in the best possible way, and another opportunity for 'immersion' (thank you, Maureen), with the show set in the student union bar of Norwich University College of Art.

It tells the tale of a bluestocking enthusiast of border ballads, Ms Prudencia Hart, who, one midwinter night, finds herself sucked (via a crack in the tarmac in the Asda carpark) into Hell, where she ends up living out countless millennia in the Devil's Library, where every book that has ever been written resides.

This strange fate befalls her after an odd night out with her colleague Colin, a sparring partner in the academic debates on the true meaning of 'folkloric' in contemporary society (X-factor versus Robbie Burns). A snowstorm detains them in a desolate town in which the 'folk music



Close Act, *Invasion* (photo Rod Penn)



National Theatre Scotland, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (photo Drew Farrell).



Ragroof Tea Dance at the Spiegeltent (photo JMA Photography)

night' at the local pub is less the joyous playing of traditional pipes and banjoleles that would have delighted Prudencia, and more the forlorn strumming of Dylan's *Blowing in the Wind* on an out-of-tune guitar, to the accompaniment of the click of knitting needles, followed by a tremendously tacky karaoke session. 'Oh, you're from Edinburgh!' the boozey old biddies croon when Prudencia refuses to take a turn on the mic.

The five actor-musicians weaving in and around the audience (and often over and under us too) create the story of Prudencia's midwinter adventures using a feisty mix of a text spoken in rhyming couplets and a wonderfully robust physical embodiment of images and ideas through the techniques of 'poor theatre' (with, for example, a mad-dash motorcycle journey enacted with torches, flying scarves, and stuttering kazooos).

My return visit the following weekend (19 and 20 May) showed Norwich in a rather different mood. The Festival Gardens were much quieter, with most of the food retailers and boisterous shows absent. In their place were some rather more intimate works, including Il Pixel Rosso's disturbing live/film crazy clown car piece, *And the Birds Fell From the Sky*; and live art / cabaret supremo Bryony Kimmings' feel-good (think spas, whale song, and fluffy bathrobes) audio installation *The Hall of Gratuitous Pleasure*.

Escaping from the Gardens, I caught two evening shows that, in their very different ways, were a real thrill. First up was *Mirror*, by German company Schweigmann&, at the OPEN venue. You know you've made a good choice from the programme when you turn up to find the likes of Neil Butler (from UZ in Scotland) and Tom Creed (William Galinsky's successor at Cork) in the limited-capacity audience.

Mirror is a kind of high-tech peepshow. The audience is split into two groups, and we are taken off to be seated on a long bench in a dark corridor facing a wall. A black horizontal strip in the centre opens up to allow us, with a bit of wriggling and adjusting to the low-level lighting, to see human faces emerge from the darkness. We then see bodies floating towards us, seemingly in freefall, like astronauts in zero gravity. There are two bodies, one male and one female, and then there are suddenly four – but wait, two are mirror reflections of the others. But which is the 'real' one and which the reflection? Then, with an enormous shock, we realise that the space is full of water. How did that get there? Was it always there?

Mirror is a clever play on perception and assumption, and along the way a beautiful reflection (sorry!) on the Narcissus myth. Just at the point where I've decided that everything is a Pepper's Ghost illusion and there is in fact no one actually in front of me, one of the performers scrambles dripping out of the water and crawls along the edge of the peephole-strip, coming to stare us out eyeball to eyeball. She is real and she is very definitely wet! I don't know how they did it, and I don't want to know – they can keep their secrets, and I'll keep the memory of the magic.

From there it is a brisk walk through the cobbled streets of the city centre to the Norwich Theatre Royal for *100% Norfolk* by Rimini Protokoll – who have previously produced *100% Berlin*, *100% Vancouver*, and *100% Vienna*. And as this magazine goes to press, they will be at the Hackney Empire for *100% London*. It's a breathtaking project. I can just imagine the planning meeting: 'OK, so let's get 100 people who are an exact statistical breakdown of one city/region – say, 49% men and 51% women; 3% disabled people; 20% children – then give them a series of tasks, and ask them to come up with questions. Then we put them all on stage together. Just them, and a band – no actors.' I mean, can you imagine? It is extraordinary. And very Norfolk. There's a 'Know' and 'Don't Know' section, where everyone moves across the stage to take up position under giant signs in response to a question, and one question is 'Do you know how to skin a rabbit?'. An astonishingly large number of people move to 'Know'.

Everyone gets the chance to show us something of themselves through an object, or a story to relate. I like the man who wants to cobble the A11 and put drawbridges on the county borders. Then there's the man whose special object is a dictionary ('every book ever written is in here, you just have to unscramble them'), and the lovely older lady with beautiful posture who brings her ballet shoes. I love the children, who skip merrily round the stage dropping objects, and attempting to gather up lost pages of beloved comics. And I love the dogs – yes, there are dogs, and they join in with great gusto. I love the fact that nothing is censored: there are awkward moments around the issues of corporal punishment, the death penalty, and Zionism. My favourite question is 'Who finds it hard to make a decision?' As the bodies move across the stage, we also get to see a live video feed of the instant choreography emerging, the camera above giving a bird's eye view. A beautiful, beautiful show – as an outsider, I felt that I had really 'met' Norfolk. 100%.

Norfolk and Norwich Festival 2012 took place 11-26 May, at various venues in Norwich and beyond.
www.nnfestival.org.uk

In an extension to the festival programme, there will be two additional presentations later in the year: Circa & I Fagiolini's *How Like An Angel* in June/July; and Robert Wilson's *Walking* in August/September. See the festival website for details.

Charlotte Smith at Camden People's Theatre's Sprint Festival

A Breathless Sprint

Sam Halmarack and Tom Wainwright, *Psychodrama* (photo Paul Blakemore)

At least two performers do a treadmill routine during the Sprint festival. In one case, it's a moment of revelation, breathlessness and beauty. In the other, several espressos, a heart-rate monitor and some manic movement create a moment of, well, just breathlessness. Such is the magic of theatre.

The Sprint festival, in its 15th year, took place at Camden People's Theatre over four weeks in March. It's been put together by CPT's new artistic directors: Brian Logan, a long-standing performer with Cartoon de Salvo and critic for Time Out and The Guardian, and Jenny Paton, a former producer, publicist and project manager.

The programme seems pretty packed. Pieces I missed included *Your Last Breath* by Curious Directive, *My Robot Heart* by Molly Naylor and The Middle Ones, and Greg McLaren's *Symphony for Audience and Performer*. Subjects range from cancer (Brian Lobel) to Zeus, Hera and Hercules (*The Games* by Spike Theatre).

In *A Duet Without You*, Chloé Déchery tries dancing a pas-de-deux or singing a duet alone; loneliness, alienation in modern cities and technology are perhaps some themes. There are quite a few one-man shows, both by more established artists, such as Fringe First winner Jamie Wood (*Beating McEnroe*), and those perhaps better known in other contexts, such as Shunt associate and Chris Goode collaborator Tom Lyall, who presents his first solo work (*Defrag*), or Jess Latowicki of Made in China (*A Fault Line*).

Avon Calling by The Other Way Works is performed in an audience member's house (within 30 minutes of CPT by public transport) and *The Reservation* by Ellie Harrison and Jaye Kearney at the Best Western hotel in Swiss Cottage. *Eating Our Words* by Coffee+Sponge is designed for just one audience member, while Future Ruins integrate live television in *Malaise Trio*.

Kazuko Hohki presented *Incontinental*, which features Lancaster bombers, audience aerobics, an outsize white feather boa, swirling planets and Japanese bedside tales. But there's no escaping that this is a play about faecal incontinence.

Funded by the Wellcome Trust, it is greatly helped by the onstage presence, patience and fluency of Alastair Forbes, professor of gastroenterology and clinical nutrition at University College Hospital. In tandem, Lewis Barfoot and Colin Carmichael revel in cabaret, from the 'disco dysentery' number to *Incontinental Airlines*.

The detail and depth of the show are impressive. The real-life story of 'Minimouse' is perhaps most poignant: in her mid-twenties, she is suddenly left doubly incontinent after a difficult childbirth. There's

Brian Lobel, *BALL* (photo John Reed)

the city commuter who counts steps between public conveniences on his way to work, anatomical precision, and some startling facts. It's all rich material, and the subject matter of bowel and bladder just seems to bring out more panache and pizzazz from the performers.

Talking of which, New International Encounter (NIE) developed *Tales from a Sea Journey* on a container ship travelling from Le Havre, France to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, performing it valiantly, on the night I attended, to a party of tweens.

Their trip becomes a framing device – initially rather obvious, but subtler at the end – for three stories told concurrently. There's Ella, a Norwegian fisherwoman who cheats death only once. The Danish teacher, Elizabeth Flensburg, who pours over her maths textbooks in the late nineteenth century, but still falls for a leather-clad stranger. And the cack-handed Second World War naval officer, Captain Mathieson, who shoots his dog, ignites his boat and drifts to Java.

NIE live up to their name, with humour, conviction, narration in Norwegian, comic translation and physical skill. The captain resists and obeys onstage instructions, hallucinating with ease and leaving girls in stitches. His three-part puppet of a dog fails to die with comic aplomb. The final a capella song by three women, after another has gone missing, is gently haunting. However, overall, *Tales from a Sea Journey* feels less edgy or moving than some of the company's other work. It's not entirely clear which age group it's aimed at, and the stories are perhaps slightly safe.

Sprint takes risks with both the Starting Blocks artist development scheme and two evenings of bite-size performances called Short Cuts. However, *Keine Angst* by Ira Brand falls sadly flat, feeling contrived and monotone. It aims to explore phobias but steadfastly does not scare you, and the one-woman format is unforgiving.

Perle, in contrast, is full of promise. Dancing Brick have collaborated with the illustrator Serge Seidlitz and drawn on the medieval poem 'Pearl'. Tantalisingly, I've been told by the PR company that it's a Cardinal Rule that work in progress can't be reviewed ('I'd get into trouble,' he said). So... it's the story of a young father coming to terms with grief... there's some bemused mime and a little of *Krapp's Last Tape*... oh, and it has the running, the really good onstage running... One to watch.

Sprint Festival ran at Camden People's Theatre 9-31 March 2012.
www.cpttheatre.co.uk

Battling brothers, headless women, and broken-hearted men
– Dorothy Max Prior finds it all at The Roundhouse

CircusFest 2012



Cirkus Cirkör, *Undermän* (photo Mats Bäcker).

CircusFest 2012 | Dorothy Max Prior

CircusFest returned to the Roundhouse for a five-week showcase of contemporary circus – this year also extending its arms to North London venues Jacksons Lane and Artsdepot. The Roundhouse programme included three major productions in the main space – Cirque Mandingue’s *Foté Foré*, Cirkus Cirkör’s *Undermän*, and Professor Vanessa’s *Wondershow*.

Cirque Mandingue’s *Foté Foré* opened the festival. The company (founded by Luc Richard) are from Guinea in West Africa, but have strong connections to the French circus scene, and are co-directed (with Richard) by Christian Lucas, artistic director of Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris. The show title translates as Black/White and the narrative is about as cheesy as you could get – black kids trade contortionist and acrobatic moves in a B-boy or capoeirista kind of way; white boy arrives and body pops; there’s mockery, but finally he’s let into the club; and in the end they all work and play together in multicultural harmony. But it’s bursting to the brim with skill and humour, so no one minds. If you like your circus to be mostly equipment-free, to rely heavily on the pure power and skill of the human body, with uptempo African dancing, drumming and hip-hop beats in the driving seat, then this is the show for you!

In stark contrast comes *Undermän* by Swedish company Cirkus Cirkör. ‘Undermän’ is the Swedish term for the base in an acrobatic pair, and this show gives us the story of three big burly men whose hearts have been broken. Deserted by their girlfriends – flyers who’ve flown off – they are left with just each other as consolation. Our three bears make the most of it by forming a rock band (highlight: a great cover of ‘Suspicious Minds’), bonding over the weightlifting, and opening up on-mic about their relationship problems. The first confessional comes close to the start and is the most wordy, and kind of simultaneously enchanting and embarrassing; man two pleads ‘tell me what I’ve done wrong’ whilst solving a Rubik Cube dilemma in a couple of twists; and man three is more interested in his kettlebell weights, with little more to say about anything other than ‘I am an undermän, but I’m still a man!’. There’s plenty of humour, verbal and physical – including a rather fabulous mock-artistic-acrobatic routine with an invisible flyer. All of this is entertaining enough, but in the last section of the show, they suddenly shift gear and really show us what they can do, resulting in some absolutely breathtaking hand-to-hand acrobatics, juggling and cyr wheel work. There’s a fourth person on stage: a skinny boy guitarist

who acts as a kind of cipher of ‘otherness’ – a spot where he’s given centre-stage (to crush a ukulele to bits and complain that ‘he’s got issues too’) doesn’t quite work for me – I feel it’d be a stronger show without this intervention. That aside, it’s great!

The third main space show, *Professor Vanessa’s Wondershow*, is something else again: a recreation of the circus sideshows of yore. The show was conceived by Professor Vanessa Toulmin, director of the National Fairground Archive in Sheffield, and one of the world’s leading experts on circus sideshows. Around the large circular space are a number of sideshow attractions, many of them originals from the 1930s-1950s, lovingly preserved by legendary showman Jon Marshall, who himself is looking after *The Butterfly Girl* with a relaxed skill that shows up some of the novice showmen caring for other attractions, which include a headless woman; Electra, the 27,000 volt girl; and (my favourite!) a teeny girl in a goldfish bowl. Vintage penny arcade machines add to the ambience, and there’s a funny little cinema show, which bucks the trend elsewhere for the male presenting and controlling of women by having a pair of delightfully dizzy dancing girls passing commentary on early film clips of lady trapeze artists and vaudeville dancers. Seeing this little sideshow makes me aware that what’s missing from the rest is any sort of contemporary commentary on the sideshow tradition – where’s Marisa Carnesky when we need her?

Also at CircusFest is a new commission from Il Pixel Rosso, *The Great Spavaldos*, a spoof history of a pair of aerialist brothers whose relationship is poisoned by jealousy and rivalry. As with previous work *And the Birds Fell From the Sky*, this new piece uses special video goggles to immerse the audience members into the piece. Thus, you find yourself, with your ‘brother’, donning your cloak, entering the Big Top, bowing to tumultuous applause, climbing the rope, and mounting the trapeze... and then, drum roll... and then... Ah but that would be telling! Let us just say that it is a dizzying experience.

CircusFest ran 28 March – 29 April 2012 at Roundhouse, London and other venues.
www.roundhouse.org.uk/circusfest

Terry O'Donovan catches three nights of Forest Fringe at the Gate

Forest vs Gate



Dan Canham, 30 Cecil Street

The Forest Fringe has made a name for itself in the ever-expanding Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Led by Andy Field and Deborah Pearson, the organisation thrives on collectivity, experimentation and theatrical adventure. In April, they moved into The Gate Theatre in West London and created a two-week mini festival of new work, old work, and theatrical offerings straddling live art, dance, immersive experience, play readings and off-the-cuff musings.

Each week had a curator appointed by Forest Fringe. Week one was headed by writer/performer Chris Thorpe and week two by dancer Dan Canham. I sampled three evenings out of an impressive twelve and genuinely wished I could have seen more – a rare feat given the amount of theatre on offer in London at any one time.

Throughout the festival one of the founding fathers of experimental and original theatre and live art, Tim Etchells, provided foyer entertainment in the form of posters displayed up the staircase and on the walls of the cosy Gate holding area. Etchells, who has almost created a form in itself through his use of lists in his theatrical work with Forced Entertainment and other collaborators, presents us with a variety of musings on the state of the world in the form of SOMETHING vs SOMETHING. Entitled *London Fight City* it is simple, funny, sad and astute. Light and humorous posters such as 'Women whose Eyes are Bigger than their Stomachs vs Men whose Cocks are Bigger than their Brains' and 'Paris Hilton's Poodle vs Kim Kardashian's Chihuahua' sit alongside devastating thoughts: 'People Who Are So Tired, Empty & Exhausted They Can't Even Cry vs People Who are So Numb, Beaten, Vacant & Internally Petrified That They Can't Even Move'.

The second evening of performances under Chris Thorpe's curation could have been inspired by Etchells. The third show of the night is a brand new short piece of writing from Thorpe and Forest Fringe's co-artistic director, Andy Field. As Field was on his way to the theatre that morning he had been delayed by 'a person under the train'. In response, he and Thorpe wrote a meandering list of possible reactions to the impossible despair that can arrive from such a terrible accident/suicide/experience versus the apathetic and unapologetic

social response. Relevant and urgent, it could be the beginning of an interesting piece.

Chris Thorpe read two of his earlier works to kick the evening off. The first, *Thorpe/Manchester*, is a monologue that creates an eerie and unsettling vision of a city that has an underlying rage and violence sitting beneath its calm surface. The piece details how a joke game of 'dangle your balls over the open mouth of your drunk friend's sleeping open mouth' can have dire consequences. Thorpe's delivery is exquisitely timed. He recounts the horrific story of smashing his friend's face in with a golf club in an expertly nonchalant tone that slowly creeps under your skin. The piece is funny and unexpected, and leaves one with the sense that anyone could turn in an instant.

His second piece is a shorter work simply called *Thorpe/2007*, also presented as a list. This time Thorpe recounts the contents of a black box that was inside a boy, recovered following the explosion of a plane. The list veers from the ridiculous to the mundane, resulting in a bleakly comedic theatrical oddity.

One of Thorpe's guests was the ever-adventurous Chris Goode. Like Thorpe, Goode chose to read an earlier work that had far too short a life (only one very short-lived production outside of London). Goode introduces himself and the piece by telling us that he can't be bothered to 'act' but that the character is not based on himself. He sets himself up at a small table with a glass of red wine, his script and some props to his side. *Infinite Lives* follows John, a thirty-something gay man who leaves work to write a sci-fi novel. The title is inspired by the cheat code for a computer game called Jet Set Willy. If someone has this code it means that they can never die; instead they have infinite lives. One can repeatedly fall to their death, without ever actually dying. It's a chilling image and perfectly reflects the corner that Goode's character pushes himself into throughout the piece.

While John begins to write his novel, he becomes more and more addicted logging into an online porn site where he pays to have private chats with a young God-like man called Carlos. In between sexual gratification, he begins to chat to Carlos about his 'real' life,



Will Hanke.

Forest vs Gate | Terry O'Donovan

'real' emotions. Alongside this, John becomes less and less connected with his 'real' life, losing touch with friends, speaking to people on Skype and becoming a recluse. *Infinite Lives* is perhaps the most bleak addition to the evening, but it's also the most rewarding. It's a play about lost opportunities, a disconnected contemporary world, and at its heart, a modern love story.

Later in the week, Thorpe experimented with performing pieces that had been created for intimate audiences and site-specific settings. First up, Thorpe took to the stage with another short story/monologue, which had originally been performed as part of Slung Low's *Beyond the Frontline*. Performed at The Lowry, this was a sort of requiem to the British Army, and Thorpe's piece was experienced by eight to twelve audience members sitting in an army truck. The monologue is delivered by a computer programmer who has been working on an assignment. By executing his job perfectly, and creating a new programme, he realises that he is perhaps responsible for killing more and more people... It's simple and chilling; a thoughtful musing on who is accountable.

Jess Latowicki then took to the stage in the most 'staged' piece thus far. *A Faultline* is a work-in-progress performance in which Latowicki is a contestant in a sort of beauty contest in which she competes to be most charming, have the best manners and prove herself the most intelligent. A male voice commands her to prepare a table for a first date, take off her clothes and answer a series of increasingly quick questions. She piles party dresses on top of each other, dissects her body with lipstick and at one point runs herself repeatedly into the wall. These moments are memorable and will no doubt settle and blossom into a clever and accessible piece about how women continue to be objectified and valued for their looks as opposed to brainpower.

Dancer and theatre-maker Dan Canham presented his ode to a derelict theatre in Limerick, Ireland each night of the second week. I had seen the film version of *30 Cecil St* (highly recommended) and was excited about seeing Canham's piece in the flesh. Canham interviewed workers, owners, and others who were connected in some way to The Theatre Royal that began life in 1852. Using the interviews as an emotive and evocative soundscape, Canham has adapted his site-specific film for the theatre. He marks out the rooms, corridors and stairs of the theatre using white masking tape on the floor. Unfortunately, the space at The Gate does not lend itself to the conceit and the piece suffers from the awkward space. However, Canham's movement is stunningly evocative. His simple, gestural style is both mesmerising and haunting, coupled with the lovingly made soundtrack.

Canham's week of guests included Andy Field's partner in Forest Fringe crime: Deborah Pearson. Pearson presents a work-in-development called *The Future*. Sitting next to a small table with notes, Pearson delivers a story that foretells the immediate future: directly after her performance she is going to her ex-boyfriend's wedding, where her fiancé is the best man. She details every single moment of the journey – how she will feel when she glances at people on the Tube and when she arrives at the party and is greeted by boyfriend and fiancé. It is a fascinating set-up that warrants further development. We don't know whether it's true or not, but it doesn't matter. Pearson's delivery is electric and captivating, and her writing intense, hilarious and immediate.

Rounding off my Forest Fringe experience was the sublime *Sam Halmarack and the Miserables*. On re-entering the theatre we were asked to stand around the stage, where fairy-lit instruments anticipated the band billed as the 'bombastic pioneers of interactive stadium pop'. However, when Sam Halmarack arrives onstage it is with awkward embarrassment that he informs us he is alone. The band hasn't turned up.

Over the next fifty or so minutes, we are gently led on an interactive musical odyssey where we sing along, play glockenspiel and drums, laugh a hell of a lot, and are reminded how much life can quietly break our hearts. Sam has us eating out of his hands from the word go. His persona is a cross between an eager, youthful student and a burned-out loser whose dreams have been dashed too many times. As we all joined in with the final anthem (that should surely be Number One), chanting 'Me in the front / You in the back / This is how we ride when we're going to a concert' I felt a tingle of regret, a glimmer of hope and a warmth about those small moments in life when dreams feel like they can come true.

Forest Fringe pulled off an understated, ambitious and positively rich two weeks of theatrical play. The work veered from apocalyptic and earth shatteringly huge to tiny, personal offerings. Throughout, the atmosphere created was one in which audiences were invited to share, contemplate, and engage with the material. I sincerely hope it becomes an annual occasion.

Forest Fringe at The Gate ran 9-21 April 2012, and was curated by Chris Thorpe (in the first week) and Dan Canham (in the second).
www.forestfringe.co.uk

Out There



Au Cul du Loup. Score (photo Martine Archambault / Le Figaro).

IF Milton Keynes

Conceived in 2010 in response to Arts Council England's ambition to stimulate investment in the arts in Milton Keynes, IF Festival was also – you couldn't help feeling, as a visitor – an attempt to subvert the character of a town best known as a programmatically designed concrete car-hell. There was a shopping mall subtemob (like a flashmob, but subtler), La Machine's steampunk carousel *Magical Menagerie* landed at the centre of an outlying carpark, and a brilliant Swiss circus show, *InStallation*, played in a big top pitched on Campbell Park (a rolling, synthetically shaped, bulldozered greenspace on the edge of town). The standout though was Janek Schaefer's *Asleep at the wheel*, an installation sited inside Midsummer Place, Milton Keynes' vast 430,000 ft² shopping centre, that placed a small traffic jam of cars – headlights and taillights on – at the back of a dark, pillared, vacated Sainsburys. You could enter each of the cars to listen to a miniature audio installation that circled around questions of environmental and civic responsibility, while at the front of the space a soft-lit, circular table ('the library') held a small stock of books on climate change and renewable energy.

The 2012 edition of IF will use many of the same sites – and Wired Aerial Theatre's

cautionary epic about the Copenhagen Climate Change conference, *As the world tipped*, will reoccupy some of the same intellectual ground – but the main focus of this year's programme is, as with so many of the summer festivals, on the Olympics and the connections between sports and the arts. One of the most obvious links comes in the form of Au Cul du Loup's *Score*, a physical theatre take on the Games which proposes its own competitive set of sports to replace the ISF sanctioned ones. Monica Ferguson, IF Festival's director and the chief executive of The Stables (the venue that produces the festival), name-checks *Score* as a highlight: 'it's a great show for family audiences, full of fun and you can look forward to sticky-parcel-taped wrestling and intergalactic hockey matches performed with the most exquisite comic timing and physicality'. She also picks out *Rouge*, a collaboration between the Cambodian company/school Phare Ponleu Selpak and the French Compagnie Ubi that will be playing at the Campbell Park big top: 'Our Creative Producer Bill Gee came across the company whilst travelling last year and became fascinated by them and their work. The Phare is a charity which grew out of Site 2 Refugee Camp on the Thai border, using art and expression to help young people overcome the trauma of war. *Rouge* features a troupe of amazing young acrobats and a

gamelan which combine to powerful effect.'

Also in the programme there's a visit from the Lone Twin boat, built from donated wood (tennis rackets, cricket bats, guitars, etcetera) and sailing around the coast of South East England as one of the Artists Taking the Lead projects (the MK stop-off is an inland jaunt for the boat; it'll be exhibited at an 'unusual space' and welcomed / seen-off by community-led ceremonies); Enfila's *Pleas*, a music-circus-theatre show ('Expect wire walking, tumbling and acrobatic physical feats,' says Monica); and Fevered Sleep's galactic show for under 5s, *Little Universe*. Outdoors, alongside the Wired Aerial Theatre piece, IF is planning a clutch of smaller shows, with a focus on Catalonian artists thanks to support from the Raymond Lull Foundation. Guixot de 8, a Barcelona-based company that installs a sculpture garden of colourful mechanical physics puzzles (they were at Greenwich + Docklands Festival last year), are confirmed, and Circ Panic, Res de Res and Mu Music Circus will also be bringing crowd-pleasing acrobatic performance.

IF Festival runs 20-29 July 2012 at locations across Milton Keynes.
www.ifmiltonkeynes.org

Out There



Dancing Brick, Captain Ko and the Planet of Rice



Teatro di Capua, Medea Hardcore



Derevo, Mephisto Waltz (photo Roman Ekimov)



Catherine Wheels, The Ballad of Pondlife McGurk

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

This year, as every year, the Fringe brochure is a little bigger, clocking 379 pages (but deviating from tradition by ditching the usual kitsch ultra-gloss cover image in favour of a vector art drawing of a one-eyed cat in a gallon Stetson – excellent). The brochure listings are of course extremely compressed, and sometimes cryptically translated, and so it helps to have a few lines of attack in approaching the morass of shows...

The **Escalator East to Edinburgh** programme has been a reliable indicator of quality in the past, and among their 2012 stable of artists the total theatre highlights are curious directive performing *After the Rainfall*, a piece that threads through the arid Egyptian desert, continental Europe, the British Museum and a quiet village green as it weaves ‘multidimensional narratives about the aftermath of the Empire’; Dancing Brick with *Captain Ko and the Planet of Rice*, ‘a poetic triptych about time, memory loss and science fiction’ that’s supported by the Wellcome Trust (another stamp that should draw your eye); Show And Tell’s *Molly Naylor and the Middle Ones: My Robot Heart*, a storytelling music show exploring the intertwined emotions of love and fear; *NOLA*, a documentary play exploring the affects of the

Deepwater Horizon oil spill by Look Left Look Right (who won a TT Award in 2011 with *You Once Said Yes*); and Shams’ *Thin Ice*, a wartime thriller and polar love story set in Greenland in May 1940.

Last year the Traverse had a strong total theatre line-up that included Tim Crouch’s *I Malvolio*, David Hughes Dance and Al Seed’s *Last Orders*, and The TEAM’s *Mission Drift*. This year one of the headliners is *All That is Wrong*, the latest piece from Fringe darlings and (take your pick) unethical predators / unsettling geniuses Ontroerend Goed. The final work in their trilogy about growing up and adolescence, the show is performed by Koba Ryckewaert, who appeared in previous pieces *Once and For All...* and *Teenage Riot*. Also at the Traverse, also the recipient of many a Fringe award, comedian / storyteller / theatrical minimalist Daniel Kitson will be performing his new show *As of 1.52pm GMT on Friday April 27th 2012, This Show Has No Title*, which also has no description or further information. Mysterious! Two more then to watch out for: Chris Goode & Company’s *Monkey Bars*, a cognitive dissonant verbatim piece that takes the words of children (gathered from a series of interviews) and gives them to adult performers (‘Not adults

playing children, but adults playing adults, in adult situations’), and 2010 TT Award-winners Catherine Wheels’ *The Ballad of Pondlife McGurk*, ‘a coming of age tale about just how difficult it can be to stay true to your friends’.

A much newer venue that proved its mettle last year was **Summerhall**, home in 2011 (its debut year) to Zecora Ura’s talk-of-the-fringe show *Hotel Medea*. The venue once again has a rich total theatre programme, with Bootworks Theatre’s walking piece *30 Days to Edinburgh* (see the company’s feature elsewhere in this magazine); Sleepwalk Collective’s *Amusements*, an ‘insolent, tempestuous solo work’ that uses live and pre-recorded text and music experienced through headphones; and an interactive SF cheese-tasting piece, courtesy of The Guild of Cheesemakers, that culminates when the participants make ‘a collective decision that could alter humanity forever’.

This year there’s a strand of Polish work, **Listen / Touch / See: Polska Arts in Edinburgh** coordinated by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute. Casting an eye over its bleak landscape we find KTO Theatre’s *The Blind*, an adaptation of José Saramago’s novel

Out There

Blindness (about a global blindness epidemic) that 'presents an apocalyptic world with metaphors of a disintegrating society'; Teatr Biuro Podróży's *Carmen Funebre*, an outdoor piece 'taking up the brutalities of the Bosnian conflict, ethnic clashes, as well as other outbreaks of nationalism and intolerance'; neITheatre's *Puppet. The Book of Splendor*; a piece about effigies, golems, and mannequins 'inspired by Tadeusz Kantor's work and what he has termed the Theatre of Death'; ZAR Theatre's *Caesarean Section. Essays on Suicide* ('The title of this performance is a metaphor for suicidal compulsion and the involuntary force that pulls us back from the brink'); and TR Warszawa's *2008: Macbeth* (part of Edinburgh International Festival), which communicates its essence with a lengthy quote from Jan Kott: 'History in *Macbeth* is sticky and thick like a brew of blood. [...] The whole world is stained with blood. [...] Blood in *Macbeth* is not just a metaphor; it is real and flows out of slaughtered bodies. [...] There is more and more blood, everyone walks in it; it floods the stage. A production of *Macbeth* that does not evoke a picture of the world flooded with blood, would inevitably be false.' Book now! No, really: neITheatre are past winners of a Total Theatre Award, and grim as it is the whole of the Polska programme, which also includes work by Song of the Goat Theatre, Mouth to Mouth Republic and others, is like a return to the Old Testament days of Aurora Nova.

Not to be outdone, Russia, the other great exporter of bleak experimental theatre, offers us the **Russian Season 2012**. Physical theatre maestros Derevo, who've been making total theatre as long as this magazine has been running and who have *two* TT Awards (1997 and 2002), are at Assembly Roxy with *Mephisto Waltz*, 'a gospel of dance, a personal journey and a declaration of love'; Akhe – Russian Engineering Theatre, who bagged a TT Award in 2003 and who are regular visitors to Edinburgh (and, down South, the London International Mime Festival), are back with *Mr Carmen*, winningly described as a 'show duel' between a hero and his alter-ego; and Do-Theatre are performing a rerun of their show *Hangman*, a Fringe first winner in 2007 that combines elements of the Theatre of the Absurd and contemporary dance with lashings of black humour. Joining this experimental theatre trinity are Hand Made Theatre with *Time for Fun* (a cheesy-looking piece of hand mime) and Teatro Di Capua with *Medea Hardcore* (a 'post-punk version of the ancient myth').

And then, after those tidy categories, we're left with a brace, or a jumbled-up basket, of leftovers. At the Scottish Storytelling Centre there's Horse + Bamboo's *Angus: Weaver of Grass*, telling the life story of Angus MacPhee, and Puppet State's *The Man Who Planted Trees* (pretty much a permanent Fringe fixture now, having run many years at the



Chris Goode and Company / Unicorn Theatre, Monkey Bars (photo Richard Davenport)



Ontroerend Goed, *All That Is Wrong*

SSC). Down at Bedlam Theatre there's another puppet company worth looking out for, Tortoise in a Nutshell, who impressed in 2011 with *The Last Miner* and who'll be presenting *Grit*, a new quartet of tales inspired by real situations of children in war; plus the Lecoq mime group Rhum and Clay Theatre Company with *A Strange Wild Song*. At Assembly venues are People Show with *People Show 121: The Detective Show*, and Dancing Brick (again!) with *Perle* ('a live cartoon based on one of the oldest poems in the English language'). And then across the Pleasance empire watch out for the return of Blind Summit's dissipate puppet masterclass *The Table*, Theatre Ad Infinitum's *Translunar Paradise* (also returning following great success last year), and XXXO, a piece made by two of the performers from Ontroerend Goed's *Once and For All...*

And for those planning a late Fringe, you can always follow the **Total Theatre Awards** to get the best of what's out there. Now in their sixteenth year, the Awards will once again cap a rigorous two-stage process: first an assessment stage that pulls together the



Dancing Brick, *Perle*

shortlist of companies (to be announced 16 August), then a judging stage that decides the final awards (usually six or so; handed out this year on 23 August). After the ceremony there will also be two mornings of discussion, 24 & 25 August, focusing on previous Award-winners and examining how they're continuing to make artist-led work under current economic conditions. Provisional venue: Summerhall. See you there.

Edinburgh Festival Fringe runs 3-27 August 2012 at venues throughout the city.

www.edfringe.com



OBRA, Gaudete...



Close Act, Invasion (photo Henry Krul)

BE Festival

BE Festival is a relative newcomer, only on its third edition, but has already developed a strong identity: the festival programmes short movement-based work from across Europe, taking the interesting decision to schedule four 30 minute performances per night with a dinner break at the halfway point. This year's line-up has work from the UK, Spain, Italy, France, Portugal and Russia, with some of the highlights including a mime-take on the improv comedy night, *Mimprovisation*, by Autour du Mime; the first in a planned trilogy of works based on poet laureate Ted Hughes' versicle novel *Gaudete* in the form of OBRA Theatre Co's *Gaudete – The Abduction and Duplication of Lumb*; the Birmingham iteration of a series of experiments conducted by Teatro Sotterraneo on 'guinea pig' audiences to analyse the human relationship to laughter, *Homo ridens_Birmingham*; and The Plasticine Men's *L'Autruche (The Ostrich)*, a 'disorderly pageant inspired by the life and times of Marie Antoinette'. BE Festival also hands out a number of jury prizes, with the winner of the Development Prize invited to bring back a full-length version of their show the next year. The 2011 winner, Sleepwalk Collective's *As the flames rose we danced to the sirens, the sirens*, returns this year alongside the company's new work *Amusements*.

2-8 July, Birmingham

www.befestival.org

Hat Fair

Taking over the streets and Cathedral green of Winchester, Hat Fair is the UK's oldest street arts festival – a buskers gig that gradually grew into a programmed event. This year, among the usual mix of smaller shows (running all day and in parallel), Hat Fair is trying something a little different by presenting three much larger scale works: Close Act's *Invasion*, a fiery promenade show built around the company's Saurus creations, giant bird-like dinosaurs; Square Peg Circus' *Rime*, an adaptation of Coleridge's poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'; and the French company Generik Vapeur's *Waterlitz*, an epic street arts spectacle played on and within a twelve-metre giant built from shipping containers.

6-8 July, Winchester

www.hatfair.co.uk

Hazard

Now on its fourth edition, Hazard is a micro-festival of incidental intervention and sited performance appearing (unpredictably, suddenly) in Manchester's city centre. Chance encounters and random occurrences are the order of the day, and past festivals have seen Manchester's Cathedral Gardens wrapped in fluttering hazard tape, the image of banking given a makeover, a circumnavigation of the city by canoe, and a wheelchair moonlanding. The 2012 programme has yet to be confirmed, but past Hazards have featured the work of such artists as Action Hero, Alex Bradley, Angel Club North, Richard DeDomenici, Eggs Collective, Jordan McKenzie, Michael Pinchbeck, and Mkultra.

21 July, Manchester

hazardmcr.org

Latitude

With several hundred music, theatre, film, and spoken word performances variously blasting out from arena stages, resting hidden in the woods, or playing on the waterfront's floating stage, Latitude, now in its seventh edition, is a performance festival (taking place over the grounds of Henham Park in Suffolk) that tends to have a good density of total theatre work. Confirmed artists for 2012 include high-art/low-art cabaret outfit Duckie, Australian contemporary circus giants Circa, Zecora Ura and Persis-Jade Maravala (showing the *Zero Hour Market* segment of their massive *Hotel Medea* trilogy), handmade cut-out filmmakers Paper Cinema (with their version of *The Odyssey*), the Lecoq mime troupe Theatre Ad Infinitum (with Edinburgh success *Translunar Paradise*), and Total Theatre Award-winning companies past and present in the form of Scamp Theatre, Look Left Look Right, and Ridiculusmus.

12-15 July, Suffolk

www.latitudefestival.co.uk

Masquepony

Masquepony (pronunciation uncertain; perhaps like the Italian cheese) is a new event created by Kendal Arts International and Manchester International Arts as a street arts camping festival. Occupying Cartmel Racecourse in Cumbria, Masquepony invites its audience to spend a weekend among the likes of Compagnie des Quidams, the pyrotechnic outfit Pa Boom!, juggler Ian Marchant, Spanish performance hairdressers Osadia, outdoor veterans Artizani, and many others. Nearby Cartmel is (scenically!) a medieval village with a 12th Century priory.

17-19 August, Cartmel

www.masquepony.co.uk



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