

# TOTALTHEATRE

## MAGAZINE

VOLUME 20 | ISSUE 02 | SUMMER 2008 | TOTALTHEATRE.ORG.UK  
TOTALTHEATRE - DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

FIERY NIGHTS AND FESTIVE DAYS - THE SUMMER STREET ARTS SEASON PREVIEWED  
GO WILD IN THE COUNTRY AND TAKE IN SOME RURAL TOURING  
SKIP ALONG TO ADELAIDE AS ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA SEES IN A NEW ERA OF RESPECT  
LINDSEY BUTCHER DOES A LOT MORE THAN DANGLE  
THE CANNY GRANNY GETS HER TEETH INTO LIVE ART  
GLASGOW IN THE SPOTLIGHT - DISPATCHES FROM THE ARCHES FESTIVAL AND THE NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART  
GET OUT MORE WITH TOTAL THEATRE, THE MAGAZINE THAT REACHES NEW PERFORMANCE SPACES AND PLACES



# england's north west

capital of outdoor performance 08 **scintillating events all summer**

- **Liverpool Streets Ahead May 24 - 26**
- **Feast! Picnic By the Lake with x.trax Manchester June 6 - 8**
- **Carpet of Flowers Manchester July 16 - 20**
- **Urban Moves international dance festival, Manchester July 25 - 27**
- **Nicole et Martin (Switzerland) Manchester August 29 - 31**

## Lakes Alive festival fever in the Lake District

**Transe Express**  
Windermere - June 14

**Nicole et Martin**  
**Circus** (Switzerland)

**Mintfest, Kendal**  
August 29 - 31

[www.lakesalive.org](http://www.lakesalive.org)  
[www.liverpool08.com](http://www.liverpool08.com)  
[www.mintfest.org](http://www.mintfest.org)  
[www.streetsahead.org.uk](http://www.streetsahead.org.uk)  
[www.urbanmovesfestival.org.uk](http://www.urbanmovesfestival.org.uk)

**make a weekend of it!**

TOTAL THEATRE - DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

# Discover

**your creative potential at  
the University of Winchester**

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- BA (Hons) Performing Arts
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- MA Devised Performance
- MA Theatre and Media for Development

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

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T: (01962) 827234  
E: [courseenquiries@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:courseenquiries@winchester.ac.uk)

**EDITORIAL**

**CONTENTS**

Summer brings street arts festivals galore! As this edition of Total Theatre Magazine goes to press, Brighton and Norfolk are basking in early summer sunshine, easing us into the outdoor season. For where to head next, see the round-up of summer festivals and events in our feature on outdoor performance. Also outside of the black boxes and red plush theatres is our special focus on rural touring, in which Alex Murdoch of Cartoon de Salvo explains why getting upstaged by the raffle is not such a bad thing!

Back indoors, there's a look at Sham Theatre's **Black Stuff** from the perspective of the role of the dramaturg in the creation process, and a three-way reflection on Miriam King's **The Reading Room** in our regular series, Being There.

Another regular spot is our Absolute Beginners page, a slightly tongue-in-cheek look at an artform, strand of practice, or role within the theatre-making process. This time, the Canny Granny gets her teeth into Live Art – chewing over the meat and spitting out the gristle. Live Art is also on the agenda in our report from the National Review of Live Art 2008, held in Glasgow.

Further afield, Pippa Bailey takes us to the Adelaide Performing Arts Market 2008, her trip coinciding with new Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's groundbreaking apology to the aboriginal peoples of Australia.

Total Theatre Magazine prides itself on featuring the voice of the artist. Most of our editorial articles are written by practising artists and theatre-makers, making our publication a unique documentation of contemporary theatre and performance practice. A highlight of this issue is an artist's diary written by Tina Bicac, who records her work over the past year as designer on Punchdrunk's **The Masque of the Red Death** and with other physical & visual theatre companies.

As always, a pretty eclectic mix, reflecting the broad family that is 'total theatre'.

It just remains for me to let you know that this issue of Total Theatre Magazine marks a transition point. We will in future be published by the University of Winchester, a relationship that I am sure will usher in an exciting new phase of growth and change. If you wish to contribute to that development, your support is very much welcomed. We will in future rely to an even greater extent on our subscriber base, so urge you (if you don't already) to subscribe; to encourage colleagues to subscribe; and to suggest to educational establishments and other institutions that they take out a multi-access (print and electronic) subscription.

We also very much welcome your thoughts on the editorial content of Total Theatre Magazine. What are we doing well? What could we do better? As always, you can contact me with your comments, criticisms, or suggestions.

Please note our new postal addresses for the administration and editorial sections. Our email addresses and website remain the same. We look forward to hearing from you!

**Dorothy Max Prior**

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**REGULARS**

News & Previews	p5
Performer & Company Updates	p8
Voices:	p19
Lindsey Butcher of Gravity & Levity	
Absolute Beginners:	p23
The Canny Granny on Live Art	
Being There:	p27
Miriam King's The Reading Room	
Media	p35

**FEATURES**

Starting Over: Pippa Bailey at Adelaide	
Performing Arts Market	p10
Rural Touring Special	p12
Upstaged by the Raffle by Alex Murdoch	
Let's Get this Show on the Road by Ben Walmsley	
+ Lights, Van, Action! – further information on rural touring	

Outdoor Performance	p16
Station to Station: JoJo of Bash Street on collaborative commissioning + Donna Close on programming outdoor performance + street arts festivals 2008 round-up	

Making it Up:	p20
an artist's diary by designer Tina Bicac	

The Right Stuff	p24
Beccy Smith, Jonathan Young and Laura Lloyd on Sham Theatre's The Black Stuff	

National Review of Live Art 2008	p28
Once More into the Breach by Robert Ayers	
Open Borders, Open Hearts by Dorothy Max Prior	

<b>REVIEWS</b>	<b>P30</b>
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The Arches Festival, New Territories, Pina Bausch, Jerome Bel and more

COVER: PERIPLUMS THE BELL AT BRIGHTON FESTIVAL, X-TRAX, GREENWICH & DOCKLANDS FESTIVAL, WINCHESTER HAT FAIR. PHOTO RAY GIBSON

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**NEWS & PREVIEW**



NEWS & PREVIEW

PEOPLE SHOW 119: GHOST SONATA



DREAMTHINKSPEAK ONE STEP FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

**LIVERPOOL 08 CITY OF CULTURE**

Liverpool's year as European City of Culture continues to feature innovative contemporary theatre and performance. Highlights have included the world premiere of dreamthinkspeak's *One Step Forward, One Step Back* is a major new site-specific work designed for Liverpool Cathedral. It was created as a response to our increasingly secularised world of global economy where material growth supersedes spiritual growth. Inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the piece responded uniquely to the host venue's interior, whilst looking externally to the City beyond, asking the question: What is Paradise? *People Show 119: Ghost Sonata* was a promenade performance, inspired by the play *The Ghost Sonata* by August Strindberg, that moved the audience outside and inside the iconic Victorian Palm House at Sefton Park in Liverpool. Highlights for the summer months include the Streets Ahead festival of street theatre and outdoor performance. See www.liverpool08.com

**DIVAS AT THE POINT EASTLEIGH**

This summer sees a special season of work by the internationally acclaimed Liz Aggiss and Billy Cowie, who work together under the name Divas. From Monday 16 to Saturday 28 June *Liz Aggiss and Billy Cowie: The Living Archive* will feature films, an installation and live performances celebrating an extraordinary collaboration. Highlights of the season include *The Accidental Pioneers* featuring dance films by Liz Aggiss and Billy Cowie, and on Thursday 19 June at 7.30pm Liz Aggiss performs *Hi Jinx*. Also, from 17 July – 7 September, at Southampton City Art Gallery, there's a chance to see *Men in the Wall* a four screen 3D dance-film installation created by Aggiss and Cowie in 2003 (admission free). See www.thepoint-online.co.uk

**PROCESS08 – HIP-HOP MEETS THEATRE**

Process08 is a rich workshop festival delivered by international masters of hip hop theatre, encouraging young artists to focus on the process of new theatre making and developing their own language through looking at how one can experience, explore and share devising and developing skills using a display of multi-disciplined art forms. Hosted by Benji Reid; featuring Will Power, Ty, Baba Israel, Walid, Kwikstep, and Rokafella. 4–17 August 2008. Anyone interested in participating, or for more information, contact Lisa Eaton on: lisa@breakingcycles.co.uk or tel: 0161 237 1655

**DELL'ARTE**

Dell'Arte is honoured to be the first organisation in the United States to present the Prize of Hope, an international award given by The Danish Institute for Popular Theatre, at Dell'Arte's 17th annual Mad River Festival. The 2008 Prize of Hope will be awarded to Tim Robbins and The Actors' Gang of Los Angeles.



BENJI REID'S PROCESS08



SKYLIGHT CIRCUS ARTS

Since 1991, the Dell'Arte Mad River Festival has brought together performers and audience members from 'around the world and down the block' for performances of theatre, music, pageantry and more. 21 June – 26 July, 2008 in Blue Lake, California. Call 1-707-668-5663 or email info@dellarte.com or see www.dellarte.com

### CIRCUS SKILLS TRAINING COURSES

SkyLight Circus Arts is the only centre for circus in North West England. They offer training courses for all levels from beginners to professionals. Participants can learn a range of skills including aerial, balancing, hand held and acrobatics. Courses are taught by experienced staff in a supportive environment. The company provide employment for circus artists and offer opportunities to train and perform with professionals. Circus skills can be of benefit to all physical performance disciplines: improve core strength, flexibility and co-ordination as well as enhancing overall fitness. For more information on the full range of courses, see www.skylight-circus-arts.org.uk

### WARHORSE THEATREWORKS

New company Warhorse Theatreworks believes in lifelong training for the performer to keep them physically active and creatively inspired; they have for the last few months been running a Performer's Playground. The Playground is a weekly drop-in workshop for anyone who is interested in devising theatre and looking to work with likeminded individuals. Previous sessions have already seen puppeteers and writers workshoping their ideas with members of the Playground, as well as sessions looking at clowning, chorus work and physicalising text. The workshops run every Monday evening 6.30-9.00pm at the Thanet Centre in Chalk Farm. Sessions only cost £5 each week. Warhorse Theatreworks shall also be putting on productions and are currently in a research and development period for a multilingual adaptation of *A Comedy of Errors*. See www.warhorsetheatreworks.com

### ACTION FOR CHILDREN'S ARTS

Action for Children's Arts, the UK's only umbrella body speaking for all arts organisations involved in providing arts for and with children, have just embarked on a huge nationwide consultation project with arts practitioners, arts organisations and children themselves to produce a Children's Arts Manifesto which will be launched at its annual conference on 21 July. The manifesto will set out what ACA believes we need to do to give children in the UK more access to the arts, and will be a call to action for everyone who believes in the transforming power of imagination in children's lives. ACA welcome input from everyone as to what they think about the state of children's arts today and what our priorities should be for the future. Have your say by filling in the questionnaire at the ACA website: www.childrensarts.org.uk

### ROH2 FIRSTS

Named by The Telegraph the 'indie' arm of the Royal Opera House, ROH2 invites submissions from creative artists to take part in Firsts 08 in the Linbury Studio Theatre. Now in its sixth year, this season is at the forefront of the work of ROH2 and seeks to present high quality work of originality and diversity across the contemporary lyric art forms including music, dance, puppetry, physical theatre, and aerial work – and anything that defies categorisation. Priority will be given to young, vibrant artists working outside of the mainstream and artists from the regions. Firsts presents nine companies over six nights in the Linbury Studio Theatre from 10 - 22 November 2008. Email firsts@roh.org.uk for application details.

### NEW WORK NETWORK NEWS

New Work Network (NWN) have recruited four Activators: Vicki Weitz (East), Peter Petralia (North West), Bryony Henderson and Augusto Corrieri (South East) who will be creating artist-led opportunities and activities that support and nurture artists and the new work arts community within the East, South East and North West England regions. Each Activator will work with NWN and its regional partner organisations including: Essex University, Lakeside Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre, Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster University, Basement Arts Productions, South East and Chichester University. Join New Work Network (NWN) online and in person during Chelsea Theatre's SACRED season for a roundtable discussion on socially engaged practice. NWN will be hosting a web discussion examining issues and challenges facing artists making socially engaged work. Writer Sally O'Reilly, artist Charlie Fox and writer and curator Rachel Lois Clapham will be responding online via NWN's web forum (www.newworknetwork.org.uk) and will form part of a group of 'provocateurs' at Chelsea Theatre. For more information see www.newworknetwork.org.uk

### THE SPACE

Excitement at The Space! Join the shenanigans at the new monthly Improv Dog comedy show. Don't miss the end of the Enterprise '08 Festival, including: *How to be a Screen Goddess (In the darkness of outer space)*, part history lesson, part blockbuster premier, all experimental performance piece; *Typhoon Mary's Traveling Medicine Show*, a recreation of a bygone sensation, spiced up with dark comedy; *The Deadline*, edgy clown theatre where the games played are dark and comic; and *The Magdalene Mysteries*, blending music theatre and experimental performance. See www.space.org.uk for details and booking info.

### RULES AND REGS

Rules and Regs is a practice-led development initiative for artists working in live art. Participating artists make new work in response to rules devised by a curator as a challenge to explore new ways of working. Each unique month-long programme is curated by a different organization, features different artists responding to different rules, and culminates in a public exhibition of work. Rules and Regs 2008: Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster (25 & 26 April); arts organisation A Space, Southampton (30 May & 1 June); Colchester Arts Centre (5 & 6 July); South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell (29 & 30 August); Site Gallery, Sheffield (5 & 6 September); The Bluecoat, Liverpool (3 & 4 October). 2008 Finale: 15 November, The Bluecoat, Liverpool, an evening of performance featuring artists selected from all six of the Rules and Regs 2008 development programmes. See www.rulesandregs.org

### MOMENTUM

Momentum in partnership with Hope St Ltd present Physical Fest 4, ten days of physical theatre workshops and performances in Liverpool, 3-12 June 2008. Physical Fest is an annual festival which aims to introduce powerful and experimental movement forms, present performances and workshops from exciting physical practitioners and give the opportunity to research, exchange information and find new ways to produce theatre material. This year's fest includes workshops from: Yorgos bakalos (Grotowski), Selina Papoutseli (Butuoh), Momentum, Ira Seidenstein (Suzuki) and a four day workshop from Japanese actor/director Yoshi Oida who worked for many years with Peter Brook. For more information/booking email physicalfest@momentumtheatre.com or call 07813301517 or see www.momentumtheatre.com

# SUMMER FESTIVALS 2008



HOIPOLLOI STORY OF A RABBIT

### NORWICH & NORFOLK FESTIVAL: MAY

The ever-expanding NN Festival has a strong total theatre programme this year. Performances from Hoipolloi, Circo de la Sombre, Theatre of Widdershins, Xarxa Teatre, and Teatro de los Sentidos. NoFit State Circus will also be presenting the world premiere of their new show *Tabù – standing on the edge of the wilderness*, a turbo-charged, 90-minute, life-changing rollercoaster ride. For full listings see www.nnfestival.org.uk



BUREAU OF SILLY IDEAS THE BURST PIPE DREAM

### BRIGHTON FESTIVAL: MAY

As we go to press with the summer 2008 edition of Total Theatre Magazine, Brighton Festival is basking in success (and in welcome summer sunshine!). Festival highlights have included a stupendous hometown performance of outdoor show *The Bell* by Periplum; the arrival of the Caravan 'dialogue' between 20 of the region's artists/companies and presenters from the UK and abroad (11-13 May); and the descent of a plethora of bike riding participants in Blast Theory's *Rider*

*Spoke*. The final week includes Bureau of Silly Ideas' street show *The Burst Pipe Dream* (22-25 May), the culmination of Fevered Sleep's residency at The Basement with installation/performance *The Infinite Line*; and Hoipolloi's *Story of a Rabbit*. See www.brightonfestival.org

### SALISBURY INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 23 MAY-8 JUNE

This year's festival (the last under current director Jo Metcalf) features an African Showcase, a Peace Weekend, and shows with an environmental focus. One of the highlights will be the dawn-to-dusk *Hotel Medea*, commissioned by the festival and created by Brazil's Zecora Ura Theatre Company in collaboration with London-based by Para-Active. In the beds, rooms, and corridors of the mythical hotel, the audience will experience a stunning interpretation of this Greek tragedy. www.salisburyfestival.co.uk

### FUSE MEDWAY FESTIVAL: 31 MAY-14 JUNE

During Fuse Medway Festival, Medway's streets, venues and open spaces will buzz with the sights and sounds of some of the newest and most unusual performers from the area... and further afield. Being different, diverse and daring is at the heart of a programme designed to fire the kids' imaginations, ignite the interest of curious casuals and add spark to the committed and active. Fuse Medway Festival has been growing for over five years, in an area of Kent that is renowned for its underground, creative communities. Great value ticket prices, with many events free. See www.fusefestival.org.uk

### CPT SPRINT FESTIVAL: 29 MAY-29 JUNE

Now in its 11th year, Camden People's Theatre's annual Sprint festival has forged a reputation as one of London's most interesting fringe theatre/live art events. This year's programme is an eclectic mix. People in Pieces create miniature weather cycles live on stage in *15 Storms in a Teacup*, and Michael Pinchbeck's *The Long and Winding Road* is delivered inside a parked car to one person at a time. *Black Tonic* is a detective story performed in the corridors, lobby and bedrooms of a London hotel, and The Special Guests' *Nightfall* is performed in and outside the theatre at sundown on the summer solstice. Other artists featured include The Paper Birds, Chi Chi Bunichi, and Tom Marshman, who is intent on finding his inner cowboy... In all, seventeen companies and performers will appear within and beyond the

borders of the venue, in shows five minutes in length to all night long. See www.cpttheatre.co.uk

### LIFT FESTIVAL 2008: JUNE-JULY

Lift Festival 2008 launches a new collaborative festival model and a visionary mobile meeting place. Lift, previously London International Festival of Theatre, has a 25-year history of presenting innovative theatre from around the world to London audiences, often in unconventional spaces. The festival hub, called The Lift, is an extraordinary structure four storeys high – the height of three double-decker buses – which is a theatre, a concert hall, an open air stage, an interactive billboard, a cinema, an exhibition space and a public meeting place all in one. Lift Festival 2008 will reach across two sites starting in Stratford, East London, from 12-21 June with The Lift in Stratford Park, then moving to the Southbank Centre from 26 June to 6 July with The Lift in Southbank Centre Square. Highlights of Lift Festival 2008 include the UK premieres of international productions from Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa, China and Canada; local Lift commissioned projects; feasts, workshops and a range of conversations and discursive events. For full details see www.liffest.org.uk

See also the outdoor performance feature in this magazine for details of street arts festivals in 2008



BANGER THE POWER HOUR AT LIFT



PRECARIOUS



GECKO



PICKLED IMAGE



OPERA CIRCUS

## CLOD ENSEMBLE

The Red Ladies are on their way. Who are they and what do they want? Do their stilettos pose a threat to national security? An undisclosed number of identically dressed, clandestine and possibly dangerous women are planning to assemble in the summer. Rendezvous with them at their makeshift headquarters at ICA, London and Old Fire Station, Oxford in May-June 2008. Produced by Fuel. See [www.redladies.org](http://www.redladies.org)

## GECKO

Following a sell-out run at the Lyric Hammersmith, Gecko are taking *The Arab & The Jew* on the road. The tour includes the West Yorkshire Playhouse in May and Ruhrfestspiele Festival, Germany in June. The company have also announced that Al Nedjari is stepping down as co-artistic director of Gecko. Al will continue to play a key role in touring the *The Arab & The Jew*, and in Gecko's education work. 2008 plans for Gecko include making their first mid-scale show, directing the Lyric Hammersmith Young Company and developing a new performance for schools. Gecko is produced by Fuel. See [www.geckotheatre.com](http://www.geckotheatre.com)

## SPIKE THEATRE

Spike Theatre is 10 years old! The company are celebrating with a UK tour of a brand new show entitled *Gin and Tonic and Passing Trains*. Spike's latest show was created in co-production with Ramesh Meyyappan, and was commissioned by and premiered at the Tramway theatre, Glasgow. The show has recently been voted one of the picks of 2007 by critics in Singapore and Ramesh has just received a best actor nomination. For more info call +44 (0)151 709 8554 or email [mail@spiketheatre.com](mailto:mail@spiketheatre.com) or see [www.spiketheatre.com](http://www.spiketheatre.com) / [www.rameshmeyyappan.com](http://www.rameshmeyyappan.com) for touring details.

## GOMITO

*The Sun Dragon* is an exciting, visual, total theatre experience for young people with active imaginations and adventurous families. Using their trademark storytelling style Gomito conjure up a visual storybook full of exciting adventures and memorable characters. This fifty minute mini epic follows the adventures of Jacob, a boy who dreams of flying. A magical quest starts in the back garden one blustery autumn evening and ends on a planet five billion light years away where he meets witches, wizards and a whole variety of mystical creatures. The summer will see Gomito travel to London, Cambridge, Crawley and Brighton... then onto the Edinburgh Fringe! Email [sam@gomito.co.uk](mailto:sam@gomito.co.uk) or see [www.gomito.co.uk](http://www.gomito.co.uk)

## OPERA CIRCUS

Opera Circus returns to touring in Scotland with *Differences in Demolitions* a beautiful new chamber opera written by the great Scottish composer Nigel Osborne. Osborne's music has been influenced by Sevdah, which has been described as 'The Bosnian Blues' and which draws on the folk traditions of Bosnia, Greece, Turkey and Jewish Sephardic music. Opera Circus ensemble mixes Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian artists with British and is directed by Lenka Udovicki. For performance dates see: [www.operacircus.co.uk](http://www.operacircus.co.uk)

## PRECARIOUS

Award-winning company Precarious are currently developing a new show which explores the theme of consumption and its effect on the human condition. A story of the conflict and tension between the kitsch demands of modern life and the enchanting wonder of the human spirit, *The Factory* attempts to awaken in the most glutinous consumer the true value of life. Fusing dynamic movement, provocative text, eye-popping design and spectacular digital effects, *The Factory* promises to be Precarious' most ambitious project to date. The Factory will debut at the Tobacco Factory in July, and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and a mini-tour will follow. See [www.precarious.org.uk](http://www.precarious.org.uk)

## NOLA RAE

Nola Rae recently toured *Exit Napoleon Pursued by Rabbits* to the Pusan International Theatre Festival in South Korea, and will be joining Footsbarn Travelling Theatre at the Globe Theatre in London for a Celebration of Shakespeare 23-25 May. *Mozart Preposterous* is scheduled to play in Monterrey in Mexico, 11-18 June. *Exit Napoleon* plays in The Festival Teatro Piemonte Europa in Turin on 2 July. Other shows in August to be confirmed: *Exit Napoleon* in Warsaw International Mime Festival, and *Elizabeth's Last Stand* at The Green Belt Festival, Cheltenham. For bookings information contact Valerie West by emailing [vwest@dircon.co.uk](mailto:vwest@dircon.co.uk) or calling 020 8444 6248; or see [www.nolarae.com](http://www.nolarae.com)

## RAGROOF THEATRE

*Shall We Dance?*, Ragroof Theatre's outdoor show about partner dance (and dancing partners!) takes to the road again this summer, starting off in Brighton at the Parlure Spiegelent, where the company are also hosting weekly Tea Dances. The show then goes to Streets Ahead Liverpool as part of the European City of Culture celebrations (25 & 26 May) and to numerous other venues/festivals throughout the summer, culminating in a week-long residency at the Dublin Fringe in September. Ragroof's more intimate show *Make Do and Mend* and the ever-popular *Button Museum* (a little installation that is a repository of people's memories) also tours in 2008, including the Shoreditch Festival on 20 August, and an extensive autumn rural touring programme. See [www.ragrooftheatre.co.uk](http://www.ragrooftheatre.co.uk)

## FOURSIGHT THEATRE

In September 2008, Foursight Theatre will be embarking on preparations for their site-specific production, *The Corner Shop*, which will be performed 29 September - 4 October in the West Midlands. A partnership theatre and heritage project with Black Country Touring and English Heritage, *The Corner Shop Project* will record and share the experiences of shopkeepers and their families behind the counter as well as those of their customers in front. Using recorded real-life stories as a starting point, Foursight Theatre will create a new theatre production working with a team of professionals and volunteers from the local community. For more details see [www.foursighttheatre.co.uk](http://www.foursighttheatre.co.uk)

## BOTTLEFED

Bottlefed have successfully completed phase 1 of their Research & Development project, finding a platform for improvisation between physical theatre and live music. They are very excited to continue working with musical improvisation collective Kobayashi during the summer/autumn of 2008. Phase 2 of the project is to develop methods of improvisation into a working model for physical theatre/live music collaboration. The aim is to apply this model at both national and international workshop residencies (collaborating with local musicians/performers) and performing the results. A pilot of the model will run in Bergen (Norway) and London in October 2008. For details on forthcoming performances visit [www.bottlefed.org](http://www.bottlefed.org) or email [info@bottlefed.org](mailto:info@bottlefed.org)

## SHAMS

*Black Stuff* will play at the Pleasance Courtyard, 1-25 August in Edinburgh. A couple's Mexican honeymoon turns sour as a global oil shortage hits, leaving them stranded in the desert. A dark comedy featuring clowning, animation and integrated sound/lighting, *Black Stuff* is a playful, absurd take on the approaching crises of peak oil and climate change. Jonathan Young will also be developing a new experimental installation-based piece, *Reykjavik*, based on the year he spent there, to be Scratched at the St Albans and Hotbed (Cambridge) Festivals in early July. See [www.shamstheatre.org.uk](http://www.shamstheatre.org.uk) or email [info@shamstheatre.org.uk](mailto:info@shamstheatre.org.uk) or call +44 (0) 7740 475 879

## BASH STREET THEATRE

*The Station*, a new production from the Penzance-based Bash Street Theatre Company, has its UK launch at the X-trax showcase in Manchester 6-8 June. This street theatre show is set in a dilapidated train station in the age of steam locomotives, and has been jointly funded by ACE and eight co-commissioners. The company will premiere the show in Germany in May before returning to the UK to perform for all the commissioning festivals. Their award-winning show *Cliffhanger!* is continuing to tour in the UK and Europe. For tour details of both shows see [www.bashstreet.co.uk](http://www.bashstreet.co.uk) or email [office@bashstreet.co.uk](mailto:office@bashstreet.co.uk)

## THEATRE O

theatre O (*3 Dark Tales*, *The Argument*, *Astronaut*), have been working with award-winning playwright, Enda Walsh (*Disco Pigs*, *Chatroom*, *The Walworth Farce*) on their new piece *Delirium*, a reinterpretation of Dostoevsky's classic and compelling tale of family rivalries, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Enda Walsh's skill as a playwright and theatre O's unique vision for bringing stories to life on stage, as well as a company packed with talent from around the world, all promise to make *Delirium* a hugely exciting theatrical event. See [www.theatreO.co.uk](http://www.theatreO.co.uk)

## CHRIS GOODE

Following a brief but strenuous mini-tour, Chris Goode has retired his Total Theatre Award shortlisted *Hippo World Guest Book*, at least for the time being. His attentions turn next to a radical rewiring of Chekhov for the Headlong / Gate New Directions co-production *...SISTERS*. He can also be seen talking to Dennis Cooper and Gisele Vienne at queerupnorth in May. Less visibly, he is researching postliminal theatre space for Rose Bruford College, and working on a new piece, *An Apparently Closed Room*, with Theron Schmidt, for the autumn; and he persists in blogging at Thompson's Bank of Communicable Desire (<http://beescope.blogspot.com>).

## MIMBRE

Summer 2008 will see Mimbire touring their shows *The Bridge*, *sprung*, and walkabout piece *Memento*, as well as the company's cabaret acts. Some of the highlights will include the Ana Desetnica International Street Theatre Festival in Slovenia, Pittsburgh International Children's Theatre Festival, a return to *The Bridge's* co-commissioner The National Theatre in London, and a tour of various festivals in Italy, among many other events and festivals. A full tour schedule will be available soon on the website. Email [info@mimbire.co.uk](mailto:info@mimbire.co.uk) or see [www.mimbire.co.uk](http://www.mimbire.co.uk)

## PICKLED IMAGE

Pickled Image continue to perform their show *Houdini's Suitcase*, fusing live performance, puppetry, and an original soundtrack to tell the story of Joshka Malouth, one time apprentice to the great Houdini. *Houdini's Suitcase* will be performed at Jackson's Lane, London 11 & 12 June, with further tour dates for the autumn to be announced soon. See [www.pickledimage.co.uk](http://www.pickledimage.co.uk)

## STEWART WRIGHT & CRAIG EDWARDS

The love child of Lee Evans and Buster Keaton, *The Nothing Show* is a profoundly funny piece that invites its audience to watch an everyman story. The clown (our hero) shares his experiences as his day starts. By turns whimsical, farcical and shocking, the minutiae of life are writ large in a tour de force of contemporary clowning, performed by Stewart Wright and directed by Craig Edwards. Playing 21 May at the Tobacco Factory, Bristol, with further dates coming soon. See [www.thenothingshow.com](http://www.thenothingshow.com)

# FEATURES STARTING OVER

## PIPPA BAILEY GOES OUT AND ABOUT AT THE AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING ARTS MARKET 2008, BEARING WITNESS TO THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

February, the bleakest month in Europe, is a great time to head south.

In Australia, for three hectic weeks in February and March, the largest festival in the southern hemisphere takes over the otherwise sedate city of Adelaide, with more than 500 shows, 5470 performances and an estimated 3000 artists taking part!

The Adelaide Fringe was modelled on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and has aspirations to be the southern hemisphere's counterpoint event, having decided (in 2006) to grow from a bi-annual to an annual festival. Every two years this celebration is shared by the groundbreaking Adelaide International Festival and the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM).

Held at the Adelaide Festival Centre of the Arts on the sloping banks of the River Torrens, APAM 08 brought together more than 550 performing arts presenters and producers from around Australia and the world, including a generous supply from the UK. It's a unique event for anyone whose livelihood is in the performing arts and this year the event was sold out for the first time. With support from the British Council I flew out to Adelaide for seven days. It was not my first visit to the city. My childhood and early career was spent in Australia, I have produced several shows for the Adelaide Fringe and made a TV documentary about 'Inje', a Bulgarian/Australian co-production programmed into the 1996 Adelaide International Festival. Every time I visit the city during festival season I am impressed by how well it accommodates all the artists, tourists and hangers-on. The wide, flat boulevards, built on a planned grid, lead to large public squares entirely surrounded by parkland (designed for the only freely-settled British province in Australia) which fill with people and a sense of fun. In February and March the city almost doubles in size with several other festivals competing for the consumer dollar, including a V8 car race and All British Day (the mind boggles). With great food and wine grown locally there really is something for everyone and the city plays perfect host to the influx of interstate and foreign visitors.

APAM is full on; a jam-packed experience, despite the relaxed attitude and spacious hospitality provided by the Aussies. It showcases some of the best of Australian theatrical talent in daily performances, pitch sessions, forums, hosted breakfasts and evening networking events – as well as the performances of featured artists programmed into the two festivals. It's a very full programme.

Upon entering the Adelaide Festival Centre's drama complex on the first day of APAM my mug was shot and pinned to a wall for other delegates to peruse. Personal pigeonholes



provided another means of contact as mobiles and email stop being the modus operandi.

Many meetings are not planned, snatched in increasing haste as the week goes on and time becomes more pressured. The foyer offered a trade fair of arts companies, agents, government funding agencies and businesses all peddling their wares. Happily the relationship between artists and promoters seemed relatively easy and friendly. The pressure on artists by funders in recent years to think in business terms has paid off to the extent that all the artist's presentations were slick and professional, even if ideas were still in the early stages of development; indeed these represented some of APAM's most exciting work. Colleagues who had attended in previous years said the standard was lower this time round but I must have fluked a great line-up because I was delighted by the quality of the work I saw, even if it was not all to my taste.

So, what impressed? Overall the Fringe Festival's completed shows and the pitch sessions offered the most satisfying performance experiences. Shows from the extraordinary troupe Acrobat, as renowned for their life choices as for their uncompromising work; The Tom Tom Club featuring young acrobats, a DJ and an amazing human beat box; and cabaret darling Meow Meow were obvious leaders. The outdoor company Strange Fruit, frequently touring Europe, offered a new variation of their elegant spectacle swaying atop poles. I find this work too limited to receive as a stand-alone show, preferring the chance encounter across a crowded skyline, but it is beautiful.

The spotlight sessions opened with a moving excerpt from *Ruby's Story*, the story of Ruby Hunter and Archie Roach, who form one of indigenous Australia's most widely admired song-writing teams. There were moving stories and microphone arrangements by performer Martin del Amo. The contemporary dance work of Ros Warby and the late great Tanya Leitke, who died tragically before she had the chance to take the helm at Sydney Dance Company, really stood out.

However, these sessions were excerpts of longer shows and inevitably some of the work seemed to suffer from being abbreviated.

The pitch sessions were programmed daily and introduced



by Australian national treasure, artistic director and great champion of the arts, Robyn Archer. What shone through her patter was a great love of the work and a respect for the artists, braving daunting crowds of delegates to sell their ideas and dreams.

Work ranged from the kooky inventiveness of young Melbourne company Uncle Semolina, to a project by the internationally acclaimed physical theatre company Legs on the Wall, to a highly innovative multimedia production with indigenous dance, cinema, physical theatre, live music and karaoke called *Burning Daylight* by Marrugeku who specialise in working in remote aboriginal communities. Topped by the highly political cultural projects driving Scott Rankin and his team of producers of Big (h)Art the pitch sessions offered great insight into the near future of great Aussie work.

And in between all the performances and presentations there was much discussion and chat and meetings and forging of relationships. My main business was to continue discussions with the Adelaide Fringe about hosting the Total Theatre Awards as part of a proposed international development for the Awards, which currently take place annually in the UK at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. I met with judges from their existing awards process and spoke at length with artistic director, Christie Anthoney, and plans started to take shape.

But there was a significant new context for this year's APAM as it closely followed the momentous 'Sorry Day', where new Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd finally apologised to the indigenous people of Australia. I cannot articulate how moving and significant this gesture has been. Thankfully Rudd's speech was inspiringly clear:

'I move

That today we honour the indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were stolen generations - this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive

parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart, resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.'

And so what, you may ask, does this have to do with a performing arts market? Framed as a commercial opportunity where companies and shows are bought and sold it is easy to forget the bigger picture. 'Sorry Day' symbolises a moment of cultural catharsis and a new chapter in Australia's history. It may be hard to imagine in a complex multifaceted life how a single relatively intangible act can have such profound impact. The elephant in the room in Australia has been identified and finally new conversations and relationships can be made.

At many moments during APAM the local indigenous people were recognised and honoured. There were a range of fascinating projects involving indigenous artists, the eminent theatre director Barry Kosky referred to the 'sorry day' in his keynote address, and many informal discussions touched on it with a new sense of optimism and hope for what may follow. And even outside the market bubble two taxi drivers told me how important this gesture is. This is the cultural context for Australia at this moment in time and it was valuable to it, so clearly and hopefully framed, while the business of buying and selling 'cultural product' went on. This truly was a momentous time to head south and taste the promise and sense of freedom that is consistently reflected through great Australian performance.

*Pippa Bailey is creative director of the charity Total Theatre Network, producers of the Total Theatre Awards. For updates on the Awards and the future of the organisation, see [www.totaltheatre.org.uk](http://www.totaltheatre.org.uk)*

*Adelaide Fringe 2008 took place 22 February–16 March 2008. Adelaide Fringe 2009 will run from 27 February–22 March 2009. Artist registration dates for the 2009 festival: Registrations open 1 August 2008. Early Bird Registrations close 10 September 2008. Registrations close 10 October 2008. See [www.adelaidefringe.com.au](http://www.adelaidefringe.com.au)*

01 | AUSTRALIAN ART ORCHESTRA: RUBY HUNTER IN *RUBY'S STORY*. PHOTO JAMES KNOWLER  
02 | ACROBAT, FEATURING GUEST ARTIST MOZES PHOTO JOHN SONES



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# UPSTAGED BY THE RAFFLE

## ALEX MURDOCH TAKES US THROUGH HER VILLAGE HALL OF FAME, DESCRIBING THE UNMISSABLE GEMS OF RURAL TOURING WITH CARTOON DE SALVO

Last week I was putting my face on in the toilets of the lovely Constantine village hall in Cornwall and found a poster on the wall of a very young and fresh looking Cartoon de Salvo in *Meat and Two Veg*... must have been eight years ago when we were last there. That night in Constantine is one of our often cited 'vintage village hall gigs' where the village turned out in 50s garb, decked the hall in bunting, and sold hotdogs – partly in honour of the show's themes and mostly because it's such a brilliant up-for-it community.

If I sound sentimental about village hall touring then it's because I am. Rural touring has become a marker in our year and has defined why and how we make our work. We started out wanting to make shows free of the baggage of a London-centric theatre scene and all we knew was we wanted to have an honest and direct relationship with the audience. When we tried out an early version of *Meat and Two Veg* in our first village hall gig in Kent we were (and this was not to be the last time) largely upstaged by the hall's raffle. The raffle became part of the show's tea break and the village hall became part of the natural habitat of the company.

When we make decisions about the company and where it's going, a lot comes back to village hall touring – what Bec designs, the kind of actors we employ (you can't have fustspots, they've got to have the right attitude) and even just the way we are on stage is informed by these experiences. In the Salvo's we don't take for granted the privilege it is to play games and make up stories for a living. In village hall gigs local promoters have worked hard for months, unpaid, to get their community together and get on a show. When we arrive, expectations are high and meeting those expectations is important. We respect the values of these local heroes who want to bring quality theatre to their neighbours in the sticks and if we're good they respect the work we do in return. So we'd better be good; and for me that's something worth measuring your work by rather than the latest theatre-scene flight of fancy, or set-in-stone theatre lore.

Beware thinking your audience are in any way 'bumpkins'. Radical, edgy stuff like *Ridiculusmus* goes down a storm. (Yet another favourite village hall anecdote from days when we shared producers was the AA man walking right into the middle of a *Ridics* show in the Scottish Highlands to say 'Alright Dave the van's fixed now'). Right now we are sticking our necks out with *Hard Hearted Hannah and Other Stories* which is an entirely new improvised story each night that we're touring to a mix of village halls and proper theatre spaces. We're finding it's at the village hall gigs where the risk we are taking is accepted on the level, and it's the 'developed audiences' of the theatres that often want to see the strings and suspect impro cheating (wish we did, but we have nothing up our sleeves...).



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(it's very common to be brought lovely home-made food by the promoter to heat up) or a technician whose roaring AC/DC sound-check interfered with the community meeting; or worse the show that went up its own bottom... Production values and positive attitude need to be high priority and I would get rid

of notions in the company that rural touring is somehow slumming it. I'm so keen about this that I spoke to Danny Hearty about it at ITC and have developed a course now for them called *Introduction to Rural Touring*. We look at the pleasures and practicalities and pitfalls but we also explore what rural touring can bring to your artistic practice.

The scene is thriving with more and more local councils' schemes and major theatres looking for ways to work with rural communities in and outside of their village halls. The brilliant Pride of Place Festival supported and instigated by the likes of Farnham Maltings (who co-commissioned our *Hard Hearted Hannah*) is where we're off to next. By day there's talks from theatre heroes John Fox and Emma Rice, by night there's dancing to the Baghdaddies. And there's us.

I've had the best conversations and experiences about art and theatre while doing rural touring and it's for sure that the Salvo's will always have a village hall-shaped show on the go. It is sometimes a bit like hard work (who was to know there were two villages called Hamsterley at the end of the nine-hour drive and we'd passed the right one an hour ago...) but it's more like the best job in the world and we're addicted to it.

*Alex Murdoch is artistic director of Cartoon de Salvo. The other core members are Rebecca Hurst and Brian Logan.*

*Hard Hearted Hannah and Other Stories has toured to village halls and theatres from January 2008 onwards. It will be appearing as part of Caravan at the Nightingale in Brighton (11-13 May) and running for three weeks (15 May-7 June) at the Lyric, Hammersmith.*

See [www.cartoondesalvo.com](http://www.cartoondesalvo.com)

And if we're good the audience will let us know. All villages are different but we find the audiences pretty lively. A few weeks ago in Icklesham in Kent (which has the best pub in the world, by the way) we'd improvised a field of cows somewhere out there in the direction of the audience. We thought at one point we wouldn't be able to get those naughty cows to stop mooing. But they quietened for the serious bits. It was like having 73 playful actors in the room rather than the three that had got out of the van.

And if we're not good we don't have to wait for the reviews to come out in the press. During *The Chaingang Gang's* most quiet and sensitive moment one old lady in the front row sighed deafeningly 'Oh no, this is rubbish'. Turned out she was hard of hearing and had lost the plot; however let's not have a disclaimer spoil such a story.

Why do we keep on telling this and other village hall stories with such affection? Because it's the honest and direct relationship we always sought with our audience. Because it's real. The performance matters: as entertainment, as art, theatre – call it what you will. It's accessible in the right sense of the word, not a tokenistic nod to fit the artistic policy or agenda but because quality work is experienced by people who want it and need it and move mountains to get it there. That's got to matter more to you as an artist than being seen by the chap from Channel 4. Because of this I've become rather fixated on the idea that village hall touring work must be done well. Last year we were interviewing potential general managers, and we gave them a rural touring budgeting exercise. Several people proposed we pay actors under equity minimum. One said the actors should get £150 a week until they 'move up' to the mid-scale. What's that about? Now and again we arrive in a hall to hear a story of a darling actor who wouldn't wash up

01 | CARTOON DE SALVO GO RURAL TOURING!  
02 | CARTOON DE SALVO'S HARD HEARTED HANNAH  
03 | CARTOON DE SALVO'S HARD HEARTED HANNAH

# LET'S GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD

## BEN WALMSLEY REFLECTS ON RURAL TOURING AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

With no building of our own, the mission of the National Theatre of Scotland is to create and tour great theatre all over Scotland and beyond. This was reflected in our launch event Home, which comprised ten theatrical events playing to audiences in locations ranging from a Shetland ferry to a forest in East Lothian.

Since then, we have been involved in creating more than 53 productions in over 88 different locations. Although perhaps best known for our big international hits such as *The Wolves in the Walls*, *The Bacchae* and *Black Watch*, in the past two years we have created or remounted six small-scale shows in addition to the ten Home events. Most of these productions (*Gobbo*, *Julie*, *Mancub*, *Snuff* and *Venus as a Boy*) have played in village halls and community centres all over Scotland.

But we are also keen to work in rural areas in site-specific locations and on the larger scale. *The Elgin Macbeth* in June 2007 was an outdoor version of Shakespeare's Scottish play, performed by an integrated professional and community cast in the ruins of Elgin Cathedral as part of the Highland Year of Culture. And *Half Life* in September 2007 – a co-production with renowned environmental artists NVA – took audiences on a Neolithic journey through Argyll, culminating in an open-air night-time performance in a purpose-built forest amphitheatre.

But *what* we tour is just as important as *where* we tour it and programming our tours to fit the diverse needs of our audiences and promoters will be an ongoing challenge. Last year, we decided to remount Brian Friel's modern classic *Molly Sweeney*, one of the big theatrical hits of 2005. For our younger audiences, we chose to commission Nicola McCartney to adapt the popular Scottish children's book *A Sheep Called Skye* by Sarah Harris.



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Throughout Autumn 2007, our ensemble company took these two productions to 21 towns all over Scotland, presenting a total of 58 performances in village halls and small-scale venues from the Borders to the Highlands, via Ayrshire, Fife, and the isles of Skye, Islay and Mull. The tour was designed specifically to tie-in with local events and festivals. So, for example, it opened in Wigtown during the town's annual book festival in late September and featured in the Dràma Na h-Alba Festival in Inverness during the October school holiday.

The main aim of rural touring is to work in partnership with regional promoters, and one of our main artistic aims is to breathe new life into Scottish theatre and to give new audiences another chance to see shows. For us, this generally means hitting the road and getting away from the central belt. But this can sometimes prove tricky. When booking our last tour, I was keen to go back to Carrbridge in the Highlands, but the only dates we could make clashed with their annual porridge-making championships! And recently, I received a letter pointing out that although we'd covered a fair amount of ground in our first eighteen months, we hadn't yet made it to Aviemore. So our audience do keep us on our toes.

*2008 work from the National Theatre of Scotland includes The Emperor's New Kilt, (a take on the fairy tale); Little Otik (an adaptation of filmmaker Jan Svankmeyer's story about a baby carved from a tree stump) and 365, a commission for Edinburgh International Festival directed by Vicky Featherstone. For more details on these and all other projects, please visit [www.nationaltheatrescotland.com](http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com). by Vicky Featherstone. For more details on these and all other projects, please visit [www.nationaltheatrescotland.com](http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com).*

01 | BRIAN FRIEL'S MOLLY SWEENEY FOR NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

## LIGHTS, VAN ... ACTION!



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The NRTF (National Rural Touring Forum) is the umbrella organisation for the 40-odd rural touring schemes that operate across England and Wales. It publishes an excellent practical guide that takes you through the whole process in a manner that is both frank and enthusiastic about the possibilities. The website has details of individual touring schemes.

[www.nrtf.org.uk](http://www.nrtf.org.uk)

### HOW IT WORKS

Each of the 40 rural touring schemes collates a menu of live performances, and if they pick your company, they'll also pencil in your available dates. They then offer their menu to promoters. Promoters are rural volunteers, such as village hall committees or PTAs, or local individuals who have volunteered. (There are about 1800 of them.) Promoters book the show(s) they want each season for their community through the touring schemes.

Each scheme has a different brand identity, and each promoter and venue has their own idea of what they are after. But, because they are all part of the NRTF, they all talk to each other and so a theatre company's reputation, for good or ill, will spread quickly between schemes and amongst promoters.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Venues ranging from 1920s wooden huts with one power point, to churches with outside toilets, to brand new state-of-the-art venues. Most will be unequipped, without even a CD player. Cross-generational audiences, the majority of whom will live within five miles of the venue. 'Often people don't necessarily consider themselves arts attenders. They go out of curiosity, to support the local community,' says Dawn Badland of Applause.

### KEEP YOUR SLIPPERS ON IN THE URBAN METROPOLIS IF...

Your show has a vast set or performance area (as it might not fit into village halls or might mean that a promoter has to dramatically reduce the number of seats they can sell). Your show constitutes 'dance that is too obscure, [or] theatre that pushes a political theme hard' as this may not be suitable, the NRTF advises. (But it can still be radical, challenging and intelligent theatre.) You get homesick, nature scares you, and you know you'll be made to eat insects. This was proved to you on I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here. But it's an eccles cake! I made it myself. No! No! I won't have anything except Chicken Cottage.

### KEEN TO LEARN LOTS MORE?

Go along to one of ITC's Rural Touring sessions.

By the end of the course, it is claimed, participants will be able to:

- Understand the history, definitions and benefits of rural touring
- Identify the people involved and understand their roles and relationships
- Feel confident in creating a working rural touring budget
- Comprehend the practicalities, pleasures and pitfalls of production management in village hall and non-theatre spaces
- Review their external marketing and internal communication needs within this sector
- Explore and express the artistic value of their work within rural touring

Wow! Can't wait! When's the next one? 17 February 2009, apparently – bit of a wait, but no doubt worth waiting for, as it is led by the lovely Alex Murdoch of Cartoon de Salvo, as mentioned in her article in this magazine.

See [www.itc-arts.org/trainingcourses.aspx](http://www.itc-arts.org/trainingcourses.aspx)

01 | ORGANIC THEATRE'S SHEEPSKIN

# STATION TO STATION

JOJO PICKERING EXPLAINS HOW HER COMPANY BASH STREET THEATRE CREATED A MODEL FOR CO-COMMISSIONING STREET THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

A few years ago I became aware that an increasing number of street theatre shows were commissioned projects. This was an interesting new trend.

For those of you reading this who don't work in street arts, it should be explained that mostly the work is presented as free-to-audience. So, without a box office income, the way that artists make a living is either through busking (the oldest tradition!); by being paid a performance fee for an existing touring show; or (the more recent trend) receiving a commission to create a new work, which could come from a number of different sources.

Like most street theatre companies, Bash Street Theatre started out independently, producing its own work with no funding, and while we had been commissioned to develop environmental shows in the past, these were not our main touring productions. I wanted to know more about commissioning.

In 2007, to build on the success of our silent-movie show, *Cliffhanger!* we started developing a new show, but our Arts Council grant application was turned down. It was then that I realised that we needed a different approach to fund the project. So I started to talk to everyone I could, both companies and festival promoters, about the mechanics of commissioning.

I soon learned that every commissioned project seemed to work in a different way; some companies were approached by commissioners, some actively pitched to prospective commissioners; some projects were commissioned by just one commissioner, others by a small group; some funding bodies were commissioning the whole project, others part-funding.

There was a complex mixture of different ways of working, and I was now even more confused about what to do. There was also the added issue of artistic direction. What would the impact be on our artistic and creative freedom?

I then had a very interesting chat with an independent producer, Simon Chatterton, who suggested that it might be an idea to develop a project with a higher than usual number of commissioners for a lower investment. I spent some time on budgets and realised that if we could find 8–10 commissioners each investing £1,500, we could ask the Arts Council for matched funding, and could launch the project. We would then offer the show exclusively to these commissioners in the first year of touring. A key element was that the commissioning fee was payable in a different financial year to the performance fee. I now contacted some of our regular bookers and pitched the idea. The feedback was supportive and positive, with many confirming their desire to be included in the project straight away.

This was really encouraging, so I started to work on the idea in more detail and look at the final budget. At this point I also contacted Arts Council England, South West to get their feedback. Again, the response was positive, so I took the project to the next stage. The idea of paying the commissioning fee in a different financial year than the performance fee was very well received, although not all the commissioners needed this. Our application for ACE funding now stood a better chance because of the matched funding from commissioners.



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Another benefit was the confirmed tour for the new show, which meant that we could compile publicity material (photos, a promotional DVD and reviews for a publicity brochure) during, not prior, to production. The project would end the summer season with all these elements ready for general touring in 2009. An important element of this project thus became the marketing campaign, which also includes exposure at showcase festivals in 2008 – in the UK and in Europe.

The new show is called *The Station* and is set in a dilapidated railway station in the age of steam locomotives. It combines physical theatre and silent movie stunts with live music, and is aimed at a family audience. We have successfully received a grant from Arts Council England and funding from eight co-commissioning partners (North Devon Festival, Swindon County Council, Penwith District Council, Haverhill Borough Council, Winchester Hat Fair, Gloucester Town Council, Waterford Spraoi Festival, The National Theatre's Watch This Space) where the show will be performed in 2008.



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We invited all the partners to a series of preview shows in April and May in Cornwall. The reality of the working relationship with the partners up to now has been minimal. How this will pan out over the remaining part of the project, I am unsure. But, we feel that the commissioners trust us to deliver a quality touring show, and there has been no interference in our artistic freedom.

This model has been easy to set up and manage, and it distributes the investment over a range of partners, providing festivals and promoters with an opportunity to invest in the artistic process. The project will also provide the company with the tools to sell the show in 2009. Another unexpected result is the positive response we have received, not only those who could be part of the project, but also those who would have liked to. I recommend this model to other companies who might want to work in a similar way.

*Bash Street Theatre was founded in 1991 by JoJo Pickering and Simon Pullum. The company has had considerable success developing a European touring programme with its silent-movie show Cliffhanger! In 2006 this production won the 'Best Street Show' prize awarded by an international jury at the Fira de Tàrraga, in Spain.*

*The Station can be seen at the x.trax showcase festival in Manchester as part of Feast – A Picnic by the Lake, 6–8 June 2008. See [www.xtrax.org.uk](http://www.xtrax.org.uk)*

*For further information on the rest of the year's presentations and company plans, see [www.bashstreet.co.uk](http://www.bashstreet.co.uk)*



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## STREET ARTS AND OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE FESTIVALS 2008

The outdoor performance summer season is well and truly under way. The Brighton Festival (throughout May) has no Streets of Brighton this year, but numerous outdoor works were programmed as part of the main festival, and a new Buskers Festival is part of the Brighton Festival Fringe on Saturday 24 May. See [www.brightonfestivalfringe.org.uk](http://www.brightonfestivalfringe.org.uk)

Liverpool's Streets Ahead is an international street festival for Capital of Culture year, featuring 50 companies from all over the world, by day and night. Highlights include giant dragons saluting St Georges Hall, Milan's la Scala opera house recreated in Derby Square, and dozens of human shop window displays. See [www.liverpool08.com](http://www.liverpool08.com)

June 6, 7, 8 FEAST! Picnic by the Lake is presented in association with x.trax. Over 40 street shows from Britain, Europe and Africa – new work by British artists, British premieres of the Bedouin Jerry Can Band, circus delights from German/Croatian company Oko Sokolo and adult puppet shenanigans from Spain's Trukitrek. See [www.xtrax.co.uk](http://www.xtrax.co.uk)

Greenwich + Docklands International Festival 2008 runs from 19–22 June. See [www.festival.org](http://www.festival.org)

Hat Fair is the UK's longest running street arts festival which takes place in Winchester on the first weekend of July (3–6). [www.hatfair.co.uk](http://www.hatfair.co.uk)

Watch this Space is the National Theatre's outdoor performance programme that runs throughout the summer (11 July to 14 September). See [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/wts](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/wts)

Stockton International Riverside Festival 2008 takes place 31 July to 3 August. See [www.sirf.co.uk](http://www.sirf.co.uk)

August 29, 30, 31 are the dates for the Mintfest, Kendal – the fourth year for this international street festival set in the heart of the lake district. Mintfest uses streets, squares, unusual spaces and even the romantic castle site. See [www.mintfest.org](http://www.mintfest.org)

01 | BASH STREET THEATRE'S THE STATION. PHOTOS STEVE TANNER  
02 | BASH STREET THEATRE'S THE STATION. PHOTOS STEVE TANNER  
03 | PRODIGAL THEATRE THE URBAN PLAYGROUND

# LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION

## DONNA CLOSE TAKES A LOOK AT OPTIONS FOR OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE PRESENTERS

Presenting outdoor work comes with a number of challenges – there's the weather, for a start! Then there's the question of location: urban or rural?

Most established street arts festivals take place in big urban centres. With a shift in terminology (from 'street arts' to 'outdoor performance') comes the acceptance that there is more to 'street arts' than 'streets'. There's also countryside hills, villages, parks, and beaches.

Just a couple of examples of the shift: Desperate Men have toured a show performed exclusively on beaches (*Eco Pirates*, in which themes of recycling, beach litter and maritime pollution are all explored and exploited by the fearsome Pirates of the Carry-Bin); x.trax is now presented not in Manchester's city centre, but in Platt Fields Park.

Another example of this shift was seen at the inaugural Inside Out festival, which took place last September with an ambitious programme presenting some of the best UK and international outdoor work in a variety of urban and rural locations across Dorset. The work was beautifully chosen to respond and resonate with the particular sites. The most powerful aspect of outdoor performance is the way in which it can make us re-engage with place. This can be profound enough in urban settings when artists transform a dreary commercial shopping centre into a village farm or underwater kingdom. But when the performance responds to the particular identity and heritage of a space and its denizen then something really magical can take place. Inside Out wove this magic through coasts, villages, towns and hilltops across Dorset.

The dramatic cliffside Nothe Fort in Weymouth became the backdrop for Teatr Biuro Podrozy's anti-war stilt and fire performance *Carmen Funebre*; the traditional gardens of Bournemouth seafront were transformed into contemporary fire gardens by France's Cie Carabosse; An ancient hill fort on Hambeldon Hill became resurrected as a place of communion and journey through Red Earth's site specific environmental performance *Enclosure: West Bay* is celebrated as a bustling harbour with artists from all over the world imported to mix with home grown performers.

The festival opened with one of the most exciting UK site-specific companies Periplum presenting their show *Arquiem* in the picturesque streets and squares of Wimborne in Dorset. *Arquiem* is a dark promenade piece that tells the tale of a boy driven by desperate fear and consuming passion to kill his lover to preserve the intensity and purity of their love.



Under the spell of a charismatic and devilish provocateur and amidst a chorus of 'hups', the villagers become vigilantes dragging the boy to a violent trial and ultimately to a beautifully written and performed gallows monologue. The performance wound its way through the darkened narrow streets to the Minster where the judges passed sentence before a torch-lit baying mob took the boy to his death in the village square. And the real villagers and visitors loved it. We had a glimpse of life in a brutal mediaeval village; Wimborne may never look the same.

Inside Out is one of a number of new initiatives that demonstrate the huge interest there is in outdoor and site-specific performance. It attracted large audiences of both locals and visitors, many of whom went to see most of the shows across the county. It also demonstrated that the audience want to see groundbreaking high quality 'difficult' work. If it's a good show at an interesting site they will brave weather and distance to get there. It's a challenge laid down now to outdoor arts practitioners and festivals to reward this loyalty with exciting, challenging and excellent work that celebrates our landscapes and cityscapes.

Its all out there: let's go get it.

*Additional reporting by Dorothy Max Prior*

*The Inside Out festival was produced by Dorset Theatre Promoters' Consortium working with Bournemouth and Poole promoters, local authorities and arts organisations and under the artistic direction of Simon Chatterton and Bill Gee.*

*Periplum's Arquiem was presented at the Brighton Festival (May 2008), alongside new show, The Bell (created in collaboration with The World Famous). The Bell was presented as part of Caravan Assembly and Without Walls. It can be seen at x.trax Manchester, Greenwich & Docklands Festival and Hat Fair Winchester. See [www.periplum.co.uk](http://www.periplum.co.uk)*

*Without Walls is a consortium of seven major UK festivals presenting outdoor performance. For information on their supported artists for 2008, see [www.withoutwalls.uk.com](http://www.withoutwalls.uk.com)*

01 | PERIPLUM'S ARQUIEM. PHOTO RAY GIBSON

# VOICES

## AERIAL DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER LINDSEY BUTCHER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF GRAVITY & LEVITY, IN HER OWN WORDS



**I trained as a dancer**, so have always approached circus from a dance and choreographic aesthetic.

**Aerial doesn't have to mean 10 or 20 metres off the floor.** It could be just a metre. It's about the body being suspended; the relationship with the surfaces you are in contact with – floor, rope, trapeze, wood, metal.

**Just dangling is boring.** It's the tension between ground and air – gravity and levity – that is interesting (hence the company's name). It gets especially interesting when you introduce other things into the equation: another person, a plank of wood...

**Our mission brief in Shift is: shifting planes, emerging landscapes.** The title refers to the shifts in plane/level/set that we make from one section to another, the emotional shifts that are portrayed, and the shifts in perspective that the audience experience. They are free to sit in one spot, to lie down, to walk about – whatever they choose to do.

**I like the intimacy; being able to see people.** The proximity that the audience has to the performers is rare in circus and dance.

**When I go to see performances, I rarely leave the auditorium during the interval.** In Shift I wanted to keep everything in view. Everything happens before the audience, there is no 'offstage'. The set is built, deconstructed and rebuilt in front of the audience.

**The sculptural feel to the work** comes from our designer Mish Weaver who has a fine art background. She and I both like the work of artist Cornelia Parker – her exploding garden shed (in Tate Modern) influenced us. The use of suspended objects in space; the planes that slice the space; the shift from 'clean' to 'disarray'.

**There are huge transformations – the set basically explodes between sections two and three!** The idea of the movable set (planks of wood, pulleys, ropes etc) is to create an environment in which the performers could work in collaboration with the choreographers. We also wanted to find a way to simplify things, to make the show a little easier to set up in different venues.

**The show is a triptych.** The three sections are choreographed by Charlotte Vincent (Vincent Dance Theatre), by Charles Linehan, and by Luke Creswell/Steve Mc Nicholas of Yes/No Productions who created *Stomp*.

**The third section is a percussive piece.** I worked with Luke and Steve previously, as aerial co-ordinator on the *Lost and Found Orchestra* (which returns to the South Bank later in 2008). *Shift* was an opportunity to take that work further: the merge of human and object as the performers become giant puppets playing the set like one big percussion instrument. A rare foray for them to create a sound-based piece without using the *Stomp* performers or professional musicians.

**Music is a crucial element in Shift.** The third (percussive) section is choreographed and composed by Luke and Steve; the second section, choreographed by Charles Linehan, uses the live music accompaniment of the American performer in the show, Scott Smith. The first piece is composed by Daniel Weaver, whose own experience as a theatre performer/deviser affords him an acute understanding of the relationship desirable between the soundscape and the choreography.

**My work explores the freedom of restraint** – to be held in suspension; caught, yet liberated. You can't get that dancing on the floor.

**This show could be called 'constant research'.** Every day has felt like a continuous learning process.

*Lindsey Butcher is a choreographer, dancer and aerialist who has worked with many different dance companies, including; Extemporary, Walker Dance/Park Music, Darshan Singh Bhuller, Vincent Dance Theatre. Her work in circus has included: Ra Ra Zoo, No Ordinary Angels, Scarabeus, Gandini Juggling Project, Momentary Fusion and The Dream Engine. She formed Gravity & Levity in 2005 with the creation of the company's first production, Taking Flight. The company's latest production, Shift, is currently touring. See [www.gravity-levity.net](http://www.gravity-levity.net)*

01 | LINDSEY BUTCHER IN SHIFT. PHOTO JOHAN PERSSON

# MAKING IT UP

## TINA BICÂT EXPLAINS THE PROCESS OF COLLABORATIVE COSTUME DESIGN IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM

Sometimes the script arrives, the designer reads it, talks about it with the director and designs the costumes, often without meeting the performers who will be working in the clothes.

And sometimes, particularly for devised work, it's not at all like that.

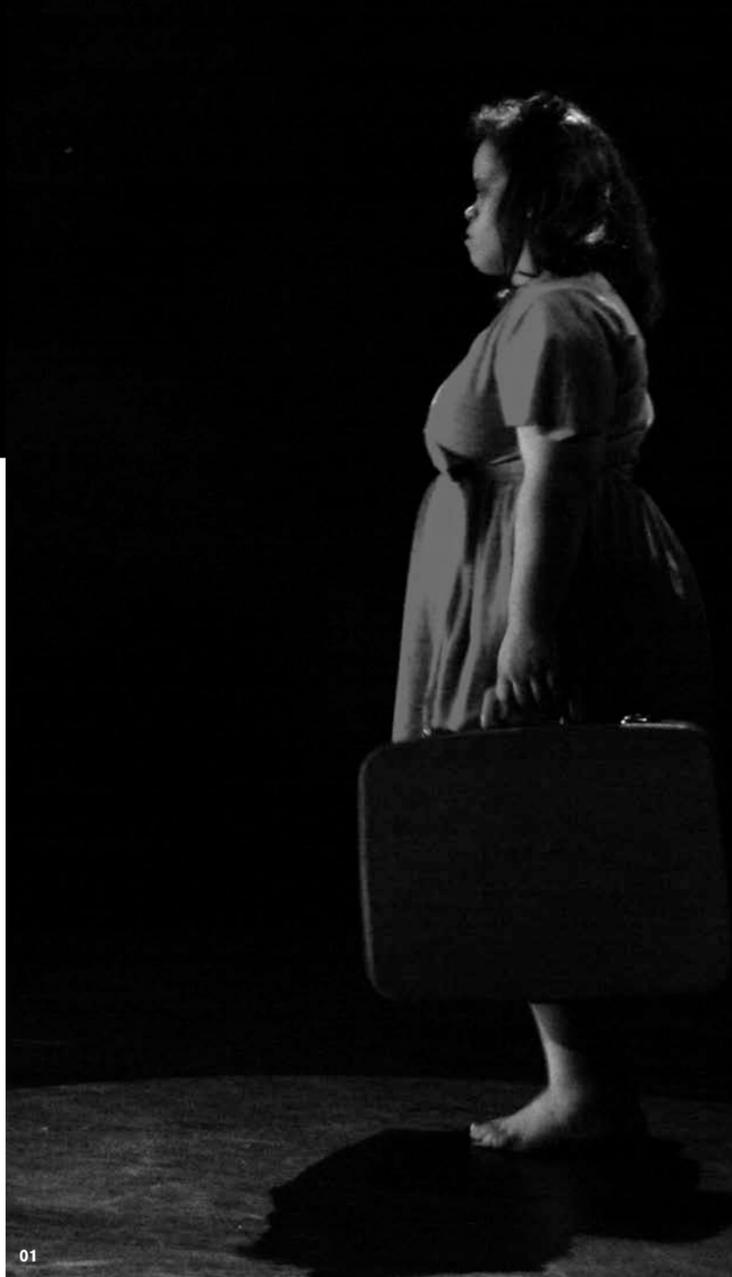
The script is an idea, a collection of images, a story, a group of characters or even a mood. The company is a collection of inventive, technically skilled workers most of whom are obsessed and absorbed by their ideas. They all have wide artistic interests, but each one of them has something which catches their invention more strongly than anything else – sounds, movement of bodies, light, words – and it is this overriding interest which makes them valuable to the company. With designers it is the visual picture; its balance, stillness and movement, that they want to give to the performers and the audience.

The atmosphere that surrounds this sort of work is serious and single-minded, but it is also close to the absorption and excitement of children's play. It is companionable. The intensity and abstraction from everyday life and long hours of hard work often explodes into passionate argument, or is defused by the banter, laughter and cups of tea that punctuate the working day.

During 2007 I worked with three devising companies who both connect and differ. All three have movement at the heart of their creative work, and combine it with soundscape and visual effects, and to a lesser extent words, to form the narrative drive of their performance.

### OCKHAM'S RAZOR'S ARC

Ockham's Razor use theatre, dance and circus to look at the manners and mores of humanity with an interested, slightly detached and often amused eye. They were devising a new work and had asked me to design for it. I arrived at their high-hangar of a rehearsal room, bounced across the padded, empty floor and looking up, found three performers swinging in the air on a grid of metal poles comparing the relative virtues of knots, weights and humans. It was clear that this bizarre production meeting would not result in the circus of glitter and drum-roll. The characters in the story the company were creating were delicate, uncertain and engaged in a complex, social exchange which mirrored the way all humans begin to understand and live with their fellows.



As rehearsals developed it became apparent that the narrative of the play concerned three diverse survivors from a shipwreck (the shipwreck of life?) building a new way of living, or possibly dying, together on a drifting raft.

While I was imagining the picture the audience would see, Derek Nisbet, the musician, was crouched over his lap-top composing the soundtrack – a collage of sea sounds and broken tunes through a mist, which suggested the chalky, washed-out colours of dawn at sea. So I drew, and later we all ate and talked.

Such extreme movement suggests Lycra bodysuits which will not catch, ruckle or bind in the ropes. Aerial performers are subject to friction burns when rope, cloth and skin rub on each other. The company's work is physically dangerous. They are brave but not foolhardy, and costumes must not add more risks to those already present in their work. But I wanted them to look like people, not aerial performers – tattered and frail survivors from a wreck during an evening storm.



I found cloth which had stretch and was tough enough for a tug-of-war but looked as airy and delicate as chiffon. I dyed and built the costumes so that the bodies could work freely and safely: skirts cut with concealed shorts so that they could not slip when upside-down and fall over the performers eyes; shirts with concealed pants that could not ride up. Tricks really – to make costumes look like real clothes. Fittings happened on the ground in front of the mirror, but also hanging upside-down from, or sliding down, ropes. Adjustments, often no more than a holding-stitch on a skirt, made for more safety without spoiling the picture I was trying to make for the audience's eyes.

### AMICI'S ELEGY

Fast on the heels of that job I walked, sketchbook in hand, into a rehearsal at the Lyric, Hammersmith. It seemed a cramped chaos of random bodies all chatting and hugging in a clutter of sandwiches, wheelchairs, shoes and papers. Three hand-claps and there was order – a circle of people, including me, saying and signing their names. The warm-up began and the different skills and abilities of the performers fused into a company. This was Amici, an inclusive dance-theatre group with both disabled and non-disabled performers and choreographers. Someone told me the structure of the story – six episodes of sorrow in the lives of six women – and the rehearsal began.

I began to draw – no quiet reflection in the studio, but quick scribbling with people nudging up, cuddling and pointing and leaning over my shoulder. Performers who could not talk needed space and help, and sometimes an interpreter, to communicate their intellectual or choreographic ideas. Performers with more visual imaginations needed drawings or examples to make the costume ideas clear in their minds.

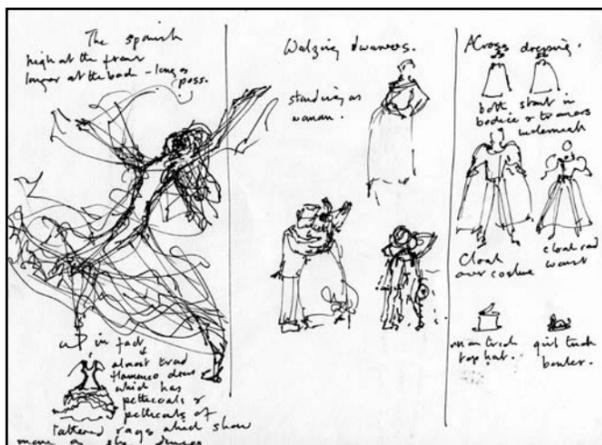
The practical difficulties of the task were huge; the blatant honesty of the performers with Down's syndrome meant that the compromise that underpins most theatre fittings wasn't there.



It was vital that these performers should really want to wear their costumes and feel their performance was strengthened by them. It is a tricky technical problem to fit someone who can scarcely move without help from their wheelchair or cannot talk without time, concentration and effort. These difficulties were a stark reminder that every movement, every word and every connection of creativity in a theatre performance is valuable, a premise that can get forgotten in the intensive invention of the devising rehearsal room. The designer is forced to throw away preconceptions, academic or over-complex notions, and return to the simple root of theatre design – to help the performer and director to give his or her best possible message to the audience.

If a performer can only move one foot, that foot can move a giant butterfly fluttering above the wheelchair if it is balanced right – the performer is an actor and choreographer. He knows how to fly but needs the equipment to do it. Puppets add to the movement.

The pattern of the narrative made what could have been thought of as disability into an essential benefit. The work is disturbingly honest and emotionally powerful. A complex and serious message is being given to the audience. The visual information of costume and the freedom of puppets help the actors entice into their onstage world those who are startled by, and perhaps uneasy about, the physical diversity of the performers.



## PUNCHDRUNK'S *THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH*

I knew what to expect with Punchdrunk, as far as one ever does with this intensely creative group. I'd worked with them before. They make site-specific theatre/dance performance in spaces where the masked audience and the performers move together in a world of dark dreams and fantasy. I picked my way through plasterers and painters, prop-makers and lighting technicians to a rehearsal room in the basement of Battersea Arts Centre. The room was boiling with movement: performers hurled themselves through the air or moved in silent and balanced duets. It looked like the last frenzy of a wild party but was actually the warm-up.

The research everyone does before and during rehearsal links the various departments in feeling and style. In my costume department it fuelled the pre-production work of a giant heap of clothes and cloth and accessories which would fit into the dark and gothic vision of Edgar Allen Poe's stories.

The performers come for long fittings which are a cross between a character analysis and a dressing-up extravaganza. They know what they want to feel like and how they need to move. I know what we want the audience to see. We work together for the audience. Give a performer a frockcoat and see what he feels like. He runs up stairs and rolls down them while I watch. The coat flaps on his thighs, distracts him and slows the roll. Chop the front to an angled tailcoat for his comfort, heighten the collar for the look and try again. A tight waistcoat underneath. Too constricting but looks right. Chop the armholes, shorten the front and run and roll again. Better. The shirt, romantically full, but cut from light muslin except for collar and cuffs. The women must have long skirts and petticoats. The skirts look heavy but are gauze and the petticoat frills weigh less than the skirt. The lighter the clothes the higher they can fly.

The way the performer reacts to the feeling of the costume stimulates new movements and ideas. A bodged up version of a garment may be tried out for a day to prove which new adjustments and details must be made for the next rehearsal. Everything is invented with the performer's particular style of movement in mind, and to give the audience a picture that draws them into the world of a performance. All this chopping and movement is interrupted by grabbing one of the directors to communicate the pictures we are making; the work is too fast to allow the luxury of drawings and prearranged meetings, and too diverse and immediate for them to be practical.

You can't work like this unless you can cut and sew and think and invent fast; there has to be so much experiment and instant invention that to draw and wait while someone else



cuts a pattern and arranges a fitting would be tormenting. You need to bodge things up, to try and to play, chop and knot till the clothes feel right to perform in. Afterwards you can take the time to make them look right.

The designer/maker's job when working for companies like these is exciting and demanding. You may research, prepare or consolidate your work in your studio or workroom, but the bulk of invention happens with the company rehearsals and at fittings. It is rare to invent alone once rehearsals have begun.

You watch the performers improvising and the directors instigating, shaping and refining the material. You know the way they approach their work and use their minds and bodies. You are involved in the search and experiment as directors and performers strive to understand and present the characters they are playing. You hear the music, the talk about light, set and sound and props as they are being created by your fellow designers. The work grows as an amalgamation of everyone's ideas and experience into the production the audience see on the first night.

*Tina Bicât's work with theatre, film, television and carnival includes productions with casts of hundreds, one-man shows, costumes devised and made with the actor in rehearsal, puppets, transformations, tricks and special effects as well as more traditional costume designing and making. Her current work is in performance where the design is developed throughout the rehearsal process. She combines freelance design for professional theatre with working with the drama students at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, and is currently supported by an Arts Council grant to pursue her interest in the use of puppets, shadows and objects in performance. With the Punchdrunk design team she won the Critics Circle award in 2006. She is the author of six books on theatre practice published by the Crowood Press the latest of which is Puppets and Performing Objects ISBN 978-1-861269-607 (reviewed in this magazine).*

01 | AMICI ELEGY  
02 | OCKHAM'S RAZOR ARC  
03 | COSTUME SKETCHES DONE IN REHEARSAL FOR *THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH*  
04 | PUNCHDRUNK'S *THE MASK OF THE RED DEATH*. PHOTO BENEDICT JOHNSON

## ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

# LIVE ART

## TOTAL THEATRE'S CANNY GRANNY GETS HER TEETH INTO CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

'My next show is going to be closer to live art than theatre', my great grand-nephew Johnny announced between mouthfuls of chocolate muffin. 'What is live art?' I enquired, wondering whether this was a new kind of performance that involves speaking with a mouthful of chocolate chips. 'I don't know', he replied, much to my relief because I hate to think everyone else knows the lingo even if my false teeth do make certain phrases rather tricky to pronounce.

'Art that invests in the process, presence and experience as much as the production of objects or things' is one such saliva-sucking phrase posted on the Live Art Development Agency's website. I've never previously come across an artform that's not an artform but 'an influential space in which artists can take formal and conceptual risks'. Indeed, as the successor to performance art, with its emphasis often on endurance and duration, we wonder whether the audience is all that important to live artists; although satisfying oneself so blatantly without regard for one's guests would, if one was in the dining room or in bed, be considered to be plain bad manners.

Live art is like the artistic equivalent to a rumpus room where you can take the kids to let off steam. It's all about misbehaviour, 'art that wants to test the limits of what's permissible or possible'. So established events, like a guided tour, might be turned on their head to become a Mis-Guided tour (Wrights and Sights, Exeter), or small social interactions with the public are turned into art by FrenchMottershead. The notion of 'risk' refers to a general rebellious spirit, 'disrupting borders, breaking rules, defying traditions, resisting definitions, asking awkward questions and activating audiences'. Hell yeah! Johnny, loosen my corset! I'm here, live artists! Activate me!

Audiences are being 'activated' everywhere. Plenty of opportunity to get involved, whether you are a performer or an audience-member, or a consumer

who prefers to 'resist definitions and question assumptions' about whether or not you are an audience-member.

And indeed, many artists whose work features on Live Art sites have set up very exciting relationships with their audiences: Lone Twin's blindfolded eight-hour line dance, for example, that the public could join in whenever they liked; or Blast Theory's invention of various computer and satellite-technology assisted live action computer games – artists who are involving audiences who wouldn't normally turn up to see 'a play' but would happily engage in 'a mad experience'. Now it's theatre (or should we say 'Dead Art?') that's looking self-centred.

It all rubs off though: this smudging of the line between performer and spectator is taking place in theatre, as audiences are cast in more active roles everywhere from Shunt Lounge to Punchdrunk's *The Masque of the Red Death*. Not that Shunt and Punchdrunk feature on live art sites particularly, but plenty of people you'll recognise do: Forged Entertainment, Kazuko Hohki, Marisa Carnesky, Bobby Baker, Station House Opera – which could lead us to believe that Live Art is just a pirate ship sailing away with some of our most exciting and experimental theatre, with most of the programmers at BAC drunk on rum in the hold.

Certainly, the term doesn't exist at all in the United States, leading us to suspect that Live Art is really a Hoxton conspiracy to cream off the pink wafers from the Foxes selection box, and that you too could invent whatever terms you want: after all, words like 'jam session' and 'scratch night' must have come from somewhere. So if anyone would like to join the Chocolate Muffin Development Agency just call me – but the phone won't be answered by a person, more of 'a space'.

Laura LLOYD

### WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LIVE ART?

*Some venues that support live art*

Arnolfini (Bristol)  
One of the UK's major contemporary arts spaces combining galleries, live, dance, film, literature and education programmes, and presenting the bi-annual festival Inbetween Time. [www.arnolfini.org.uk](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk)

Chelsea Theatre (London)  
'London's theatre for Live Art' which presents the Sacred season of live art within a theatre setting. [www.chelseatheatre.org.uk](http://www.chelseatheatre.org.uk)

Bluecoat (Liverpool)  
Year-round programme focusing on visual and performing arts and artists working in interdisciplinary terrain; organises the Liverpool Live programme for the Liverpool Biennial. [www.bluecoatartscentre.com](http://www.bluecoatartscentre.com)

Farnham Maltings (Surrey)  
A multi-artform arts centre, supporting work by the likes of Lone Twin and Rajni Shah. [www.farnhammaltings.com](http://www.farnhammaltings.com)

Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff)  
Chapter is Wales' flagship centre for the contemporary arts with an all year round programme of performance, cinema and visual arts from Wales and internationally. [www.chapter.org](http://www.chapter.org)

Colchester Arts Centre (Essex)  
Housed in a converted church, and presents a year-round programme of performing arts, specialising in Live Art. [www.colchesterartscentre.com](http://www.colchesterartscentre.com)

Basement Arts Production, South East (Brighton)  
A 'multi-use art space': venue, rehearsal space, artists' support service, producing house, exhibition space. [www.thebasement.uk.com](http://www.thebasement.uk.com)

### SOME NETWORKS & UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS FOR LIVE ART

Live Art Development Agency (London)  
Has a study room you can book to use, a shop stocking DVDs and resource materials. [www.thisisliveart.co.uk](http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk)

Artsadmin (London)  
Provides a unique national resource, supporting artists across the spectrum of contemporary performance practice [www.artsadmin.co.uk](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk)

New Work Network (London)  
New Work Network is a national, artist-led support organisation bringing together people working in Live Art, contemporary performance and interdisciplinary practice [www.newworknetwork.org.uk](http://www.newworknetwork.org.uk)

Live Art UK  
National network of live art promoters and facilitators. Initiatives include the Live Art Touring Commission, and their Critical Writing Initiative [www.liveartuk.org](http://www.liveartuk.org)

National Review of Live Art (Glasgow)  
More, much more, than a mere 'festival', the NRLA is the annual gathering place for those with a shared interest in live art/performance [www.newmoves.co.uk](http://www.newmoves.co.uk)

# THE RIGHT STUFF

SO JUST WHAT DOES A DRAMATURG DO? SHAMS THEATRE PERFORMER LAURA LLOYD, DIRECTOR JONATHAN YOUNG, AND DRAMATURG BECCY SMITH SHED SOME LIGHT ON THEIR PROCESS

## NIGH ON COMPREHENSIBLE

Searching for a giant crow using an omelet; choreographing movement sequences that didn't fit; and leering from the top of a stepladder in Venice. Just a few low-lights of previous devised productions (not by Shams, I hasten to add) in which the show's director was also performing. The resulting shows were nigh on incomprehensible – I think a fellow performer's mother used the phrase 'up yourselves'. Needless to say, when Jonathan Young said he wanted to act and direct in Shams Theatre's new production, *Black Stuff*, I had my reservations. But working with a dramaturg has made it possible.

I've never participated in a 'writing' process quite like *Black Stuff*. First, we improvised using techniques we'd learnt during Clown through Mask training (a powerful marriage of Native North American and European clowning traditions). The improvs would be rooted in the scenario of the show: a couple who are stranded at a remote petrol station in the desert. They would go on for *hours*. Beccy Smith, the dramaturg, watched many of them patiently, as did our assistant director. Our early bits of script used word spoken during improv, recalled using video. In our first work-in-progress presentation, Beccy helped us establish the information needed for the story to function: Which of the petrol station's gadgets are powered from a generator; what the regularity of oil deliveries is to the petrol station; what supplies are precious for each of the characters.

The final script was draft-scripted by Jonathan and Beccy before we began our final rehearsals. They diligently ensured the logic of the world and of the story. Then, as we rehearsed, we probably rephrased about 90% of it, often with our assistant director taking care of the characters' motivations. I think a literary theatre 'playwright' could feel betrayed by the actors doing that, but Beccy wasn't precious about the words themselves. To put it crudely, it's a relief to have someone checking it all makes sense, especially when it's a political piece and that carries responsibility.

**Laura Lloyd, performer and deviser in *Black Stuff***

## A CLEAR DESTINATION SO YOU CAN VEER OFF THE ROAD

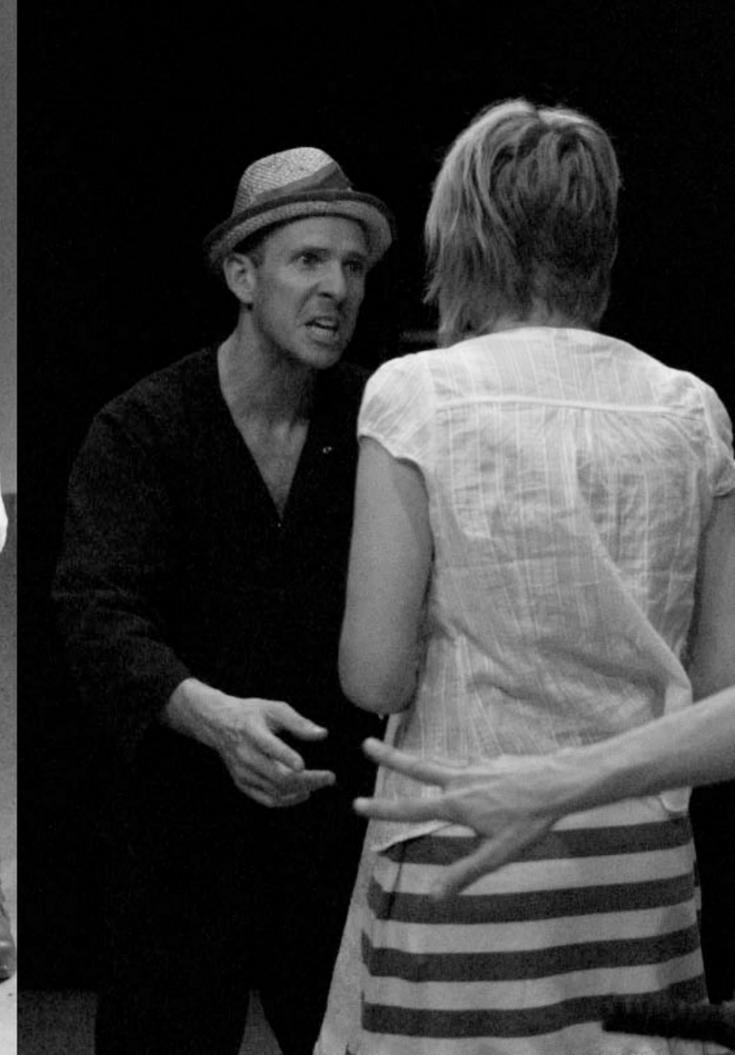
*Black Stuff* was the first time I'd really worked with a dramaturg right from the start of a process.

Beccy was great – not a wannabe writer/director in disguise with accompanying ego, she helped us think carefully about both the scripting and direction of the piece, and also the nature of the process as we made it. Part of the successful collaboration was her willingness to be regularly in the rehearsal room, to witness our early explorations through improvisation, and to flag up broader themes and theatrical possibilities. For instance, the action of *Black Stuff* is driven by a shortage of energy (petrol and electricity) and Beccy made us aware how significant the life of objects could be to help tell that story.

Later when we came to script and storyboard the piece ahead of final rehearsals, it was invaluable to have Beccy to talk through the various possibilities with. Dramaturgy seems to me to be about addressing questions of world, narrative, characters and meaning on stage and the ways in which they can be most effectively realised. As I was acting and directing, it was invaluable to do this work of building a solid foundation both in words and images before going into rehearsals. For us, this balance of freedom within a structure really helped the development of the show. As we had a clear sense of where we wanted to take the piece, it felt exciting and quite easy to go 'off road' and experiment with new possibilities because we had a sense of how they could tie into the whole. In fact, one of my favourite scenes of the show – when a woman is left alone with a predatory man – came about from acknowledging the limitations of our script and going beyond them to create something far more complex and engaging than our original idea (but that nonetheless owed a debt to it).

One of the usual criticisms directed at devised theatre is that it often consists of lovely moments but lacks a structural integrity. Working with a dramaturg is an excellent way of overcoming this in a way that allows the strength of devised material to stay present but maintains and develops an awareness of the whole.

**Jonathan Young, director, Shams Theatre**



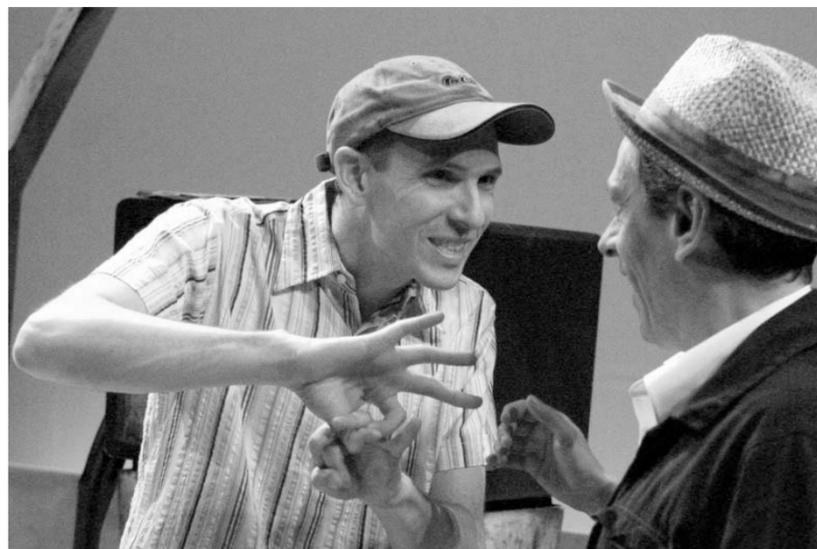
## BALANCING POLITICS AND DELIRIUM

When I work as a dramaturg it's my responsibility to represent the work in the room, and so the ways in which I engage practically, and the ways I collaborate, can completely change character according to the different needs and shape of each individual process. I think of the practice of dramaturgy as coming to embody the process of which you are a part, so it's innately mutable. This might sound very vague but in practice it's highly specific and relates to the other meaning of the term dramaturgy – the systems by which a performance creates meaning. In focusing your concentration on those systems, the changing ways you serve a production are always grounded in the central formal and practical questions absorbing the company.

The process of *Black Stuff* was experimental, aiming to apply the personal creative journeys initiated through the company's Clown through Mask training to a defined scenario and political narrative. From the beginning we were colliding the playful, anarchic impulses of the masks used in this training (which are used in the creative process, but not in the final production), applied through extended improvisation, to develop ideas for a story which we needed to carry political and ideological weight. Finding a way to make the tension between these two poles work soon emerged as the central formal question of the piece – finding a solution that could harness the incredible creative power of the masks and enliven our story, taking it to places we couldn't reach without them, but working with the masks in a framework that involved allegory, political metaphor and painted a real (enough) world.

The dramaturgy of theatre is often about story and my earliest work answering this question took the form of trying to work out the logic of a story for our first scratch from the mass of improvised material that had proliferated. We transcribed all of these early sessions – my job whenever I could be in the room, otherwise done later by Jonathan, or our assistant director, from the day's videos – and I looked for ways it could fit together, and for the beginnings of an architecture for the story. During these sessions performers worked through a changing sequence of masks, which meant characters veered wildly in tone and voice. In an early scratch it became apparent that over-scripting deadened this liveliness in the masks – their most significant quality – so at the next stage of developing the script I started to think about building the detail of what we needed to show structurally to express the ideas of the piece that might form scene units for the clown to play within.





All of these discoveries were made through dialogue – my most important dialogue being with the director/writer, although I was also involved in collaborative decision-making with both the performing and production teams. From the outset I was given space to look sideways at the process of making the work and to analyse how process informed product, and how we might best tailor it to the tricky task in hand. In practice this meant anything from suggesting points in the sketched story that could be useful starting points for improvising in actions that could move the story forward, to suggesting exercises to develop character. It also involved negotiating audience feedback and integrating this into the vision of the company (a really necessary layer of support often overlooked when scratching work).

On the inside of the process we built I worked with Jonathan offering up ideas for structure, and interrogating the forms and function of events and characters in the piece. Most of the writing was created either through improvisation, or by Jonathan in the later stages: there was a clear dramaturgical function in collating and editing this material, a process which went back and forward over several drafts before again being distilled and re-imagined in the rehearsal room. In the last stage of making the piece I was responsible for tracking and finalising its development through the later stages of rehearsal.

My focus was always on the bigger picture – the ideas the company wanted to express through the piece; the patterns that emerged in sound, stage picture, objects; the rhythm of the whole – whilst the performers and director inhabited the detailed impulses and realities of the characters. Sometimes that was a perspective we all shared and my questions were ones we all grappled with, but it was my job to stay there and be ready to respond to the questions from the floor ('What would it mean if that happened here?'), to help facilitate moving the work forward.

#### Beccy Smith, dramaturg

*Shams Theatre's Black Stuff plays the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 30 July – 25 August 2008 at 4.20pm daily in Pleasance Two at Pleasance Courtyard. For further information on this show, on other current projects and on the Clown through Mask training, see [www.shamstheatre.org.uk](http://www.shamstheatre.org.uk)*

*Beccy Smith is a freelance dramaturg and writer, specialising in non-text focused work and puppetry. She was formerly director of The Puppet Centre Trust, and oversees projects for the Dramaturgs' Network, a development agency for the practice of British dramaturgy.*

#### MORE ON DRAMATURGY AND THE DRAMATURGS' NETWORK

Dramaturgs' Network is an organisation for UK theatre practitioners committed to developing dramaturgy and supporting practitioners' development in the field.

The organisation's activities over the past year have included producing the Pro-Sessional conference which took place at the Soho Theatre, London, in November 2007. This was created in collaboration with the Literary Manager's forum, Writernet and Soho Theatre, and took the form of a practical conference challenging and supporting the processes of dramaturgy on the UK.

Contributors to the day included: Synne Behrndt, whose main interest is in contemporary cross-discipline devising processes; Stephen Canny, an executive producer, writer, dramaturg, and director whose prolific output has included work as associate director and dramaturg with *Complicite*; Carl Grose, writer and performer with *Kneehigh Theatre*; Hanna Slatne, dramaturg and literary manager of *Tinderbox Theatre Company*; Mischa Twitchin, founder member of the London-based performance collective *Shunt*. The day included presentations, forum discussions, and practical demonstrations of dramaturgy in action in open rehearsals.

For further information see [www.ee.dramaturgy.co.uk](http://www.ee.dramaturgy.co.uk)

Synne Behrndt is also, with Cathy Turner, the author of one of the few UK publications to address the issue of the dramaturg's role within collaborative and devised theatre and performance. It is called *Dramaturgy and Performance* and is published by Palgrave Macmillan as part of their *Theatre and Performance Practices* series.

See [www.palgrave.com](http://www.palgrave.com)

# BEING THERE

## A REFLECTION FROM THREE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON MIRIAM KING'S THE READING ROOM - APRIL 2008 AT THE POINT, EASTLEIGH

*The Reading Room* brought Miriam 'Mim' King as a singular artist (performer, archivist, film-maker and purveyor of fine atmospheres) together with members of our community on a very particular journey; a project that used a piece of local history as a starting point for an event that signalled both an ending and a beginning.

In 1935 the good councillors of Eastleigh decided to build a library next to its existing Victorian town hall. It was a lovely place and until the mid-90s generations of residents browsed and borrowed books there. For a decade it became a family resource centre – its lovely interiors reduced to bland, civic colour schemes and child-friendly surfaces – and in 2006 it was taken over by *The Point* to become part of a new space we start building this year. So we needed to find a way to say goodbye and move on. We put a call out in the local papers and Mim spent three months meeting with people who had visited, worked in and loved Eastleigh library.

Another call produced hundreds of old books donated by the public which became the source material for the installation she created. The library was transformed into a special place once more: the sounds, smells and atmosphere of its former life recalled in a magical installation of words, books and pictures, with the enigmatic librarian herself appearing and disappearing...

Having Mim at *The Point* was a very special experience for us all. Her vision for the project, her energy and her extraordinary way with people engaged us in a process that went far beyond the work taking place in the old library.  
**Gregory Nash, artistic director, The Point, Eastleigh**

I'm not quite myself... I've become Jean, a hybrid of all the librarians that I'd met.

With a quadrasonic soundscape and melodious lines read from an assortment of books, Jean, in the shadow of the 'tree of many books', opens the *Permission Required for Restricted Reading* area. An elderly man goes in without requesting permission! Jean sidles up to his wife, informing her that her husband has entered the restricted reading area without her consent. The concerned wife asks, what's in there? Jean explains primly that it contains books 'dealing with sexual matters'. 'Oh dear' says his wife and Jean offers to coax him out, enticing him with her other special collection of recommended reading on steam engines and the railways. Is he interested in steam engines, she wonders? He's reluctant and wishes to remain with *More Joy of Sex*. Eventually when he leaves the library he declares that he's enjoyed his visit very much!

Other visitors enjoy books on boats and re-arrange paper boats (made from pages from books about boats) into delicate fleets and ferocious shipwrecks. In a rocking chair, book in lap, a man relaxes, his thoughts drifting as his shadow drifts around in the parchment-coloured light. Torches shine on a complete works of Shakespeare, returned to the very room it was removed from after fifty years of absence... not a prompt return! There's a can of corned beef on the floor; a pair of liver-coloured stilettos await their wearer and the 'tree of knowledge' looms...

Jean declares the library is closing. Lingerer visitors reluctantly and silently leave. Each one is 'stamped out', with a gift of a book on long-term loan.  
**Miriam King, artist in residence**

A little printed notice advises that *Silence is Requested*. Feel at *Liberty to Browse*, it says: Allow Solitude; Stand, Sit, Read. The library door is opened and the librarian welcomes us in. It's dimly lit and smoky ('maybe that's the mists of time' my companion whispers). At first it seems as if not much is going on. A pillar in the centre of the room has been transformed into a tree-trunk of splayed books; the walls are papered with pages; books are piled in heaps all around; there are little groupings of sculpted book-leaf objects – a tiny figure, a row of paper boats sailing across the floor.

These sort of visually and aurally 'quiet' spaces are so rare; it is unusual to have to stop to listen, to have to look to see. As we move around the space, more is revealed: pages are turned to show tiny video monitors on which landscapes flow by; beams of light highlight words and phrases from the texts on the walls; the soft and unobtrusive soundscape takes on more shape and focus as voices emerge, telling stories of romantic encounters, thrilling discoveries. Meanwhile, the librarian/artist gently manipulates the environment: a flick of a rocking-chair here, a light shined there; a whispered word; the occasional rearranging of a stack of books.

It's a delicate piece that very ably draws together the elements of a lost institution, flagging up the strange mixture of liberation and repression that the typical local library once represented in public life. A genuine engagement with site, prettily managed by artist Miriam King and lighting designer Chris Umney.

**Dorothy Max Prior**

IMAGES: MIRIAM KING THE READING ROOM, PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

# ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

## ROBERT AYERS ENJOYS THE FAMILIAR AND THE UNEXPECTED AT THE NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART

Her heartbeat and breathing (through an air hose) were amplified. This didn't go altogether smoothly, and more than one of the repeated stagings of this piece were interrupted because of her distress. These pieces were abhorrent even in their conception. Men putting women on display has a far too significant history – and present, unfortunately – for it to be acceptable when served up as blithely as this.

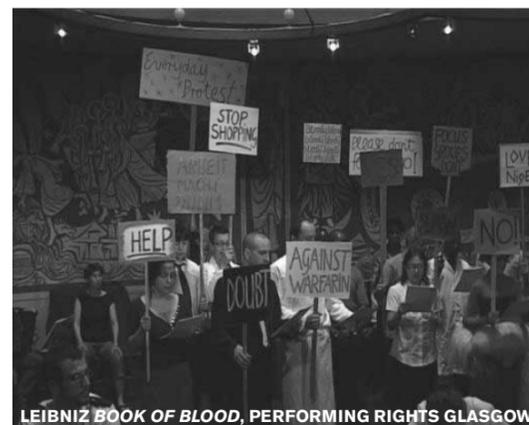
Again by contrast, I very much enjoyed Lisa Wesley's new performance, *Something in the Blood*. Wesley is a mesmeric performer when she wants to be, and this combination of autobiographical recollections and a script concocted from her email exchanges with plant collectors around the world provided her with the perfect platform for an almost whispered delivery that is able to draw a theatre full of spectators into a lovely intimacy. At once deeply touching, utterly bizarre, and laugh-out-loud funny.

You could not imagine anything more different than another of my favourite pieces. Nan Hoover, who will be 77 this year, has been a pioneer of artists' use of film, video, photography, and light since the early 1970s. The piece that she presented here could not have been simpler: she walked slowly through a sequence of overlapping coloured light beams. But she did this with such presence, and such assured conviction, that even late on Friday night she was accorded an utterly rapt silence by a largely young and excited audience. Sometimes an artist can import her own reality to a situation, even if that reality seems utterly out of keeping with what is going on around her. It was thrilling to see Hoover achieve this in Glasgow.

There were so many other things. Things that I loved, things that I disliked, things that I missed, things that I ignored. Things that I never managed to find. Things that went on rather irritatingly while I was trying to have a conversation in the bar. Things that happened out in the garden in the dark. Things that happened in the greenhouse.

But that is the nature of the National Review of Live Art. Almost too many things happening all at once. Nobody can take it all in. And that, ironically, is what makes it Europe's most important performance festival. Days, even weeks later you find yourself pondering things you saw and heard, and conversations you had, and you start to comprehend the real meanings of the experience. It is at that stage that you realize that the NRLA is worth so much more than the physical ordeal that it entails.

*The National Review of Live Art 2008 took place at the Tramway, Glasgow, 6–10 February as part of the New Territories festival. For further information, and for dates of the NRLA 2009 (posted autumn 2008), see [www.newmoves.co.uk](http://www.newmoves.co.uk)*



LEIBNIZ BOOK OF BLOOD, PERFORMING RIGHTS GLASGOW

## OPEN BORDERS OPEN HEARTS

It's Sunday morning, and here we all are, up bright and early, waiting expectantly. Our hostess, dressed becomingly in leopardskin with fuchsia frills and furbelows, chatting and flirting with her audience, is country singer turned lesbian performance artist Ms Tammy Whynot (who shares a body with Lois Weaver). Although it looks like we might be on the set of an Oprah-style confessional TV show, we are in fact in the Tramway Theatre on the final day of the National Review of Live Art 2008, which was given over to Performing Rights Glasgow, a chance to explore the place where human rights and performance might meet.

In this first session we get a pretty good cross-section of the sort of territory being explored. First up is an introduction to the day by the eminent academic Adrian Heathfield, in which he explains how we need to 're-map the terrain of political engagement in performance and in art'. ('I love it when you talk like that' says Tammy in her Southern drawl, 'It makes me go all creamy inside'.)

Then comes a succession of presentations by artists working on this intersection between politics and performance, each a living embodiment of art in action. Of course Guillermo Gomez-Pena is here: godfather of ethno-techno art, creator of Chicano cyber-punk performance, and general all-round adorable activist extraordinaire. He delivers an impassioned and poetic polemic – a litany of desires: 'we are all tired... no more instant utopias... make art part of everyday life... Planet Poetry, Planet Performance...' He is not interested in God or country, 'My hope is located in late night conversations at the bar... and in your arms'.

## DOROTHY MAX PRIOR REPORTS ON THE OPENING SESSION OF PERFORMING RIGHTS GLASGOW, A DAY OF PERFORMANCES, PRESENTATIONS, SCREENINGS, AND INTERVENTIONS AROUND IDEAS OF PERFORMANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

His presentation finishes with an emotional 'duet' with Kurdistan-Iraqi artist Adalet R Garmiany who Guillermo invites to translate (into Kurdish) and speak with him the words: 'We lick each other's wounds then fall asleep and dream of another present'.

Adalet is a musician and performance artist. We see (and hear) film of a sound installation piece using the everyday sounds of daily life in Iraq, and of a beautiful piece enacted on a grey and pebbly British beach – cascades of paint streaking the stones with jewel colours. The artist speaks of coming to the UK and his awareness of this country's essential nature as an island: 'there is water everywhere!'

Tammy pops up at the end to tell us that she has made a collaborative piece with Adalet. She points out his resemblance to the popular media images of two iconic men, Jesus Christ and Osama Bin Laden, and says that the result of the collaboration – a postcard of Tammy with Jesus/Osama – was used to scare two separate groups of Americans. The right-wing were frightened by Tammy-with-Osama and the left-wing by Tammy-with-Jesus.

Another artist we meet is the marvellous Anje Taggart, whose mission in life is to show that resistance can be 'exciting, fun, safe'. Her situationist-style art attacks have included rounding up 26 'shoppers' to push empty trolleys around Asda ('They're not shopping properly' was one complaint the store received.) She pointed out that the beauty of this sort of thing is that no permission is needed, no props, and no venue hire. Then there's the till receipt that cleverly spells out 'FUCK NESTLE'. (Think about it; buying a Toffee Crisp provides an

'F' three digits along, so under that we need something that has a 'U' as its third digit and so on.) She gleefully explains that she takes the goods back to Tesco complaining that someone is sending her secret messages, and gets her money refunded.

There is more: Margareta Dena's work includes tender biographies of her mother and grandmother, explored through the medium of a shared family interest in textiles; Virgule Performing Arts Company of Iran give a practical demonstration of overcoming the challenges faced by contemporary performers in a country where onstage touch between people of the opposite sex is not allowed, and where women must not wear close-fitting clothing.

On screen we meet John Jordan, co-founder of Reclaim the Streets and later The Rebel Clown Army, which aims to 'escape the I of the artist and become a We'. We learn that John Jordan is 'searching for ways to live, despite capitalism'. Like many of the artists gathered here in Glasgow, he is no longer interested in utopias but instead wants to foster 'people who have stopped demanding a dream' and have instead 'put it into practice.'

'Revolution,' he says, 'just arrives like the morning'.

*'Open borders, open hearts' is a line taken from Guillermo Gomez Pena's presentation.*

*Performing Rights Glasgow was co-curated by the National Review of Live Art and the Live Art Development Agency. It took place on Sunday 10 February as part of NRLA 2008.*



# REVIEWS FROM NEW TERRITORIES 2008

## CAROLINE SMITH SPANK

### RARAVIS ...DE TERISSA (...OF CLAY)

#### National Review of Live Art/ New Territories Tramway, Glasgow February 2008

Hosting the evening in a bright red dress, Caroline Smith is very charming and light hearted, step by step narration of a dance routine she is, due to an accident, unable to perform sets a light, playful tone. The childhood photos of her and her sisters in 80s attire, her ironic comments on the two girls aspirations as young dancers and the description of her mother's unusual lunchboxes fit well into the realm of fond and sharply observed memories.

At first this atmosphere of reminiscence seems to be wholly unconnected to the newspaper reports about the mysterious death of a young woman in the same area of London that are presented on screen by an unsmiling and stony faced Caroline Spark, whose professional pose as a neutral and disinterested reporter would seem severe even in a news programme.

As the two women begin to acknowledge each other, shared themes start to emerge and the apparent serenity of the memories gives way to a more troubling story.

Merging different perspectives and bringing together private and public memories *Spank* develops from a familiar but highly entertaining evening of happy autobiography into a more challenging piece that asks spectators to weave together different threads of narrative.



The structure of fragmented stories that reflect in different ways on a topic may not be new, nor are there surprising or entirely unexpected insights to be gained, but the high level of audience engagement required in bringing the different pieces together nevertheless make this performance enjoyable.

...of *Clay* by Raravis (Andrés Corchero and Rosa Muñoz) is a visual and auditory challenge. Beginning in absolute silence, the performers develop their basic vocabulary of movements in slow motion. They walk as if drawn by a piece of string attached to different parts of their bodies, they bend their knees and crouch, and they modulate the shape of their bodies with their shoulders. All their movements are executed with a slowness that is hard to achieve in live performance, and a great part of my appreciation for the first minutes of their production stemmed from mere admiration of the body control necessary to achieve this.

When the silence is interrupted by the bleeping sound of modems and internet connections, which develops into a sizzling that reminded me of high voltage power lines, initially the performers do not seem to react.

But as it becomes more rhythmic and grows in volume their movements are combined into new patterns and seem to relate more strongly to the soundscape created. The change from the apparently isolated presentation of simple movement and sounds into a dense and highly captivating dance that combines them in quick and varying order is so gradual that it cannot be attributed to any specific moment in the piece. Many of the following solos and duets of the performance use similar patterns of isolation and integration, simplicity and complexity, slow and fast. The seamless development of one into the other remains fascinating and captivating throughout.

### SOCIETAS RAFFAELLO SANZIO/ ROMEO CASTELLUCCI HEY GIRL! Tramway, Glasgow February 2008

The opening image of *Hey Girl!* is mesmerising: we see a heap of flesh-coloured material on top of, and dripping off, a bare table. A dangling arm and hand suggest a human form, and through small movements a young woman emerges from the amorphous heap, shedding what seems to be a second skin.



Despite the clinical white light the eyes struggle at first to perceive a human shape, as thick clouds of haze and the fleshy tone of the second skin and dripping plastic confuse it. The extreme slowness of her gradual appearance thus challenges the audience to make sense of the changing forms in front of them. Unable to change perspective or follow the urge to touch the image to clarify our perception, Castellucci captures our attention by gradually revealing more and more of her body.

Sadly the expectations raised by the inventiveness and strength of this first image are not fulfilled throughout the performance. Some of the images to follow, such as the violent beating of the woman by a group of men, seen only as anonymous shadows, can be interpreted even before they are fully presented and the slow, gradual build-up with its copious use of theatrical smoke disappoints, merely revealing something utterly foreseeable.

Sitting through these rather obvious images presented at a very low pace may not be entirely pleasurable, but at regular intervals the spectator is rewarded with further visual gems – in retrospect, these strong impressions linger on... but it is not enough.

Ursula Canton



### PIERRE RIGAL / COMPAGNIE DERNIERE MINUTE PRESS The Gate Theatre, London February 2008

Where would art be without the sensational predicament of the uncomfortably small room? From the cell-like incubators of anguish in Bacon's paintings, and the weird lounge of David Lynch's rabbit sitcom, to David Blaine's much-derided cubicle suspended above the South Bank, and, most terrifyingly, the invisible glass box within which the cheesy mime artist of popular imagination is permanently trapped: in all these confined spaces we recognise the airtight claustrophobia of the human condition. Rising gamely to the challenge of creating a dance-theatre work for the diminutive Gate, Pierre Rigal not only has thechutzpah to shut himself in an incommensurate booth, he also compounds the nightmare by having the ceiling lower itself by degrees, until finally he's pent in a virtual coffin.

As a constantly ingenious exploration of one man and his diminishing kinesphere, Press showcases Rigal's exceptional technical strength, his control and imagination, but also his coolness and evident self-regard. As an apparent expression of surveillance anxiety, it's freaky and stylish, with a pin-sharp design by Frédéric Stoll.

What finally disappoints about *Press* is its lack of rigour. Many of the crucial pressures of the scenario are relaxed or suspended at points so that Rigal can make more room in which to be clever. The connection with the audience is vague and inconsistent, and, like the whole piece,

needs more thought to match the physical discipline. But Rigal is undeniably talented, and for a venue like the Gate to be commissioning work of this nature is frankly miraculous.

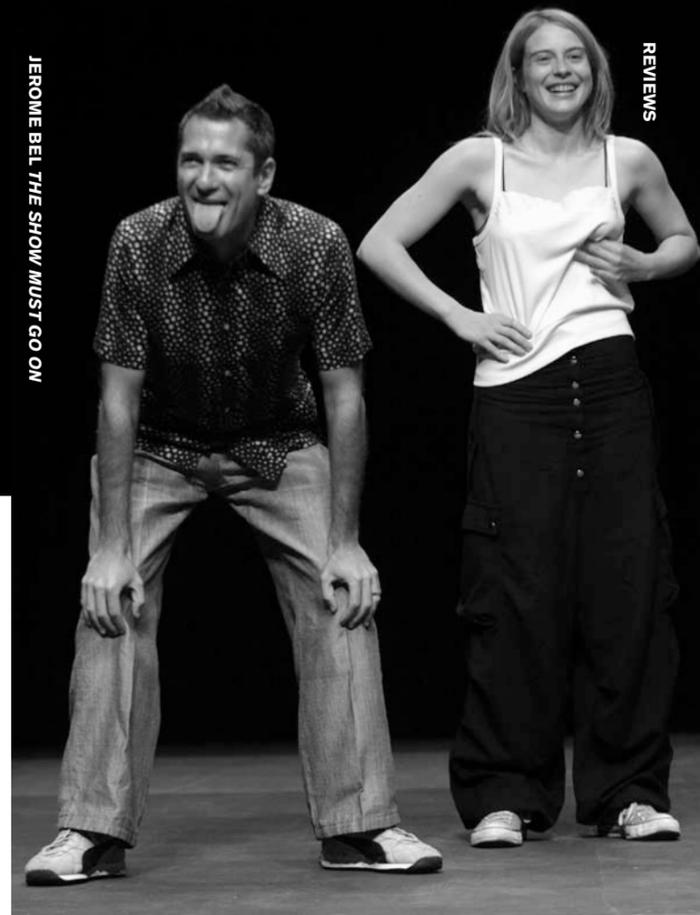
Chris Goode

### PETER HANDKE (TRANS. MEREDITH OAKES) THE HOUR WE KNEW NOTHING OF EACH OTHER National Theatre, London February 2008

Set on a stage-set of a town square, *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* is, in case you missed the tagline, a play for 450 characters with a cast of 27. We see their journeys across the square, or their brief activities within it, seldom seeing the same character twice. There is some sense of how much fun it must have been for Handke to write. Even if the play's inventiveness is not itself a marvel, the breadth of the characters and the variousness of their inchoate narratives maintains a low threshold of interest and attention: a man furiously chases a girl, a woman in an evening dress walks slowly forward with a broad green leaf obscuring her face, someone dies.

Unfortunately the cast don't really cut it as physical performers. It's all right when they're doing the strange or extreme characters — when they have on distracting costumes — but elsewhere they don't find truth in the everyday (with one exception: two strangers walk past each other and their hands brush...). The spirit of the piece isn't invidious or false, but is held back by the obvious rigidity of its own choreography, a mismatch for the fluid possibilities it is trying, by example, to suggest.

JEROME BEL THE SHOW MUST GO ON



It is also too long (1hr and 45mins) and when near the end it tries to shift modes, stretching its few instances of surrealism out to encompass all the characters in a metaphorical landscape, it is without the grace or poetry to make that vision real.

John Ellingsworth

### JEROME BEL THE SHOW MUST GO ON Sadler's Wells, London 9th Feb 2008

Jerome Bel has been carving his niche as a choreographer for over a decade, unpicking what it is to dance — challenging the form in a similar vein to Jonathan Burrows, or to Forced Entertainment in theatre (unsurprisingly, Tim Etchells is a fan of Bel's work). This recent retrospective at Sadler's Wells is a welcome chance to catch work previously missed.

*The Show Must Go On* (2001), like all Bel's work, is simple in premise - 18 performers, 1 visible technician and a host of pop songs. Each pop song serving as a provocation for elementary actions and playful comments upon the stage space: darkness; very slowly, light on an empty space; multiple recreations of

'the' scene from *Titanic*, the singing of Yellow Submarine from the lowered orchestra pit of the Sadler's Wells' stage all feature as responses. We watch each one partly trying to guess Bel's responses to each song and partly wanting to be surprised by the obvious choices he has made. The simplicity of this piece is one of its central charms, alongside the human frailty in his performers, all apparently non-dancers. It is paradoxically compelling, as we search for the subtle differences between the performers.

In this simple approach Bel accomplishes what many companies still struggle to do, which is engage us directly and compellingly in the progress of the performance. Watching his work reaffirms the idea that there is no need for the myriad dance languages we possess, no need for embellishment or theatrics and he does so throughout without self-indulgency or a sense of deadened experimentation. Most welcomingly, he delights his audience; remembering that performance is something that happens between two sets of people: those who do and those who watch.

Tom Wilson

# REVIEWS FROM ARCHES THEATRE FESTIVAL 2008



TIGER LILLIES 7 DEADLY SINS



PERE UBU BRING ME THE HEAD OF UBU ROI



TEATR NOVOGO FRONTA DIAS DE LAS NOCHES



NEW ART CLUB THIS IS MODERN



DAVID LEDDY PATER NOSTER

**TIGER LILLIES**  
**7 DEADLY SINS**  
New Players Theatre, London  
April 2008

**PERE UBU**  
**BRING ME THE HEAD OF UBU ROI**  
Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank Centre, London  
Ether 08  
April 2008

Two shows, two legendary anarchic post-punk music groups with a penchant for the occasional dabble in theatre and/or multi-media performance.

Tiger Lillies are well known to theatregoers (of the alternative variety) for the 'junk opera' *Shockheaded Peter*, a groundbreaking collaboration with improbable members Julian Crouch and Phelim McDermott. Since that tremendous success, the group have had numerous bashes at creating a theatre show for themselves. The latest is *7 Deadly Sins*, in which the Tiger Lillies' grotesque *Grand Guignol*-inspired songs – terrifyingly funny paeans to murder and mayhem – are reworked or otherwise reordered into an account of the world's super vices, aided and abetted by a mildly entertaining burlesque performer Ophelia Bitz, and an 'updated' gay Punch and Judy booth show by Nathan Evans. (Mr Punch is evidently a source of inspiration to the band – this is the second Tiger Lillies show centred around our hook-nosed friend.)

The worst sin evidenced is that the intrinsically theatrical Tiger Lillies seem somehow dampened down, castrated almost, by the structure of the show (which lacks any real dramaturgical logic or impulse). The usually riveting Martyn Jacques seems somehow caged by the fourth wall, unsure of his place in the on-stage action, veering awkwardly between being 'actor' and 'musician'. Why do they do it? Why not just be the Tiger Lillies? Seeing the group in a cabaret setting (as, for example, I had just a few months earlier at the Komedia in Brighton) is theatre enough for me – they really don't need to add on the theatrical trimmings, which are over-egging the pudding. But if they really do want to make another 'proper' theatre piece, I'd urge them to get help where it is needed – collaborate with someone who understands how to make theatre.

Pere Ubu were once described as the world's only expressionist rock-and-roll band. The band's mainman is the big-bodied and gruff-voiced David Thomas. Having named his band after Alfred Jarry's tale of the King of Grotesque, I suppose it was only a matter of time before Ubu did Ubu – and Thomas in middle age is an obvious choice to play the carnivalesque tyrant and antihero, Pere Ubu. This new production for Ether 08 thus realises an ambition he has had since 'being turned on to Alfred Jarry as a 16-year-old high school student in Cleveland, Ohio'. So if the reworking and staging of this play was a long-term grand ambition, what of the realisation?

In Thomas's production, we encounter a similar problem to the Tiger Lillies' show: though full of interesting component parts, the end result feels devoid of any theatrical skill. There is an impressive array of collaborators on board, but where's the director and/or dramaturg in all this? Ah yes, you cry, this is the point! This was Jarry's intention in creating Ubu Roi (in 1896!) – to make anti-theatre in order to shock and outrage the consumers of culture. Yes, yes, I know. But unlike that first audience, we've suffered the slings and arrows of a half-century of knowing, ironic, so-bad-it's-good postmodern performance. I don't want to watch lousy actors playing at being lousy actors. I don't want to go to a festival at a renowned arts centre to see people make work with zero physical presence and performance skills that would shame first-year undergraduates. In discussion with friends in the bar during the interval, we agree that the only way this production might have recaptured the shock of the original would be if it were presented in a pub, to an audience of angry heavy metal fans. The flying bottles would maybe have added the required edge.

There are saving graces, and the second half is at least better than the first: when Thomas stops playing the in-and-out-of-the-action game and growls with gross menace into the mic, he's riveting. There's an especially good moment when he mimics Mere Ubu and holds a conversation with himself that makes me wish he'd dispensed with the actor-musicians and done the whole thing alone on stage; sometimes we get a spell of wonderfully deep and blood-curdling instrumental drones (created in collaboration with electronic composer Gagarin); and the stop-motion screen animation by the Quay Brothers provides an interesting visual illustration to the sound and action, the graphic quality of Jarry's Ubu drawings worked into a Swankmejer-esque landscape of dark caves populated by dancing cutlery and cockroaches.

Once again less would have been more – and the moral (as with the Tiger Lillies) is if you want to make theatre, get help from someone who can steer the ship, or at least provide a map.  
**Dorothy Max Prior**

**TEATR NOVOGO FRONTA**  
**DIAS DE LAS NOCHES**

*Dias de las Noches* begins with the familiar sound of a ringing phone, but from the moment one of the performers picks up the receiver, we are swept off our feet and caught in a breathtaking journey through the familiar and the unexpected. Teatr Novogo Fronta combine physical theatre and clowning with an engaging visual style that does not need any translation of the text. Out of the familiar they create the unfamiliar, as in a three-legged dance where the extra legs attached to the performers' waists unsettle our expectations of human body-shapes and movement. Similarly, a beach scene with strange horned creatures who have plungers attached to their backs shifts from amusing to moving as we recognise the inelegance and gracelessness of real human beings. These fast-paced comic moments are balanced by dark and threatening ones. The performers' visible fear of the ringing phone, the forebodings of the lighting and the sound steadily building up unease and tension, before the performance erupts again in hilarious anarchy. The excellent pacing and the imaginative imagery leave you exhilarated and nearly exhausted – a cathartic experience from a very non-Aristotelian piece.

**DAJINDER SINGH**  
**THE SEVERED HEAD OF COMRADE BUKARI**

Every  
Line  
Is  
Weighed down  
With  
Expectation...

The highly stylised delivery of *Comrade Bukari* is a textbook example of theatre that demonstrates rather than enacts. Choreographed movements and sounds underline the spoken text, as well as significant (and rather long) pauses between sentences. Technically these aspects are immaculate – the actors' delivery is exact and the performance appears to be very neat, but heavy with underlying meaning. But which meaning? The script ranges from rather predictable clichés to short passages that capture the rough-friendly banter amongst adolescent males quite well. The first are probably beyond hope; the latter could be made into an interesting study of characters if they were not brought to a forcefully imposed dramatic conflict and were better served by a direction that does not try to fill them with a profundity the text does not support. As it is, the stylised performance looks like a glittering but empty shell.

**NEW ART CLUB**  
**THIS IS MODERN**

New Art Club perform dance analysis and criticism. The first part of the performance introduces the audience to the vocabulary of dance by varying a short series of movements through repetition, unison, pauses and the use of space. Watching the performers reveal the minimal units that make up complex series of movements can be fascinating for those who normally witness only complete dance performances, similar to the wonder the scientifically less trained can feel when seeing tiny organisms under a microscope. My ambition to recognise and take pleasure in finding these elements in the following dance piece (based entirely on the movement material presented before) was certainly great – at least at the beginning of the piece. Yet after becoming familiar with its element, I began to tire with the length of the piece which seemed drawn out a little too much. The concept of *This is Modern* is original and interesting, a generous portion of self-irony makes it witty and entertaining, but the timing does not always work, and many of the examples and jokes would benefit from a snappier pace.

David Leddy's *Pater Noster* puts the audience into a situation where they are an 'audience' rather than 'spectators': they need to *hear* rather than see the play. In contrast to much contemporary experimental theatre, which places the emphasis on visual imagery, Pater Noster reduces the theatrical experience to nothing more than the sound of the spoken word. We are seated individually in a small room, which resembles a small lift, (the 'pater noster' of the title) and are plunged into complete darkness to listen to a recording of Leddy's script. Although the small space could feel claustrophobic, the slow rumbling sound of the lift and the calm and serene voice envelop the listener in an almost meditative soundscape that echoes the structure of the script. Chains of associations are spun, evoking the beads of a rosary, prayer and the tranquillity of churches, of water and lakes. The words create pictures of rowing, the slender arms of the rower, reminiscences of anatomy books, surgeries and the slow agony of waiting for the doctor. At first they are loosely connected, then in a spiral of repetitions they close in and wrap the listener in a rich blanket of imagination and association. Stepping back into the light of the corridors, for a moment the vaults of the Arches seem pale in comparison to the richness and sensuousness of the mental images evoked.

Reviews by Ursula Canton. Arches Theatre Festival 08 took place at The Arches, Glasgow 8–19 April 2008



TANZTHEATER WUPPERTAL THE RITE OF SPRING

**PINA BAUSCH /  
TANZTHEATER WUPPERTAL  
CAFÉ MULLER /  
THE RITE OF SPRING  
Sadler's Wells, London  
February 2008**

Two classic pieces from the 1970s choreographed by the first lady of *tanztheater*, Pina Bausch. First up is *Café Muller*, in which we are expecting to see Bausch herself perform, but due to 'indisposition' (as it is says on the oh-so-innocent piece of paper we are handed with our programmes), she does not appear, which is a disappointment, it has to be said.

The piece is typical of Tanztheater Wuppertal's work of the 70s and 80s. It's a kind of ballet of the dispossessed: a distracted woman totters dangerously around the stage in high heels; dreamy and disconnected sleepwalkers in white silk gowns forge paths across the space, creating sculptural shapes in interaction with the wooden tables and chairs; said chairs get pulled out, scraped along the floor, chucked around and crashed into heaps by a manic mustachio'd man; a woman throws herself into the arms of a man, he drops her, she does it again, he drops her again, they repeat and repeat, and speed up and speed up and speed up; there's an offstage/onstage thing going on with a revolving door upstage behind a glass window, people disappearing and reappearing in an endless cycle of obsessive-compulsive actions.

All good stuff, like a live film packed with stunning moving pictures and of course the choreography beautifully enacted. But the problem is that Bausch's work has been so influential on contemporary dance-theatre that in many ways the piece (30 years on) seems almost to be a parody of itself. This I realise is grossly unfair on the artist – she can't help it that everyone has copied her – but I find myself (shockingly) a little bored – and longing to see some of her more recent work.

*The Rite of Spring* (1975) seems to have stood the test of time better than *Café Muller*, probably because it is a 'purer' piece of contemporary dance-theatre, developed at an earlier stage of Bausch's career, and less reliant on the irony and trademark gestural work that has become such a cliché of contemporary dance. Its connection to later pieces (such as the beautiful *Masurca Fogo*, seen at Sadler's Wells a few years ago) is in the breathtaking use of the 30-strong ensemble, the balance between the strength of the group and the drive of the individual played with throughout. The power and beauty of so many bodies on stage! The constantly evolving patterns as dancers flock and separate, weave and flow, forming alliances and oppositions! The geometric shapes that seem to speak to our souls: circles, lines, figures-of-eight, that appear then melt away! And like all her work, it's a piece of visual art as well as movement theatre: the stage is covered with earth, the dancers dressed in crumpled cream silk with the only 'prop' a (menstrual) red diaphanous scarf that is used to coil and caress, restrain and liberate. It's exhilarating stuff.

It's good to have the opportunity to see these early works live, but when oh when will Bausch's work from the past decade come to the UK?

**Dorothy Max Prior**



FABULOUS BEAST JAMES SON OF JAMES

**FABULOUS BEAST  
JAMES SON OF JAMES  
Playhouse, Oxford  
Feb 2008**

This, the third part in Michael Keegan-Dolan's trilogy examining the changing social landscape of Ireland's Midlands is a broad mix of song, dance and text. The premise rests on the events that happen when the eponymous James returns home for his father's funeral, setting off a gradual disintegration of a small town's social order.

As a piece of narrative dance-theatre this show ticks along at a cracking pace, carrying the audience's attention and playing the story quite clearly and creating some entertaining moments. At times, though, the limited dialogue feels stilted, and is actually quite invasive amongst the highly charged and inventive duets Keegan-Dolan stages.

Characters are titled as broad archetypes, and there is a flavour of Greek Tragedy in the events that come to pass. The piece seems to ask us to empathise with the characters, but it feels as if the characters are in need of a little more depth or truth to them if this is to be achieved. Daphne Strothmann and Clodhna Hoey (as The Politician's Wife and Woman from the East respectively) are the exception in this regard.

The use of song lies closer to the musical than the oratorio nature of voice in some other physical theatres, unpicking themes or acting as choral soliloquies; though at points the lyrics come across as clumsy and overstate the case a little. This leads to moments where you feel as if something has been missed, moments that could lift the piece out of the workmanlike to the poetic.

**Tom Wilson**

## MEDIA

### PRINT PUBLICATIONS

#### PUPPETS AND PERFORMING OBJECTS – A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Tina Bicat  
The Crowood Press  
ISBN 978 1 861269 60 7  
£14.99 Paperback  
www.crowood.com

The beauty of the Crowood Press practical guides is that they are just that: good solid hands-on accounts of performance practice in action; the hows, whys, and wherefores of the subject in hand. This welcome new volume is a classic example. Tina Bicat is not a specialist puppeteer – she is a highly experienced, creative designer and maker who works mostly in devised/visual theatre (see her article in this issue of Total Theatre Magazine). Her book, simply and brilliantly, explores 'how inventors and performers make and use puppets, objects, shadows and visual effects, and create theatre using these inanimate objects'. She brings to the subject an intelligent and pragmatic approach, taking us through the whole process from concept via the conventions of puppet theatre/object theatre to production decisions, to the rehearsal process, to the work of the designer/maker/ animator. Throughout she always holds on to both the fine detail and the bigger picture: How could this happen? How does this help to make good theatre? An essential purchase for anyone interested in the use of puppetry/ object animation in contemporary theatre.

#### THE WOOSTER GROUP WORKBOOK

Andrew Quick  
ISBN 978-0415353342  
£21.99 Paperback  
Routledge

Scripts and performance scores, scribbles, schematics, storyboards, photos, journal entries, scrapbook collages, director's notes, stage managers' logs, research material, interviews... If you are a fan of The Wooster Group – New York-based doyens of multi-disciplined, multi-layered, postmodern theatre – you'll lap it all up. And for anyone interested in contemporary theatre and performance, this material is a valuable resource and an insight into the working methods of one of contemporary theatre's innovators, Wooster Group's director Elizabeth LeCompte. Meaty, beaty, big, and bouncy. Worth buying as such good value – nearly 300pp or words and pictures for your money!

#### SACRED THEATRE

Ed. Ralph Yarrow  
Intellect Books - Theatre and Consciousness series  
ISBN 978-1841501536  
£19.95 Paperback

Ralph Yarrow's book is something of a puzzle. Perhaps we here at Total Theatre Magazine have a different concept of

what 'sacred theatre' might be? We wouldn't necessarily expect to find Pinter, Ionesco, Caryl Churchill, and Tom Stoppard at the heart of the question, but here they all are... A sample line from the section on Churchill's *Cloud Nine*: 'the sacredness of theatre... unfolds within the space of subjectivity created within the decontingenzing of the subject through a dis-identification of fixed roles.' Hmm. More understandable to your academically-challenged book reviewer is the inclusion of an interesting reflection on Bataille/Genet by Yarrow and Carl Lavery; and Franc Chamberlain's practice-informed reflection on Grotowski, Nunez, and Gardzienice; with some welcome words (in plain English) from John Fox of Welfare State International/Dead Good Guides. Oddly, Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba, Augusto Boal and Guillermo Gomez-Pena hardly get a look-in in this book; and there is an extraordinary lack of consideration of non-European theatre. Interesting in parts, but the excess of such words as 'liminality' tag it as one for the performance studies clan rather than performance practitioners.

*Publications reviewed by Dorothy Max Prior*

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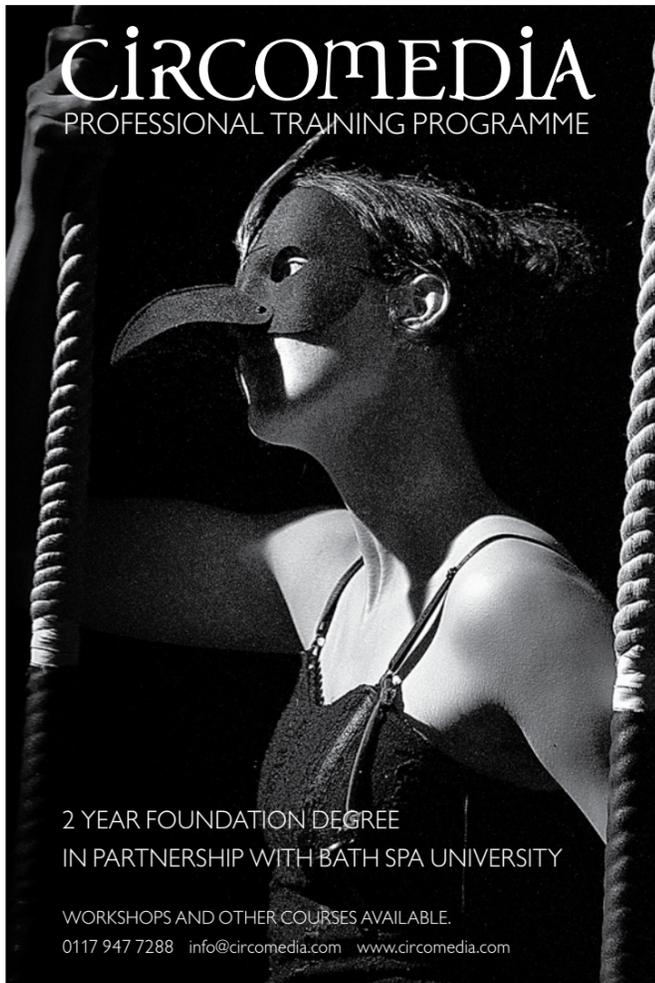
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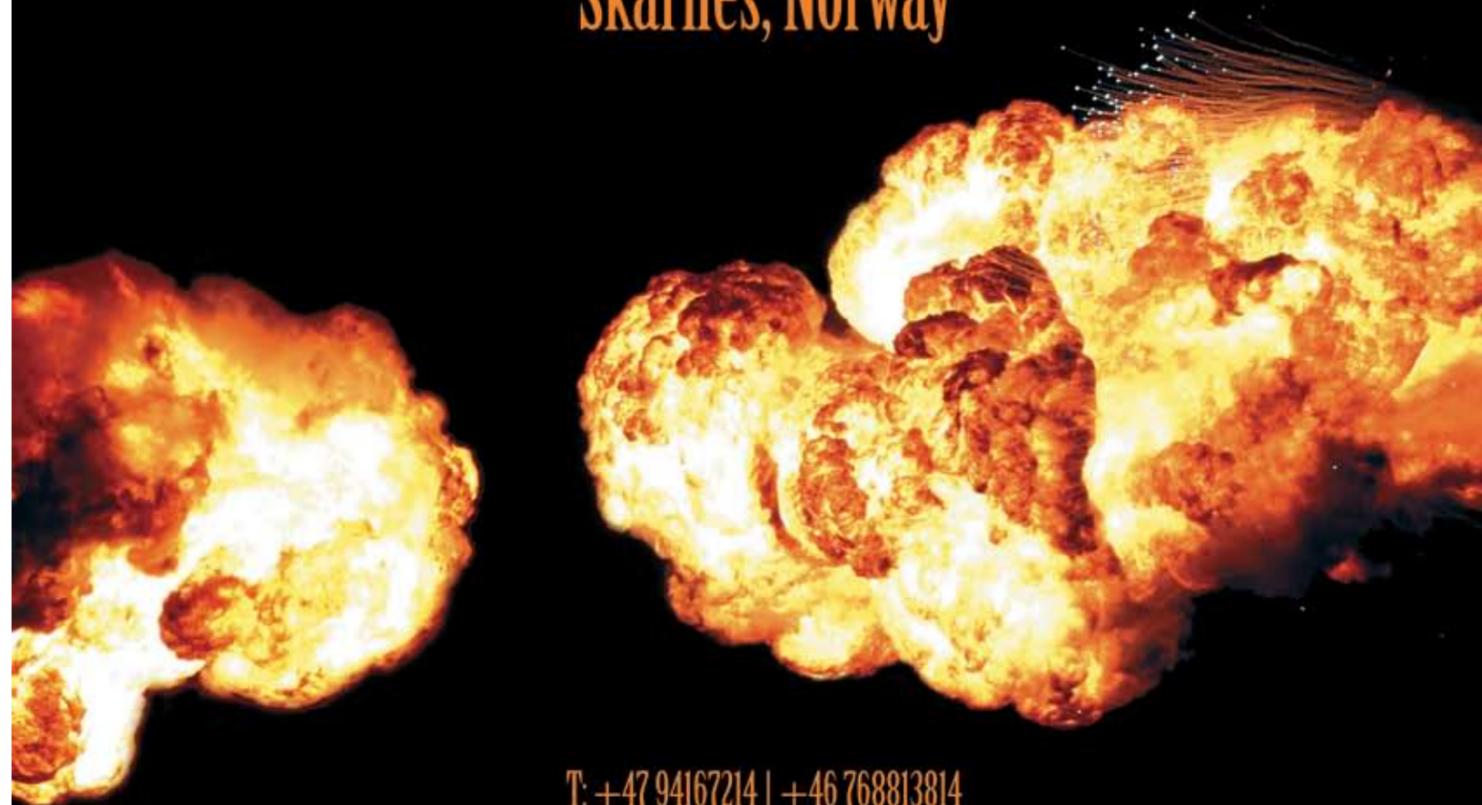
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