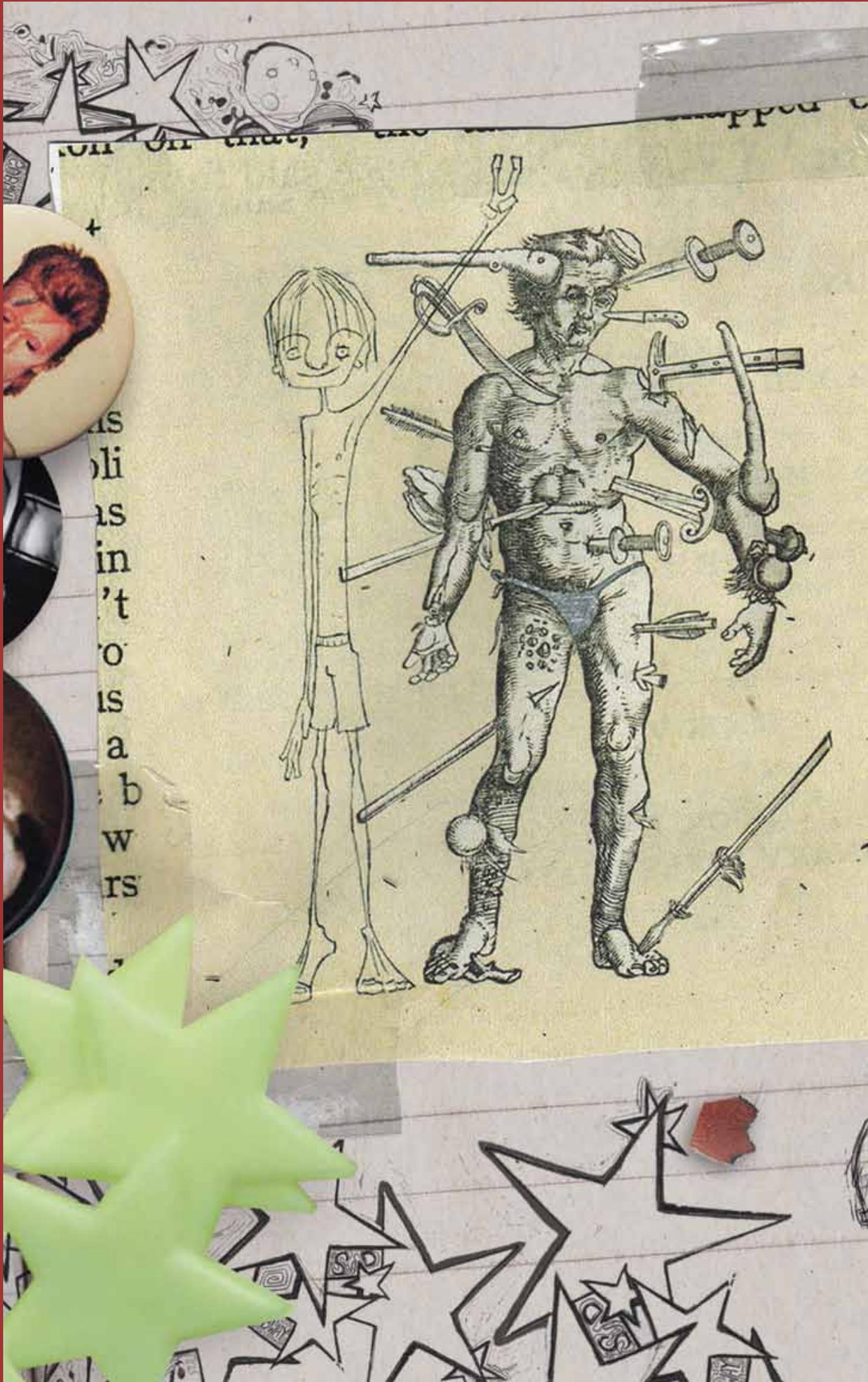


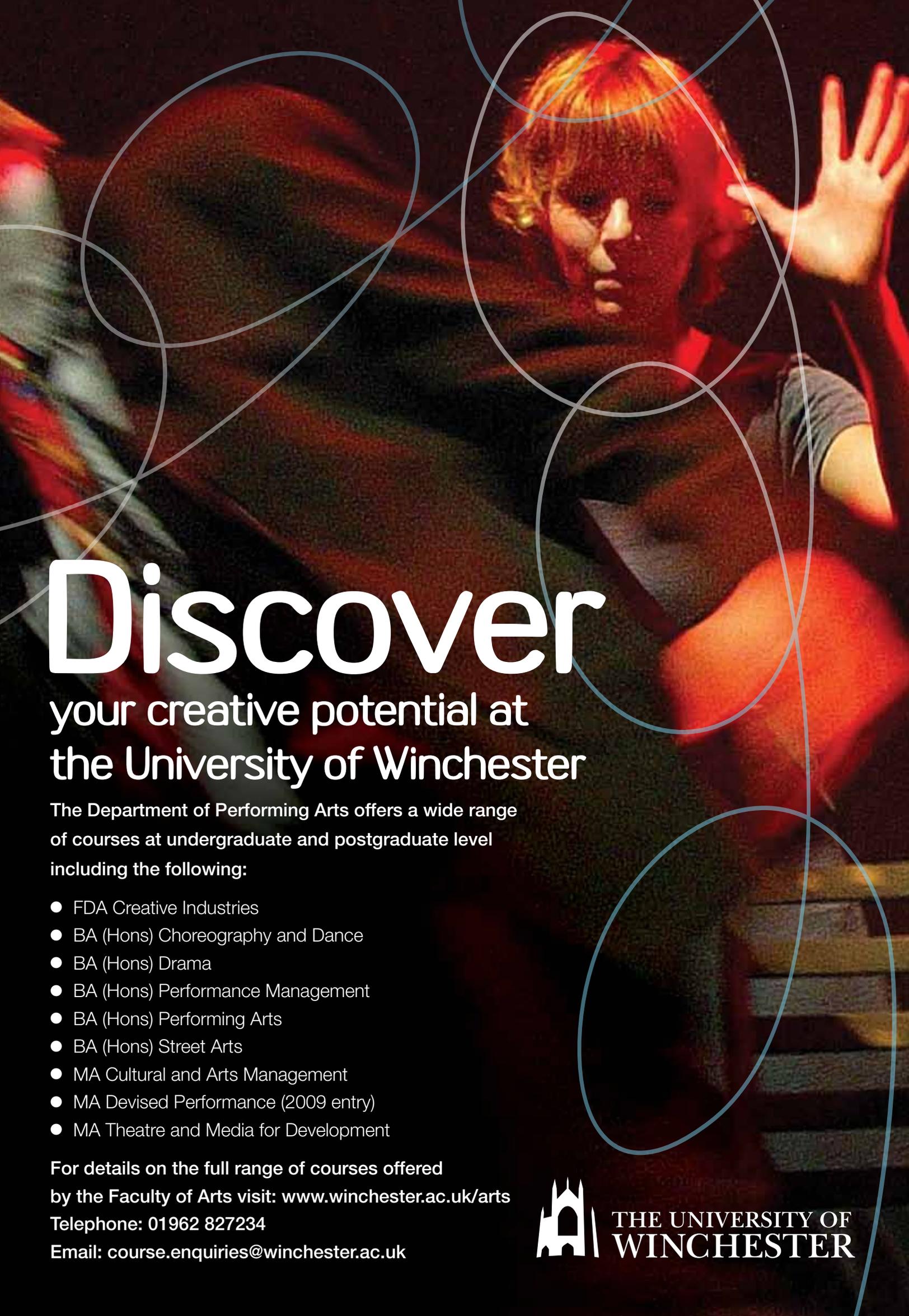
# TOTALTHEATRE

## MAGAZINE

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TOTALTHEATRE - DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE



THE TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE SUMMER PICNIC HAMPER - LOTS OF GOODIES INSIDE  
STREET ARTS: THE NEXT GENERATION - BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS BLAZE THE TRAIL  
URBAN SURPRISES - GET THE STORY ON FRENCH PRANKSTERS ICI-MEME  
QUEER UP NORTH STAR URSULA MARTINEZ REVEALS ALL  
MEET MARK DOWN OF BLIND SUMMIT THEATRE AND THEIR PUPPET CREATION SHUN-KIN  
WHAT'S EVERYBODY DOING AT THE NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART? FIND OUT INSIDE  
WHAT A SITE! A TALE OF UNDERGROUND CAVERNS AND MULTI-STORY CAR PARKS  
PLUS: REVIEWS AND REPORTS FROM THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL,  
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24 Kensington Street  
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## EDITORIAL

Our summer issue heralds the arrival of the outdoor performance high season. Starting in May with festivals such as Big in Falkirk, Brighton, and Norfolk & Norwich, the summer months continue with a plethora of events in all corners of the land.

Total Theatre Magazine has, for many years, been a staunch supporter of street arts and outdoor performance. It seems appropriate to think for a moment here about what it is about this body of very different sorts of practices falling into the 'outdoor arts' category that makes it of such interest. Of course, there's the fact that events are often unticketed, and presented in public spaces, thus bringing live arts to people who may not otherwise have that experience.

But it is also that the relationship with the audience is so very different outdoors, where there is a lot of potential distraction, and people have the option of walking away if they don't like you. This view is reflected in Matt Feerick's article on his company Wet Picnic, emerging artists on the street arts circuit. This article is part of a special feature called Street Arts: The Next Generation that celebrates the work of young artists, and flags up new training opportunities in street arts/outdoor performance. Meanwhile, across the channel, French companies such as Ici-Même have been exploring the power of trickster theatre and interventions in public spaces, here documented by Charlotte Smith. We also have an article by Meyhrdad Seyf on two very different site-responsive projects that originated in the East of England region. Another sort of site (and thus another sort of audience relationship) is a circus tent – and we have a report this issue from the Cirque de Demain festival in Paris, in which the brightest new stars of contemporary circus show their wares. We also have an interview with Ursula Martinez, an artist whose work has crossed the boundaries of many sorts of audience relationship – from the circus-cabaret success of *La Clique* to the extraordinary immersive theatre event *Office Party*. Her latest show *My Stories, Your Emails* premieres at Queer Up North, May 2009.

In all of the above-mentioned work, the relationship with the audience is rather different to that of so-called 'traditional theatre'. Far from being passive observers, audience members are drawn into an active engagement with the artists and their work. Our reports from the National Review of Live Art highlight examples of work which expects a little more of the spectator – although this does raise issues, explored here, of what the 'contract' with an audience actually is outside of a seated theatre setting, where they have the choice to move on. Does this mean, in some cases, that people are taking a TV-generation channel-flicking approach to the 'consumption' of live arts?

I was interested to read a recent interview with The Globe's director Dominic Dromgoole (by Brian Logan, Independent on Sunday 3 May 2009) in which Dromgoole points out that two aspects of the Globe are key to how the performance must work: the architecture (round, open to the sky) and the audience (boisterous, free to move around). He points out that in daylight there is an equanimity between actors and audience – you can't use the lighting to focus attention: "we all do something collaboratively in the light together".

It's a timely reminder that the model of theatre that we have come to think of as the norm – a black box into which we silently creep and sit cloaked in invisibility, being passively entertained or educated from behind a 'fourth wall' – is in fact just one little avenue of practice that has developed in one pocket of time in some parts of the world.

Far from being a quirky branch of performance practice, street arts, outdoor performance and site-responsive theatre is actually at the heart of theatre practice. Which is why we give it so much attention! That this work is crucial to contemporary arts practice is being reflected in the news, as we go to press, of the unveiling of Punchdrunk's latest project – a site-specific collaboration with the Old Vic called Tunnel 228, set under the arches of Waterloo Station. There are whinges about Punchdrunk 'going mainstream' but we say good, about time – and great to see Kevin Spacey involved in the support of 'total theatre'!

We hope you enjoy this summer issue of Total Theatre Magazine, and as always welcome feedback and suggestions for future content.

### Dorothy Max Prior

Editor

magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk

### TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE

Editor

**DOROTHY MAX PRIOR**

magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk

Editorial Forum

**ROBERT AYERS**

**FRANC CHAMBERLAIN**

**RICHARD CUMING**

**ANTHONY DEAN**

**BARRY EDWARDS**

**MARIGOLD HUGHES**

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**LAURA LLOYD**

**BECCY SMITH**

**EDWARD TAYLOR**

**MISCHA TWITCHIN**

**CASSIE WERBER**

**TOM WILSON**

Listings Editor

**JOHN ELLINGSWORTH**

listings@totaltheatre.org.uk

Reviews Editor

**BECCY SMITH**

Advertising &

Subscriptions Manager

**CHRISTIAN FRANCIS**

info@totaltheatre.org.uk

advertising@totaltheatre.org.uk

Design

**STUDIO TONNE**

studio@studiotonne.com

Printing

**ANDUS**

andus@mistral.co.uk

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Faculty of Arts

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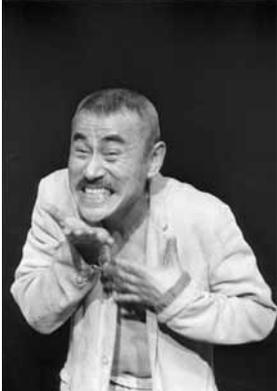
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### CONTACT DETAILS

Administration:  
Total Theatre Magazine  
University of Winchester  
Faculty of Arts  
Winchester  
SO22 4NR  
[info@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:info@totaltheatre.org.uk)  
Tel: 01962 827092

### Editorial:

Total Theatre Magazine  
The Basement @ Argus Lofts  
24 Kensington Street  
Brighton BN1 4AJ  
Tel: 07752 142526  
[magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk)

# TELLING STORIES

## DOROTHY MAX PRIOR MEETS CULT CABARET DIVA URSULA MARTINEZ, WHOSE NEW THEATRE SHOW PREMIERES AT QUEERUPNORTH



*"I'm delighted to be embraced by the mainstream without having to compromise who I am and what I do"*

A woman works her way through the crowd at *La Clique*. She's dressed in a white bikini, wearing a shaggy blonde wig, fag in hand, grinning, grooving to the music. When she reaches the podium, the act that follows is minimal but perfectly pitched: a bit of go-go dancing, then each triangle of the bikini is in turn lit by the cigarette, breasts and crotch bursting into flame as the dancer grins cheekily and winks at her audience. In the telling it sounds very slight: in the witnessing, *Light My Fire* is a rich act that holds the audience captivated. This is Ursula Martinez – writer, performer and cult cabaret diva. Or at least, this is one of the many personae of Ursula Martinez...

A middle-class girl of Anglo-Spanish heritage, Ursula Martinez was raised in Norwood in South London (a stone's throw from Croydon – the subject of another of her hilarious cabaret turns, a flamenco skit on the joys of South London multiculturalism where 'Cordoba meets Cor Blimey'). She made her name in the 90s on the queer cabaret circuit, appearing at Screamers, Club Bent, and Vauxhall Tavern, and later in Duckie shows *The Class Club*, and the award-winning *C'est Vauxhall*.

Ursula had originally trained in theatre, and on leaving Lancaster University worked with both Forced Entertainment and the Glee Club, but in the early years of her career had 'lacked the courage' to create her own theatre work. It was the experience of creating cabaret work that led to her having the confidence to make her own theatre work. Her first show was *A Family Outing*, which was created in collaboration with writer/director Mark Whitelaw. It proved a fruitful partnership.

She points out, when I meet with her, that people tend to think of her as a solo artist, but her theatre work is collaborative. Not just in the making (all the 'Ursula Martinez' theatre pieces to date have been created with Mark Whitelaw), but also in the performing, for she usually shares the stage with others – that first show, *A Family Outing*, famously featured her parents, Arthur and Mila, appearing on stage with her in an exploration of family relationships.

The show premiered in 1998 at queerupnorth in Manchester, and Ursula speaks of the "absolutely electric" atmosphere as the three of them took to the stage for the first time for "an extraordinary moment when anything could happen".

Whilst neither parent is a performer, both being teachers, Papa Arthur, I learn, had in fact already featured in Ursula's performance work. He was, she says, a physics teacher at Norwood Tech, where he was famous locally for his energised experiments and lecture-demonstrations, and was persuaded to present his science experiments at Duckie, with his daughter as his lab assistant. From there to inviting him and her mother Mila to appear in her first show. "They loved it" she says, 'and want to know when they'll be in another show!"

*A Family Outing* was the first of what was to become a trilogy of works – the second being *Show Off*, and the third *OAP*. All three are co-written by Martinez and Whitelaw, and directed by Mark Whitelaw. *Show Off* 'exposes the myth of celebrity and questions the notion of identity and the performing ego, both on and off stage', and *OAP* 'presents her fears and paranoia about growing old alongside some comforting, harsh and illuminating words from those with first-hand experience'.

The cabaret turns that have been delighting audiences for more than a decade also get incorporated into the performance text of her theatre work. The magnificent *Hanky Panky*, in which magic and striptease combine seamlessly in one of the cleverest pieces you are likely to encounter on the cabaret circuit, made its way into *Show Off* – and is now being revisited in Ursula's new show, *My Stories, Your Emails*, which premieres at this year's queerupnorth (May 2009) before moving on to a run at The Barbican in London.

The Barbican are long-time supporters of her work. Following their programming of the Duckie shows she starred in (*The Class Club*, and *C'est Vauxhall*, which was renamed *C'est Barbican*) they then presented the re-staging of her own trilogy under the new title of *Me Me Me* (2006), and, in 2007, commissioned *Office Party*, an immersive theatre experience which blurs the boundaries between 'performer' and 'audience', which Ursula made with long-term friend and collaborator Chris Green (aka Tina C and Ida Barr), and director Cal McCrystal. The Barbican, she says, have been wonderfully supportive: "*Office Party* was a complicated and unpredictable show, and they took the risk. I feel privileged to be part of what they are doing". They are now (with Queer Up North) co-commissioners of the new show, *My Stories, Your Emails*.

2

**MY STORIES**

*"I used to chew my fingers until they bled and then stick them into my Mum's hot chicken gibleet soup to numb the pain. I still make my fingers bleed occasionally, but my Mum hasn't made chicken gibleet soup since 1979."* **Ursula Martinez**

As with *Office Party* and the earlier work that forms the trilogy, in *My Stories, Your Emails* Ursula's cabaret acts are used as material to be explored within the context of the new theatre show. The two main strands of her work have run side-by-side over the past decade, with the cabaret work reaching a zenith in her appearances in the hit show *La Clique*, first seen in the Famous Spiegeltent at Brighton and Edinburgh festivals, and now in residence at London's Hippodrome

in the heart of showland, Leicester Square. Ursula is "delighted to be embraced by the mainstream without having to compromise who I am and what I do" and is glad it has all happened organically. "I didn't dream of having my name in lights in the West End, but it happened anyway. I've never known where any of it was going – I simply had ideas and then gone ahead and done it." She expresses slight surprise that everything has somehow gone to plan without there being a plan – and in particular has welcomed the fact that her newfound status as a revered female performer has made her the subject of many a student dissertation, and a frequent guest lecturer at numerous academic institutions. It is all, she says looking round at our fellow occupants of London's Groucho Club, "very grown-up – when did that happen?"

3



The new show, *I learn*, is conceived as being in two separate parts. The first part, the 'stories', are taken from Ursula's own autobiographical writings from the past ten years. "They work a little like jokes", she says, "each with something that is almost a punchline – or sometimes a surreal footnote." The second part of the show, the 'emails', are just that: emails from assorted fans, unsolicited and sent in response to a YouTube posting of *Hanky Panky*. (Ursula had nothing to do with that posting, she makes clear!)

Both 'stories' and 'emails' will be read aloud by Ursula, who will, in this instance, be the lone performer in the show. The audience are free to form their own associations and connections between the two sections – although in dramaturgical terms, the structure of the show invites a sense of 'before' and 'after' that links the two sections: Martinez' life 'before' her magic striptease became a global, viral phenomena and 'after'. The reading aloud, she feels, is a crucial choice, a decision taken at the start of the process: "I am not an actor, and I don't particularly like 'acting'. Reading is of course a performative act, but what it says is 'this is what I'm doing, reading to you, I'm not pretending...'" She also says, with an ironic smile, that perhaps it is a "Brechtian choice - showing the edges of theatre."

The exploration of the email response to the YouTube *Hanky Panky* posting started with an appearance at David Gale's *Peachy Coochy*, which is one of Arts Admin's current hit projects. At each *Peachy Coochy Nite*, a projector projects 20 images for precisely 20 seconds each, whilst the 'coocheur' speaks for precisely twenty seconds per image on their chosen subject. Ursula has been using this format to share the email responses she has been receiving, which vary, she says, from the mildly odd to the outright obscene. And no, she won't share the most outrageous of those here as she feels that context is all "what is right onstage, in a live performance, isn't necessarily right if extracted and placed on the page" – although she is kind enough to subsequently send me a few examples of stories and emails...

4

**YOUR EMAILS**

*"Hi gorgeous Ursula. It's a nice feeling to know that you will read my message. The reason I'm writing to you is that I'm a great admirer of yours. Your body is stunning. I think we can become friends and I could reveal you all my fantasies. Would you like to? Let me know and I'll send you a pic of me. Please I'm begging you on my knees to become friends. Kiss you everywhere."* **Constantino**

IMAGE 1 | *MY STORIES, YOUR EMAIL.*  
PHOTO HUGO GLENDINNING  
IMAGE 2-4 | *HANKY PANKY.*  
PHOTOS ORI LATTER & SHEKHAR BHATIA



*"It's important to me to touch base with the community that first took notice of me. Queerupnorth were really influential in launching my career"*

Ursula says that she is very much looking forward to the May premiere in Manchester: "I feel ready, excited." The staging will be "minimal – static almost". It'll involve some video including the screening of that infamous YouTube post, but will mostly be Ursula reading the texts. The performance will come through the delivery of the texts, and she is, she says, "confident that I'm at a point at which that feels right".

She is also delighted that she will once again be part of queerupnorth: "It's important to me to touch base with the community that first took notice of me. Queer Up North were really influential in launching my career; they championed me – booked *A Family Outing* unseen, even though I hadn't done a theatre show before."

Which brings us to the question of sexual identity: "I have always been open about my sexuality within my work, which will naturally draw in a queer audience" she says. But she has never made work about her sexuality or geared it specifically towards a queer audience, and this, she feels, is the key to her broad appeal. When in her twenties, her lesbian identity was at the heart of her self-image, whereas now, she says, she identifies as "first a human being, then an artist, then a woman, and then as lesbian."

The "first a human being" mantra manifests itself in the love of the audience that is so evident in her work – in fact, could be seen as the factor that pulls together the disparate strands of her practice (that and the humour that permeates all her work). That she "loves being on stage" is apparent; and it is not surprising to learn also that she "loves people – I'm a starrer on the Tube, I watch people all the time, and I ask people personal questions to get at the nitty-gritty".

In all her work, she is so completely in the here and now, so completely engaged with whomever, as audience, is there to share this moment with her, that we are drawn into the 'play' wholeheartedly. Reading stories or stripping; playing flamenco guitar or literally burning her bra; tabletop dancing as a Mexican wrestler or interviewing older women about the effects of ageing – whatever she's doing, she does with complete engagement.

"The only thing you can say I've been aiming for all these years is a positive response," she says. That I think I can safely say is what she'll receive, wherever she might venture next. Viva Croydon! Viva La Martinez!

*Ursula Martinez was interviewed in London, March 2009, by Dorothy Max Prior. Further information taken from the artist's website. See [www.ursulamartinez.com](http://www.ursulamartinez.com)*

*My Stories, Your Emails is commissioned by barbicanbite10, London and Queer Up North International Festival, where it premieres 13–16 May 2009 at the Library Theatre, Manchester. See [www.queerupnorth.com](http://www.queerupnorth.com)*

See also:

Duckie 'Performers+Pop+Poofters': [www.duckie.co.uk](http://www.duckie.co.uk)

La Clique at The Hippodrome: [www.lacliquelondon.com](http://www.lacliquelondon.com)

For more on Peachy Coochy Nites, see [www.artsadmin.co.uk](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk)



## MORE ON QUEER UP NORTH 12–25 MAY 2009

Over 100 artists and performers meet in Manchester for Europe's leading queer arts festival. This year's programme includes productions from Italy, South Africa, Canada, USA, and the UK. The Belgian Spiegeltent La Gayola pitches in Manchester for the final four days of the festival. A continuous programme of cabaret, music, circus, dance, comedy and pure pleasure will bring the festival to a close (May 22–25).

Theatre highlights include: Ursula Martinez (see above feature); Chris Goode, who premieres *The Adventures of Wound Man* and Shirley, a queer, superhero, bedtime tale for grown-ups featuring animation from Adam Smith (Contact Theatre, various dates up until 23 May). A Queer Up North co-production and commission, *Wound Man* also tours nationally. Celebrated South African performance artist Steven Cohen makes his UK debut with a sixty-minute programme blending choreography, documentary film and finely-wrought costumes, including his visually extraordinary signature piece *Chandelier*. (16–17 May, Martin Harris Centre).

The exquisite Victoria Baths will be transformed with light and sound for the world's first underwater opera by Los Angeles soprano Juliana Snapper and Parisian composer Andrew Infanti. (17 May).

Other highlights include: Italian theatre company Motus; the extraordinary circus-cabaret performer Empress Stah; and New York's celebrated Taylor Mac with his poignant autobiographical show *The Young Ladies Of...* (Library Theatre 12–16 May).

For full details, and to book online, see [www.queerupnorth.com](http://www.queerupnorth.com)

IMAGE 1 | TAYLOR MAC  
IMAGE 2 | STEVEN COHEN  
IMAGE 3 | CHRIS GOODE

# VOICES

## MARK DOWN OF BLIND SUMMIT THEATRE SHEDS LIGHT ON THEIR COLLABORATION WITH SIMON MCBURNEY IN COMPLICITE'S SHUN-KIN

**It started with a casual phone message.** Are Nick and I free tomorrow to meet? [Blind Summit Theatre is led by Nick Barnes and Mark Down.] Simon McBurney was charming, we drank coffee, he showed us a strange book of Japanese mannequins, we discussed Japanese aesthetics, the darker side of the human brain, the odd aspects of Japanese sexuality – vending machines selling schoolgirls' knickers and whatever – and that was it, he said "see you next week" – we were working with him.

**Shun-Kin used two texts by Japanese writer Tanizaki as a starting point.** One was *A Portrait of Shun-kin*; the other *In Praise of Shadows*, in which 'light' and 'darkness' are seen to represent Western and Asian cultures. In Tanizaki's view, the West is continuously searching for light and clarity; oriental art and literature favour shadow and subtlety.

**Simon went off and left me with the Japanese cast for a week!** Having started off the process, he left me alone to workshop ideas. I came in and had everything – stage managers, designers, cast, translators – and I thought, "Wow, this is great!".

**Puppetry is a marriage of design with performance.**

**I took in some puppets, and some arms and legs and heads.** I just did what Blind Summit do – play. The puppets were ones we had used in our show *Mr China's Son*.

**Whatever you take into the room gets cast – so Blind Summit puppets are a bit like actors, they get to play a variety of roles.**

**It's good working with pre-made puppets.** Because what it looks like is imposed, what you do is determined by what you use to do it.

**Shun-Kin herself is part-woman part-child.** She evolved from the child puppet in *Madama Butterfly* [Blind Summit created the puppetry for Anthony Minghella's acclaimed opera production], and from a character called Qiyan in *Mr China's Son*. She has the head of a child and the body of a woman.

**Simon fell in love with her.** He's not the first to fall in love with a puppet girl....

**The only principle of Complicite is to turn**

**up.** Then, whatever happens, happens.

**I sit and watch the actors play.** I give people almost no instructions. Eventually something odd and interesting happens (often it's a 'mistake', something falls over for example) and I say, "let's go with that". When you have a good idea, you know it – when it's bad, you just move on.

**There's a hundred thousand ways to solve any one problem.** Working in collaboration, you find ways that you might not have found on your own.

**You have to hold your own and be prepared to argue your case with Simon.** If I left him on his own with it for a day, he'd change things. So I made sure I was there all the time!

**Two people, two heads, two ideas on how to do everything!** But in many ways it is easy having a director and a puppet director work together. Simon is at the point in his life where it is probably a great relief to have someone who can be told "you take this part of it off my hands". I am able to say, "you look after the story, and I'll look after the puppetry".

**Nothing gets fixed, everything is flux.** The great thing with Complicite is that what you do on the last day of rehearsal is the same as what you do on the first day: play, improvise, do things, change things...

**People thought they knew what to expect from Complicite these days and this production threw them.** I feel that *Shun-Kin* has taken Complicite back to its heart – 'the body' rather than 'new technology'. The elemental forces, live music...

**There's never a finished product with Complicite.** I remember one night sitting in the auditorium with Simon who was talking through the show, still saying what should change. We got some tuts from our neighbours.

Complicite's *Shun-kin*, directed by Simon McBurney, opened with a short sell-out run in Tokyo in February 2008. It was then performed January – February 2009 at the Barbican, London, and in March 2009 Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo. Co-produced by Complicite, Setagaya Public Theatre and barbianbite09, London. [www.complicite.org](http://www.complicite.org)

A special note on *Shun-Kin* from Mark Down: "Nigoshichi Shimouma, who played Old Sasuke in the London revival, died suddenly from cancer in April shortly after the run in Tokyo finished. He was wonderful to work with and we will remember him fondly."

Blind Summit Theatre are led by Mark Down, actor and director, and Nick Barnes, designer and puppet maker.

Their current repertoire of 'new plays with puppets for adult audiences' includes *Low Life*, which has had many successful runs at BAC (where they were supported artists 2003-2004), at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and on numerous tours throughout the UK and worldwide.

Previous collaborations have included *On Emotion* (with On Theatre for Soho Theatre), *Faeries* (with Will Tuckett for the Royal Opera House); and *Madama Butterfly* (with Anthony Minghella/ENO/New York Met). *Madama Butterfly* returns to ENO, London 10 June–10 July 2009.

Their latest collaboration is *His Dark Materials*, which premiered March–April 2009 at Birmingham Rep, and now tours nationally until June 2009. Based on the books by Phillip Pullman, adapted by Nicholas Wright, directed by Rachel Kavanaugh, with puppetry design and direction by Blind Summit.

The company are currently working on an adaptation of George Orwell's *1984*, with Annie Siddons and BAC.

[www.blindsummit.com](http://www.blindsummit.com)

IMAGE | COMPLICITE'S SHUN-KIN, PUPPETRY BY BLIND SUMMIT

# URBAN SURPRISES

**SECRET AGENTS ON THE STREETS!  
CHARLOTTE SMITH LOOKS AT SOME INTERESTING  
ALTERNATIVES IN FRENCH OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE  
AND ART IN PUBLIC SPACES**

Have you heard about a new housing scheme called Chronoclub? Each dwelling fits snugly into a parking space, with ingenious furniture lowered from the ceiling. The homes can be rented by the hour, including luggage delivery and take-aways. In Paris, the scheme has attracted interest from town planners and the atmosphere is friendly, with barbecues by the beach huts. You may have even won a free night's trial of these new urban solutions before you realise that this is a theatrical hoax.

The companies devising this sort of work are the secret agents of street theatre. They don't operate with fireworks or fanfares, lighting or lantern processions, giant puppets or special effects. Instead, they infiltrate the everyday, the public space of the street, distorting the landscape subtly and provocatively. Their work is a 'theatre of mystification' using urban surprises and installations. Its history could be traced back to Augusto Boal's invisible theatre and the techniques range from video art to naturalistic acting, clowning to advertising, flashmobbing to gardening. But this is still a minority art – enacted by a few French companies in particular.

The street itself becomes a specific site, but one without tight boundaries. You may be tricked by a fake parking ticket planted by Ici-Même (creators of the above-mentioned *Chronoclub*), or notice surreal street furniture such as tea fountains, goldfish lamps, showers or phone boxes that ring to tell stories. Opéra Pagai have created a series of 'entreprises de détournement' (diversion or hijacking projects) including cars where you can grow plants and flowers. People are taken in to different degrees – one man says he's working on a new building design with a strong natural element, so suggests they swap business cards. Kumulus brought the *Squames*, a spoof species of humanoids (a cross between monkeys and humans), down from the central European mountains, where (it was claimed) they faced extinction.

Arguably, France has a head start when it comes to street arts, which have been flourishing over the past three decades. Festivals including Aurillac, Chalon sur Saône and Sotteville-lès-Rouen are internationally renowned. Lieux publics is a national base in Marseille that also runs the In Situ network across Europe. The resource centre Hors les Murs started in the early 1990s, and the Sorbonne offers a Masters in cultural projects in public spaces. A long



list of companies creating original street theatre includes Royal de Luxe, Ilotopie, Théâtre de l'Unité and Les Goulus. State funding may have enabled this type of work to be produced when private sponsors would prefer conventional venues. Political protest also had a strong influence on the development of street theatre in the 1970s, even if this has waned.

However, Christophe Blandin-Estournet, artistic director of the Excentrique festival in central France, rejects the traditional label of 'street arts', saying: "These are site-specific projects, including cinema, art, cooking, and can take place in a flat, garage or park. I feel artistically closer to groups like Station House Opera than to large processions." He also avoids the usual commercial or festival logic and prefers to talk about 'population' or inhabitants instead of 'audience'. Excentrique therefore works throughout the year with people in the region, with the productions surfacing as a visible moment during the seven weeks of the festival.

Variable locations and generous support have made it possible to programme work using hoaxes and rumour. For example, at the prestigious international garden festival at Chaumont-sur-Loire, Jérôme Poulain led nocturnal guided tours last year. Visitors only found out on the way that these were slightly clandestine, turning unexpectedly into a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the regional president. Another project smuggled clowns into towns: the clowns went about a



daily routine of work, school, shopping, residents' meetings etc. for a fortnight without any publicity or information to say that this was Excentrique.

Pierre Sauvageot, director of aforementioned Lieux publics, is another leading figure in French 'arts de la rue' who feels that there has been significant change in recent times "We have stopped using the term 'street arts' because people say it's pejorative, so we say 'art in public spaces'." Such work often thrives on the blurring of identities of performers within their chosen environment.

Ici-Même have almost succeeded too well in blurring their identity. The name is an everyday expression meaning 'right here', and the collective in Belleville, Paris could be confused with another company in Grenoble, spoken-word producers in Nantes and a funk-rock band from Moulon. Ici-Même began, in 1993, as a group of artists, architects and scenographers. Mark Etc, the founder and artistic director, had a background in outdoor video art and militant politics. An early project called *Retour au paysage (Return to the landscape)* looked at immigration and segregation in Marseilles and Morocco, with installations using mirrors, minarets and western cars.

The company's more recent work is at a 'crossroads of disciplines'. They reached a turning-point where the visual work began to seem ephemeral compared with the heavy urban machinery around it. So they moved on from slightly angelic or facile subjects to a new combination of theatre and art. Instead of one-off pieces, the productions can be reproduced and tour, and may be funny, topical and gently subversive. The three main authors are Mark Etc, Eric Ménard and Nataska Roublov, but Ici-Même currently has fourteen members scattered across Europe, who regroup when possible.

This type of work is not easy to produce or finance. Language is an issue: for example, the characters of salespeople and tenants in *Chronoclub* might need to be adapted by native speakers, or the audience would not be taken in. The technical side, such as building a cluster of new houses, may be complicated and costly. Established venues may prefer to concentrate on in-house, indoor productions or question the quality of this type of work. Upfront funding is needed because ticket sales spoil the hoax.

These considerations may partly explain why such theatre is perceived to be relatively rare in the UK. It can also be argued that it was a strong element of 70s street arts and performance art, but perhaps seemed to fall by the wayside within regular 'street arts' practice as the UK focused on 'professionalising' street arts. However, it remained a crucial element of 'performance art / live art / experimental theatre' and is currently a growing area of practice. Pierre Sauvageot, citing UK artists of interest, mentions 'landscape theatre' company Wildworks (who grew out of Kneehigh Theatre); Richard Dedomenici, a trickster-ish 'live art' performer who describes himself as "Gadfly|Trimtab|Quipnunc"; and Dot Comedy, an established 'street arts' company whose hoaxes include their spoof *Car Boot Sale*, the *News Desk*, and the *(Mis)Information Tent*.

The latest hoax by Ici-Même is *Streetbooming*, an apocryphal sort of flash mobbing. It looks at participation itself in the digital age, and how 'activism' has been confiscated by advertising. People are told where to meet by text or email and take part in a spontaneous event, not knowing that they are being manipulated. "We have actors hidden in the audience, so there's a play within a play, or rather a play within a happening," explains Mark Etc. "On one level, we all improvise street stories, playing parts of the same character. But we add another dimension so that people can see contradictions, the reality of society – we are not just sheep."

*Streetbooming* is similar to other mystifications, but the audience is more active. "People don't know it's fake, but we are not there to laugh or exploit their credulity. It's not a hidden camera. Everyone takes away their own opinion, but we want them to react, to debate and think. The aim is not just to guess whether it's true or false. With *Chronoclub*, we wanted the audience to realise that the tenants were more like victims, disadvantaged, abused, that this type of commercial housing is very close to reality, and perhaps we should do something. But we went away without saying that it was theatre. We always thought that wouldn't add anything."

## WALK THIS WAY

Ici-Même: [www.icimeme.info](http://www.icimeme.info)

Opéra Pagai: [www.operapagai.com](http://www.operapagai.com)

Excentrique and Jérôme Poulain: [www.excentrique.org](http://www.excentrique.org)

Compagnie Kumulus' Squames and other projects: [www.kumulus.fr](http://www.kumulus.fr)

France's national resource centre and development agency for street arts and circus is Hors Les Murs. [www.horslesmurs.fr](http://www.horslesmurs.fr)

Lieux publics is a national creation centre based in Marseilles. Lieux publics also leads the European producers' network In Situ. See [www.lieuxpublics.fr](http://www.lieuxpublics.fr)

Richard Dedomenici's 'temporary website' (he claims the real one was hacked and deleted by bored 14 year-olds and/or governmental cyberterrorists): [www.dedomenici.co.uk](http://www.dedomenici.co.uk)

Wildworks: [www.wildworks.biz](http://www.wildworks.biz)

Dot Comedy: [www.dotcomedy.co.uk](http://www.dotcomedy.co.uk)

For more on UK street arts and outdoor performance see: Independent Street Arts Network (ISAN) is an independent group of presenters and promoters of street arts throughout the UK working to develop the artform. [www.streetartsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.streetartsnetwork.org.uk)

National Association of Street Artists (NASA) is a national network of UK-based artists and companies creating work for the street and other outdoor contexts. [www.nasauk.org](http://www.nasauk.org)

IMAGE 1 | ICI-MÊME STREETBOOMING  
IMAGE 2 | EXCENTRIQUE / JEROME POULAIN.  
PHOTO XAVIER OLIVIERO  
IMAGE 3-5 | ICI-MÊME CHRONOCLUB / HIGHLIGHTING

# STREET ARTS – THE NEXT GENERATION

## LIFE'S A PICNIC

**MATT FEERICK OF WET PICNIC IS ONE OF THE BRIGHT NEW STARS OF STREET ARTS. HERE, HE EXPLAINS HOW THE COMPANY CAME INTO BEING, AND WHERE HE HOPES THEY ARE HEADING**

It started in a pub. We were searching for a name for the theatre company we were going to form. At the time the name was more important than the work we were planning to create. After a long game of word association and a little fingering of the dictionary, we found we had come up with two names. One was entirely inappropriate and so we chose the second. Wet Picnic.

There were four of us: me, Penny Patrick, Graeme Cockburn, and Russell Kellaway, who all began as a group of students at the University of Winchester and decided that rather than heading to London with everyone else, we would set up a company, stay in Winchester and create work that we wanted to create – and try to find a way in which we could all be employed regularly.

So, we did.

We were lucky enough to receive a business start-up grant from the University of Winchester. Which not only gave us a little bit of momentum to start the company but also demanded we really look at how we were going to make work and support ourselves as artists. It forced us to look at things from a business point of view as well as an artistic one. To begin with, we were totally lost, and also a little scared that we had to learn how to be business people when all we wanted to do was create art. To date, we are still learning and still making a lot of mistakes as we try to marry making work with keeping a business stable and operating effectively.

It was here we met Hat Fair (Winchester's legendary street arts and outdoor performance festival) and they encouraged us to step into street theatre. Together with the money we had received from our business start-up grant they helped us to develop our first few street acts. Having just come out of university with very little experience of creating work for a real public we were all a little worried that our ideas were not going to be good enough and our skills as performers were not going to match up to those who were working in street arts already. We were right. Our work was not as strong as those who were already out there, of course it wasn't – these guys had been working for a long time with tough crowds and in tough conditions.

But we were encouraged, our audiences were great, and we soon realised that one of the best theatrical training grounds is in the street, because if you aren't good enough then the audience just walk away.

Something that really pushed us on and helped to develop our work was the welcome that we received from the street arts community. Promoters and performers were quick to offer advice and opinions, and to hold our hands at events and new places. This gave us confidence and a place to feel safe and play.

Quickly we were performing at more festivals and more events, creating bespoke acts and taking our existing acts all over the place. It was clear that as summer came around we would need more Wet Picnic-ers to join us and start performing. So we auditioned and got some fantastic performers, some of whom still work with us, and some who've moved on to have much more successful careers than we do! They helped to develop our walkabouts (which include *Parsons, Parsons and Parsons*, and *The Not So Secret Service*); the static shows we started to create; and – most importantly – the way we create work as a group. More and more we are building a network of both indoor and outdoor venues that work with us regularly and commission new work. We have had the opportunity to try different styles; to work with puppetry, dance, physical theatre, text, mime and many other things. Some have stayed and some have gone. But as we enter a new stage of the company's development, we are now clearer about what it is that the company creates now, and will be creating in the future – both indoors and outdoors.

*“One of the best theatrical training grounds is in the street, because if you aren't good enough then the audience just walk away”*

There is a mix of performers and creators in the company, and backgrounds range from university degree training to schools such as Lecoq, The Circus Space, and Central School of Speech and Drama. This feeds into the mix of work that the company creates, and the way in which we create it. What we learn with outdoor performance is brought inside, and visa versa. Not all of the methods we use are in our final piece, but it is all part of the rehearsal process. We devise together, performers and a director (normally me, but

## HERE'S THREE MORE BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS WORKING IN OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE



**IMAGE 1 | WET PICNIC STREET ARTS SHOW *THE DINNER PARTY***  
**IMAGE 2 | WET PICNIC WALKABOUT *NOT SO SECRET SERVICE***  
**PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE COMPANY**

sometimes with a guest director such as Petra Massey from Spymonkey), with regular visits from Penny Patrick who works as our dramaturg.

At the end of 2008 we finished a tour of two new shows. Outdoors, we've presented *The Dinner Table*, which is set around a large table on wheels with eight seats. This piece has different options that include two walkabout shows and a static 'circle show'. Indoors, we've toured *Rodney Dillyweed's Undesirable Demise*, a dark tale of a boy trapped between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Both shows were heavily supported and received great responses that allowed us to really look at where Wet Picnic will be going in the future, who are the core group of people that really make the company move forwards, and how to we operate.

We've tested different ways of working on each show – we worked with an external director on *The Dinner Table*, and have worked with both new performers and familiar faces. We made a lot of mistakes making the shows, and so learned a lot, but we also built our networks and gained a much larger audience base. We got advice from ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network), and support from Café Culture (a Winchester-based initiative). We now feel able to evaluate the first few years that the company has been working together, to look at our practice, to plan and to rethink the company's journey.

We will be taking a mixture of shows out this summer. *The Dinner Table* will be visiting festivals across the UK, as well as there being two new commissions as yet unnamed, one specifically for Henley Festival and one which we hope to tour next year. We are also planning the R&D phase of our next indoor show, which will be devised as a company, as well as a larger static outdoor show for next summer. All of these projects are massively exciting in lots of ways – not only because we will be creating new work, but also because as a group we are building a company that can support our future and continue to create the work we want to create.

*Wet Picnic* are Matt Feerick (artistic director); Penny Patrick (dramaturg); and performers Judy Barrington Smuts, Graeme Cockburn, Charley Dubery, Kelly Reayner, and Julia Gwynne. See [www.wetpicnic.com](http://www.wetpicnic.com)



**Lucy Frost studies at Arden School of Theatre in Manchester, works with established street arts company Artizani, and is now starting up her own company, Molly Orange**

I'm a performer, designer, and stage manager who has studied trapeze, ballet, breakdancing, poi, gymnastics – and violin welding! I used to perform informally and never considered street arts as a career until I met James McPherson from Artizani, who taught on Arden's Performance Design & Management course. Until that point, what we'd learnt had been geared to regular, mainstream stage work. James opened my eyes to new worlds!

Working outdoors is different; and the scenography and design needs to reflect that. On a very practical level, there's a lot of small but significant details, like what materials are weatherproof, so you don't have things with running colours! From there, I started working for him – as a designer / maker (making moving lobsters etc) and then as a 'visible technician' on his show *Desert Island Discs*.

I have spent the past year collecting skills through workshops, such as clowning with Gerry Flanagan (director of *Desert Island Discs*); at a clown school in Hanover, Germany; and various aerial and acrobatics workshops at Skylight Circus Arts in Rochdale. I have been researching for my dissertation, *The Language of Street Theatre*, looking at storytelling techniques in unpredictable environments, interviewing practitioners, attending conferences, and generally submerging myself in the industry.

Performance-wise, with Artizani I am touring with *Desert Island Discs* for the second year and am working on a new project with Artizani's James Macpherson in August entitled *The Cabaret of Dr. Caligari*. This is an outdoor cabaret with the goal of launching young people with strong artistic ideas into the industry under the nurturing umbrella of a company with twenty years experience (and odd to think that Artizani was founded in the year I was born!). This will be touring the Lake District as part of Lakes Alive.

I have started my own company, Molly Orange Street Theatre, with another Arden graduate, Sian Haslock. Our first show is an acrobatic walkabout performance, *Spit Spot*, based on the characters of two street cleaners – a surreal walkabout. We have a few bookings this year including Feast / x.trax showcase in June, and have contacted the Arts Council about Grants for the Arts funding.

For Artizani at x.trax, see [www.xtrax.co.uk](http://www.xtrax.co.uk)

Lakes Alive is a summer-long programme of outdoor events in Cumbria. See [www.lakesalive.org](http://www.lakesalive.org)

Contact Molly Orange on [molly.orange@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:molly.orange@yahoo.co.uk)



MILO FOSTER-PRIOR FIRE HAZE

**Milo Foster-Prior graduates this summer from the UK's first foundation degree in Street, Festival and Site Specific Arts. As Deputy Stage Manager with Periplum, he's worked at many of the major UK street arts festivals, and toured to Mexico**

I went to the Brighton Steiner School, where there's a lot of emphasis on art and drama. When I was 15 I did my GCSE work experience with Same Sky, making large sculptural puppets for the children's parade that opens the Brighton Festival. I got taken to a lot of festivals as a child, and at one some-one lent me her firestaff. I did my first fire performance when I was about 11 – Flaming Gorgeous (stilts/pyro company) were doing a show, and I was allowed to do some spinning. When I was 16, I co-founded a small company called Spin Out, doing mostly firestaff and poi. One of our first bookings was a New Year's Eve fireshow at a country mansion – we got paid £75 each! I dropped out of sixth form, and worked with Cultures Club, as a trainee theatre workshop leader; also leading circus skills workshops, and doing mini-performances. In 2007, I got onto the new Street Arts foundation degree at Northbrook College.

My tutor is Claire Raftery and some props-making work with her company Periplum turned into a long-term job as Deputy Stage Manager of *The Bell* and *Arquiem*. I worked on both shows for the summer season 2008, which included Brighton Festival, x.trax, Greenwich & Docklands, and Hat Fair – then I went to Mexico to present *The Bell* at the 7<sup>mo</sup> Festival Internacional de Teatro de Calle at Zacatecas.

In street theatre, you might have a job title, but the lines between roles get blurred – everyone just works together to get everything done. *The Bell* has around 20 people on the road, cast and crew. It's a pretty full-on set-up: three towers with crows-nests; two trampolines; an A-frame aerial rig on giant

rockers; a big cart that moves through the crowd. Then there's the hods, birdies, pulleys, strops, 30 giant flags on poles, nets...

I also work 'indoors' as a stage manager and technician for cabaret/revue shows and for live art events at The Basement; and have done other outdoor arts work – another project I worked on for Periplum was making giant snow-globes for Newcastle-Gateshead's *Winter Wonderland*.

Outside of Uni, I train in aerial, kung fu, and gymnastics. I'm doing two shows for May – performing in the Northbrook street arts show, *Ocean's Skin*, which is programmed into the Brighton Festival [Editor's note: no pressure, then!] and stage-managing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Fringe.

I'm finishing my foundation degree this summer, and probably won't do the extra year to get a BA. I don't really like writing about my work – I develop ideas through thinking and doing, not on paper. So my plans are to get a part-time job to fund my aerial training, and hopefully to continue to work in outdoor performance and stage management.

*Northbrook College – Southern Theatre Arts Centre present Ocean's Skin as part of the Brighton Festival: Tuesdays 12 & 19, and Thursday 14 May, at American Express Plaza 1.00pm. Periplum have received funding from Arts Council England to develop their new show, A Thousand Revolutions Per Moment [www.periplum.co.uk](http://www.periplum.co.uk)*



FIRE SCULPTURES CREATED WITH LIZ O'BYRNE

**Liz O'Byrne is a student of the Creative Events degree course at University of Kent. She also works with The World Famous outdoor performance and pyrotechnics company**

In August 2006 I was working in a mind numbing catering and hospitality management job, which had – for three years – squeezed almost every ounce of creativity from my soul. I quit. The next day, not knowing what to do, I Google'd creative events

training and found that the University of Kent at Medway were launching a new degree Creative Events: Design & Production that September. I applied that day and enrolled the next week.

On our very first day of the course we were loaded into a minibus and driven to Calais. All we knew at the time was that we were going to see an elephant. Nothing could have prepared us for what we experienced in the presence of Royal de Luxe's *The Sultan's Elephant*. For most of us, it was our first real experience of street arts, and what an outstanding example to be initiated with.

Unlike most degree courses, Creative Events has a huge percentage of practical learning and assessment in true-to-life scenarios. Our three years have been filled with project workshops offering us a chance to learn from and work alongside the likes of Sue Gill & John Fox, Emergency Exits Arts, Bangditos, The World Famous, White Light, Caterina Loriggio, Art Hewitt, and Jane Pitt. The I.O.S.H Managing Health and Safety course was included as part of our theoretical studies alongside licensing, and the business of event production.

Our proudest moments from the course have included the thirteen of us working together as a company in our 2nd year to design and create processional puppets, and lanterns from community workshops, which were the focus of a 30-minute performance we produced for the opening of Medway Fuse Festival 2008. In the same year, in smaller groups, we devised, built and performed our own piece of street performance. The group I was in created *The Science Sisters*, five crazy but stylish scientists following the alchemists' dream, showing off their extremely explosive portable magical machine.

The opportunities that the course has opened up have been extraordinary. In 2008, one student flew off to Beijing to take on a role as assistant stage manager for the company that produced the Olympic hand-over performance. For me, meeting The World Famous was a changing point for me: after an amazing two-day workshop, I undertook work experience during the summer of 2007, and have been honoured by continuing work with them since.

*For The World Famous' plans for 2009, their ten-year anniversary, see [www.theworldfamous.co.uk](http://www.theworldfamous.co.uk)*

## TRAINING IN STREET ARTS AND OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE

### COURSES WITH AN EMPHASIS ON OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE

#### FOUNDATION DEGREE – STREET, FESTIVAL AND SITE SPECIFIC ARTS AT NORTHBROOK COLLEGE, WEST SUSSEX

With its initial student intake in 2007, Northbrook's was the first street arts foundation degree course to be established in the UK. The emphasis of the course is the development of theatre-makers committed to innovative, content driven visual performance for contemporary environments. Sharing many units with the Physical Theatre strand, the programme balances performance skills and craft development, production/event and industry experience with academic study. Includes: devising for performance, the creation of solo and ensemble work, physical theatre and acrobatics, site specific performance, festival and carnival costume. Artists and companies connected to this course include Claire Raftery, Periplum; Adrian Court, Boutique. [www.northbrook.ac.uk](http://www.northbrook.ac.uk)

#### CREATIVE EVENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

University of Kent at Medway is home to an innovative degree programme in Creative Events: Design and Production which involves a very practice-based training in carnivals and street festivals, processions involving puppetry and costumes, pyrotechnics, high-tech product launches, installations and light shows. Artists and companies connected to this course include Mike Roberts / The World Famous. See [www.kent.ac.uk/creative](http://www.kent.ac.uk/creative) for further details. Email Gavin Carver at [g.p.carver@kent.ac.uk](mailto:g.p.carver@kent.ac.uk)

#### UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER BA STREET ARTS

The University of Winchester is offering an exciting new degree in Street Arts, starting 2009. This BA degree will suit performing and visual arts students who want to make performances using a wide variety of skills, such as: street dance, parkour, street theatre, large-scale puppetry, circus and acrobatics, site specific performance, comedy, large scale

events management, creative production, design and making skills, new media and performance. The programme offers training in contemporary outdoor performance that will be especially interesting to students who like to express themselves physically and visually. The course offers the students the opportunity to showcase their work at the Winchester Hat Fair. Contact John Lee at [john.lee@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:john.lee@winchester.ac.uk) or see [www.winchester.ac.uk](http://www.winchester.ac.uk)

#### FOUNDATION DEGREE IN STREET ARTS PERFORMANCE. AT CITY COLLEGE BRIGHTON & HOVE

Also new for 2009, this course was developed in collaboration with a core team of street arts practitioners, such as Emergency Exit Arts, and will develop performing and making skills, applying them in a community based project, and a devised piece for the Brighton Fringe Festival. Underpinning these practical units will be a historical perspective and considerations of the significance of street arts as a cultural phenomenon. Second year will include an industry placement; furthering performance skills; and developing employment opportunities. There will be site specific performance project with Red Earth plus an opportunity to develop a piece of work that will showcase in Brighton Festival. Accredited by University of Brighton in partnership with City College Brighton & Hove. Associated artists/companies: Same Sky, The Circus Project, and Red Earth. [www.ccb.ac.uk](http://www.ccb.ac.uk)

### OTHER OPTIONS

#### BA PHYSICAL & VISUAL THEATRE AT EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY, ORMSKIRK

Although not exclusively focused on street arts, this course, which is new for 2009, will include outdoor performance work as a key element. Artists and companies connected to this course include James McPherson, Artzani. [www.edgehill.ac.uk](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk)

#### THE CIRCUS SPACE

Although specifically teaching circus arts, The Circus Space acknowledges the inter-relationship between circus and street arts, and students regularly work with street arts practitioners on the placing of work in outdoor settings. [www.thecircusspace.co.uk](http://www.thecircusspace.co.uk)

#### CIRCOMEDIA

Offers numerous courses in circus and physical theatre. The school's founder and co-director Bim Mason is a renowned street arts performer, and author of one of the few books on UK street arts practice, so the school has strong connections to and allegiances with the Bristol street arts community. [www.circomedia.com](http://www.circomedia.com)

#### CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

Although no courses are run specifically in street arts, Central has a reputation for nurturing performers, directors and designers who can create collaborative theatre in a variety of settings. The school has worked with numerous organisations, including Paradise Gardens in London, in placing students on outdoor performance projects. Their acclaimed Advanced Theatre Practice MA course has given birth to numerous high-profile companies and projects, including the Shunt Collective. See [www.cssd.ac.uk](http://www.cssd.ac.uk)



**PERIPLUM'S THE BELL,  
WITH PYROTECHNICS BY  
THE WORLD FAMOUS**

*This is just the start! Total Theatre Magazine will be giving regular updates on street arts and outdoor performance emerging artists and training initiatives. Please send information to the editor on [magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:magazine@totaltheatre.org.uk)*

# SITE LINES



## MEHRDAD SEYF REFLECTS ON TWO CONTRASTING SITE-RESPONSIVE PROJECTS, PLASTIC AND THE MULTI-STOREY

The garage door goes up and two sets of pickled jars are revealed next to a woman's feet in stylish black shoes. We go in, the garage door closes, a tea set is carefully placed on a flowery fabric on the floor and a woman walks towards the audience, requesting the ladies to remain where they are and beckoning the gentlemen to follow her. The men are taken to another place to watch a film projected onto a wall where elegant individuals move between shoes, syringes and bandages. In the meantime a man tells the women how to make pickles – and then informs them that he is going to have his penis removed. This is how the journey through the sensual world of *Plastic* begins.

*Plastic*, by my company 30 Bird Productions, was performed in an old brewery, during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2008. The top floor of the brewery – on the University of Edinburgh site taken over by Pleasance Venues for all of August – was being used as a garage and storage space by the university. The basement floor, a vast space made up of two sets of parallel rooms interconnected through an arch and separated by small narrow corridors, was re-discovered accidentally a year earlier. During the war, the basement was used as a shelter with 'Women' and 'Men' signs still prominent on the walls. Connected by a spiralling stone staircase, the two floors of the Pleasance Undergrand, as it became known, were cleared and cleaned to pave the way for three site-responsive pieces. We were one of the three companies who had the chance to use it for the first and last time – the venue was only made available by The Pleasance for last year's festival, with the aim of attracting projects specifically designed to respond to that site.

Initially conceived as a piece about law and desire, *Plastic* was influenced by Sophocles' *Antigone*. Antigone's desire to bury her brother's corpse is in direct contradiction to the law passed by Creon: the corpses of the enemies of Thebes will be left to be devoured by wild beasts outside the city gates. The law forbids, and in doing so it has to articulate the very thing it seeks to make inaccessible. Its aim is to establish order, to avoid the breakdown in social harmony, and it does this through creating restrictions that apply to everyone. Individual desire, on the other hand, cannot be defined through reference to all and sundry; it expresses itself outside the dynamics of group psychology. Honouring the dead, especially if it happens to be your brother, overrides the laws of the state.

*Antigone's* compulsive desire exposes the shortcomings and, in the end, failure of Creon's law.

30 Bird envisioned *Plastic* taking place within a site where the architectural traits of the building, its angles, its walls, its structures and doors, could have a similar function as the restricting/revealing nature of the law. Within these structures – sometimes through performance and dance, and sometimes through the animation of objects, film and installations – moments of individual desire would be captured.

Sex change operations in Iran, now the world capital of plastic surgery, provided the specific context for *Plastic*. Here, the relationship between law and desire expresses itself in complicated ways. The Islamic state funds and condones sex change operations as a way of releasing individuals from their physical prison: a man within a woman's body, or vice versa, can be freed to live the life they are destined to, as long as they express their intention clearly. They can even change their official identity and acquire a new passport with a new name. The real experience of sex change operations tells a different story. Many volunteers discover that a simple shift from one gender to the other fails to address their desire to escape conventional definitions of male and female roles.

In *Plastic*, the site has a constant presence, its curves and angles lit to reveal its structure. The performances are dispersed, sometimes glanced through a doorway, sometimes through an arch. There is no rush, no compulsion to fill the space with action. The audience are left to look at walls, the bricks, the shape of the building, or just to look for something to happen. The performers shift between law and desire. They separate men from women, they guide them through different areas of the site. Sometimes they join the audience watching a piece of dance; observing an Islamic toilet lined with Kath Kitson-esque fabric; positioning themselves strategically to direct the gaze of the audience towards a particular location. Their presence is defined by the dynamics of the space.

With the audience being such an important component of the performance, each showing varied in energy and intensity. We learnt, for example, that although the maximum number of people permitted for each show was 35, the maximum number that allowed for comfortable viewing was around 22. We spent the first week of the run discovering how the performance worked in the site with a roaming, divided, and sometimes scattered, audience enabling us to make changes and improve the general structure of the show to provide more freedom for the audience to move. We would have liked to have had much more time in the space – we had three days – and in future site-responsive projects we would make sure that the site is fully inhabited by the artists from day one.



Site-responsive projects are born out of the characteristics of the sites they inhabit. The site doesn't act like a theatrical set, it is not there to complement or enhance an already defined project with minimal alterations to fit the space. It has a history, architectural traits, connections to town planning (if within a city) and to wildlife and the environment if in the countryside. A truly site-responsive project tries to take as many of these traits into consideration; they become defining aspects of the project. An example of such a project is *The Multi-Storey*, created by Jonathan Young and Nic Fryer.

"Come, I want to show you something." This phrase is constantly repeated in *The Multi-Storey*. The piece is set mainly on and around a multi-storey car park situated near the Cambridge Leisure Park comprising a hotel, chain restaurants, a multiplex cinema, a theatre and club, and a bowling alley. The audience are gathered outside the hotel to witness a couple get into their car: he has turned the engine on, she is running through the doors when her mobile rings. She has a quick conversation and hangs up, he inquires about the caller, she says it's no-one important. They leave. The audience is now taken to the other side of the hotel, facing the leisure park's vast square, the restaurants and the multiplex cinema. Another man appears and addresses them directly. He talks about the recreation centre, pointing out different restaurants, isolating a group of girls chatting and giggling loudly. He then tells us that there are CCTV cameras placed everywhere in strategic locations. He points to them, and where they can't be seen, he describes their precise location.

Nowhere is outside the range of the cameras. There is no private space.

The space between the hotel and the restaurants is designed to direct pedestrians towards commercial outlets. The ground is carpeted with stone, interrupted by about five or six straight paths leading from the hotel to the opposite chains of restaurants. Walking on the stony bit is pretty uncomfortable, and if you walk on either side, you can't escape the presence of shops, cinemas and cafes. Everything is fully planned. "Come, I want to show you something."

We are taken to the multi-storey car park where we take the lift to the top floor. When we reach the top, we witness a champagne dinner shared by the woman and the narrator followed by an affectionately humorous tango, before they are interrupted by the appearance of the boyfriend driving up the car park in his car. The woman abruptly leaves the space. The narrator calls the boyfriend on his mobile for a short conversation, after which he drives his car back down, in pursuit of his girlfriend. We are led back down the stairs. On every floor we're encouraged to look down through a caged window towards a small enclosure of grass. When we first look we see the woman lying on the ground in her red dress looking lifeless. When we look down again on the next floor, only the dress remains, the woman has disappeared. We're taken round the back of the car park to the small green enclosure. The dress is no longer there. The narrator addresses us again: "this is the only space where there are no CCTV cameras". Behind us, there is a large caged window through which we can see the boyfriend in his car arrive, still searching for his girlfriend. Later, we see from afar the narrator and the woman walking off on the bridge on Hills Road, lost amongst other pedestrians, whilst the boyfriend watches them vanish.

Using the extremely manipulative town-planning scheme in the leisure centre, *The Multi-Storey* creates multiple perspectives: the CCTV cameras recording the audience watching the events unfold through the area: the boyfriend looking for his partner; the narrator taking us to his secret private dinner and then unfolding the real private space where nothing can be seen.

The story in itself only acquires significance through the function of the space. What is real, what is fantasy, we don't really know. Has the woman really jumped to her death, or is that just the possibility of something happening where nothing can be seen? The architecture of the car park and its surroundings, heavily influenced by commercial town planners intent on getting punters to spend their money, becomes an epic setting for the end and the beginning of a relationship.

In both *Plastic* and *The Multi-Storey* the site is the star of the show. The nature of the performances is not predefined or rehearsed independently of their setting. Performers become extensions of the site; their presence, their movement, and even their speech serve to demonstrate the complex ways in which the architecture and physical location determines and influences our lives. The audience too have a multiple function. The divide between the audience and the performers becomes much more fluid, but not through arbitrary audience participation. It is the site that contains everyone within it, performer or not. Once you're in, you're in, even if you stand in a corner or hide behind someone slightly taller. Your presence contributes to the dynamics of the space and at the same time is defined by it.

*Plastic* was funded by ACE East through East to Edinburgh Escalator Programme, and the Iran Heritage Foundation. The company aim to keep *Plastic* in the company's repertoire and perform it in sites around the country.

*30 Bird* is also in 2009 embarking on a city-wide project, *Chodzenie*, set in Southend.  
[www.30birdproductions.org](http://www.30birdproductions.org)

*The Multi-Storey* was conceived and devised by Nic Fryer and Jonathan Young for the Hotbed Festival 2008, and was performed by them and Laura Inskip. For more information, contact [info@shamstheatre.org.uk](mailto:info@shamstheatre.org.uk) or [smallchangentheatre@hotmail.com](mailto:smallchangentheatre@hotmail.com)

**IMAGES 1-3 | THE MULTI-STOREY.**  
**PHOTOS COURTESY OF**  
**JONATHAN YOUNG**  
**IMAGES 4-5 | 30 BIRD PRODUCTIONS**  
**PLASTIC. PHOTOS STUART CONDY**

# EVERYONE'S A WINNER

## JOHN ELLINGSWORTH HOPES TO FIND TOMORROW'S CIRCUS TODAY AT CIRQUE DE DEMAIN IN PARIS

I think coming to the 30eme Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain, held in the 2000-seat Cirque Phenix in an outlying park in south-eastern Paris, I had the conservative expectation of seeing empty but irreplicable acts – honest real circus freaks with unique, borderline repulsive physical abilities – rather than anything that moved or surprised me. On day one Dima Shine fit the bill with his pedestal act – he twists and turns around a spinning pole, handbalancing on the top. It's fairly familiar until he starts bending: I've never seen anyone, not even a straight contortionist, fold their back in two and then twist their pelvis through 90 degrees. It's got overdramatic music and lighting, but at least has that sense of being an act tailored to its performer.

There is something very appealing, I think, about extreme specialisation in circus, but forced training kills the life of it. So Troupe de Chemin de Fer were jawdropping in a completely standard way – two Chinese boys who are much, much younger than me (an automatic universal measure that seems to be becoming increasingly important) doing near-impossible things on rola-bola. It made my heart beat faster, but it's the sort of act where all the drama and theatricality comes from the blistering difficulty of the tricks (for the finale the base is on three levels of rola-bola then is holding up a platform on which there are another three levels of rola-bola on which the flyer does a handstand; then the base does something tricky with his feet and they gradually wobble through 360 degrees to face every rank of audience seating; huge applause). It's not exactly that the two balancers were bored or indifferent; just creatively disengaged. Part of the interest of watching a person exercise an extraordinary skill is having some sense of the choices they must have made to attain it – but for the members of most Chinese troupes the choices are never theirs.

The Columbian Banquina act on day two was certainly stamped (aggressively, over and over) with the character of its performers. They've an energetic fun take on banquine (acrobatics where a flyer is tossed between groups of catchers) with a street style that ultimately doesn't quite fit. I don't think that all the stuff that gets rounded up as urban dance (hip-hop, krumping, clowning etcetera) is out of place in circus;



I'd like to see more of it. But it seems strange to pursue that style and then choose a discipline where slack posture or deviation from correct technique will destroy your back and end your career: a shirtless man crosses his arms over his vertiginously deep chest, hitting an iconic urban pose, then as the flyer approaches snaps suddenly into the straight-backed perfect posture, arms overhead. Rather than being pervasive and intrinsic, the aesthetic of the piece ends up being divided, parcelled.

Dramaturgically much tighter, Etienne Saggio's 'new magic' act started a moody rainy sort of a piece with some very nicely fashioned music/spoken word playing as Etienne slowly worked a length of stiff wire into a ball, which he then performed sleight of hand with. I have no idea what the French voice was saying, but was nonetheless arrested. In time the ball disappears and Etienne lifts a mechanical bird from a cage, runs, and hurls it into the air. It comes to life and circles the tent, more birds swooping in from the ceiling to join it; our magician stands in the middle of them, guides them, hypnotises them, and eventually catches them one-by-one in his net. It's original, but also in its way quite old fashioned – the sort of thing you might imagine being presented at court four centuries ago. I liked the inscrutability of it, though from repeated viewings it was obvious that its mechanisms weren't so slick as to be invisible, and on the last day my Paris host – renowned filmmaker Benjamin Busnel – sat close enough to get some insight: it's all done with wires, dontyouknow.

I didn't expect to see a great number of narrative pieces at the festival, although there were two acrobalance acts which were very different in style (Antoine et Aurore, who were classically graceful and serene, performing to Monteverdi; and Justine et Phillipe, who were spiky and messy and performed to God-only-knows-what), but which were both public expressions of a private physical language developed be-



tween base and flyer, and had a semi-narrative, or movement at least, within the changing states of their relationships. Justine and Phillipe went the fairly well-trodden route of encoding fights and resolutions into their performance; Antoine and Aurore's piece found a lot of its material and some of its emotional punch in the enormous size discrepancy between base and flyer.

Working along similar lines there was a great Chinese pole act by a trio of Tunisian performers (Saifeddine Jelassi, Maharane Hannachi and Yamen Abidi). My French is woeful and the compere (florid and somehow slightly undead and eventually in my notes referred to as The Count) talked fast; it might have been based on a Flaubert short story about jealousy. Regardless, the three perpetually antagonise, engage and break off, caught in a flux of masculine enmity. The pole style is very acrobatic and more about big dramatic tricks than sequences; most of the choreography is ground-level, the men (each dressed in a different colour suit) restlessly taking their coats off, putting them back on, turning them inside out. It ends up being my favourite piece in the festival, and gets heaped with prizes on the last day – but so does pretty much everyone.

Cirque de Demain has a simply incredible number of prizes: special prizes, special jury prizes, medals, audience choice, the ceremony goes on and on. The awards themselves wildly differ in material and grandeur: metal statuettes, abstract trophy-swirls, framed certificates. The magic bird svengali got a book and returned to his place to stand for the rest of the ceremony looking like he was going to *poison* someone for this. The pole trio received more awards than they had hands and had to pass them down the line to try to organise themselves. One of their prizes was called the Prix Al Jazeera Children. People kept trying to go back to their place in the line and were stopped by The Count – he couldn't speak everyone's language and just gestured: *there are more*

prizes. It's like a school sports day where everyone wins – except it's not quite everyone. Acts that went away without a prize included: a doubles cradle act (that I can't find the name of and think might even have been a guest performance) which brilliantly executed the overused robotic doll movement style, the two women chalking up between tricks like ladies in a powder room; juggler Timur Kaibjanov, who looked like he had a nice routine but unfortunately destroyed it with too many drops; and choppy triples acrobalance from Rialcris (I didn't like them; they whipped the woman behind me though into a fierce ecstatic frenzy: '[screaming] formidable! [screaming] magnifique! [screaming]'). By the end most of the audience had left and never saw the final, and most prestigious, awards.

A young Russian juggler, Alexandre Koblykov, got a gold medal and I was very glad. His was a simple act, the drunken sailor, but he had a charm and lightness that felt untutored, and with the exception of clown Peter Shub (who was a past winner and not a competing act) was the only performer who seemed genuinely relaxed on stage (plus he juggled ten balls; that's a lot, right?). I also liked that on Gala day, when everyone else was looking maybe a little tired / hungover and missing tricks, it was the drunk sailor who really held it together. The other golds (there are three golds, three silvers, and four bronzes, of course, meaning that roughly half the competitors medal) were the Chinese rola-bola duo and Emma Henshall, who did a swinging trapeze act which, honestly and not facetiously, I think probably wouldn't have done so well if she hadn't been very pretty and wearing a short red dress. She also benefited hugely from environment: when you watch swinging trapeze in a big tent with 2000 other people, excitement is a thing that's alive and moving through the room.

Afterward I count them – the ratio acts: prizes is 22: 30. Cirque de Demain is an insider festival – there are no open applications – and it's hard not to feel that these accolades are, in a way, self-awarded. It's not that the festival is a sham, but it's not the Circus of Tomorrow either. Most of the acts arrive at the Cirque Phenix by route of large established producers/agents, and until there is a procedure by which people can just walk in the door it will always be what it is: a camp fun few days that will confirm preconceptions of circus rather than challenging or expanding them.

*The 30th Cirque de Demain took place in Paris 29 January – 1 February 2009. See [www.cirquededemain.com/](http://www.cirquededemain.com/)*

**IMAGE 1 | DIMA SHINE LIMBERS UP**  
**IMAGE 2 | MASTER OF CEREMONIES**  
**CALIXTE DE NIGREMONT**

ONTROEREND GOED SMILE OFF YOUR FACE



# ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

## MORE HOME TRUTHS FROM OUR CANNY GRANNY, HERE WAXING LYRICAL ON PROGRAMME NOTES

In the waiting-room of the podiatrist, I read in a popular journal that when Laurence Olivier was appointed as the first director of the National Theatre, he had a rant about theatre programmes and said that the new programmes would have more to them than advertisements for gin. Strange to think of gin actually needing any advertisement. It doesn't. Would you like one?

Programmes can be a microcosmic representation of the show. Forkbeard Fantasy make theirs artefactual, layered and pop-up, like a toy. Their notes will never be consigned to the Arts Council's Great Filing Cabinet. Ice and lemon?

The National Theatre has an archive of all its programmes. The description of *The Far Side of The Moon* is a lovely aide-memoir of Lepage's show: 'a porthole-shaped window [becomes] everything from the face of the moon and the clock on the wall of a downtown bar, to the hatch of a space capsule, the door of a tumble-dryer, and a cosmic birth canal through which little space-suited souls reach earth'.

The Edinburgh Fringe brochure, the Yellow Pages of theatre, always offers a myriad intriguing names and descriptions of shows – many of which one might rather erase from, than etch into, the memoir. In fact, I once saw an improvised opera that made sketches based on the shows' notes.

Of course, all the Edinburgh notes are written long before the shows have been made. The Fringe programme is a record of thousands of neat ideas – everything from AAA standup (yes, taxi rank rules apply) to *Zombie Prom* ('After being dumped by Toffee, Jonny commits suicide by driving into a nuclear power plant'), via *Miss Sign-On* ('Life isn't easy as a diva on the dole'). If you plan to get your show into that New Testament of adjectival optimism, remember: *Aardvark* may get you onto the first page, but it may not be so easy to cast.

Cheers! I like programme notes. So what if they are full of clichés ('Hilarious comedy') and mystifying artistic statements ('the physical body veers between dialogues somewhat disillusioned yet compulsory')? Like chiropody for the artistic soul, I like to be philosophically massaged into a new pair of theatrical slippers. I like to know if it's going to be something sturdy and familiar ('the absurd story of two men trapped in mindless office jobs' – *Top Of The World, Paperweight*), cushioned and colourful ('a lust-fuelled journey to hell and back' – *Kneehigh, Don John*), or sensation-filled and precarious ('You are in a dark room. There are other people. They want something from you. Or not' – *Ontroerend Goed, Smile Off Your Face*).

Somehow the notes show you how to walk in your new shoes. They tell you about the rehearsal process, they install anticipation, they reflect upon what you have seen. It got me thinking – perhaps it was just this second G&T – that it might be interesting to make a show which was mostly note. Then it occurred to me that that is almost what Forced Entertainment's *Spectacular* is.

But no note on programme notes would be complete without mentioning a smith's anti-note for Tim Crouch's *An Oak Tree*. It's a clever example: it is both 'a key that unlocks just a little of what you are about to see / read / have just seen / have just read / might just read / might buy / might put back on the bookshelf of the shop / other (delete where applicable)', whilst also being 'not one of those programme notes'. Fancy a top-up?

Laura Lloyd is the Canny Granny

# NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART 2009

## OUR BODIES OUR SELVES

WHAT'S EVERY BODY DOING  
AT THE NRLA? A BREATHLESS  
LAURA LLOYD FINDS OUT



*"Everyone wants me to bleed.  
Go fuckin bleed yourself!"*  
Franko B

"Just saw naked man lying on floor with pig carcass" is the kind of text message you expect to welcome you to a festival of performance art – in this case, the National Review of Live Art in Glasgow.

Appetite thus whetted, I am pleased to find special guest artists Hancock and Kelly performing a 'dialogue of performances' – solos that inform and respond to the other's work. Traci Kelly both invites you to participate and reproaches you for being a consumer. First, she lies naked holding a pig carcass, encouraging you to rub salt and olive oil into her skin and the pig's skin, to feel the difference. Secondly she drinks wine, spits it into the mouths of spectators, who spit it back into hers. Thirdly, she lies on a bed of maggots. Onlooker: "We were jostling in the crowd to get a better look, and then suddenly I realised, that's the audience squirming like the maggots."

The emotive quality of these challenging encounters takes them beyond any performance art cliché. This is equally the case for the other half of the equation: Richard Hancock's solos pushed limits of vulnerability and humiliation. In *Postures A-M* he is naked on podium with rubber pig's head, fingering his arsehole. Rare, yet sad, to see male body enslaved and pornographised. Later, in *Open Wound*, he is on all fours with a microphone in his anus and bowl of blood beneath his mouth. The lights go off. This is terrifying – in the dark, imagining him pulling a tooth. Relieved, perversely, to be stuck at the arse end of crowd, far from eye contact. Not just shocking, (this we expect, shock); I experience fear and grief for these bodies' violation. Later I was proud: came home and told everyone had seen man put a mic up his bum. Why my own bravado? Aftershock of witnessing self-debasement.

If you tire of the body being used as a whip to flagellate the voyeuristic onlooker, welcome to Franko B's *I'm Thinking of You*. Naked on a swing, covered in tattoos and piercings, he smiles in the golden light with his gold teeth glinting, and looks at everyone. A Pianola plays itself in a corner; light. For him, it's a meeting. But Franko B has made his body mean something different from any other; he's not your average man. Franko B, naked, here, means he's *not* covered in white paint, he's *not* bleeding. All the sweeter for it. "There's no point, you know, in staying with a signature," he says at the Early Bird forum the next morning. "Everyone wants me to bleed. Go fuck-in bleed yourself!"

It's about toying with the audience's expectations. Hunt and Darton: two women, youthful, good-looking, perfect. Exploring embarrassment, they find 'peculiar dance moves' which match (or mismatch) their observations. The moves aren't funny exactly, nor brilliant, but make things slightly awkward; undermine our desire for polish. *Everybody Moving On*, it's called.

For many years, we learn, Pina Bausch's dramaturg, Raimund Hoghe, "was content to stay on the fringe of the stage before he, the hunchback, finally dared to 'throw his body into the battle'". Here, in a piece about Maria Callas, he's subverting our expectations by not doing anything of operatic proportions (certainly not dancing), just very slowly boring the hell out of us by opening and closing a brown blanket.

IMAGE 1 | HANCOCK & KELLY  
IMAGE 2 | PETRA'S PULSE  
IMAGE 3 | FRANKO B  
IMAGES COURTESY OF NEW MOVES  
INTERNATIONAL / NEW TERRITORIES

Other (more theatrical) bodies are controversial in the opposite way – doing too much. Perhaps that is the difference: in theatre, we are used to seeing bodies either dancing or performing actions which in some way imitate life or create a reality, tell stories. Whereas within a performance art/live art context, the body is its own metaphor, it's a means of toying with the audience's desire to watch, to project, and of teasing us for our insistence on trying to understand.

So the Paper Birds' *In A Thousand Pieces* arouses controversy at NRLA by being narrative. The bodies are more diagrams than metaphors: girls in pants and bras and high heeled shoes move robotically like the mannequin bodies we see on Channel 5 documentaries about sex traffic. They are bought and sold and raped to emotive piano music. But we already know rape is a bad thing, so where's the dilemma?

Two pieces come close to striking a medium between the body as a theatrical actor and the body playing with the spectator's desire to make sense of it. One body is dancing, and dancing, and more dancing, and dancing. It's Wendy Houston's *Act 2, Manifesto*, a tract of love and bile – the second performance in her ten-year project. Using her trademark self-interruption, she tells you in her hesitant way what the performance won't be, and then adjusts it before your eyes, so that you get the theatre and then don't get it, every minute. Her rave dancing at the end proves interminable and most of the audience leave. That's because we really want to join in: we've lost her, now we want to lose ourselves in the music. Rumour has it you may be able to next time, so bring your glo-sticks.

And another is *Aegean Fatigue* ('nine visual songs that form a raw and unsettling theatrical album') by Petra's Pulse. Richly abstract without being aloof, they are humorous and bizarre, enacting rituals using vibrant images we want to stay within: sawdust being blasted with a vacuum cleaner as a girl describes where her home used to be; a dancing dustbin soldier; blood pouring down a diving board.

The performances are a reminder of how rarely we are allowed to see the body's disturbing mystery exposed. You want to unbuckle yourself from the seatbelt of understanding and risk falling overboard. You want to watch, and you're given permission to take it in, and you want to stay in the images, and the images to stay in you. What more could you want of witnessing real live bodies in action?

*Laura Lloyd's new solo show, Holiday, is totally naked (though the audience are clothed for most of it). It features stories about nudity; a sombrero decked with fairy lights; tequila. It premiered at Southwark Playhouse in April 2009, and will be touring later in the year. See The Honourable Society of Faster Craftswomen – performance that puts women centre stage. <http://fastercraftswomen.blogspot.com>*



B.O.R.N.



MICHAEL FORTUNE

## FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

### ROBERT AYERS REFLECTS ON THE HONOURING OF LIVE ART'S FAIRY GODMOTHER, NIKKI MILICAN OBE

It was one of those things that seemed utterly bizarre and entirely proper at the same time: in an email wishing me a happy new year and reminding me ever so gently about a piece of writing that I *still* hadn't completed, Nikki Milican added, "by the way, the Queen made me an OBE"! I immediately sent her back a joyous, expletive-strewn note of congratulations and enquired when I'd be seeing the press release from her company, New Moves International. Her response was typically self-effacing: No, there wouldn't be a press release, she told me, as though it was the silliest idea she'd ever heard, and then she added, "It does seem ridiculous to have my name next to people who have given their kidneys and other body parts in the call of duty..." And therein lies the enigma that is my dear friend Nikki Milican.

People up and down the country, and around the world come to that, are terrified of her. She has a perfectly well deserved reputation for taking no nonsense whatsoever so far as her festivals New Territories and The National Review of Live Art are concerned, and she'll brook no lack of respect for the art that is at their core. No matter if you're the artist who made that art, she will actually drive you to a higher level of responsibility, professionalism, and – perhaps most important – pride in what you've made than you might have had in the first place. And no matter what form the art takes (because Nikki has produced *every single kind of performance art there has ever been* over the years) she often give the impression that she has a greater belief in it than some of the artists responsible for it. But that is the simple source of her sometimes alarming passion. Unlike so many people in the art world, and particularly the performance art world, her motivation has nothing at all to do with ego. She loves the NRLA, and she loves every moment of that half a winter week in Glasgow – even though there are moments every year that will have her tearing her hair out – but I have often thought that if she could enjoy it, and make it all happen, and put in all of the hard work, but just *become invisible* for the duration, then things would be just perfect for her. She can't be doing with people constantly telling her how brilliant she is.

Nikki often talks of the "family" that is the NRLA – all of those generations of artists whose careers would have been impoverished, or simply never have happened at all, had it not been for the stimulus and recurrent sustenance of the festival. I am delighted to count myself one of the oldest members of that family. If Nikki hadn't offered me £350 and given me the run of the Midland Group building and its roof and fire escapes in 1984, I shudder to think where I'd have finished up.

So it gives me enormous pleasure to offer Nikki Milican the big kiss on the cheek that she won't get from the Queen, to salute her as the Fairy Godmother of Britain's live art and performance art world, and say that while an OBE for "services to performance art (live art)" is an appropriate start, I look forward to the day when she is rightly recognized as Dame Nikki!

*Robert Ayers is a New York based writer, editor, and performance artist; and an honorary associate of the National Review of Live Art. See his blog at [www.askyfilledwithshootingstars.com](http://www.askyfilledwithshootingstars.com)*

# TIME LADIES AND GENTLEMEN PLEASE!

**DOROTHY MAX PRIOR  
TAKES HER TIME AT THE NRLA 2009**

Time is of an essence at the National Review of Live Art. First, there are the choices about how to spend your time. The queuing system is legendary. You might have a day pass, or a press pass; you might be the most important person in the whole wide world; but you will queue. So decisions must be made: if you really want to see X at 6.00, then you will probably have to forego Y at 5.00, possibly even Z at 4.00, skip dinner and settle in for a long wait.

The general feeling that time is running out pervades the festival. Down endless tunnels scurry the spectators, like so many white rabbits. Late, late, late...

In much 'time-based' live art, the theatre protocol – in which performers and witnesses are contracted to share the space for a fixed time – is set aside. Instead, there is a gallery mentality: get an eye-ful, pick up the gist of the image, and move on. People clatter in and out of installations, performances, screenings, in a way that I find disturbing. Stay still! I want to shout. Take your time!

If there is a real live performer present, it feels such an insult to leave, although I do accept that if someone has decided on a performance-installation for, say, twelve hours, that doesn't mean she expects the same audience members to be present throughout. But hell, I've sat through nine hours of Maly Theatre before now – in Russian! And it isn't just the live performer that I hate to abandon...

I'll confess now to being a nightmare to accompany to an art gallery. My husband once abandoned me in a gallery in Barcelona – we'd been there hours and he'd had enough. He left, met friends, had lunch, came back – and I was still where he'd left me. I move slowly. Sometimes I hardly move at all. So I find the sight of herds of people trooping past artworks of any sort pretty distressing. But it is the attitude to screen work by spectators in art galleries – and here, at the NRLA – that bothers me most.

If an artist/filmmaker has gone to the bother of making a work to a defined length, 7 minutes, say, why on earth does the spectator feel that it is OK to come into the space, stare at a random section for 30 seconds, and leave? TV-on-all-day syndrome I suppose. I wouldn't know; I don't watch TV.

In the bar at The Arches, there are film works running constantly, treated like wallpaper or screensavers, mostly ignored by the chattering drinkers. I try to watch the films, but people stand in front of me. Well, it is a bar I suppose, a place to gather and drink and talk. So in this case, it is more an issue of curation choices than spectator behaviour. There's some great work here – including films by enterprising Irish artist Michael Fortune. These include the magnificent *Reigning Cats and Dogs*, recorded in Fortune's family home, in which small daily incidents are filmed (and therefore viewed) from the animals' perspectives. The soundtrack of this film is crucial to the piece (for example, the cacophony of loud barking as all the dogs rush outdoors together; the silence of the cats), and it seems like sacrilege for it to be playing in a bar minus soundtrack.

To be fair in the telling, the work is also shown, on another day, in a special film/video screening area. But an area that is not made particularly comfortable for would-be viewers – the assumption seems to be that no-one wants to view whole films, just kind of float by. I cause consternation by asking for a chair then sitting down and actually watching all six films on each loop on each of four monitors. Much of this work is by graduates of the MA programmes at Duncan of Jordanstone college, and includes the excellent dance-for-camera work of South African Jeanette Gislov (of Walking Gusto Productions), who is seemingly equally at home with politically hard-hitting explorations of women's oppression, and celebratory images of young male dancers (street stripping to It's a Man's World!); then there's Marina Tsarsara's painterly films, which show a beautiful sense of place and an intelligent exploration of body-and-object relationships; and for a fun-filled finale, the wild and wacky *I Like Findhorn and Findhorn Likes Me* (or, *The Day After My Wife Left Me*) by Theatre of Erotic Misery star JONNYRED-ING, which features a near-naked go-go-dancing angel tripping out on the sacred Findhorn turf. Find it on YouTube, you won't regret it. 4 minutes and 51 seconds of time well spent.

Other screen work is presented in a more sympathetic way, although some spectators seem determined to devalue it. Helena Hunter's *Myths & Metamorphosis* is an installation combining film, sound, and photographs. The artist's starting point is Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and her work is an enriching modern interpretation of these mythological tales, 'exploring how bodies are magically changed into other bodies'. We enter a dimly-lit black-curtained room; a beguiling low-key electronic soundtrack (composed/created by Mark Wright) drones gently. The visual images are sensual and disturbing; beautiful yet grotesque – evoking Eros and Thanatos (the spirits of sexual love and death). Two walls of large monotone photos, and on the far wall a screen, playing two short films (created with acclaimed filmmaker Chiara Ambrosio). In one, we see a vision of Hera, goddess of motherhood, whose milk spurts from her breast to form the Milky Way; in the other we encounter a mesmerising Hypnos, god of sleep. Each film is enchanting, engaging – and each lasts just 5 or so minutes. It's not much to ask of the audience to stay the course, surely? Don't we owe it to the artist to see it through?

Of course it is more complex with the long-haul installations. We can't really be expected to stay still and quiet in a dark room watching nothing much happen for hours on end, can we? Well actually, I'm quite happy to...

Take Croatian artist Zlatko Kopljar's *K12*, for example. A room, two large screens. On one screen is a static image of a wood in daytime, picnic table in the foreground. On a tree in the background is a hanging/hanged man. An archetype, of course, an image from the Tarot – yet a real man, who looks really dead. Or really dying. Can anyone intervene? Is there time? Is the image really static, or if I stare at it long enough, will something change?



THIRD ANGEL'S *REALTIME*. VIDEO STILL  
BY CHRISTOPHER HALL

Anyone who has experienced a life-crisis will understand that experience of frozen time. Is my mother dead? Is my baby going to breathe? Can anything be changed or am I on an escalator of time that cannot be interfered with? The other screen features a slow-moving film of a man in a nighttime wood, slowly rolling a glowing orb. A Puck playing with the world? A moon held captive? A spell being cast? Will anything the man on screen two does ever change what we see on screen one? No matter how many times I watch it through, I wonder what might happen if I leave... if my presence as observer is somehow affecting the outcome of something pre-ordained. Schrödinger had his cat; *K12* is my entanglement.

Third Angel are a company whose work crosses the divides of theatre, live art and film. In *9 Billion Miles From Home* the two performers are tied together by bungee ropes, locked into a ritual of endless, repetitive tasks: 'We want to live in a big here, and a long now / we want to let things take the time that they take.' The company designate a slot of time as a 'pre-performance', in which the comings-and-goings of an open observation/rehearsal situation are anticipated, followed by the performance proper. There are the usual hefty queues for the show. Yet once it starts, some who have queued for ages walk out after five or ten minutes. It's a theatre setting, seated in traverse, and to leave you therefore have to walk across the stage – something that causes not a flicker of concern to the escapees.

On the following night, we get an entertaining selection of films introduced by Third Angel co-director Alexander Kelly. We see from the films that 'time' is often of paramount importance to the artists. In *Technology*, Alex Kelly grapples with theories of relativity and the distortions of time. The empathy is tangible within this audience of artists for their on-screen fellow artist, doing his damndest to crack the basics of quantum physics with schoolboy enthusiasm that later fades to frustration and world-weariness. In *Realtime*, on-screen actor (Jerry Killick) engages us in a real-time exercise, testing us on counting out minutes silently – with a cheeky twist to the test. In *An Acquired Taste*, we are taken down the local with Alex and his dad, to see how long it takes Alex to drink three pints of Guinness. It's a painful process – and time ticks by slowly. For once, the NRLA crowd are held in the time-lock, and no one leaves until the last drop in the glass is downed...

*The National Review of Live Art 2009 took place at The Arches and The Tramway in Glasgow, 11–15 February 2009. NRLA is part of New Territories International Festival of Live Art. Artistic director is Nikki Milican OBE and company manager Colin Richardson-Webb. See [www.newmoves.co.uk](http://www.newmoves.co.uk)*

## THE QUEUE-KIT

### HOW TO SURVIVE THE QUEUES AT THE NRLA? HERE'S TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE'S QUEUE-BUSTER SOLUTIONS

#### A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Preferably something with a non-sequitur at the end, like Raymond Carver. This will act as a kind of cultural sorbet, or palate-cleanser. And you should be able to get through one per queue.

#### ANTI-SAD LIGHTING

If they made this pocket-sized, then it would help prevent the grimy feeling you get from being in lightless tunnels all day. Alternatively, one artist at NRLA 2009, Marcel Sparmann, was constantly walking around the block, and encouraged others to do too, which was very refreshing, and refreshingly unpretentious. Perhaps someone could hold your place in the queue while you nip round the block, although place saving is breaking the unwritten NRLA laws-of-the-queue.

#### A KINDER SURPRISE

Someone at one point was eating an ice-cream, and this was to be envied. However, a Kinder Surprise would entertain you with a plastic toy once the sugary diversion had finished.

#### BOOZE

Has a wonderful way of distorting time. So long as you don't lose your place in the queue popping to the lav after.

#### BUSKING

Obvious really. Options range from the conventional one-man-band model, to queuing as an opportunity for interactive art-making.

#### OLD TIME AND SEQUENCE DANCE CLASSES

There are many dances, the Military Two-Step for example, that could easily be taught, and danced, in a queue.

#### POSTCARDS

Send one to someone at the other end of the queue. Perhaps an in-house postman could be provided next year?

*Suggestions for the queues compiled by Laura Lloyd inspired by conversations held at NRLA 2009 (whilst queuing, of course) with Dorothy Max Prior, Richard Dedomenici, Katie Etheridge and others.*

# LET'S GET PHYSICAL, LIVERPOOL

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOL 21 | ISSUE 02 | SUMMER 2009



TMESIS THEATRE  
(FORMERLY MOMENTUM)

## ELINOR RANDLE PREVIEWS TMESIS THEATRE'S PHYSICAL FEST

Tmesis Theatre (Formerly Momentum) are based in Liverpool and for the past six years we have developed a reputation for unique physical theatre pieces: *Tmesis*, *Memento Mori*, and *Anima* (a Liverpool Capital of Culture Commission) – all of which have toured nationally and internationally. Tmesis Theatre is run by its two artistic directors/performance, Yorgos Karamalegos, and myself, Elinor Randle.

The idea for Physical Fest sparked from a plan to try and bring a friends' four-day workshop from London to Liverpool. We also wanted to teach a longer workshop, so decided to put it all together and being as we are, always ambitious, call it a festival! With the support of Hope Street Ltd where we are based, Physical Fest began in 2005 as a self-funded event, driven by our desire to train, but tired of always having to travel to London to do exciting workshops. The first year was a great success, a brilliant atmosphere and obviously something the city was hungry for.

As a company we have always considered training and working with world-renowned practitioners as an intrinsic part of what we do. Neither of us have followed one specific path – we've always developed skills needed for the particular piece we are working on, and have had a great education through the people we bring to work with us, such as Linda Kerr Scott (Complicite) who helped us rework our first piece *Tmesis* in 2004; Tanya Khabarova (Derevo) who collaborated with us in the making of our second piece, *Memento Mori*; and Malou Airaud (Pina Bausch) who worked on *Anima*.

We are passionate about continuously learning, and now through Physical Fest have created the opportunity to do ten days of training per year with practitioners we have chosen to invite to the festival, which also gives us the opportunity to meet and work with artists we may want to collaborate with in the future.

The Fest has grown from strength to strength over the past five years with evening events, taster classes, performances and an improvised jam event – and attracts an increasing diversity of participants. One of the reasons for its success is the atmosphere the Fest has always had – it's a carefully curated programme run by people who are extremely passionate about physical theatre, and about bringing exciting work to Liverpool. In the first two years the practitioners were all people we knew like Yorgos Bakalos (Corpus Soma), Andrea Buckley, Marie Gabrielle Rotie (Butoh UK) and ourselves, who were prepared to work for lower fees than normal. Almost all of the people we invite are people we have met along the way or had some sort of connection with which helps maintain the warm feeling that the Fest has.

As we got some funding we were able to expand, bringing in 2007 our first performance, Tanya Khabarova's *Reflections*. This was particularly fitting as it was the show that prompted us to ask her to work with us; it was also the first time a Derevo performance had been to the northwest. Fests 3 and 4 saw a growing participation nationally and from Europe, and last year we managed to get master of theatre Yoshi Oida to do an inspirational four-day workshop which created stronger international attention for the Fest.

YOSHI OIDA



Now in its fifth year, we have realised our ambitions for an internationally unique festival solely specialising in physical theatre. We are hosting Yoshi Oida's solo show, *Interrogations* and re-launching the re-worked version of our first piece, *Tmesis*. We will, as always, be running workshops – along with special guests Gennadi Bogdanov (Biomechanics), Jean Laurent Sasportes (who works with Pina Bausch), Jorge Lopez Ramos (Zecora Ura), Free Running from Airborne Entertainment, a live jam with practitioners and participants in front of an audience, evening classes in Capoeira from internationally famous group Cordão de Ouro, Pilates, Samba – and a work in progress showing of *Cover* from local artist Maria Malone (who is also our festival coordinator).

*Tmesis Theatre were formerly known as Momentum, but for legal reasons have changed their name. Tmesis Theatre take their name from the company's first piece (Tmesis). New website: [www.tmesistheatre.com](http://www.tmesistheatre.com)*

*Physical Fest 5 runs from 21–30 May 2009 in Liverpool. For more information, bookings for Physical Fest 5 and videos and photos from previous year's festivals go to [www.momentumtheatre.com](http://www.momentumtheatre.com) or email [physicalfest@momentumtheatre.com](mailto:physicalfest@momentumtheatre.com)*

# OUT AND ABOUT

## PIPPA BAILEY LOOKS TO A BRIGHT NEW FUTURE

Like many people in these turbulent times, I been pondering the future, with several opportunities in recent months to explore how it might be shaping up.

At the end of January I was invited to the Lilian Baylis studio at Sadler's Wells to see *Folding and Unfolding: Moments in Costume*, the 2009 graduate exhibition of the Masters in Costume Design for performance. For anyone interested in a movement based approach to live performance, these creations provoked intriguing physical response. Not just functional, the costumes defined character by the way they restricted the body or opened to reveal secret compartments and hidden meaning. One stand-out design by Annalise Harvey embedded ten thick elastic strings in the back of a Victorian gown, extending like wings behind the woman trapped in her dress and attached to bolts in the wall. A similar idea was explored more playfully by Ginny Yang whose bustle dress contained several monocles, attached to silver chains, then handed to audience members. Konstantinia Vafeiadou created a series of plastic sheaths and hoods, removed to reveal an increasingly strange and vulnerable bird-like creature. For my money, the women's costumes were infinitely more successful than the men's; testimony perhaps to the way in which women's identity has been shaped, constrained and revealed through the range of clothing we perform.

Next stop, in early February, a meeting of the Independent Street Arts Network included a presentation from Alastair Noonan and Karl Rouse at Central School of Speech and Drama (CSSD) detailing a number of highly successful collaborations between professional artists and CSSD students. Everyone involved talked about the benefit of attaching talented students to projects where they could work alongside experienced artists. In 2008 The Centre of Excellence in Theatre Training (CETT) commissioned Remarkable productions and designer Adam Neville to work with CSSD students and create the *Bar of Ideas* for Paradise Gardens Festival in Victoria Park, London. Another big success story is the widely toured Nutkhut show, *Bollywood Steps*, developed into large-scale with student performers and technicians. There are very important additional costs and considerations when working with students who need training, mentoring and adequate expenses but great reward for all concerned when these collaborations work.

On another matter entirely, Musical Theatre Matters is both a mantra and a relatively new organisation, headed up by the irrepressible Chris Grady, which is seeking to increase knowledge, to encourage a community, and to champion new musical theatre initiatives. I was asked to speak at their annual conference in early March and have to admit to cringing at the idea of 'musical' - conjuring nightmare images of tatty sequins, overacting and show-tunes on endless repeat. But I am always keen to build bridges between different areas of the performing arts and certainly interested in the development of new music theatre shows (perhaps more like the legendary *Shockheaded Peter*). Bringing music, drama and different performance styles together, appealing to a wide-ranging audience while moving away from revivals and particular work that has dominated the West End for many years is an attractive proposition.

The day started with three outsiders, myself, Jeremy Newton, chief executive at The Princes Foundation for children and the arts and Clive Belgeonne, a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University and project manager at the Development Education Project. We all offered our thoughts on the role of creativity and artists in creating a brighter future, recognising the immense power of music theatre to help. The day continued with extraordinary local and international



speakers including Bill O'Brien, director of theatre at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington USA – eagerly awaiting instruction from his new boss at the White House.

South America partly provides the inspiration (and a tenuous link) to NoFit State Circus's newest show *Tabu* – featuring two extraordinarily talented Argentinean sisters. First commissioned by Norfolk and Norwich Festival in 2008, I caught this show at the start of their 2009 tour at the Roundhouse before it headed off to the Brighton Fringe in May, then France and Germany, and finally Cardiff, at the Wales Millennium Centre in September. Not all aspects of the show are successful, but this exceptional British circus company takes the audience on a mood journey, in turn smoulderingly dark and intensely joyful, with a sexy live band and some of the best static trapeze I have ever seen. I was also tickled by the idea of forty-two rowdy circus folk parked up at the back of the slickly refurbished Victorian building. The Roundhouse, which professes to place young people at its heart, has just launched their young people's theatre company. Their young jazz band featured on the opening night of *Tabu* and they have announced the beginning of a Roundhouse young circus company. It's certainly all go in North London for the stars of tomorrow.

*Pippa Bailey is director of Total Theatre, who produce the Total Theatre Awards.*

## TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2009

As we go to press, Total Theatre are awaiting confirmation of final funding to announce the 12<sup>th</sup> Total Theatre Awards at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009. This year, Total Theatre aims to build on the success of 2008 and the Awards team will seek applications from artists, critics and theatre academics wishing to assess shows and join discussions about excellence. If you want to be kept up to date on this, or are presenting a show in Edinburgh in August 2009 and wish to apply to be considered for an Award, please email [totaltheatreaward@btinternet.com](mailto:totaltheatreaward@btinternet.com)



LET'S GET PHYSICAL | OUT AND ABOUT

IMAGES: NOFIT STATE CIRCUS *TABU*. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEVENTH WAVE CREATIONS

# OBJECTS OF DESIRE

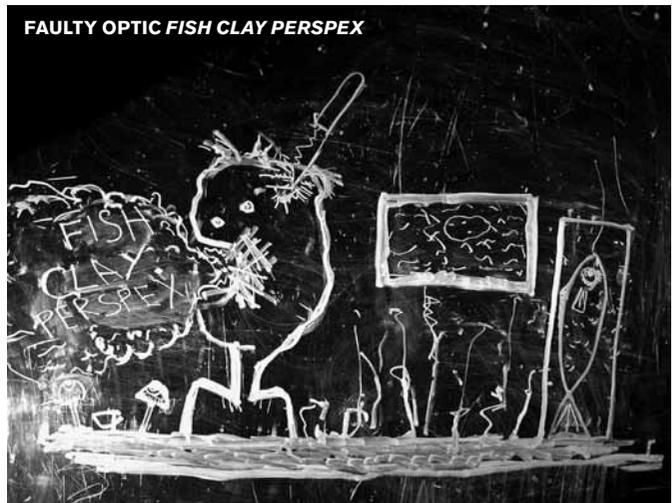
## DOROTHY MAX PRIOR ON PUPPETRY AND OBJECT THEATRE AT THE MIMEFEST

My quest to see as much of the puppetry work as possible at LIMF 2009 provoked a reflection on the relationship between performer and object – manifested in various ways.

**Figurentheater Tübingen** describe themselves as 'working at the intersection of puppetry, object theatre, and live art'. Their beautiful show *Salto.Lamento* has as its theme the Dance with Death. In a wonderful opening section, an animated wedding gown turned christening robe opens to reveal the face of Death, who then gleefully runs amok for the next hour or so, transforming everything she touches. For it is the metamorphosis that Death initiates that is the interest here, not death-as-the-end. That opening image is of course a sobering reminder that even at the moment of birth, our death is within us. Yet it is also a celebration of the positive powers of 'death', which we can see as another word for 'change', and this piece could be described as a reflection on the myth of permanence: 'toute bouge', as Lecoq once said. Nothing is solid, everything is in flux.

In enacting this vision of metamorphosis, director / performer Frank Soehnle animates the stage with a rich array of 'things': hybrid creatures (often marionettes) that swap their body parts regularly, becoming beings with bodies and no legs, or with legs and no bodies, hung up and left to dangle when they are 'between lives'; boxes that reveal eggs that in turn open to reveal strange wee puppet beings within; fluttering sheets of paper; cascades of grey ashes (Christian mortification) and pools of gold dust (Egyptian quests for eternity); a dancing red dress that turns into a horse; masks that become puppets and puppets that take off their masks to reveal nothingness... a constant evolution. A key element of the production is the beautiful multi-instrumental live music created by rat 'n' X – and it can be noted that the acoustic instruments used in the piece become part of the theatre-of-objects as they are 'animated' by the onstage musicians – but at the heart of the piece is the extraordinary physical skill of Soehnle, whose work demonstrates that investing objects with power and meaning is what is at the heart of both 'puppetry' and 'object theatre'.

If Figurentheater Tübingen exploit the Gothic-Romantic and Symbolist traditions, then **Buchingers's Boot Marionettes** take us kicking and screaming into Theatre of the Absurd, Dadaism and Surrealism. *The Armature of the Absolute* is an homage to Alfred Jarry, the notorious creator of vulgar anti-hero Ubu Roi. Like previous show *Vestibular Folds*, *Armature* features a carnivalesque pop-culture-gone-to-hell aesthetic, using recycled materials (from old bones to discarded toys) to create a nightmare world inhabited by mutant creatures. All set to a nerve-jangling soundscape in which snippets of popular tunes are mashed into a *musique concrete* collage.



Puppet characters include a 'bebodyed' head-of-Jarry, his terrible invention Ubu, and an imagined nemesis Dr Faustroll, accompanied by his pet baboon, and a mechanical duck that comes a cropper at the hands of something nasty that lives in the toilet. Then there's the objects – absinthe bottles that fly around the stage; pens that write 'by themselves'; that hellish toilet bowl, dissected so we can see its innards; a miniature fairground; and Jarry's whirring and whizzing bicycle.

Should there be anyone out there who still believes that puppet theatre is 'just for children', then see this company and witness that belief torn limb from limb. Gloriously grotesque, feverishly phantasmagorical, tantalising and tormenting, emotionally exhausting – there is nothing to do on leaving the theatre beyond sleeping it off.

More mutant puppetry with **Faulty Optic** in *Fish Clay Perspex*, the first showing of a new collaboration between Faulty founder-member Liz Glover and Sarah Wright; a triptych of experimental puppetry pieces using a variety of media – the company eschewing their trademark live-feed video in favour of the more traditional plastic arts of puppet theatre, albeit used in resolutely non-traditional ways. The first section, *Fish*, features a typical 'Faulty' lone geezer, a Sisyphus-like puppet character given a task of collecting pebbles from a beach, battling against the onslaught of the waves. A fish attaches to his head, and his behaviour becomes more and more dramatic and self-destructive as he attempts to pull it off... in *Clay*, two (clayhead) puppets battle to create a third, enormous clay head, locked in a drive to demolish each other's creations and assert their own will. In *Perspex*, two little stockinet bean-bag puppets fight their battles behind a sheet of Perspex on which the puppeteers draw or tape shelters and staircases, then later hunting beasts and heavenly refuges. In between each section, a group of dancing neutral-white puppets float in on a cloud of cotton wool and dance on their own special tabletop space – skilfully manipulated, although it was hard to perceive their purpose in the show. A delightful collection of little vignettes, beautifully worked by the two puppeteers, but not yet a cohesive show. (And as the work was presented as 'in-progress', a showing of a series of experiments, that is more than fine.)



TOMAS KUBINEK

Seen on the same evening was the extraordinary **Sharmanka**, whose activated installation work brings the unusual artform of automata-theatre to new heights. Sharmanka (which means 'hurdy-gurdy' in Russian) was founded by sculptor-mechanic Eduard Bersudsky and theatre director Tatyana Jakovskaya in St Petersburg, but the company has been based in Glasgow for many years.

Set in opposing arches of the Shunt Vaults, *Gothic Circus* features two exquisitely complex sculptures comprised of towers wrought from scrap metal that are fitted with cogs and wheels big and small, bells, industrial oddities such as old sewing machine parts, clock faces, and hundreds of tiny carved figures (people, angels, gnomes, horses, monkeys...). As each sculpture is animated in turn, an extraordinary theatre of images unfolds – a product of the carefully choreographed moving parts, a beautiful soundtrack, and the expertly programmed lighting that casts colour and shadow on and around the sculptures.

Witnessing this gorgeous work raises interesting questions, some of which were discussed post-show. Can there be theatre without actors? If there is no puppeteer or animator present and the piece comprises automata, lighting and sound run digitally by computer programme, is it puppetry or is it something else? Is there any point in differentiating between 'puppet' and 'object' when in either case we attach qualities to 'things' as we wish? (If we choose to see it this way, a clock can just as readily have a face as a carved puppet head can.)

Objects of a different sort abound in **Akhe's** *Faust 2360 Words*. This Russian 'theatre-of-engineering' company are renowned for their wonderful ways with the inanimate world – and in many ways *Faust*, with its core story of the pursuit of 'magic' at the sacrifice of 'humanity' is a perfect choice for the company. For most of the performance this Faust is 'caged' in a metal structure, with a smoking TV monitor, a glitterball, and a collection of dolls and papercuts for company. Books erupt in elemental trickery, bursting into flame, or trickling water; a little paper man journeys to hell and back along a pulley; there's a shapeshifter shadowplay, with the profile of a woman flipping to a devil, and a heart becoming a cross. Meanwhile, the 2360 words of the show's title twitter by. Whether ticker-taping along on a lovely handwritten scroll in Faust's cage, or flashing up as an electronic surtitle above Mephistopheles, they seem to be treated for the most part as another element of the scenography. A visual theatre treat, although lacking the dramaturgical completeness and resonance of earlier shows such as *White Cabin*.

The two other shows I saw couldn't be described as 'puppetry' no matter how far that definition was stretched – and yet, in their use of object manipulation, are interesting to reflect on here.

*Le Petit Travers*, by **Collectif Petit Travers**, is a wonderful two-man clown show in which a cello player and a juggler do battle. Juggling is of course 'object manipulation', but distinct from puppetry in that the objects are not usually expected to represent or suggest anything other than what they actually are (small balls in this case!), there is no theatrical metamorphosis. But in this beautifully enacted piece, there is 'object manipulation' of another sort as the concrete



fixtures of the piece – the cello, the balls, the table and chairs, a cupboard, the hanging light fittings, a bucket catching an ever-increasing amount of water dripping from above – are moved, stacked, dismantled, re-ordered, and finally amalgamated into one sculptural whole. It's a perfectly pitched show, and the company deserve all the accolades that have been accorded their London appearances.

**Tomas Kubinek** is an enchanting 'fool, clown, visual poet, solo performance artist, multi-talented vaudevillian, comic genius and charming huckster' with an extraordinary array of physical tricks up his sleeve, which include flying through the audience in aviator garb wearing webbed wings; donning a set of 'shoe wheel' appendages that give him eight rotating feet; and doing backward somersaults with a full wine glass perched on his forehead. Objects are framed and fetishised throughout. From the opening scene with its careful lighting of a candle, through a display of magic tricks with silk handkerchiefs played for laughs, and on to the grand finale aforementioned 'big tricks', there is always a sense that Kubinek is in battle with the world of inanimate objects.

There is much debate within the puppet theatre/visual theatre communities about terminology: what is a puppet, exactly? Is it any animated object? And what is the difference between 'animating' an object and 'manipulating' an object? The shows I saw at LIMF 2009 all seemed to contribute in some way to this debate.

But more than this, these seven delightful shows – each completely different in tone, in aesthetic, in dramaturgy; each highly skilled and finely honed; each with visual imagery drawn from a varied and colourful artistic palette – together formed a body of work that showed that the London International Mime Festival is still, after forty years, the holder of the key to the magic kingdom of visual theatre.

# REVIEWS FROM THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL JANUARY 2009



## FAMILIE FLOEZ HOTEL PARADISO QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL, SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Even the dreariest of onomatopoeia typically brightens our existence. But with the 'swoosh' that was heard as the house lights dimmed in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on a cold night in January, something truly remarkable happened. Though perhaps not the loudest, it was probably the most significant 'swoosh' yet witnessed by those present. For with that sound we entered the world of Familie Floez, and once there, were able to discover what a profoundly fantastic place that world has the possibility to be.

For the first half hour, little happens in the way of narrative development; we merely witness the goings on in a small, family-run hotel in the mountains of continental Europe. But in such simple comings and goings are things marvellous and absorbing to witness.

From the barefooted spiritualist to the precocious daughter, each character is defined in seconds by the precise actions of these remarkable performers. Such a highly physical performance style, when placed in conjunction with the costume and masks, creates a rich, distinctly visual world, communicating recognisable characters that we can't help but care about.

As the piece develops, narrative plays a greater part; there are deaths, aborted love, bank robbers, and a magic fountain of wondrous water. Yet, dramatic though some of this may sound, it's the subtle movements that created the world at the very start of the piece that linger most.

From the opening audio to the delight of the curtain call, *Hotel Paradiso* is a masterclass in what visual theatre can be. The masks, the sound, the direction - each performance component has been painstakingly developed and yet, somehow, the whole still manages to be greater than the sum of its parts. Glorious theatre.

TIM JEEVES



## COMPAGNIE 111 & SCÈNES DE LA TERRE LES SEPT PLANCHES DE LA RUSE BARBICAN

The melancholy notes of a lone cello open the beautiful and intriguing *Les Sept Planches de la Ruse*. The player sits on a large platform and as the lights slowly reveal her, they also reveal body parts popping up and down from behind the platform. They come to a standstill and a pair of legs emerges and flips over, body following. The other bodies pop up and watch this woman traverse the large terrain. They move with small, silent steps, Butoh-like in concentration; lower themselves to push the wooden podium which spreads itself across the stage, doubling in size before our eyes. At another push it diminishes to half its size. The lone performer twists and slides herself into new positions in order to navigate the constantly manipulated and changing terrain.

And therein lies the premise for the next hour or so. The fourteen strong company effortlessly flip these large pieces of wooden structures on their head, sit atop precariously balancing combinations of triangles and rectangles or disappear within them. In one stunning sequence, a stream of endless silhouettes walks slowly down the sloped surfaces towards an unknown fate.

Stéphane Ley's music is fantastic, whether it is the soaring live score, delicate soundscape or the intoxicating sound of three Chinese voices singing traditional song. Aurélien Bory's production is a magical one, constantly aesthetically pleasing. However, there is a point at which the ruse becomes tiresome. Each section is wondrous, but as a whole I couldn't help wanting an emotional resonance or climax which goes beyond exquisite images and clever balancing acts.

TERRY O'DONOVAN



EX MACHINA  
SEEKING OEDIPUS

## EX MACHINA ATHENS SEEKING OEDIPUS PURCELL ROOM, SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Mimefest have always been very responsible in giving even-handed coverage to 'traditional' forms of visual theatre and innovations in form. *Seeking Oedipus* falls almost too firmly into the former category. The lead actor and artistic director of the company, Aspasia Kralli, studied at the Marcel Marceau school of mimodrama and she is channelling her pedagogue here. The mime language of the piece is detailed and literal, acting out, beat by beat, the two-sided A4 narrative we are presented with in our programmes. There is precision here: the physical language of emotion is closely drawn, but with the story already in our hands, its re-presentation in mime added nothing; the performance became of merely decorative interest, if anything rendering the nuanced emotions described in the text more crudely. Moreover, for the company to feel we would be unable to infer any of the content from the performance itself, to my mind represents a significant failure.

The steeply raked staging, which allowed for a highly suggestive curtained opening slit up its centre, and the pleasing reveal of the Sphinx, otherwise functioned largely as a barrier to movement. Sequences of active physical interplay, such as the fight between Oedipus and his father, and the labyrinth sequence (hilariously, whose every wall was desperately mimed out) were squashed into the forestage. In the closing sequences a slightly different language seemed to be emerging, with the throwing of cloths suggestive of plague and war outside the palace gates, however this felt more like a shortage of resources rather than a genuine turn to the dramaturgy.

There was little dynamism and less drama in this piece: it served as an example of why artistic forms retain their vitality only through continual evolution.

BECCY SMITH



## AKHE PLUG'N'PLAY SHUNT VAULTS

It's not often that you leave a performance with lumps of banana on your jacket, hands smelling of garlic, and clutching a piece of A4 white paper that you bought for £16. In *Plug'n'Play* you do just that. Things you may never have dreamt about doing as a naughty child are compellingly performed by Russia's Akhe, who for this show are in the personae of a DJ mixing banging electro-pop with jazz and two lunatic artists who paint a large mural on the back wall throughout the performance.

Perfectly situated in the scruffy vaults of Shunt, we are witness to three men creating anarchy before our eyes, and allowing this energy to propel itself into the audience. Within five minutes, the tightly packed crowd were cheering and jeering, as apparently live light bulbs are plunged into glasses of red wine, and a brick swings across the stage smashing glass and threatening to drop at any second. Pieces of fruit are attached to electronic devices and exploded, sending remnants into the audience. At one point I threw a satsuma at a small, naked bald man banging the drums...

Whilst it's difficult to pinpoint an actual reason for all of this madness, it doesn't particularly matter. The performance is like a panto for creatures from a Tim Burton story, revelling in the opportunity to chop things up, attach Actimel bottles to their nipples and sip on a cocktail made with ice smashed in a man's pocket. Akhe have created a high-octane, cringe-inducing experience which never ceases to be both hilarious and terrifying at the same time.

TERRY O'DONOVAN



**FLUXX  
NIGHT, LONDON  
TRISTAN BATES THEATRE, LONDON  
MARCH 2009**

The first thing to say is that it isn't fair to review an eighteenth part of a performance, and *Night, London* happened over eighteen separate and different nights – the byline for the event being: 'Who says the show has to stay the same every night?' Add to that the difficulty of reviewing improvised work... Yet a suggestion of the whole can at least be intimidated by the experience of having seen Show Fifteen.

What made me want to see the show? The title, which I thought contained lots of potential and energy; the list of interesting collaborators; and the ambition of creating a long work in this way, with a number of consistent characters building up an improvised story over consecutive nights.

The same things which tend to bother me in watching (or directing, or taking part in) improvised work were all present: a lack of real vigour, prompted I think by performers without the support of enough certainty; a dipping and bucking energy, often unharnessed; a tendency towards the mundane, the odd, and the melodramatic.

I personally enjoy improvisation much more when I understand the rules. In *Night, London* there was clearly a structure, but the audience was not privy to it. Therefore, the effort of the performers to 'work with something' was not as satisfying to watch, while their creativity was not, perhaps, fully appreciated because we didn't know how much was predetermined.

In the after-show section, a workshop lead by guest director Chris Goode, there was a more playful sense of liveness; of ideas coming up in the moment and being allowed to breathe, such as a nicely judged exercise in which a performer delivered an improvised list of names. I was surprised to discover that the guest director's only contribution was in this section, and although the piece itself is directed by Fluxx's Chris Johnston, it would be interesting to know how the show itself could have been affected by more input from this exciting group of associated artists (a prestigious list which on other days featured John Wright of *Told By An Idiot*, and Mike Alfreds of *Shared Experience*).

While a website ([www.nightlondonontheshow.com](http://www.nightlondonontheshow.com)) featuring character blogs, videos, and story updates allowed the audience to familiarise itself with what had gone before, the minutiae of invented lives could not produce a great sense of anticipation.

What I saw in Show Fifteen was a slice of ordinary existence, but without the fascination leant by reality, or the intensity of planned performance. But every night was different; and although this makes the work of a reviewer difficult, it is a positive for a performance which was trying out a number of brave experiments.

**CASSIE WERBER**

**DAH TEATAR  
THE STORY OF TEA**



**DAH TEATAR  
THE STORY OF TEA  
THE BASEMENT, BRIGHTON  
FEBRUARY 2009**

The perceived political or social value of a piece of art can sometimes be found to obscure critical analysis. Dah Teatar's determined presence in Serbia and their ongoing creative work throughout the break-up of the former Yugoslavia is in itself both an inspiring history and artistic endeavour of considerable significance. There was undoubtedly a sense of 'event' that framed this, the company's first visit since 1998 to the UK, a perspective breathlessly encouraged by promoters Prodigal Theatre Company / Nightingale Theatre, themselves apprenticed through this particular laboratory.

Wonderfully, *The Story of Tea* (first produced in Belgrade 2006) emerged vitally through the hype as a richly thoughtful exploration expressing a complex tone and studded with intriguing ideas, drawing from a pleasing catholicism of performance styles and modes. Loosely adapted from ('inspired by' might be a more apt description) Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, the performance expanded on discourses of social convention, female isolation, miscommunication, militarism, and idealism and its stultification, with lush undercurrents of sexuality and violence.

The performance modes shifted constantly: the company were close to us, sharing out tea in bone-china cups and stories of tea's history in the opening scene, their apparent naturalism heightened by a delicate physical control. Later, abstract physical sequences powerfully denoted emotional states; objects were loaded with accrued narrative and political meanings; and the company built images of sometimes Chekovian grandeur, sometimes utterly surreal pathos. The focus on their themes resonated through the flickers of recognition ghosting from the original source, but the company's material ranged much further. More recent European history is ever-present in post-traumatic shudders of images, text and mood, and the act of being an audience was firmly in the foreground, helped in this production by a long traverse staging in The Basement's very 'present' live art space.

The performance was presented generously in English, although it wasn't always well served by its translation. This is unshowy work, which speaks with a combination of great humility and control. Flashes of lyrical physicality and muscular imagery such as a fleeting explosion of hand-held ice-skates vividly demonstrate the power that this company is capable of unleashing. Their delicate and complex use of form to best explore ideas reflects a deep compliment to their audiences and renders the attitude and politics of the piece compelling.

**BECCY SMITH**

# PICTURE THIS

## DOROTHY MAX PRIOR ATTENDS MANIPULATE VISUAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOL 21 | ISSUE 02 | SUMMER 2009

PAUL ZALOOM



In just two years, Manipulate Visual Theatre Festival has grown from interesting new initiative to major event on the UK visual theatre calendar. For 2009, a strong international programme included Spanish-Catalan Jordi Bettran's delightful *Poemes Visuales*, in which letters of the alphabet take on a life of their own, aided and abetted by some rather nifty guitar, and an amiable and clownish onstage relationship between the three performer/manipulators. Another international favourite was Belgian company Mossoux Bonte's *Twin Houses*, an enchanting dance for one woman and five mannequins.

Yet there was also interesting new work from the UK. The festival took the brave decision to give over the last night to short pieces by emerging artists. There was an enormous interest in the work-in-progress showing of the new show by 1927. This young company swept the board at the Edinburgh Fringe 2007, winning every award going (including the Total Theatre Award for Best Newcomer) with their first show, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, also presented at the festival. The new piece is called *The Fugue of Pazy Villycar*, and like the first show it combines live performance / live music and animation. On this first showing, *Pazy* looks to be just as enchanting as *Devil* – and although very much in the 1927 mode, has a new air of whimsical melancholia that reminds me of the experimental music-theatre of Canadian company Catalyst Theatre (creators of *The House of Pootsie Plunket*).

Also on the bill were The Paper Cinema and Kora with their wonderful live cinema / live music event, *The Night Flyer*, together with the even better *King Pest*, based on Edgar Allan Poe's *Masque of the Red Death* (popular with visual theatre-makers, this – Punchdrunk and Al Seed having also tackled it). Both these pieces involve created-while-you-watch animation, using little papercut puppets, reminiscent of Pollock's toy theatres, with live soundtrack by multi-instrumentalist Kora.

Also combining music, rough-cut animation and 'primitive projections', Sokobauno's *Daphne* takes as its starting point an anonymous poem about the Clyde shipping disaster of 1883 in which 120 workmen died. This ballad for Scotland's lost boys is delivered with gentle poignancy – a fog horn sounded in present time seems to

1927 THE FUGUE OF PAZZY VILLYCAR



JORDI BETTERAN  
POEMES VISUALES



call directly back to that moment of great sorrow; and the little animated figures in their peep-show box are suitably fragile, falling down like dominos.

This final evening's programme also includes *The New Not New* by Ailie Cohen, which takes a short story by Anais Nin as its starting point. Featuring a live performer and an intricate set – a kind of giant birdcage filled with feminine accoutrements – this is an ambitious piece that doesn't quite work, although there are plenty of enchanting moments to savour, including a Lepage-like use of a gown on a 'tailor's dummy' which is animated beautifully by hands entering head- and arm-holes, and video/sand animation projections that fall onto numerous surfaces, building rich multi-dimensional images. The less successful text sections use a mix of live and recorded voice – and the spoken text just doesn't cut the mustard.

As was the case in Tabola Rassa's *The Miser*, featuring a troupe of puppets fashioned from taps (Moliere's story reworked to be about drought and the hoarding of water, rather than money). Clever manipulation, but the spoken text (in poor English) is pretty dire. There's a discussion to be had about the use of voice in puppetry! There are people (Ronnie Burkett, for one) who can combine expert manipulation with the necessary skills as a speaking actor, but often, talking puppeteers (like talking dancers) leave a lot to be desired...

Talk of talking puppeteers brings us to the festival's special guest artist, Paul Zaloom.

Zaloom talks his head off at the 'in conversation' opening event, in which we are regaled with marvellous anecdotes from his days with the legendary Bread and Puppet Theater, and the making of his film *Dante's Inferno*, in which 'apocalyptic live-action graphic novel [meets] charming Victorian-era toy theatre'. (Re-invented toy theatre seemed to run as a thread throughout the festival!)

The talking continues relentlessly on the following evening, in Zaloom's live show, *Mother of All Enemies*, a 'mutation' of the traditional Middle Eastern Karagoz shadow puppet play. It's a very clever piece, in which the wickedly funny storyteller tells how newly-queered Karagoz defeats Israeli border guards, Al Quaeda, and Christian anti-gay activists to find his one true love. Every so often, Zaloom steps out of the action to tell us (in words and pictures) how, post 9/11, the US Marines attempted to recruit him in the 'war against terror' – Zaloom points out that as he's 55 years old and gay, he is maybe not an obvious first-choice candidate.

Had I seen nothing else, the opportunity to experience live the lunatic genius of Zaloom would have made the trip northwards worthwhile – but as it happened, all five days were a delight.

Manipulate Visual Theatre Festival is hosted by Puppet Animation Scotland. This year's festival was presented at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, February 2009. Some events presented in partnership with the Projector Animations Festival.



**RONNIE BURKETT  
BILLY TWINKLE**

**RONNIE BURKETT  
BILLY TWINKLE, REQUIEM  
FOR A GOLDEN BOY  
THE LOWRY, SALFORD  
APRIL 2009**

It's difficult to watch any Ronnie Burkett performance without the insistent awareness you are witnessing something remarkable. Burkett has created himself as the master of a rather esoteric craft: whilst puppetry has been vigorously reinventing itself in British theatre of late, the art of marionetting remains somewhat arcane. Add to this the sheer scale of Burkett's production: rows of ornate crafted figures hang at the back of his stage; his score (though under-produced) and set are ambitious; even the meaty length of his performance far exceeds the norm.

But despite these undeniably special features, perhaps because of them, the content must sustain

an equal weight to the form. For me in this, the piece felt deficient. Using the frame of the mid-life crisis to prompt biographical storytelling from our eponymous protagonist – a middle aged cruise ship puppeteer (encouraged by his Marley-like sidekick, the rabbit-eared ghost of his old mentor) – the autobiographical shadow threw too much focus on Burkett's own performance.

Burkett is a master vocalist and superb manipulator. Many of the piece's most successful sequences were the cabaret turns showcasing his wonderfully designed and operated marionettes (including stock classics such as the drunken opera singer, superlatively rendered). His writing, particularly in moments of smaller intimate decision making, and in arch comedy, is first-rate. However, the choice to play the lead himself, often in mortal combat with his glove puppet mentor, and sometimes performing Shakespearian soliloquy, felt far less compelling and refined than the puppet performances surrounding him, thus undermining the production's better qualities.

**BECCY SMITH**



**VINCENT DANCE THEATRE  
DOUBLE VISION**

**VINCENT DANCE THEATRE  
DOUBLE VISION / AN AUDIENCE WITH  
LIZ AGGISS AND CHARLOTTE VINCENT  
SALLIS BENNEY THEATRE  
BRIGHTON  
MARCH 2009**

*She* loves performing, wants to be seen *and* heard, hates namby-pamby touchy-feely 'processes' – thinks people should decide what they want to do onstage and then do it. *She*, on the other hand, prefers not to perform, likes to take control, enjoys the role of director. *She* wears a gunmetal silver satin evening gown and heels, dyed blonde chignon skewered with chopsticks; whilst *she* wears a modest forest green wool dress, opaque black tights, and sensible shoes. Meet Queens of the Night Liz Aggiss and Charlotte Vincent, whose carefully crafted duet, magnificently performed, explores what it means to 'perform'.

"I have something I'd like to show you... And I want you to know that I don't like people telling me what to do" says Ms A, as she gallops across the stage, clompety-clomp, banging her drum. "Could you do a bit less," asks Ms V "How small can you make it?"

In its mathematically tight structure, use of rhythm and repetition, stark utilitarian staging (desk, chairs, blackboard) and foolish theatrical props (daggers, joke hats, toy drums), *Double Vision* shares territory with the work of Forced Entertainment. Immaculate timing and choreographic precision we expect (and get) from these two highly experienced dance artists. (But are they acting their age? Aha! Interesting question! Next...)

It is also, surprisingly, a clown show – the humour is knowing, at times side-splittingly funny, and the way the two women play off each other is a clear nod to the classic clowning traditions of diametrically opposed pairings (from Laurel and Hardy to Eric and Ernie). Enterprising entertainment. Bravo, ladies! Take a bow, do!

**DOROTHY MAX PRIOR**



**APOCRYPHAL THEATRE  
BESIDES, YOU LOSE YOUR SOUL...**

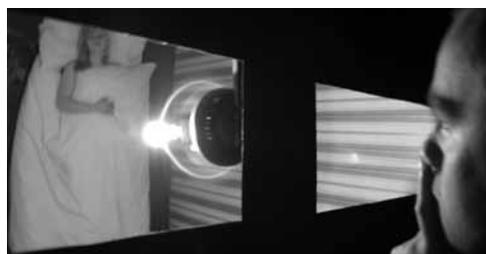
**APOCRYPHAL THEATRE  
BESIDES, YOU LOSE YOUR SOUL...  
CAMDEN PEOPLE'S THEATRE, LONDON  
FEBRUARY 2009**

For several years, Apocryphal Theatre has been exploring a complex language comprising cross-form improvisation, high-stress visual and gestural syntagms, and the manipulation of multiple performative matrices, frequently in relation to director Julia Lee Barclay's characteristically slippery cut-up texts. Here, the company attempts (not without irony) to confront the entire history of western philosophy – and the difficulties attendant in requiring that canon somehow to account both for the west's recent recourses to torture and, even more lethally, for the complicity of language in the framing of such obscenities so as to make them palatable to a mainstream constituency.

Apocryphal's greatest strength is in limning theatrical environments that feel more like habitable places than conceptual spaces; here, artist Birthe Jorgensen creates, out of used textbooks, a city in flux, within which a shifting group of actors, plus the remarkable musician Alison Blunt, enact their various convergences and dispersals, while Barclay, in their midst, semi-satirically transcribes discrepancies and interpolations in their performance of her text, which is projected against one wall so as to dominate the room like a self-destructing monument.

The company's work can sometimes exhaust itself chasing its own tail, or collapse beneath a burden of self-aware dubiety, but this piece achieves a real dynamic of building, of productivity. It's high on anxiety, low on desire; sometimes knowingly constrained by a formidable intellectualism that is both bracing and bruising. In a sense, all Apocryphal's work is pre-programmed to fail, but the failure becomes increasingly sophisticated and suggestive. Love it or hate it – or both – this is among the most significant work currently being essayed in London.

**CHRIS GOODE**



**LIVING STRUCTURES  
CART MACABRE**

**LIVING STRUCTURES  
CART MACABRE  
SHUNT VAULTS  
FEBRUARY 2009**

Thrilling, exciting, provocative, sickening, challenging, wondrous... The list could easily continue, but you would have no idea what I was talking about. Although, going into Living Structure's performance experience *Cart Macabre*, it's advisable that you know as little as possible – to stay in the dark, you could say.

Upon arrival I was asked to empty my pockets and hand the contents over. I also willingly gave up my bag and jacket, and sat in anticipation. Laying on a wooden stretcher, being wheeled horizontally through the hip Shunt crowd, is like being in your own Hunter S Thompson-inspired film. Suddenly you are thrust into a pitch-black space, and guided to a seat in an even darker small box – a tiny cart which, over the next hour or so, is pushed along a track, spun around roller-coaster style, and rocked as if floating in the sea. Meanwhile, Living Structures present us with a series of film and shadow animations, tableau images, and mini-performances, viewed from shutters in front and behind, whilst haunting voices harmoniously sing tales of setting out to sea, or of the temporary nature of this life on earth.

There are some extraordinary images, the most poignant of which is a lone woman on a bed whom we watch as if above her, like a fly on the ceiling. The piece is an exhilarating exploration of the pointlessness of human existence, which asks big questions and answers them with startling images, ranging from a sickening video of a pair of hands ripping up a heart to a delicate butterfly-puppet fluttering around a lone candle.

An experience to be savoured.

**TERRY O'DONOVAN**



**GECKO  
THE OVERCOAT  
THE LYRIC, HAMMERSMITH  
MARCH 2008**

Gecko's version of Gogol's *The Overcoat* is a genuinely exciting example of physical and visual theatre, distinguished by mathematically planned, sometimes gravity-defying movement by a cast of finely drilled performers, and endowed with a vibrant theatricality by the director, Amit Lahav, who also plays the leading role of Akakki.

The short story has been interpreted as the restless quest of a poor, modest factory worker for a beautiful new overcoat which, he is convinced, will bring him promotion by his employer and acceptance by his love. The surreal, unforgettable scenography, all right-angles and chiaroscuro, was designed by Ti Green and dramatically lit by James Farncombe. The music with a middle-eastern accent, by Dave Price, would have been excellent had it not been so over-amplified, and the performer-workers marched their way around and through it all with puppet-like precision, controlled by ice-cold office superiors who regarded their lives as hardly worth a pin. Humanity is in very short supply here and one's heart aches for the simple Akakki. The Overcoat, at last acquired, is immediately taken by the sad hero's rival, or at least I think that's what happened, as the storyline was not entirely clear and the text was a sort of soup of muttered phrases in French and Spanish and probably Esperanto.

That didn't worry me at all, but Amit Lahav might have an even better show with a dramaturg, an outside eye to disentangle the dream sequences from the real action. But it only minimally affected my enjoyment.

It's the sort of show I could see again and again.

**PENNY FRANCIS**

**TEMPLE THEATRE  
HIPPOLYTUS  
RIVERSIDE STUDIOS, LONDON  
FEBRUARY 2009**



**TEMPLE THEATRE  
HIPPOLYTUS**

Just as the devil has all the good music, so do the Ancient Greeks have more than their fair share of enduring tales. And with its themes of misogyny, abstinence and jealousy, Euripides' *Hippolytus* provides a sterling example of such durable storytelling.

Timberlake Wertenbaker's new translation modernises the original well (if you like such things, that is). 'Collateral damage', one of the most evocative phrases of recent years, encourages new readings of Aphrodite's vendetta against Hippolytus when used to describe Phaedra's death; though when we start hearing references to 'the in-laws', the translation feels a little too contemporary/informal. Unfortunately, Temple Theatre's staging of the text is even more hit and miss.

A strange hybrid of Greek and English accents blend together on the stage, which works well when extracts of the original Greek are spoken, but otherwise feels like an Anglo-Hellenic

exchange programme. The emphatic emotion, so key to a number of the monologues, ranges from the gripping to the decidedly not so, and though Paul O'Mahony's *Hippolytus* laudably treads the line between irritating self-righteousness and admirable self-control, elsewhere it feels as if the audience has been summoned to a wrestling match between performer and verse.

The chorus demonstrates a wide-ranging musical competency; violin, flute, drums, guitar and voice all feature, though whilst the intention in atmosphere is clear, its manifestation shoots wide of the mark by a musical whisker or two.

Nevertheless, the story and translation is powerful enough to carry such foibles, and despite the production's faults, Temple Theatre should be congratulated on bringing a new version of this rich tale to the London stage.

**TIM JEEVES**



**NATIONAL THEATRE /  
HANDSPRING PUPPET THEATRE  
WAR HORSE  
NEW LONDON THEATRE, LONDON  
MARCH 2008**

Gathered in the bar pre-show are a typical West End audience of middle-class families and well-turned-out older couples. Entering the auditorium, we see an untypical (for the West End) bare stage with an earthy floor, the only décor a backdrop that looks like a strip of paper torn from a giant book (onto which 'the scenery' – is projected: delicate line drawings of a Devon village; cross-hatched fields of war; shadow animations of advancing armies).

Enter the performers, a team of actors/musicians/puppeteers who eloquently and efficiently bring us a tale of two horses, told using all the tricks of the physical/devised theatre trade. Thus, a row of men holding sticks becomes a horse pen; a sea crossing is denoted by miniature boats danced across the stage; and paper birds fly above our heads at the end of bendy sticks. The birds are OK, but they aren't a patch on the goose, a very wonderful push-along puppet-on-a-stick. And then there's the horses...

The horses, created by the renowned Handspring Puppet Theatre, working with Mervyn Millar and a team of British puppeteers, have won the heart of everyone who has seen the show. Beautifully manipulated, they are the essence of horsey-ness. The scene where the horses are sent onto the battlefield is one of the most poignant pieces of visual theatre you are likely to encounter. As each horse falls, its operators roll to the ground slowly, moving away to leave a heap of woody carcasses.

What is most extraordinary about seeing this show in this environment is witnessing the 'arrival' of physical/visual theatre into the mainstream. A battle is won

**DOROTHY MAX PRIOR**

**MALIPHANT / BEN-  
JAMIN A HOLDING  
SPACE**



**DANCE UNITED /  
HOFESH SHECHTER /  
RUSSELL MALIPHANT &  
ADAM BENJAMIN  
DESTINO  
SADLER'S WELLS, LONDON  
MARCH 2009**

In *The Empire's Fall*, the opening piece of the trilogy presented, Hofesh Shechter skilfully reminds us why he's making ripples in the dance world. His choreography attacks the state of masculinity; visceral pounding musical beats in tandem with head-banging and feet-stamping. At the heart of the work is male isolation. Overhead spotlights zoom down above the six men and highlight their loneliness. The moments which connect with me are the softer, more vulnerable ones in which soothing and ambient notes lead haunting movement – the men as shadows of what they could be.

Junaid Jemal Sendi and Addisu Demissie are two young Ethiopians whose lives have been transformed by dance, which has taken them from the streets of Addis Ababa. They have been dancing together since they were 12, and in *A Holding Space*, a new work choreographed by Russell Maliphant and Adam Benjamin, their unique and binding connection is exploited expertly. Dressed all in white, the pair twist and tumble as one, most poignantly in the opening and closing images in which, it seems, they are one body.

The final piece gives the evening its name: *Destino*. It is choreographed by Dance United's Tara-Jane Herbert and Susannah Broughton with a wondrous score by Leonard Bernstein and Samuel Barber. The piece boasts a cast of over 130 non-professional dancers, with an age range of 8 to 89. The intention was to create a work exploring themes of hope, choice and destiny. Whilst it is quite a task to choreograph so many, the work here is plodding and dull – the boy who forgets the next step and pulls up his trousers steals the limelight.

**TERRY O'DONOVAN**

GALLERY



MEREDITH MONK  
SONGS OF ASCENSION

# THIRD MIND LIVE

## ROBERT AYERS REPORTS FROM THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK

The Guggenheim Museum really put the cat among the pigeons when – before January had even ended – they opened what may well turn out to be New York's museum exhibition of the year. *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* really is a splendid show. Although it starts its survey of American artists' fascination with oriental art and ways of thinking in the mid nineteenth century, it doesn't waste much time getting on to the really interesting stuff and, amazingly for a museum exhibition, it pays proper regard to the significance of performance to the history. John Cage, the Fluxus artists, Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono, Allan Kaprow, Linda Montano and others are all given proper attention. A whole gallery at the top of the building is dedicated to the documentation of Tehching Hsieh's legendary *Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, One Year Performance* (1980–81) and Ann Hamilton has made a remarkable performance installation sculpture, *human carriage* (2009).

When the Guggenheim announced the performance season that would accompany the exhibition, it was as though they'd just written out a wish-list of the biggest names in American performance art, and gone out and signed them up – Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson, LaMonte Young, Merce Cunningham, Yoko Ono, Marina Abramovic, and Robert Wilson.

Different artists are offering different degrees of performance, however: Merce Cunningham and Yoko Ono will only be talking chat-show style with an interviewer, Marina Abramovic is offering a 'lecture' on her *Night Sea Crossing* performances (though the lecture has been one of her preferred performance formats for as long as I can remember) and, in the two pieces that I have attended at the time of writing, things were different again.

Sadly, Laurie Anderson seems to have entered an early retirement phase, and her *Transitory Life* was little more than a gently nostalgic run through some of her favorite routines. The less said about that the better, to be honest. On the other hand, Meredith Monk attempted something quite ambitious. Monk is one of the key figures in the emergence of cross-disciplinary performance in New York City in the 1960s. In 1969, and at the Guggenheim Museum itself, she created *Juice: A Theatre Cantata in 3 Installments*, which was one of the iconic works of that entire period. The Museum's Frank Lloyd Wright building was only 10 years old at the time, and its spiral-ramped rotunda must have seemed an appropriately groovy place for what was thought of as a radically experimental piece of theatre. So, for her 2009 audience, Monk decided to interweave fragments of *Juice* with musical elements from her latest work, *Songs of Ascension*. The combination is a bit of a parson's egg, truth be told. The music – occasionally dissonant and enlivened by moments of Monk's 'expanded vocal techniques' – sounded stunning in the Guggenheim's rotunda, which has a wonderful acoustic as it turns out. But the performance elements are rather showing their age. It is easy to forget nowadays what an iconoclastic leap was required for Monk and some of her contemporaries to abandon the habits of representational acting and embrace abstract performance. Clearly Monk was finding it problematic even as late as 1969 because the little glimpsed vignettes that the audience were treated to as we slowly climbed the Guggenheim's ramp ran the full gamut between the sublime and the ridiculous.

There were moments of genuine beauty, but a performance nadir of sorts was plumbed for me when, contemplating a scene that seemed quite in keeping with the rest of the show – a couple of guys slowly and rather elegantly mopping a gallery floor – the Guggenheim's in-house photographer pointed out to me that actually this wasn't part of the performance at all, but just a pair of maintenance men.

For more on Third Mind Live, including interviews with many of the above-mentioned artists, see Robert Ayers' blog at [www.askyfilledwithshootingstars.com](http://www.askyfilledwithshootingstars.com)

LAURIE ANDERSON



# BOOKS & OTHER MEDIA

If you would like us to list details of online resources or have any other information for our Books & Other Media section, please email [listings@totaltheatre.org.uk](mailto:listings@totaltheatre.org.uk)

Copies of books for review should go to: The Editor, Total Theatre Magazine, The Basement @ Argus Lofts, 24 Kensington St, Brighton BN1 4AJ

Books & Other Media reviews by Beccy Smith and Dorothy Max Prior

## IN PRINT

### THE DIRECTORS CRAFT: A HANDBOOK FOR THE THEATRE

Katie Mitchell

Routledge, 2009

ISBN 978-0-415-40438-6

£14.99 Paperback / £60 Hardback

[www.routledgeeducation.com/books](http://www.routledgeeducation.com/books)

Anyone anticipating insights to Katie Mitchell's popular visual multimedia style will not find what they're looking for here. This is a craft-based approach, not an artistic manifesto. The book is a no-nonsense, step-by-step guide to Stanislavskian direction (although she also cites some other influences), clearly aimed at students or very early career directors seeking a pragmatic framework for their process.

This is not as in-depth or rigorous as Mike Alfreds' similar exegesis in the excellent *Different Every Night* (2007), but its clear structure – moving from project inception to post-show analysis – and simple language and explanation make it the more accessible of the two. Chapters break down into easily absorbed subsections, focussing on methods as pragmatic as 'How to Sit in Rehearsal' and proceeding thoroughly though the practicalities of preparation, rehearsing, communication and analysis in a way so straightforward as to risk becoming definitive. There are some nice, albeit small, production images from Mitchell's work which provide an inspiring visual stimulus, although not often clearly related to the surrounding text.

Given the current vogue for all things Mitchell, this may become the standard handbook for would-be directors and in that case, it doesn't wear its ideology quite openly enough on its

sleeve. There are other methods for leading the production of work; however, as an introduction to Stanislavski, and a demystification of the director's role, this is a comprehensive read.

BS

### DRAMA GAMES FOR CLASSROOMS AND WORKSHOPS

Jessica Swale

Nick Hern Books

ISBN 978-1-84842-010-6

£8.99 Paperback

[www.nickhernbooks.co.uk](http://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk)

Described as a 'dip-in, flick-through, quick-fire resource book' – and it is indeed that very thing. Opening the book at random (page 52, game 33) I find a version of Jonathan Kay's favourite game, Captain Cod – a more elaborate version of Simon Says that involves leaping overboard and mimicking parrots and sharks. This in a section called Energy. Other sections include Warm-Up (I enjoyed Ooey Gooney Chewing Gum as a face-warmer); Focus, Teamwork, Trust, Character, and Storytelling. 101 games in all.

If you teach regularly you'll no doubt know some, maybe most, of these – but old hands who've been leading theatre games for decades will find new treasures here too. Things I like: it is a well organised little book, with design and layout just right for its function; it is brimming with good ideas, all cross-referenced in the index; and physical games are accorded the same status as the more 'traditionally theatrical' character-based games and improvisation starters.

Most important of all, it has at its heart a respect for 'play' not as a warm-up for the real work, but play as the real work of theatre – and indeed opens with a lovely quote from Peter Brook:

"To play needs much work, but when we experience the work as play, then it is not work anymore. A play is play." Small but perfectly formed, this is an essential purchase for classroom teachers and workshop leaders alike.

DMP

## MULTIMEDIA – PRINT + DVD

### DINNER WITH AMERICA ESSAYS, FILMS, IMAGES AND CONVERSATIONS

Rajni Shah

Rajni Shah Theatre

ISBN 978-1-907055-00-3

[www.rajnishah.com](http://www.rajnishah.com)

£10 (£25 library edition)

This interesting experiment in documentation comprises a booklet and DVD package released to coincide with Rajni Shah's 2008-2009 tour of her installation-performance, *Dinner with America*. Included in this print and screen package are a coherent and intelligent essay by Mary Paterson, one of the best of the bunch of new 'live art' commentators; excerpts from an interview with Chris Goode, previously published on Thompson's Bank of Communicable Desire (Goode's blog – which is essential reading for anyone interested in contemporary theatre and performance); extracts from the artist's performance journal; footage from the making of the piece; documentary film by Lucy Cash and photographs by Manuel Vason and Lucy Cash. A good selection of material, although the print production could have been of higher quality, as the photos suffer a little in the reproduction.

DMP

### DOCUMENTING LIVE

Eds. David A Bailey, Lois Keidan and Rajni Shah

Live Art Development Agency

ISBN 978-0-9546040-5-9

£17.50 [www.thisisunbound.co.uk](http://www.thisisunbound.co.uk)

Talking of artists' documentation: Documenting Live was commissioned by the Live Art Development Agency to highlight live art practices that are informed by questions of cultural identity. It features thirteen artists from culturally diverse backgrounds: Barby Asante, David A Bailey, Ansuman Biswas, Malika Booker, Sonia Boyce, George Chakravarthi, Robin Deacon, Yara El-Sherbini, Harminder Singh Judge, Keith Khan, David Medalla, Harold Offeh, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, and Ali Zaidi. The package includes an essay by David A Bailey, a set of large-format artists' postcards, and a DVD featuring a selection of talking heads presentations, showreel extracts, and round-table discussions. A handy resource, but many of the artists (understandably) struggle with defining their work-to-camera – the best moments for me are when we get to see the showreels and examples of the work itself, rather than the ruminating on the nature of live art, performance, and 'the performative', much of which is, frankly, a little strained and dull. Available from This Is Unbound, LADA's online shop.

DMP

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THE INSECT CIRCUS AT FLETCH



THE BEES KNEES AT PARLURE SPIEGELTENT

## BRIGHTON FESTIVAL FRINGE MAY 2009

### NIGHTINGALE THEATRE'S BRIGHTON FRINGE PROGRAMME

This May at the Nightingale, Aurora Nova Productions present *John Moran & His Neighbour Saori* – in which Philip Glass protégé John Moran performs an intricate score for muse and collaborator Saori Tsukada, a dancer/gymnast he met in the New York blackout of 2003 (18 & 19 May). Other highlights include The Ornate Johnsons' *October Revolution* (23 May), and Fredrick Lloyd's *Survival of the Thinnest*, subtitled *How a Poet Survives Cage Fighting* (24 May). Nightingale's in-house company, Prodigal Theatre have two productions running. The first, presented in collaboration with Andrew G Marshall, is *Caruso and the Quake*, a dramatisation of famous tenor Enrico Caruso's journey across a city destroyed by fire, flood and the military after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Prodigal Theatre will also be re-staging their site-specific version of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Ten Thousand Several Doors*, a dark tragedy of greed, ambition, revenge and treachery which was a Brighton Festival commission in 2006. See [www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk](http://www.nightingaletheatre.co.uk)

### FLETCH – A NEW BRIGHTON FRINGE VENUE

As part of the Brighton Festival Fringe, May 2009, St Andrews church has opened its doors to over 100 shows, with the best international and local talent in one jaw-dropping line-up courtesy of Fletch Productions. Join them at St Andrew's in Hove for comedy capers, spectacular cabaret, literary loquacity, family fun and 2009's most exciting music programme. Highlights include: *And The Devil May Drag You Under* circus/cabaret extravaganza (most evenings, 9.30pm); *Come Into My Parlour* (25 May); and *The Insect Circus* (various dates). The full programme is available online at [www.fletchatstandrews.com](http://www.fletchatstandrews.com)

### PARLURE SPIEGELTENT RETURNS TO BRIGHTON FRINGE

Always a festival fave, this year's Spiegelent programme includes Total Theatre Award winners Puppet State Theatre with *The Man Who Planted Trees*, and Award shortlisted company Onassis Theatre with *Cloudcuckooland*. Other treats are the vintage cabaret of *The Aviator Club*, featuring The Bees Knees (who conquered hearts when they appeared with 1927 at BAC for the run of *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*), and Sunday Tea Dances from Ragroof Theatre (on 3, 10, & 17 May).

For information on all Brighton Fringe venues and shows, see [www.brightonfestivalfringe.org.uk](http://www.brightonfestivalfringe.org.uk)

### QUEER UP NORTH

Running 12–25 May around Manchester, high-lights at this year's Queer Up North include Taylor Mac's new show, *The Young Ladies Of...* While stationed in Vietnam in 1968, Taylor Mac's father, then a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, placed a lonely hearts ad in an Australian newspaper; the hundreds of replies from 'young ladies' are the starting point for a mix of song, film, text, cabaret and, of course, Taylor's trademark, unique, self-made costumes. Over at the Contact Theatre, 23–25 April and 18–22 May, there's the premiere of a QUN commission: Chris Goode's *The Adventures of Wound Man and Shirley*, a bed-time-tale, comic-book, superhero story about growing up and getting braver. See also the feature article on the new Ursula Martinez show *My Stories, Your Emails* in this edition of Total Theatre Magazine. Full programme at [www.queerupnorth.com](http://www.queerupnorth.com)



PROTO-TYPE THEATER

### EXETER PHOENIX

*Whisper* is a visually decadent, aurally immersive performance that asks the audience to question what is real in a world of increasing technological sophistication. Each audience member is given a set of headphones through which he or she hears the voices of three live performers who are narrating a fictional walk through a fictional city. Obscured behind a cinematic screen, the performers are alternately seen as shadows, silhouettes or in stark clarity, and they create a fully immersive sound environment to accompany their narration by producing homemade sound effects. *Whisper* is presented by Proto-Type Theater ([www.proto-type.org](http://www.proto-type.org)) and will be performed at the Exeter Phoenix 23 June. See [www.exeterphoenix.org.uk](http://www.exeterphoenix.org.uk)

### CITY CIRC

Launched in April by Crying Out Loud, City Circ is London's new season for theatre and contemporary circus. It runs until August, gathering together performances at more than a dozen venues, and including the Tom Tom Crew at the Southbank Centre (19 June–19 July), Upswing Aerial at Stratford Circus (27 June), and Company F.Z at Jacksons Lane (14 & 15 July). See [www.citycirc.com](http://www.citycirc.com)

### EDINBURGH FESTIVALS

This year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe will run 7–31 August, with of course the usual huge number and variety of productions.

For a couple of total theatre possibilities check the company updates section in this magazine for info on Fringe showings from Analogue, Circo Ridicoloso, NIE, The Paper Birds, Precarious, theatre ad infinitum, Unpacked and Zeb Fontaine. See [www.edfringe.com](http://www.edfringe.com)

The Edinburgh International Festival offers a much smaller curated programme of much higher budget productions. Highlights include National Theatre 'Radu Stanca' Sibiu's adaptation of *Faust* – a semi-promenade performance with an immense cast of over 100 actors and musicians. It runs 18–22 August, with a talk from the director Silviu Purcarete on 21 August. See [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk)

### JACKSONS LANE

Following ACE's decision to continue to fund Jacksons Lane's arts programme for a further year, Haringey Council has pledged to double its own support of the venue to £110,000 annually plus subsidised rent worth more than £60,000 a year. Alongside a year-round programme rich in physical theatre and circus, Jacksons Lane run over 50 courses for children, young people and adults. See [www.jacksonslane.org.uk](http://www.jacksonslane.org.uk)

### LIVE ART DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The Live Art Development Agency is delighted to announce that CJ Mitchell has been appointed as Deputy Director and will take up his post in May 2009. The Deputy Director post is a new position created following the appointment of Daniel Brine (Associate Director 2001–2008) as Director of Performance Space, Sydney. CJ will be joining the Agency during its tenth year; see the website for info on planned anniversary celebrations, including ten commissioned 'anniversary presents' created for sale on Unbound ([www.thisisunbound.co.uk](http://www.thisisunbound.co.uk)) and ten commissioned short films that will be posted on [www.thisisliveart.co.uk](http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk) throughout the year.

### THE SOURCE

The Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) has announced details of an ambitious two-year marketing project called the Source. With significant funding from the Scottish Arts Council and working with Scotland's audience development agencies, Glasgow Grows Audiences (GGA) and The Audience Business (TAB), it will: use technology to extract and manipulate audience data from box offices around the country and provide a clear picture of Scotland's audiences for the first time; expand the knowledge and improve the skills of venues and touring companies by using audience data to create a local and national perspective; and develop a network of local training and collaboration forums to expand both the customer care and marketing planning capacities of arts management teams. See [www.gga4arts.co.uk](http://www.gga4arts.co.uk)

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS – SUMMER FESTIVALS 2009



TRANSE EXPRESS

## NORFOLK AND NORWICH FESTIVAL

1–16 May

Sixteen days of extraordinary music, dance, theatre, cabaret and circus. Featuring the loudest show in town, *Bombs per Minute*; a show by pyrotechnicians Les Commandos Precu; and the Garden Party in the newly created Festival Gardens, featuring homegrown and international outdoor performers. [www.nnfestival.org.uk](http://www.nnfestival.org.uk)

## BIG IN FALKIRK

2–3 May

This year's event marks the 10th anniversary of Scotland's biggest street arts festival. Highlights include a special commission by Mischief La Bas / Ian Smith; *Snowglobe* by Angie Dight; Creature Feature; Whalley Range All Stars; Artizani; and Motionhouse Dance Theatre. [www.biginfalkirk.com](http://www.biginfalkirk.com)

## BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

2–24 May

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Brighton Festival features 26 premieres and exclusives including seven commissions, plus 11 free outdoor events. Highlights include the world premiere of Walk the Plank's *Fire, Smoke and Mirrors* (2–3 May); leading French street theatre company Les Alama's *Givrés* (9–10 May); and the UK premiere of *Kurva* by Reial Companyia de Teatre de Catalunya (12–17 May), a site-specific performance about the world of roadside prostitution. Brighton Pier will be transformed for the production of Joe Orton's *The Erpingham Camp* by Hydrocracker (12–24 May). [www.brightonfestival.org](http://www.brightonfestival.org)

## SALISBURY INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

22 May–6 June

Highlights include the premiere of Hoodwink Theatre Company's show *Leap of Faith*; French aerialists Transe Express presenting *Mobile Homme* in Salisbury's historic market square; and the Whalley Range All Stars' *Pig*. [www.salisburyfestival.co.uk](http://www.salisburyfestival.co.uk)

## REACH FOR THE SKY (PART OF LAKES ALIVE)

23–30 May, Lake District and Cumbria  
(various locations)

A series of spectacular outdoor performances which include the British premiere of aerial show by Voala from Argentina performed 100 feet above the audience at Lake Windermere (23 May); Transe Express who will be part of a public banquet in Carlisle (24 May); a first-time visit to UK by Castellars de Vilafranca displaying extraordinary human castle building (25 May); and spectacular double high wire walk across the harbour in Maryport by Ramon Kelvink Jr and Jade Kindar-Martin (29 May). [www.lakesalive.org](http://www.lakesalive.org)

## BEDLAM FAIR AT BATH FRINGE

29–31 May

Free weekend of street arts, plus a Spiegeltent programme and cabaret, which is part of the city's seventeen-day festival. Highlights include the master street clown Marco Carolei (Italy) and CokoKoco (Argentina) – as well as Bowjangles, Woody Bop Muddy, Circomedia students and more. Some events ticketed. [www.bathfringe.co.uk](http://www.bathfringe.co.uk)

## FEAST PICNIC BY THE LAKE WITH X.TRAX

5–7 June, Platt Field Park, Manchester

Giant, distinctive and exotic, FEAST! offers three days of leading outdoor performance from all over the world, presented also as part of the x.trax street arts industry showcase. 2009's smorgasbord includes British artists Mimbre, Walk The Plank, Dream Engine, Whalley Range All Stars, Ballet Boyz, Punchdrunk, Metro Boulot Dodo and Hoodwink. Also, new work by international artists Pret a Porter, 17 Hippies, Circo Ripopolo, El Tanbura, Bilbobasso, Kawa Circus, Cie les Decatalogues and Jo Stature. See [www.streetsahead.org.uk](http://www.streetsahead.org.uk) for general information on Feast! and to register as an x.trax delegate see [www.xtrax.org.uk](http://www.xtrax.org.uk)

## FUSE MEDWAY FESTIVAL

6–20 June, Medway Towns  
(Chatham, Rochester, Gillingham)

A fifteen-day celebration of arts and creativity in Medway, with events on Chatham High Street (6 June) and Gillingham High Street (20 June). Meanwhile on Riverside (6 June), there will be Carnival Night – Bollywood Imaginations. Other highlights include Dancing in the Streets in Rochester (13 June) featuring the re-worked *Bicycle Ballet*. [www.fusefestival.org.uk](http://www.fusefestival.org.uk)

## PARADISE GARDENS, LONDON

20–21 June

Highlights include UK outdoor premiere of Circus Ronaldo's *La Cucina dell'Arte*; the Bar of Ideas, a collaboration with Central School of Speech and Drama; Whalley Range All Stars; Bored Brands Digital Funfair; and Miniscule of Sound. [www.paradisegardens.org](http://www.paradisegardens.org)

## GREENWICH + DOCKLANDS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2009

25–28 June

This year Greenwich+Docklands International Festival will launch Out for the Elements, a new approach to programming in which each Festival for the next four years will be themed around one of the elements – water, earth, fire, and air. The style, content and settings of the 2009 Festival, running 25–28 June, will focus on water, which has shaped and defined the story of Greenwich and Docklands for hundreds of years. Highlights over the four days will include the UK premiere of *Fous de Bassin (Waterfools)*, French company Ilotopie's grand poetic spectacle in which performers literally walk on water, and *Pileau*, a large-scale performance from Dutch outdoor theatre company Close Act using procession, live music and special effects to tell the story of a fisherman, a whale, mermaids and mythic undersea characters. [www.festival.org](http://www.festival.org)

## WATCH THIS SPACE

1 July–27 September, National Theatre,  
South Bank, London

Watch This Space is the National's free festival of al fresco performance on an AstroTurf lawn with national and international theatre, circus, dance, music and spectacle. Highlights include week-long residences from UK companies, Upswing Aerial, The Gandini Juggling Project; Prodigal Theatre's *Urban Playground*; *La Roue de la Mort* by Les Studios de Cirque de Marseille, and tightrope by Les Colporteurs. And after sell-out performances in 2008, Square<sup>2</sup> opens again for more exciting theatre including *Macbeth: Who is that Bloodied Man* by Polish company Teatre Biuro Podróży. Square<sup>2</sup> tickets cost £10; all else unticketed. [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/wts](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/wts)



ARTIZANI

## LATITUDE

17–20 July, Southwold, Suffolk

With its More than a Music Festival tag, Latitude goes from strength to strength each year. The live performance is a major element of the programming with new writing, visual theatre, dance, cabaret, and performance poetry all featuring strongly. Latitude also now seems to be the Edinburgh Fringe warm-up place of choice for both theatre companies and comedians! Ticketed. Day passes available. [www.latitudefestival.co.uk](http://www.latitudefestival.co.uk)

## LAKES ALIVE SUMMER EVENTS

July–August, various locations

A series of outdoor performances in Cumbria. Featuring Ragroof Theatre's *Shall We Dance* an open-air ball among the ruins of Egremont Castle (11 July); *Dance Daze*, a contemporary street dance festival in Penrith (26 July); *Once Upon a Summer's Eve* where a host of characters including a giant compost heap come to life by Lake Derwentwater (15 August); and *Once Upon a Summer's Day* which takes the performance to Curwen Park in Workington (16 August). [www.lakesalive.org](http://www.lakesalive.org)

## BROUHAHA INTERNATIONAL STREET FESTIVAL

20 July–2 August, Liverpool and northwest  
(various locations)

Now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, this year's festival celebrates diverse culture of Liverpool on streets, in parks and within communities. Highlights include: Brouhaha International Street Carnival, World in Princes Park and Liverpool International Mela. The festival also features the creation of collaborative pieces about gun and knife crime, using dance; and a video project about youth engagement and the democratic process called *Operation Youth Vote*. [www.brouhaha.uk.com](http://www.brouhaha.uk.com)

## LONDON MELA

16 August

Europe's largest outdoor Asian festival, held in Gunnersbury Park, Ealing, with something for every generation of every community – including new commissions, international and home-grown talent, music, dance, carnival, food and crafts. Produced by Ealing Council and supported by the Mayor of London. [www.londonmela.org](http://www.londonmela.org)

## MINTFEST STREET ARTS FESTIVAL

28–30 August, Kendal, Cumbria  
(various locations)

The Lake District town of Kendal is home to Mintfest, one of the UK's leading international street arts festivals. Part of Lakes Alive, and commissioned by Legacy Trust UK for WE PLAY, the northwest cultural legacy programme for London 2012. [www.lakesalive.org](http://www.lakesalive.org)

# TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



FACELESS CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS - QUEST

## BRITISH GROTOWSKI PROJECT

11–15 June 2009 the British Grotowski Project at the University of Kent (Canterbury, UK) will hold two landmark events as part of the UNESCO-designated 'Year of Grotowski'. Firstly an international conference, Grotowski: Theatre and Beyond, will bring together renowned scholars and practitioners to discuss and analyse Grotowski's ongoing importance in the world. Secondly, a unique symposium, Grotowski: After-Alongside-Around-Ahead, will offer an open platform to a new generation of researchers and theatre-makers, showcasing performances, films, papers and discussions. To find out more about both events see [www.britishgrotowski.co.uk](http://www.britishgrotowski.co.uk)

## QUEST - OUTDOOR ARTS IN PRACTICE

Hosted by Arts Council England, Yorkshire and working in partnership with Bradford Mela and regional artists, Quest is a two-day national conference exploring the creative practice of outdoor artists. Convened within a tented village, outdoor artists, practitioners, academics, arts officers and programmers are invited and challenged to explore key and underlying questions, such as, How does the artform touch, influence and affect a change in the lives of its audience and how does it contribute to social development and urban and rural regeneration agendas? Quest will be held in Peel Park, Bradford, West Yorkshire, 11 & 12 June. For more info call Bev Adams, Artistic Director, Faceless on 01924 335985, email [bev@facelessco.com](mailto:bev@facelessco.com) or see [www.facelessco.com](http://www.facelessco.com)



THE PEOPLE SHOW 120

## BE PART OF PEOPLE SHOW 120

The legendary company will host a course in devised theatre this summer which culminates in a professional performance. Students and emerging artists are sought from across all theatre disciplines to contribute and learn in the environment of People Show Studios in Bethnal Green, London. Working alongside People Show, artist participants will help create the next People Show. Successful applicants will attend free of charge. Please email [people@peopleshow.co.uk](mailto:people@peopleshow.co.uk) to register your interest and get further details. See [www.peopleshow.co.uk](http://www.peopleshow.co.uk)

## PUPPETRY CARVING WITH JOHN ROBERTS

As part of Horse + Bamboo's Summer Festival of Puppetry, Puppetcraft director John Roberts will be running a week-long masterclass in puppet carving. John is one of the most experienced course leaders in Europe, and is the only non-Chinese person to learn traditional Chinese string puppet secrets during a seven-month study in China. He has run workshops internationally – in Sweden, Zimbabwe, America and Japan. His puppets are some of the finest in Britain. The course is aimed at adults of all experience levels. To book a place on the course call Emma Porter on 01706 220241. 20–24 July; course Fee £325. See [www.puppetcraft.co.uk](http://www.puppetcraft.co.uk)

## FORKBEARD FANTASY SUMMER SCHOOLS

Forkbeard Fantasy's annual Summer Schools are running 26 June–3 July and 10–17 July in 2009. These residential courses are held at the company's inspiring creative base in rural Devon. Set in delightful surroundings, the facilities are fully equipped for film, animation, digital post-production, prop, puppet and automata construction, sound, lighting and hybrids of all these techniques. There are twenty places on each course. The price is £750, which includes accommodation, meals and refreshments. Contact Deborah Harrison, Forkbeard Fantasy, PO Box 1241, Bristol, BS99 2TG (0117 930 9933) or email [ff@forkbeardfantasy.co.uk](mailto:ff@forkbeardfantasy.co.uk) or see [www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk](http://www.forkbeardfantasy.co.uk)

## MICK BARNFATHER CLOWN AND COMEDY COURSE

Mick Barnfather (Complicite) is running his annual autumn Clown and Comedy course 3–7 August this year. Workshops will aim to be energetic and very playful. Participants will be encouraged to have fun and pleasure and use this as a starting point. See [www.mickbarnfather.com](http://www.mickbarnfather.com)

## DANCE RESEARCH STUDIO

The third and fourth instalments of the Dance Research Studio's professional development programme, Visual Language and the Performer (13 & 14 June) and The Choreographic Exchange (25 & 26 July), are open to dancers, actors and performance artists with a graduate or post-graduate qualification, and/or three years professional experience in one of the performing arts. For more information on the programme and enrolment costs see [www.jackylansley.com/pages/studio.htm](http://www.jackylansley.com/pages/studio.htm)

The Studio is also for hire. Approximately 10m x 10m, sprung wood dance floor, mirrors, piano, sound system, video available, flexible lighting, central heating. There is one off-centre pillar. Varied and negotiable rates. For further information call 020 7613 0341 or see [www.jackylansley.com](http://www.jackylansley.com)

## NIE WORKSHOP RESIDENCY

Led by the Artistic Director and Movement Director of the company, this is a ten-day workshop based at the Au Brana centre in the South of France (29 June–9 July) which will explore the distinctive blend of clown, tragedy, storytelling and music that characterises the work of NIE. During this session participants will work with music and instruments and their integration into performance, as well as on theatre clown in red noses. For more information and details on applying, email [Cat Moore](mailto:cat.moore@nie-theatre.com): [cat.moore@nie-theatre.com](mailto:cat.moore@nie-theatre.com)



ANALOGUE

## ANALOGUE

Following the company's multi-award winning debut *Mile End* (2007), Analogue premieres its new show *Beachy Head* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2009. After a year of extensive research and development, the show looks at the ripple effects of one man's decision to take his life, fusing text, CGI animation and physical performance. *Beachy Head* is co-produced by The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich and supported by The Wellcome Trust, Royal Holloway University, Farnham Maltings, Lyric Hammersmith, South Hill Park and The Pleasance. *Beachy Head* runs 5–31 August at Pleasance King Dome, Edinburgh; available for touring in spring 2010. See [www.analogueproductions.co.uk](http://www.analogueproductions.co.uk) or email [info@analogueproductions.co.uk](mailto:info@analogueproductions.co.uk)



BOTTLEFED

## BOTTLEFED

After previewing *Hold Me Until You Break* at Jacksons Lane, London and as part of Rose Bruford Symposium in April '09, Bottlefed Ensemble is going to tour the piece to Iceland (Idno & Artfart Festival, Reykjavik, 26 & 27 August) and Switzerland (Schlachthaus Theater Bern, September, exact dates to be confirmed). *Hold Me* is a durational, improvisation-based piece where physical theatre, live music, design and lighting play equally integral parts. As part of its ongoing education work, in April Bottlefed completed the third phase of Creativity Matters, a research project into early year's creativity run by the Engine Room and London University of the Arts. See [www.bottlefed.org](http://www.bottlefed.org) or email [info@bottlefed.org](mailto:info@bottlefed.org)

## CHIPOLATAS

The Chipolatas continue their 2009 season having recently toured down under, followed by several European contracts. In May, June and July they visit Finland, Romania and Scotland. Check out [www.chipolatas.com](http://www.chipolatas.com) for more – you can now link straight to their Myspace/ Youtube/ Facebook sites. Also Sam Chipolata is involved in a new arts project happening in Barcelona – Y Ahora Que [www.myspace.com/yahoraquebcn](http://www.myspace.com/yahoraquebcn)

## CHRIS GOODE

*The Adventures of Wound Man and Shirley* is a new solo performance by the acclaimed Chris Goode, created for Manchester's Queer Up North International Festival 2009 and touring the UK in May and June. Inspired by an illustration from a 16th century German medical textbook which fascinated a teenage Chris Goode, the piece develops the intimate storytelling style Chris first explored in the award winning *Kiss of Life* and *Nine Days Crazy* to create a funny and touching bedtime story for grown-ups – and weird teens everywhere. Dates May-June include Queer Up North Manchester, Mayfest Bristol, Corn Exchange Newbury, and Drum Plymouth.

## CIRCO RIDICULOSO

Circo Ridiculoso is on tour around the country with *Lighter than Air*, a show for family audiences. Enter the strange and bizarre universe of a wild balloon tamer where surreal and stupid things happen. Combining circus and comedy, performer and clown Danny Schlesinger creates a joyous experience loaded with participation, surprises and laughs. Danny is proud to announce that he will be performing in a co-production of *Lighter than Air* with the Pleasance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this year. The show will be at the Pleasance Above venue throughout August. *Lighter than Air* will continue to tour to UK venues and international theatres and festivals thereafter. Venues wishing to book or enquire should contact Helena at Richardson PR & Management (+44 (0) 208 318 9365 [www.richardsonprm.com](http://www.richardsonprm.com)). For news and tour dates see [www.circoridiculoso.com](http://www.circoridiculoso.com)

## HOODWINK



Look up to the skies with Hoodwink's new air show! *Leap of Faith* is a celebration of the human aspiration to fly and its magnificent failures and innovations throughout history. Flying monks, paper wings, balloons, feathers and aerobicycle displays endeavour to return our fallen heroine to the sky. Charismatic characters, elegant comedy, visual flair, music and extraordinary effects. An uplifting show suitable for all ages. *Leap of Faith* has been commissioned by Salisbury Arts Centre and is suitable for all ages. See [www.hoodwinktheatre.co.uk](http://www.hoodwinktheatre.co.uk)

## LEFT LUGGAGE

Left Luggage Theatre have been collaborating with the people of Wallsend, North Tyneside to create a new theatrical event, *Alveus: solstice*. Combining puppetry, dance, video and soundscape the show draws audiences into a captivating world to explore a story of love, struggle and celebration within the impressive setting of Segedunum's Roman Bath House. *Alveus: solstice* is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, North Tyneside Council and Tyne & Wear Museums. Performances are 11–13 June. Tickets: £6 (£4 concessions) in advance. Booking essential as limited tickets are available. To book contact The Saville Exchange on 0191 643 7093, Tuesday–Friday, 1–5pm. See [www.leftluggagetheatre.co.uk](http://www.leftluggagetheatre.co.uk)

## META MORPHO THEATRE CO

Toby Wilsher, ex-Trestle Artistic Director, has just returned from Turkey where he was writing and directing his third mask show for the State Theatre. He has now established a new mask touring company in the UK called Meta Morpho Theatre Co, who will be touring their first show *The Devil is in the Detail* from January 2010. He has also secured funding to research and develop a larger project for 2010, with music by Alex Silverman and choreography by Nola Rae. Meta Morpho are Chichester-based and affiliated to the New Theatre Royal, Portsmouth. Producer is James Turnbull. Contact [info@metamorpho.co.uk](mailto:info@metamorpho.co.uk)

## MIMBRE



## MIMBRE

Mimbre's new show *Until Now* will be touring the UK and Europe this summer alongside last summer's great success, *The Bridge*. Directed by renowned Spanish clown Leandre *Until Now* is a beautifully improbable acrobatic adventure. A poetic universe is fashioned from joyful flips and harmonious balances to paint an acrobatic tale of friendship, travels and saying goodbye. There will be a special preview of *Until Now* at Laban Theatre on 17 July; call or email for tickets. The summer tour includes Feast/xtrax Manchester and Glastonbury (June) and Stockton International Festival (30 July–1 August); with overseas dates including the Tarrega Festival Spain in September. It will then be developed into an indoor show for London International Mime Festival 2010. See [www.mimbre.co.uk](http://www.mimbre.co.uk) or email [info@mimbre.co.uk](mailto:info@mimbre.co.uk) or call 0207 429 1485.



## NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY

Natural Theatre Company will be displaying their diversity with an eclectic range of performances this season. From *Nude Tourists* in Barcelona at InnMotion Festival, to their animatronic *Cycling Panda* at Dublin Docklands Festival. Closer to home, famous artist Ralph le Bonbon will take participants on a wine-fuelled tour during *The White Wine Arts Trail* as part of Bath Fringe Festival. Visitors to the Bath International Music Festival will also be able to enjoy the Naturals at Party in the City. Students can experience being a Natural for the day at the Chichester Festival Theatre Summer Workshops. For further information see [www.naturaltheatre.co.uk](http://www.naturaltheatre.co.uk)

NIE



## NIE

Previous Total Theatre and Herald Angel Award-winners NIE (New International Encounter) return to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this August with their latest show *My Life with the Dogs*. Based on the true story of a four-year-old boy who ran away to live with wild street dogs in Russia, this is a wild romp through the Moscow backstreets into a world of strange characters and raucous music with NIE's trademark European ensemble of performers. Catch them in Pleasance Two throughout the festival. For more details see [www.nie-theatre.com](http://www.nie-theatre.com)

## OCKHAM'S RAZOR

Ockham's Razor recently worked with Theatre Rites to create *Hang On*, a show for children which opened at Theatre Royal, York in April and then went to the Lyric Hammersmith. The company will now be working with Oily Cart to produce *Something in the Air* – a participatory aerial performance for young people with disabilities. This was commissioned by and will premiere at this year's Manchester International Festival. Meanwhile Ockham's Razor have been in R&D for a new full-length piece of their own. Toby Sedgwick has agreed to direct and has been involved in the early stages of the project. It will have one or two preview performances in the autumn and will premiere at the London International Mime Festival, January 2010. See [www.turtlekeyarts.org.uk](http://www.turtlekeyarts.org.uk)

## PAPER BIRDS

Alongside studying for their MA in Theatre Collectives at Chichester University, The Paper Birds have been touring their award-winning show *In a Thousand Pieces* around the UK, visiting festivals such as The National Review of Live Art and kicking off the Intim8 Festival at The Lyceum, Sheffield. After a two-week tour at The Soho Theatre, London (4–16 May) the company will be performing at The Prague Fringe and The Ruhr Festival, Germany before returning to the Edinburgh Fringe to perform the show for a ten-day run at The Pleasance Courtyard. See [www.thepaperbirds.com](http://www.thepaperbirds.com)

## PRECARIOUS

Precarious are touring their sell-out production *The Factory* this spring and will then hit Edinburgh Festival Fringe with brand-new show *anomie*. Co-Produced by Lincoln Drill Hall, and in association with New Theatre Royal Portsmouth and the Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts, *anomie* comprises six performers, six projectors, six laptops, twelve mattresses, trapezes and surround-sound audio. The company are also undertaking a huge audience development initiative, continuing with their workshop and masterclass series and taking bookings for a 30 venue national/international tour with *anomie* in autumn 2009/early 2010 – get in touch if you're interested to book. See [www.precarious.org.uk](http://www.precarious.org.uk)

## PUNCHDRUNK

Punchdrunk has joined forces with renowned BBC filmmaker Adam Curtis and Manchester International Festival to create *It Felt Like a Kiss*, a walk-through movie housed in an empty office block in the heart of Manchester, with original music composed by Damon Albarn and recorded performance by the Kronos Quartet. *It Felt Like a Kiss* tells the story of America's rise to power in the golden age of pop, and the unforeseen consequences it had on the world and in our minds. Limited season, 2–19 July. Book online at [www.mif.co.uk](http://www.mif.co.uk) or call 0844 815 4960. See [www.punchdrunk.org.uk](http://www.punchdrunk.org.uk)

## RAJNI SHAH

Alongside the current tour of *Dinner with America*, Rajni Shah Theatre has published its first book, which includes an interview, a critical essay, extracts from the performance journal, footage from the making of the piece (in an accompanying DVD), and collaborative photographs created especially for this publication. Contributors are Lucille Acevedo-Jones, Lucy Cash, Chris Goode, Mary Paterson, Rajni Shah, and Manuel Vason. The book and live show are designed to push our thinking about what 'America' means to us, exploring themes of consumerism, rights, ownership, voices, hopes, harvest and division. *Dinner with America – Essays, Films, Images and Conversations* is available for worldwide delivery through [www.rajnishah.com](http://www.rajnishah.com) at a price of £10 (£25 library editions).



THE WORLD FAMOUS

## RED CAPE THEATRE

Red Cape Theatre will begin R&D for a new performance piece, *The End of the Road*, in June. It will look at the Norfolk coastal communities that are literally falling into the sea due to erosion, and will be based on real life stories. The company's Total Theatre Award-Winning *The Idiot Colony* will also be on a UK tour this October/November. For dates see [www.turtlekeyarts.org.uk](http://www.turtlekeyarts.org.uk)

## THEATRE AD INFINITUM

Theatre ad infinitum are very pleased to announce that they have received Arts Council funding for their *Behind the Mirror* tour 2009 and for a second phase of research and development for their next piece, *The War Project* (working title) in June 2009. Meanwhile the company's new show, *Odyssey*, is at Pleasance Ten Dome for the Edinburgh Fringe, 4.20pm. The 'Best of the Fringe' (Observer 2008) company reinvent the timeless Greek myth. One hour. One actor. One man's epic quest to reunite with his family. Passionate, highly physical, and poignant storytelling brings this breathtaking adventure to life. Catch it if you can! See [www.theatreadinfinitem.co.uk](http://www.theatreadinfinitem.co.uk)



THE TERRIBLE INFANTS



### THE TERRIBLE INFANTS

*The Terrible Infants* blend puppetry, live music, storytelling and physicality into a highly sensory theatrical feast suitable for big kids and small grown-ups, featuring narration recorded by Judi Dench. The writer/performer Oliver Lansley also works extensively in television, including ITV2's *FM* and *Whites* for BBC2. *The Terrible Infants* features Tumb, the boy who eats his mum, Thingummyboy, with a face even his mother forgets, Little Linena, the material girl, and of course little Tilly and her terrible tail. Roald Dahl meets Tim Burton in this hugely theatrical, scary, funny, sad, puppetry-packed, dark, musical, magical piece of performance. See [www.lesenfantsterribles.co.uk](http://www.lesenfantsterribles.co.uk)



WALK THE PLANK

### THE WORLD FAMOUS

The World Famous, creative pyrotechnicians who this year celebrate their tenth anniversary, have an exciting summer of fireworks, flames and fire ahead. The company will be performing at: Big in Falkirk, Scotland, 3 May; The Medway Fuse Festival in Chatham, 6 June; Salisbury International Arts Festival, 6 June; and Exeter Summer Festival, 12 June. *Crackers?* will be performed at the Singapore Arts Festival 13 & 14 June, *Full Circle* will be at Viva Cité, France 27 June, and the company are creating *The Big Warm* once again at The Big Chill Festival on 9 August. See [www.theworldfamous.co.uk/shows](http://www.theworldfamous.co.uk/shows) for further details about these exciting summer performances.



THINGUMAJIG

### THINGUMAJIG THEATRE

In amongst puppet shows and walkabout puppet gigs, Thingumajig Theatre is co-producing the second Hebden Bridge Handmade Parade on 20 June, 2 pm. Open workshops and masterclasses (teaching stilt-walking, mask-making and giant puppet-making) will be 2–18 June. The company are also writing and directing *The Difference Engine: A Steampunk Adventure for Boys and Girls*, a site-specific play for younger audiences produced by the Manchester International Festival and Walk the Plank. Performances will be 11 & 12 July at the Manchester Town Hall and again in the autumn at the Museum of Science & Industry. See [www.thingumajig.info](http://www.thingumajig.info)

### TRESTLE THEATRE

In a world of endless choices and well-worn paths, how does one individual find their own way? Trestle's new production combines physical and vocal techniques inspired by Eastern European traditions of singing stories with the company's process of devising innovative storytelling theatre. *The Glass Mountain* weaves together a Polish fable about the pursuit of dreams with contemporary stories of migration. Directed by Emily Gray and written by Anna Reynolds, with musical direction and composition by Laurence Kaye and design by Katherina Radeva. *The Glass Mountain* will preview at the Arts Depot, London on 17 June and Trestle Arts Base, St Albans on 19 & 20 June, with a full UK tour in the autumn. See [www.trestle.org.uk/glassmountain](http://www.trestle.org.uk/glassmountain)

### UNPACKED

Gorgonzola! *Jumping Mouse* is at the Pleasance Two, 11.30am at the Edinburgh Fringe this August before touring the rest of Scotland including a week at the Tron, Glasgow with previous show *No Obvious Trauma*. Then, after touring England with *Jumping Mouse* and *Funeral Games*, in November the company premieres *Suspense*, a night of new shorts at the London Festival of Puppetry. A new piece will emerge from their 'shed' in Brighton soon. Watch for updates at the new website [www.unpacked.org](http://www.unpacked.org) or call Gilbert for more on 07903 018310.

### WALK THE PLANK

Last year, Tees Valley Regeneration announced exciting and ambitious plans to transform Stockton's riverside. Central to the plans was the Infinity Bridge. A symbol of the North East's transformation and the regeneration of Tees Valley, the Infinity Bridge opens to the public this May. Walk the Plank have been enlisted to assist in producing a unique 'world first' spectacular launch... more details to be announced soon! Walk the Plank will also be working on *The Difference Engine* for Manchester International Festival (more in Thingumajig Theatre's listing above). See [www.walktheplank.co.uk](http://www.walktheplank.co.uk)



ZEB FONTAINE

### ZEB FONTAINE

*Quaternary*, a commissioned work to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Paul's School and alumni Milton's 400<sup>th</sup>, is appearing at the Edinburgh Fringe, 8–15 August. Devised and directed by Artistic Director Zachary Dunbar, *Quaternary* depicts five friends on a journey to see the oldest glacier in Iceland. On the way, personal stories reveal a kind of paradise lost. Milton's epic masterpiece inspires a postdramatic piece of theatre, as soundscapes and vocalisations melt into a contemporary evocation of Hell, the Son of Man, Adam, Satan and God. See [www.zebfontaine.com](http://www.zebfontaine.com) or email [zach@zebfontaine.com](mailto:zach@zebfontaine.com) or call 07866 480 609.

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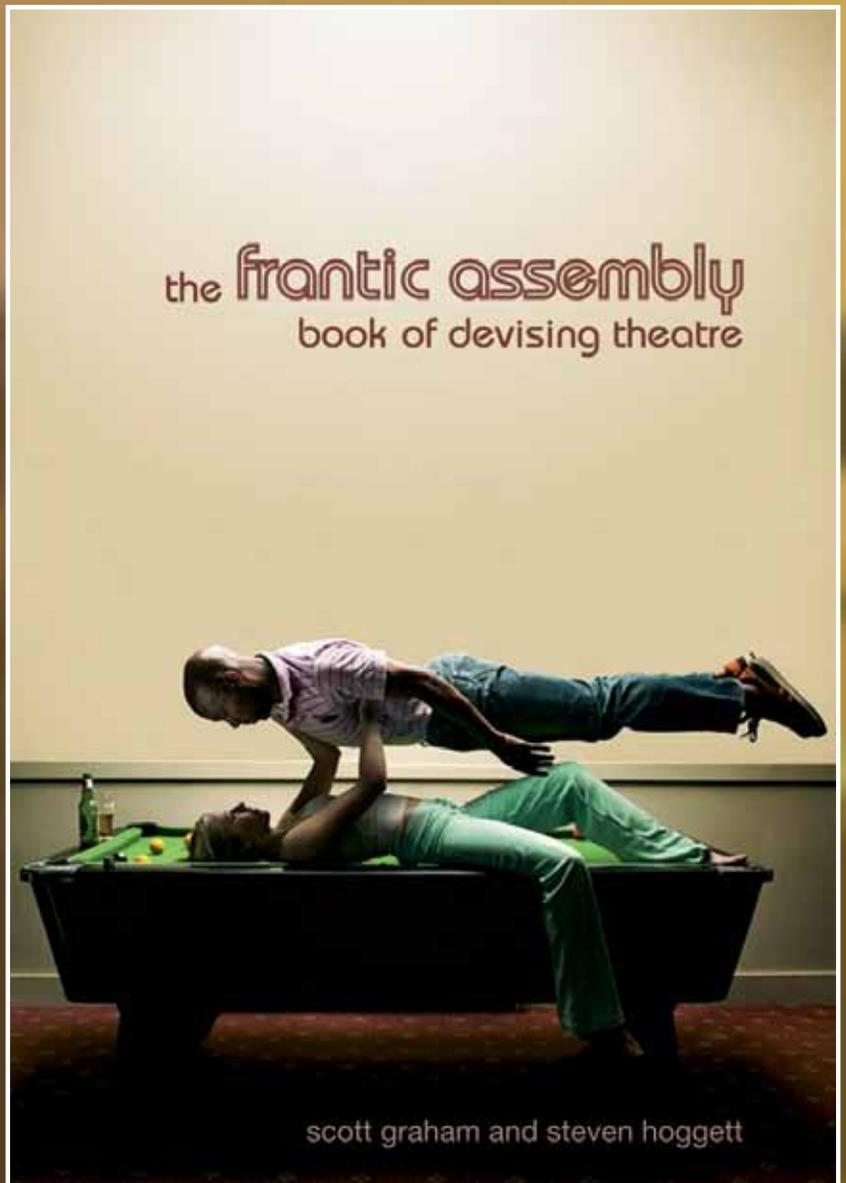
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