

TOTALTHEATRE

MAGAZINE

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TOTAL THEATRE NETWORK CELEBRATING PHYSICAL + VISUAL PERFORMANCE



FESTIVAL, FESTIVAL, FESTIVAL
COME WITH US TO SCOTLAND FOR THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE AND BEYOND
MEET THE WINNERS OF THE TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2006
TAKE A TRIP TO HUNGARY FOR AN ALL ENCOMPASSING DANCE-THEATRE FESTIVAL
GET LOST WITH STREET ARTS FESTIVAL VETERANS DOTCOMEDY
DISCOVER MONSTERS IN THE NIGHT OF THE LABYRINTH AT THE HAYWARD GALLERY
HOWL TO THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE, VIOLENCE AND LIBERATION WITH PAN THEATRE
PHYSICAL, VISUAL, VISCERAL - A SEDUCTIVE SELECTION OF FEATURES, NEWS AND REVIEWS AWAITS YOU WITHIN

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EDITORIAL

Once if asked what 'total theatre' was I'd launch into a pretty lengthy rant on the history of the term, the coming together of various strands of visual and performing arts practices, the evolution of this magazine and the organisation that publishes it and so on and so forth. Now, when asked the same question, I tend to point to the contents page of Total Theatre Magazine and say 'See all this? This is total theatre.'

Looking through the contents page of this issue, there's a pretty extraordinary range of performance work covered. What can the street arts fun and frolics of dotComedy, the extreme body art of Ron Athey (see *Monsters*), the 'singing body' work of Pan Theatre, the moving pictures of Artus (from Hungary), the polyphonic singing of our Total Theatre Award winning cover stars Farm in the Cave, and the intense physical theatre of Al Seed (see *Beyond the Fringe*) have in common? What brings them all together here on these pages?

There are many possible answers, but the most obvious one for me is that this is performer-centred work, evolved from the ideas of the artists who are themselves creators, not interpreters, of the work.

Whilst it is probably still true that for most people out there in the wider world the word 'theatre' means writer-led literary theatre, this is shifting. A look at the supported artists of the National Theatre and the recently-established National Theatre of Scotland, at the reviews pages of our national newspapers, and at the programming of many arts centres throughout the country, reveals that there has been a sea change over the past year.

Visual, physical and devised theatre is very much there in the frontline: Improbable, Punchdrunk, Kneehigh Theatre, Shunt, Grid Iron – just some of the names that have been gaining in profile and reaching bigger audiences over the past year or two.

In art galleries, performance work has finally entered the consciousness of the visual arts hierarchies, with regular live art and performance evenings over the past year at Tate Modern and Britain, at the Hayward and at the Baltic in Newcastle, amongst other places. Venues such as the Chelsea Theatre have made an about-turn in programming policy, inviting live art and experimental devised theatre into their space.

Outside of the dedicated theatre and art spaces, the massive event that was The Sultan's Elephant (May 2006) introduced thousands of people to high quality puppetry/animation enacted within a streets arts context. This I am sure will be looked back on as a defining year for street arts in the UK because of the achievement of producers Helen Marriage and Nicky Webb in bringing this event to London.

So as 2006 draws to a close and we look towards 2007, it is with an anticipation that 'our' sort of theatre – all the things that you find within – will be going from strength to strength, reaching out ever further to new audiences, new artistic collaborations, and new hybrids of performance practice. Total Theatre Magazine will, it is hoped, also be growing and reaching out to new territories. To infinity and beyond... stay with us.

Dorothy Max Prior, Editor

Comments on anything in this issue of Total Theatre Magazine welcome to editorial@totaltheatre.org.uk

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COVER IMAGE: TOTAL THEATRE AWARD WINNER FARM IN THE CAVE'S SCLAVI – THE SONG OF AN EMIGRANT AT FEEAST NOV–DEC 2006. PHOTO T KARAS.



Total Theatre Awards honour the best in physical and visual performance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Read all about this year's winners in our special feature on the **TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS**



2006 **P8**. But August is not the only month, and there's more to

Scotland than the Edinburgh festivals, as we discover in **BEYOND THE**



FRINGE ALASDAIR SATCHEL **P12**. From Scotland to Hungary, as we

travel to the Magyar Tancfesztival, a cornucopia of dance theatre

experiences, in **MIXING IT** MARY BRENNAN **P16**. Why, why, why is

dotComedy such a great street theatre company? What is it about

them that is so different, so appealing? And just what is inside the



labyrinth? Find out more in **WHY ASK WHY?** EDWARD TAYLOR and

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR **P18**. Enter a very different Night of The Labyrinth



in **MONSTERS** KATE RANDOM LOVE **P20**, which takes us to the dark heart

of surrealism witnessed in a live art event at the Hayward Gallery. The

sounds of silence, violence and liberation: Pan Theatre's voice and

body training, as taught by Enrique Pardo and Linda Wise, is investigated



in **HOWL** CASSIE WERBER **P22**.

Upfront, **NEWS & PREVIEWS** **P4** and **PERFORMER & COMPANY UPDATES** **P6**

bring you the latest on who is doing what, where and when.

REVIEWS **P24** include a hefty selection from the Edinburgh Festival

Fringe, a report from the 60th Avignon Festival, Winchester Hat Fair and more.

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT **P32** lists academic

and vocational courses, workshops and classes for the winter season.



TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS 2006

It was another great year for the Awards at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe! For full details of the winning shows, see the centre pages of this issue of Total Theatre Magazine. Further information, including short reviews of all the longlisted shows, can be found on the website: www.totaltheatre.org.uk Next August will be the tenth anniversary of the Awards in Edinburgh. Watch this space for details, coming soon, of the extra special Total Theatre Awards 2007.

TOTAL THEATRE EXPLORES

If you haven't yet done so, take a look at the Total Theatre Explores website. Here you will find information, reflection and commentary by and about women performance artists and theatre practitioners. This website is the culmination of the Total Theatre Explores project, which ran from 2003 to 2005, and acts both as a holding space for the research generated, and as a permanent resource for the physical and visual performance sector. Explores developed from being a training-based project to encompass action research through individual consultations with female artists, networking and discussion events. The final stage of the project saw the commissioning of articles written by female practitioners of physical and visual theatre and performance, including women directors, producers, dramaturgs, scenographers and performers. All of these strands of research aimed to both raise and address issues of importance to women's theatre and women performance practitioners, and to give a voice to women artists to evaluate and reflect on their own work within the general cultural context of contemporary performance. See www.totaltheatre.org.uk/explores

LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL 13–28 JANUARY 2007

The Mimefest is back, with another wonderful mix of physical and visual theatre. Leading light of the new generation of French circus-trained performers, the brilliant young acrobat, dancer and hand-balancing virtuoso Jean Baptiste André returns to the Festival with his brand new production *Comme En Plein Air*. In *The Art of Laughter*, long-time Theatre de Complicité actor Jos Houben explains and illustrates what makes audiences laugh. Total Theatre Award winners Inspector Sands and Stamping Ground Theatre will be there with *Hysteria*, and *Company: Collisions* return to LIMF with *Nothing Left to Lose* ('A theatrical requiem for innocent souls', Total Theatre) and American theatre clown and writer Wolfe Bowart presents *LalaLuna*. Visual theatre supremo Philippe Genty (France) makes his first London appearance for fifteen years with *La Fin des Terres* (Lands End). All the above are at the South Bank Centre.

Flying man and trampolinist Mathurin Bolze and his company will do 'things that you never thought were possible' in *Tangentes* at the Barbican; also at this venue will be the Aurora Nova success *Rainpan 43* with All Wear Bowlers. Critically acclaimed young aerial company Ockham's Razor bring *Arc* to the Linbury at ROH, where you can also find Zimmermann De Perrot (Switzerland), two rubber-limbed artists who will spin their way around a giant turntable.

Fans of 'new puppetry' will be pleased to see Faulty Optic back with *Soiled*, whilst Philip Boë (Switzerland) offers something rather different – *Mémoire de la Nuit* is a surreal detective story inspired by the imagery of René Magritte, which blurs the borders between theatre and magic. Steven Whinnery's *Lying with the Animals* is a mask and puppet show, inspired by Gary Larson's *The Far Side* cartoons, that teeters on the edge of theatre, cabaret and live art. To find out more about these shows, plus the latest additions to the programme, see www.mimefest.co.uk

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL MIME FESTIVAL /TOTAL THEATRE LECTURE 2007

will be given by John Fox, of Welfare State International, at The ICA on Saturday 20 January at 3pm. See the websites for further details www.totaltheatre.org.uk or www.mimefest.co.uk

PUPPETRY AND...

The Puppet Centre Trust has a new director, Natalie Querol. Outgoing director Beccy Smith remains involved as a consultant, and as a member of the editorial team for PCT's Animations, which is principally an online journal (see www.puppetcentre.org.uk/animationsonline). There is also to be an Animations in Print publication – one of the first of a series of Annuals which will provide a snapshot of current puppetry and object theatre practice. The 2006–2007 Annual (provisionally titled *Puppetry And...*) will focus on puppetry in relation to other arts disciplines. It will be published 1 March 2007. For further details email natalie.querol@puppetcentre.org.uk or see www.puppetcentre.org.uk

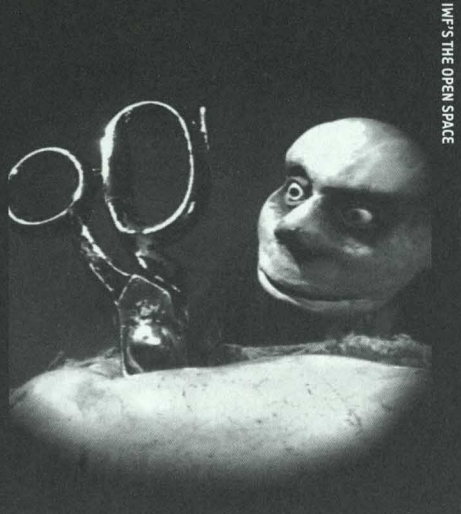
DRAMATURGS' NETWORK

The Network was thrilled to receive support from the Arts Council for a period of business planning for its future activities as a development and support agency for dramaturgy in the UK. Research into the processes of making new work and its relationship to its audiences is also ongoing (fill out their questionnaire online at www.dramaturgy.co.uk). If you would like further information about the Network and its plans contact Beccy Smith at beccy.smith@dramaturgy.co.uk

THEATRE MUSEUM REFORMING

The Theatre Museum, the UK's only national museum for the performing arts, will close at the end of the year while the Royal Opera House and the Victoria and Albert Museum negotiate its fate. When it reopens – if it reopens – it is expected that its collection will be centred more upon opera and ballet. The performance studio at the museum will also close at the end of the year.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT NEWS OR LISTINGS OR TO ADVERTISE IN THE NEXT ISSUE, PLEASE NOTE THAT THE COPY DEADLINE IS 7 DECEMBER 2006.



INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW SHOWCASE

The Open Space is an opportunity to showcase new and nearly-new physical theatre, movement and dance for emerging and established artists, at the Siobhan Davies Studios. First Saturday of every month at 7pm. To ask for further details or receive an application form, email lexi@workshopfestival.co.uk (or phone 020 7091 9666).

VAVAVOOM IS BACK

Now complemented by Immaculate Receptions, a business specialising in organising artistic parties and decadent events. Coming in November: The Monkey's Paw Club, a thrilling and blood curdling new monthly event – a literary soirée with a difference – plus the first Vavavoom School of Burlesque Showcase at the Pavilion Theatre on 25 November – students from the Burlesque course demonstrate what they've learnt, with special appearances by Vavavoom stars. See www.vavavoom.co.uk or www.myspace.com/vavavoom_burlesque

DANCE SECTOR GETS POLITICAL

Dance UK, in conjunction with the National Campaign for the Arts, has produced a Dance Manifesto with four key ambitions: dance to be supported and developed as an artform; dance to be an integral part of every young person's education; dance to be available and affordable for everyone to watch and participate in; dance to be a sustainable career with world class training. An All Party Parliamentary Dance Group has been formed to lobby these aims in Parliament. For more information, or to download a copy of the Dance Manifesto, see www.danceuk.org or www.artscampaign.org.uk

THE ESCOLA DE CLOWN DE BARCELONA is a new space for those interested in the clown arts. The school offers a three-month course of studies, as well as weekend workshops and evening classes. Proposals are welcome: the aim is also to support research projects and clown work in all areas – from clown performance to 'applied clown' (social projects, activism, clown meditation...). Clown practitioners of many different styles and origins are involved in this international project, directed by Clara Cenoz and Jon Davison. Visitors this autumn include Sue Morrison, Moshe Cohen, Franki Anderson, Danny Schlesinger, Rebel Clown Army, and Jango Edwards. Telephone +34 933 042 846, email: info@escoladec clown.eu or see www.escoladec clown.eu

BANDBAZI'S FURTHEST SOUTH

26 November–1 December: Bandbazi will spend a week in research and development on Furthest South, a new piece of circus music theatre, culminating in a presentation on 1 December. Set in Brighton in 2006, Furthest South will explore the culture clash of a 40-year-old Iranian woman and her teenage son who arrive seeking asylum. The production is looking to draw in co-producers from other venues and production companies in the South East and beyond. The company will be applying to premiere the show at the Decibel Showcase in September 2007, before embarking on a national tour. Email info@brightonfringe.net or see www.bandbazi.co.uk

THE DRIFT PROJECT

Para Active, in partnership with Zecora Ura Theatre Network, supported by Lume Teatro, are holding the drift project – a unique training opportunity, part of a series spanning Brazil, Germany, Canada, Norway and the UK – a rare meeting point for performers who want to be at the centre of their creative endeavour. This work aims to enable artistic development and the ability to self-determine process and practice. Next residency is in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 9th to 17th December 2006. This workshop is open to anyone, regardless of experience. For more info email thedrift@zecoraura.com or see www.zecoraura.com

THE LISA ULLMANN SCHOLARSHIP FUND has awarded grants to 21 artists, among them Brighton-based aerialist Lindsey Butcher, who will travel to Boulder, Colorado, to attend the Aerial Dance Festival as well as to San Francisco as part of an artistic exchange; dancer and education worker Maho Ihara (The Cholmondeleys), who will study Budo for four weeks in Japan; and Pamela Woods, of the University of Exeter School of Performance Arts, who travels to Tasmania to be artist-in-residence investigating 'site' as source and resource. Application forms are now available for the 2007/2008 awards: closing date 25 January. LUTSF is also seeking donations so that it can continue its work. See www.ullmann-trav.fsnet.co.uk

PAUL ALLAIN at the University of Kent has received a Research Grant from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council of £203,000 to conduct the 'British Grotowski project – a re-evaluation' from October 2006–October 2009. The project will involve a full-time research associate and a PhD studentship (more details on the website), which will also be funded by the AHRC. Parts of the project will be run with the assistance of the Osrodek Badan Tworczości Jerzego Grotowskiego i Poszukiwan Teatralno-Kulturowych in Wrocław, Poland, as well as other overseas partners, including the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards, Italy. Email p.a.allain@kent.ac.uk or see www.kent.ac.uk/sdfva/

CROYDON CLOCKTOWER are gearing up for Xmas, with a new show featuring The Impossible: three world class circus performers with a glint in their eye, a spring in their step and a trick up their sleeve. The Impossible are Mat Ricardo, Bryony Black and Matt Barnard who together present a spectacular show, packed full of jaw-dropping tricks, incredible stunts, and extreme silliness. See www.matricardo.com Box office: 020 8253 1030. For further information on the Clocktower, contact Jonathan Kennedy (Arts Programmes Manager) on 020 8253 1037 or email: jonathan.kennedy@croydon.gov.uk

BRIGHTON FRINGE ARTS PRODUCTION

Projects for the latter part of 2006 include Head to Head – Artists Inspiring Artists, a series of free workshops/seminars for professional artists, focusing on live art. BFAP are pleased to be working with Geraldine Pilgrim, Gob Squad, Stacy Makishi and Kiera O'Riley. In November, Station House Opera take up residence in The Basement for The Other is You – nine actors, three audiences in three different European cities, one show! Three audiences, one in each city, experience the performance simultaneously: a basement in Brighton, a school in Groningen, and a cafe in Berlin (projected live from each city onto three screens above the actors) merge to become a fourth imaginary space. Performances 1–5, 8–12 November 2006 at 7.30pm Box Office 01273 685861 See www.gardnerarts.co.uk and www.stationhouseopera.com

PERFORMER & COMPANIES UPDATES

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOL 18 | ISSUE 04 | WINTER 2006/7

DELL'ARTE THE PEER GYNT PROJECT



FRAN BARBE DANCE



BARABBAS THEATRE COMPANY is delighted to present *Cyrano*, at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin. Running 9–18 November 2006, Barabbas presents a new version of Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Veronica Coburn. In this beautiful, technically challenging and ambitious piece, rival celebrity chefs Cyrano and Christian compete for the affections of Roxanne through food and talk of food. Email info@barabbas.ie or see www.barabbas.ie

COMPANY PARADISO is co-ordinating a drama and digital media performance by/with young writers, actors and crew as part of the launch of the new Ropetackle Arts Centre in Shoreham, West Sussex. This will take place in late November – see website for dates. It's another collaboration between Malcolm Buchanan-Dick (digital stuff) Stephen Hiscock (music) and Jon Potter (it's all a big drama). This time joined by Jon Oram (Community Theatre) and Nina Ayres (design). See www.companyparadiso.co.uk

THE DELL'ARTE COMPANY and the acclaimed Jomfru Ane Teatret of Denmark have embarked on an exciting international collaboration to create a new work inspired by the Ibsen classic *Peer Gynt*, bringing a unique vision to this powerfully resonant work of theatre on the 100th anniversary of Ibsen's death. *The Liar: The Peer Gynt Project* will embark on a tour of Denmark 1–11 November. DELL'ARTE was honoured as one of the recipients of the Leading National Ensemble Theatre Award from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to advance the company's work in the realm of ensemble-based physical theatre. Email info@dellarte.com or see www.dellarte.com

DIDI HOPKINS, co-director of Commedia Works and associate of the National Theatre, directs and teaches in London, Paris, Iceland, Japan, and at the Actors' Centre. She also recently co-directed Ophaboom's touring *Casanova*. Invited to celebrate 25 years of Commedia for Avignon '07 she is running a training workshop for actors in December 2006. Didi is an artist at Jude Kelly's Metal, partner in theatre4business, and has just appeared in the *People Show 117*. You can contact her at didi@theatre4business.com

FARM IN THE CAVE bring their legendary physical theatre production *Sclavi/The Song of an Emigrant back to London* this November. As a finale to the festival of Central and Eastern European Arts (FEEAST), *Sclavi* will be presented at Riverside Studios from 29 November to 2 December (7.45pm). Full price: £19; concessions: £14. Winner of a Total Theatre Award, a Herald Angel and a Fringe First, *Sclavi* was one of the most exciting productions at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe. See www.feeast.com/ or www.riversidestudios.co.uk for tickets.

FRAN BARBE DANCE premiered a new group work in 2006, *Chimaera*, which now tours to Australia. Fran Barbe's solo, *Fine Bone China*, was shown as part of the new:currents season at the Royal Opera House's Clore Studio and is now touring to Singapore and Brisbane (November 2006) Both these works are available for touring in the UK and abroad in 2007. For further information about performances or workshops by Fran Barbe Dance telephone 07931 710 808 or email franbarbedance@yahoo.co.uk

FULL BEAM VISUAL THEATRE will tour a new version of *The Man Who Discovered That Women Lay Eggs*, September–November 2006. Using a unique blend of puppetry, masks and live action, the show tells the incredible story of how man finally unravelled the myth of his own origins in 1827. A witty, no holds barred examination of the scientific and cultural history of reproduction that proves that scientific fact is often much stranger than fiction. Email rachel@fullbeamvisualtheatre.org.uk or see www.fullbeamvisualtheatre.org.uk

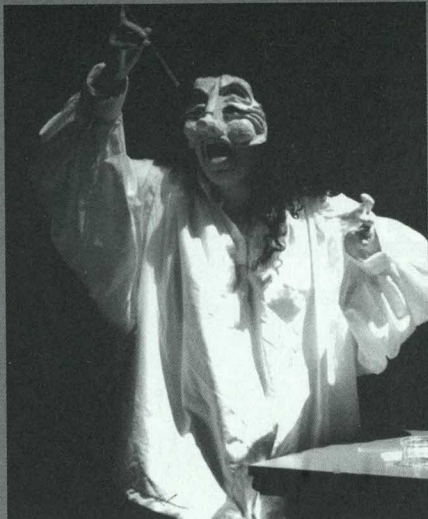
METRO-BOULOT-DODO After a successful summer touring *Spring* (an eccentric interactive garden) to street and music festivals all over the UK, metro-boulot-dodo recently unveiled the next piece in their *Four Seasons* course of work. Autumn is a time based gallery installation that reflects the season's beauty and decay. Autumn premiered at the City Gallery, Leicester, from September to October. 2007 will see the return of MBD's hugely popular performance installation *Fib*, which will run at Lincoln Drill Hall 20–24 February. For further details see www.metro-boulot-dodo.com

NATURAL THEATRE COMPANY'S boffins have produced a new street prop in the form of a life-size radio-controlled panda. This very convincing creature, christened Gordon, rides a child's tricycle whilst interacting with a crowd – rolling his eyes, gobbling bamboo and even talking back when required! Operated by a hidden technician, Gordon is accompanied by characters such as a cycling proficiency officer. This is the first time the company has used a complex animatronics figure as part of their street theatre. Visit the Naturals website to see him in action www.naturaltheatre.co.uk

NIE After scratch performances at BAC as part of the Octoberfest, New International Encounter (winners of a Total Theatre Award at the Edinburgh Fringe 2006) will premiere their new show *My Life With the Dogs* in November 2006. It is a BAC Scratch Commission, supported by the Arts Council of England, co-produced with The Junction. NIE will also be touring *The End of Everything Ever* in December in Norway. See: www.nie.cz

NIKI MCCRETTON, Associate Artist at Lighthouse Theatre, will premiere her new work *Space 50* (devised in conjunction with Jamie Wood, directed by Guy Dartnell) on 10 February 2007 at the ICIA at Bath University, which commissioned the work. The piece marks 2007 as the 50th anniversary of the first living creature in space: Laika, a dog blasted into orbit by the Soviet Space programme in 1957. *Space 50* tours Spring and Autumn 2007 (for dates see website). Niki is still calling for any vivid memories people may have of the space race as part of her research. Please contact her on nikimccretton@lineone.net or see www.nikimccretton.com

NOLA RAE will take her latest show *Exit Napoleon Pursued by Rabbits* to La Roche sur Foron on 7 November and Chateauroux Scene Nationale on 27 January. The widely toured *Mozart Preposteroso!* tours throughout November. Nola will also be directing *The Three Musketeers* for Les Anges Perdus in Vienna 27–29 December, and *Ben Hur* for Teater Manjana in Stockholm 3–9 January. A clown lecture demonstration will take place in Vienna on 8 December. See www.nolarae.com



PANTS ON FIRE

PANTS ON FIRE After winning the Publikumspreis (Public Prize) at the 2006 Arena Festival in Erlangen, Germany, with their hit show *Splice*, Pants on Fire have been commissioned to create a new co-production with Arena, returning to the festival in 2007. From January, Pants on Fire offer a second chance to take part in the *Adventures in Space Program*, a 10-week intensive training course in ensemble and physical storytelling. Alongside this, for the second year running, Pants on Fire present *Adventures in Mask*, based on Lecoq's work and taught by Peter Bramley. Most of Pants on Fire's cast members have been selected through this process. See www.pantsonfiretheatre.com

PRECARIOUS DANCE THEATRE After over 50 successful performances across the country, great reviews and invites from theatres/festivals in the UK and abroad, P-Dance's *Junction 8* tour has come to an end. The company is now planning its next show, which will premiere in January/February 2007. The new show will welcome four new performers to the company and once again will be a multi-media extravaganza! For all the latest news and developments see www.p-dance.co.uk

PÚCA PUPPETS Following a successful summer tour, their new show *Coraline*, adapted from Neil Gaiman's novel, opens in Dublin late October. It will then tour Bray, Thurles and Navan. Suitable for older children (10 yrs+) and adults, the show has been devised over two years, with music by sound sculptor Slavek Kvi, and table-top puppets and props made in collaboration with painter Fiona Dowling, creating a dark dream-world of vibrant characters and images. This autumn Púca also begins explorative work with dancers, musicians and physical performers thanks to a bursary from the Arts Council of Ireland. For further information, email pucapuppets@eircom.net or c/o production companies on www.irishtheatreonline.com

PUNCHDRUNK latest show is their version of *Faust*. Featuring an explosive cast, a labyrinthine environment, live music and the dirtiest blues bar in London, *Faust* saturates the senses and ravishes the imagination. A collaboration with the National Theatre and Ballymore Properties, it is Punchdrunk's biggest and most breathtaking show yet. Performances run 10 October–18 November. For tickets: 020 7452 3000 (NT Box Office) or www.nationaltheatre.org.uk For Punchdrunk info see www.punchdrunk.org.uk



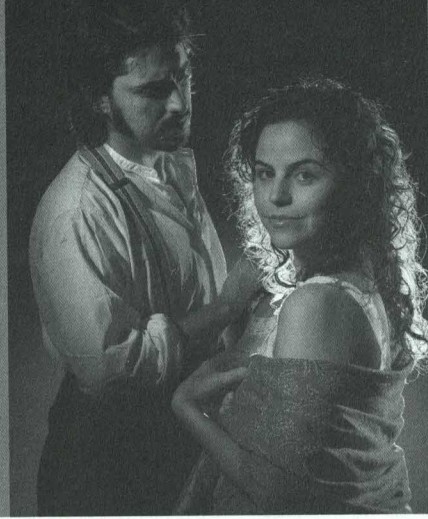
THÉÂTRE SANS FRONTIÈRES

RAGROOF THEATRE After a successful summer of making and touring *Shall We Dance?*, Ragroof Theatre are now preparing to extensively tour the show, with its own bandstand and dance floor, in 2007. Throughout autumn and winter they will be keeping up the dancing tradition by hosting afternoon tea dances at the Komedia, Brighton, with lessons in different styles of dance. They will get you moving around the floor to the sounds of the roaring '20s, '30s and '40s. Saturday 18 November and Sunday 10 December, 2–4pm. Email ragrooftheatre@yahoo.co.uk

RAJNI SHAH has been touring *Mr Quiver*, a four-hour installation performance with Lucille Acevedo-Jones and Cis O'boyle throughout 2006; it is available for touring until the end of 2007. She is currently exploring the intersection of performance as intervention and performance as gift, as part of a Live Art Development Agency One to One bursary. She will also be making surprise interventions (small gifts) as part of the National Review of Live Art in February 2007. Rajni is also currently Artist Associate for Chisenhale Dance Space, Project Director for Restock, Rethink, Reflect with the Live Art Development Agency, and Creative Adviser for Oxfordshire Touring Theatre Company. See www.rajnishah.com

REJECTS REVENGE are off to LA with Spike Theatre on 10 September to work again with the Hothouse Improv Studio and present their new creation *Hoof!* to the improvisers over there. The project has been a collaboration between the two companies, who have been working with the Hothouse over the last two years to create *Hoof!* – a new long-form improvisation method. *Hoof!* has been presented to enthralled Liverpool audiences in 2004 and 2005 and will be touring the UK on the Hoofers' return. See www.rejectsrevenge.com

SHAMS THEATRE Following Edinburgh and a September tour, Shams will be touring *The Garden* nationally Feb–March 2007 with Makin Projects; see their new website for more info. Over the coming year, Shams are developing a new (dark) visual comedy, *Black Stuff*, with an international ensemble. Key to their creative process will be a four-week training in *Clown through Mask*, from 27 November–22 December in London. If you are a professional performer interested in this work, contact Jonathan Young in early November: there is space for a limited number to join at subsidised rates. Email jonathan@shams72.fsnet.co.uk or see www.shamstheatre.org.uk



PERFORMER + COMPANY UPDATES

THÉÂTRE SANS FRONTIÈRES After an exciting trip to China for the Shanghai International Children's Festival, and a spring tour of the French production *Aladin et la Lampe Enchantée*, which won the company an Excellent Performance Award, Théâtre Sans Frontières are gathering a cast of actors from Mexico, Nicaragua, USA, Spain and the UK to tour *Como Agua Para Chocolate* (Like Water for Chocolate) based on the Mexican novel by Laura Esquivel. The production – a sumptuous love story cooked up in a Mexican kitchen, bringing the audience all the sights, sounds, smells and of course language of Latin America – tours the UK until 24 November. See: www.tsf.org.uk

TINDERBOX THEATRE COMPANY'S new production, *Girls and Dolls*, will open in Belfast on 9 November, and will then be performed in Belfast and regional venues throughout Northern Ireland. Four stunning performers bring to life a host of characters as they weave together the colourful comedy and terrible tragedy of an unforgettable summer. Email kerry.woods@tinderbox.org.uk or see www.tinderbox.org.uk

ZECORA URA The success of *Zecora Ura Theatre's* acclaimed collaboration with director Gabriel Gawin (*Song of the Goat/Anima Mundi*) continues as *The Tempest* project now tours to Vitoria-Gasteiz (Basque Country) on 9 November 2006 and to Brazil in 2007. The company is delighted to announce that their new partnership with Arts Agenda (Brighton) and Nordic Nomad will also provide *The Tempest* with its first UK tour since its sold-out run at The Greenwich Playhouse in early 2006. Catch them for two acts of sheer theatricality and wild laughter. For reviews and images see www.zecoraura.com

TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS FOR PHYSICAL AND VISUAL PERFORMANCE

REPORT BY DOROTHY MAX PRIOR WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE TOTAL THEATRE IN EDINBURGH EDITORIAL TEAM: JOHN ELLINGSWORTH, MARIGOLD HUGHES, MIRIAM KING, BECCY SMITH, CASSIE WERBER

AWARDS COMPERE TAYLOR MAC

TOTAL THEATRE MAGAZINE | VOL. 18 | ISSUE 04 | WINTER 2006/7

Total Theatre Awards are made to artists or companies presenting work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe deemed to be the best examples of physical and visual theatre/performance.

The 2006 winners were announced at a warm-hearted and lively ceremony held at the Assembly Rooms, compered by the inimitably gorgeous New York performance artist Taylor Mac, with the help of lovely hostess with the mostest, Miss High Leg Kick (herself a previous Award winner with Duckie's C'est Vauxhall in 2003).

The Awards ceremony was sponsored by Central School of Speech and Drama, and Total Theatre Awards 2006 received further sponsorship from the University of Winchester.

We offer hearty congratulations to our winners, and commendations to the shortlisted, longlisted and wildcard nominees who made it to the final list of 23 shows from our starting list of around 200 nominees!

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD WINNERS 2006

HYSTERIA

Inspector Sands and Stamping Ground Theatre
Aurora Nova

Awarded for the integration of space, sound, light and physical performance into a whole theatre that is more than the sum of its parts.

Award presented by Jonathan Holloway, chair of Total Theatre board and director of Norwich and Norfolk Festival.

PAST HALF REMEMBERED

NIF New International Encounter
Pleasance Courtyard

Awarded for ensemble work which weaves together live music, physical action, and a multitude of languages to tell stories that go straight to the heart.

Award presented by Sue McCormack, director of SETA (Southern England Touring Agency).

FLOATING

Hoipolloi
Pleasance Courtyard

Awarded for agitating the boundaries of theatre, creating worlds within worlds of illusion and delusion.

Award presented by Linda Lewis, independent producer and former director of Visions Festival.

SCLAVI/ SONG OF AN EMIGRANT

Farm in the Cave
Aurora Nova

Awarded for a show full of passion and commitment, which marries magnificent voice work, dynamic movement and energetic live percussion.

Award presented by Jaine Lumsden, drama officer, Scottish Arts Council.

TOTAL THEATRE BEST NEWCOMERS AWARD

AND EVEN MY GOLDFISH

Chatta Oakii
C Central

Awarded to a young company deemed to be best newcomers for a show bubbling over with sparkling ideas, surreal humour and seductive choreography.

Award presented by Dorothy Max Prior, editor, Total Theatre Magazine.

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD FOR INNOVATION, GIVEN IN ASSOCIATION WITH CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA

THE RECEIPT

Will Adamsdale/ Chris Branch
(Assembly Rooms @ George St)

Awarded for an innovative use, within the devising process and in performance, of the elements of sound composition, physical performance and comedy.

Award presented by Dr Sophie Nield, head of the Centre for Excellence in Training for Theatre at Central School of Speech and Drama, London.

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE/ PERFORMANCE, GIVEN IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER.

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE (BAC)

Awarded for their sustained support over many years for physical, devised and visual theatre; for their mentoring of emerging and established artists and companies; and for their development of the role of the creative producer. Given in acknowledgement of the high number of companies performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe whose work has been developed or supported by BAC.

Award presented by Professor Anthony Dean, dean of Faculty of Arts at the University of Winchester, and member of Total Theatre board and editorial forum.

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE/ PERFORMANCE, GIVEN IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

BAC – MORE THAN A VENUE

In the past, 'special' Total Theatre Awards (variously called 'lifetime achievement' or 'significant contribution') have been made to artists or companies who have – as performers, directors or teachers – had a major impact on the physical, devised and visual theatre sector. Recipients of these special Awards have included Nola Rae, Derevo, and Monica Pagneaux.

Total Theatre Awards 2006 took an interesting new direction with a decision to give an Award not to an artist or theatre company, but to a venue: BAC (Battersea Arts Centre) in London.

BAC was given the Total Theatre Award for Significant Contribution for a combination of reasons. It was an acknowledgement that over the years BAC has been not only one of the key venues

for the presentation of 'total theatre' work, but also a programming and producing house which has had a highly significant effect on UK theatre.

The first strand of that acknowledgement was 'for their sustained support over many years for physical, devised and visual theatre'. BAC has just celebrated its 25th birthday and over those years, it has been a consistent programmer of interesting new work from new faces and old friends. For a number of years, BAC hosted the British Festival of Visual Theatre; this has since morphed into OctoberFest and, for 2006, the Imagination Festival. Names to drop who have been included in one or other of these festivals, or in the year-round programme, include Complicite, Lumiere and Son, DV8, David Glass, Faulty Optic, Kneehigh, Shared Experience, The Right Size...

The second was 'for their mentoring of emerging and established artists and companies', for example, through schemes such as the Ladder of Development, and the influential Scratch/Freshly Scratched nights, which give artists the opportunity to try out new ideas in front of an audience. Jerry Springer The Opera is one example of a show developed through this scheme. The Supported Artists scheme offers, as BAC puts it, 'support to a handful of artists that have shown extraordinary talent as theatre-makers'. It is targeted at early-to-mid-career artists who BAC producers feel would significantly benefit from creative and organisational development: 2006 supported artists include Punchdrunk and Hush Productions. BAC Associate Artists are engaged in a five-year relationship with the venue; they receive ongoing support and are also expected to give mentoring support to emerging artists. Current associates include Clod Ensemble, Guy Dartnell, and two former BAC directors, Jude Kelly and Tom Morris.

BAC were also awarded 'for their development of the role of the creative producer'. The creative producer, actively engaged with the development of new work, plays a vital role at BAC. Artistic director David Jubb is a former BAC development producer; he was then based at BAC with Your Imagination (producers of BAC-supported artists Ridiculusmus and Kazuko Hohki, amongst others), and that experience has informed his approach to the directorship. Another BAC name on the 'creative producer' roster is Louise Blackwell, who with Jubb was instrumental in setting up the Scratch/Ladder of Development programmes, and who is now working with Fuel (supported by a joint BAC/Jerwood Producers

scheme), who are producers of Gecko's The Race (a 2005 Award winner) and Will Adamsdale/Chris Branch's The Receipt (a 2006 winner).

Finally, this special Award was given in acknowledgement of the high number of companies performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe whose work has been developed or supported by BAC. A look at the shows that have won Awards in 2006 bears testament to this: The Receipt, Hysteria, and Past Half Remembered have all, in different ways, been helped along the way by BAC.

So a significant contribution over the past quarter-century, without a doubt. But where to now? David Jubb, speaking at BAC's 25th-birthday bash (held on a Routemaster bus, September 2006) had this to say: 'I think the best way for BAC to celebrate its 25th anniversary is to look forwards. So that's exactly what we're doing with four key events across our 25th year. The Imagination Festival: OctoberFest 2006 positions the creativity of the audience at the heart of new theatre. We have the most special Christmas show in the UK with Rapunzel by Annie Siddons directed by Emma Rice

BAC SUPPORTED ARTIST KAZUKO HOHKI



in a co-production between BAC and BAC Associate Artists Kneehigh. We will be hosting the year's largest debate about the future of theatre with Improbable (in Devoted and Disgruntled). And to top it off we're asking people under twenty-five years old what they think of today's theatre by taking them on the ultimate tour of theatre: on a bus. The 25th Birthday Bus Tour will lead to a festival of new theatre at BAC that is created and experienced exclusively by people under 25. Our 25th birthday is simply asking the question...what happens next?'

Dorothy Max Prior

SHORTLISTED SHOWS:

KNOTS – Coisceim Dance (Aurora Nova)
SPYMONKEY COOPED – Spymonkey (Assembly Rooms @ George St)
STREET LIFE – Renegade (Aurora Nova)
THE CONVENT – Jo Strömrgren Kompani (Aurora Nova)
THE FAMILY SEMIANYKI – Teatr Licedei (Assembly Rooms @ St George's West)
THE GARDEN – Shams Theatre (Pleasance Dome)

LONGLISTED SHOWS:

CRUNCH! – Tangram Theatre Company (Pleasance Courtyard)
FOOD – theimaginarybody (The Traverse)
KETZAL – Derevo (Aurora Nova)
LA CLIQUE (The Spiegelgarten)
LITTLE RED THINGS – Gomito Productions (Bedlam Theatre)
MY POLISH ROOTS (AND OTHER VEGETABLES) – Karola Gajda/Peta Lily (Gilded Balloon)
NO OBVIOUS TRAUMA – Unpacked (Pleasance Courtyard)
OUTRÉ – Darren Johnston/array (Aurora Nova)
THE FACTORY – Arches Theatre Company/Al Seed (Smirnoff Baby Belly)

WILDCARDS:

INSOMNOBABBLE – Big Wow in association with Richard Jordan Productions Ltd (Smirnoff Underbelly)
OVO – Udi Grudi (George Square Theatre)

PRESIDING JUDGES FOR THE AWARDS 2006:

Dorothy Max Prior – Total Theatre Magazine editor
Felicity Hall – Total Theatre Network director
Professor Anthony Dean – Total Theatre Network board representative

Total Theatre Awards Judging Advisory Panel: Mary Brennan (live art/dance critic, The Herald), Marigold Hughes (performer/director and member of Total Theatre Magazine editorial forum), Donald Hutera (dance critic, The Times), Miriam King (freelance artist/filmmaker and member of Total Theatre Magazine editorial forum), Martin Sutherland (Director of The Corn Exchange and New Greenham Arts Newbury) Beccy Smith (freelance dramaturg and former director of Puppet Centre Trust), Ric Watts (independent producer), Nick Wood (course leader MA Advanced Theatre Practice, Central School of Speech and Drama).

Our thanks go to our Judging Advisory Panel, to our stalwart team of reviewers and assessors, to Awards ceremony compere Taylor Mac and hostess Miss High Leg Kick, to the Awards presenters, the Assembly Rooms, all the participating venues, and to all the artists and companies who entered the Total Theatre Awards 2006. Last but not least, a big thank you to our sponsors, Central School of Speech and Drama and the University of Winchester, without whose generous support the Total Theatre Awards 2006 would not have been possible.

More on the winning shows over the page. See also Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2006 in the reviews section.

TOTAL THEATRE AWARD



Farm in the Cave

SCLAVI/SONG OF AN EMIGRANT

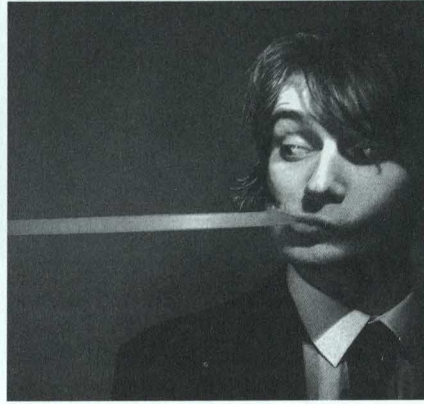
Aurora Nova

A cacophony erupts as a wagon rattles and clatters out of the dark. Head-scarved women and loose-shirted men explode into the space with polyphonic songs, stamping dances and raw physicality. We're awoken to the frenzied and emotive dream of an anonymous Slovak migrant worker returning home, trying to find his place within his vacated past, where lives and loves have moved on.

The title of the piece references the Latin word 'sclavi' which means both Slavs and slaves. *Sclavi/Song of an Emigrant* is based on the Farm in the Cave Theatre Studio's expeditions to villages in Eastern Slovakia; on old Ruthenian songs; on letters written by emigrants who find that coming home is the hardest thing of all. This is an international collaboration, examining the diaspora of Slavic culture past and present: the creators of the production are Czech, Slovak, Polish, Ukrainian and Serbian. It is an in-depth production that uses all and any available artform practices in the service of theatre.

I loved this show, felt moved, engrossed and enraptured by the performers' passionate intensity. It is so complete: the sounds, the songs, the (live) percussive music, the intensely physical dance/performance, the atmospheric lighting. Nothing lacked. Making me sigh with that good aching feeling.

Miriam King



Chotto Ookii

AND EVEN MY GOLDFISH

C Cubed

A young man (tall) sits alone (mostly) and remembers a time when he was happy (probably), comforted by the sound of the sea. I would like it if more theatre were debuffed like Goldfish, stripped down to what is essential in order to communicate what is essential. It guarded its secrets so well. Parts of it were dramatically familiar – the sea as a resonant memory trigger, a love-to-irritation relationship arc – but then the rest of it really wasn't: a fleet of persons carrying briefcases, heavenly dances become a fight for sofa space, a vacuum cleaner with tremendous suck. These scenes – on the whole pretty weird scenes – produced emotion without grounding it, generating a charge only released in standout moments of visual performance. A light on a flex cord swung round to become a lighthouse, turning the stage into a series of calm, static tableaux, eliminating the facial tics of the obsessive main character just as a deep memory emerged. It was simple – it really was just a light on a flex – but it took restraint and subtlety to set up dramatically. Another standout moment was the best visual representation of heartbreak I have ever seen. They were images that were not only beautiful, but conveyed the intensity of the character's feeling, which surely is what total theatre is all about.

Best Newcomers and Single Tallest Man. From the heart, for anyone young at heart. These reprobates done good.

John Ellingsworth



Will Adamsdale/Chris Branch

THE RECEIPT

Assembly Rooms

A man lives in a city. His name is Wiley. Surrounded by the daily sonic barrage of metropolitan blips and bleeps, a grind of urban clatter animated and substantiated by performer/live sound operator Chris Branch, Wiley blags his way through his days, working for a company so saturated by buzzwords and taglines he no longer knows what he is doing, dodging in and out of the flowing tide of meaningless scraps of paper that grant him his access to the city. Entry docks for people, exit docks for people, different ones for objects, drink tabs – folded and scribbled on with formulaic precision.

Close to drowning in this paper tide, Wiley finds one scrap to hold on to and bring him back to the surface – a receipt. 'Choose something and go for it,' a de-urbanised, hopeful, chicken-tending comrade tells him. He does. His mission: to find the owner of the receipt; to find out who it was that bought that drink at a Bar-Space-Bar somewhere in the city.

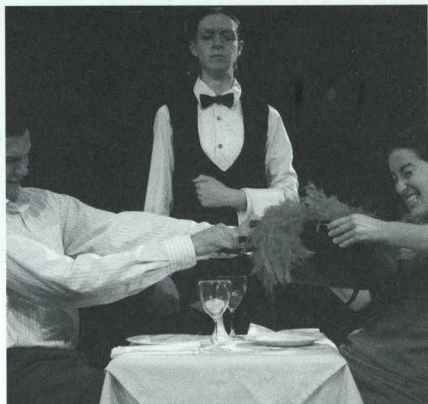
Built up by the performers' direct relationship with the audience, the immediate effect of Branch's live sound operation on the progression of Adamsdale's/Wiley's quest, and by the comically quirky and seemingly spontaneous exchanges between these two chaps (a boyish banter that tells a story of many shared beers), this tale is very much one of our present times. The match is an excellent one.

The Receipt is an urgent and vital performance and a tale that needs to be told, lest we are drowning and we don't even realise it: an urban fable of human spirit triumphing over the dehumanising barrage of our daily lives; a quest for our times.

Marigold Hughes

WINNERS 2006

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE



Inspector Sands and Stamping Ground Theatre

HYSTERIA

Aurora Nova

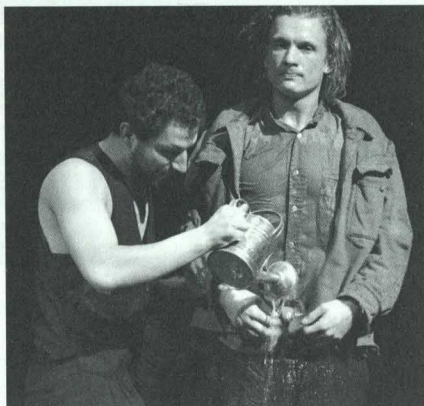
Hysteria is, on one level, a kind of contemporary Restoration comedy of manners, playfully highlighting the follies and frailties of human relationships as negotiated in social settings. It takes as its subject matter a restaurant date in which a man (Ben Lewis) and a woman (Giulia Innocenti) nervously circle around each other, exposing their own neuroses and those of the other, their relationship mediated through the anarchic interventions of an even-more-neurotic-than-the-date-victims waiter (Lucinka Eisler), who has a rich inner life and tendency towards paranoia. Is this a first date? Maybe they've been married for years ('It's Just a Temporary Thing' – Lou Reed). Either way, there's a lot to learn about each other...

On another level, this is a classic clown show – an eternal triangle of three characters expose the archetypes and stereotypes within and without through physical/visual/verbal situation comedy. It is horribly, at times excruciatingly, funny.

Moving on up a level: it's a piece of truly, totally, total theatre that draws together superb physical acting, a sharply honed text, a stunning mise en scène of light and objects, a perfectly tuned sound design and an intelligent use of the performance space.

Hysteria is an excellent example of the pay-off that comes with a slow and careful development process, in which the dramaturgy of a theatre piece is challenged along the way, to the betterment of the show. Praise is due to The Nightingale in Brighton and BAC in London for the roles that these venues have played in this process, and to artistic collaborator Jonathan Young (also shortlisted for an Award for his solo show *The Garden*). A genuinely collaborative piece of theatre-making, and a worthy winner of a Total Theatre Award.

Dorothy Max Prior



New International Encounter

PAST HALF REMEMBERED

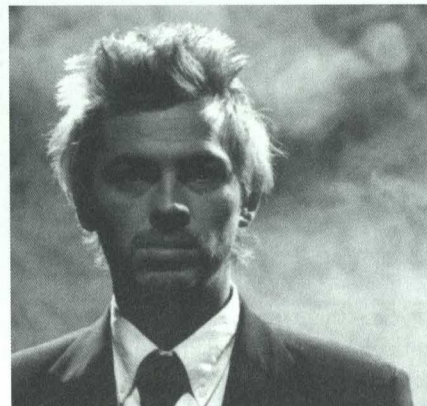
Pleasance Courtyard

As *Past Half Remembered* opens, the performers, playing an assortment of well-worn folk instruments, distribute vodka, and regard the audience wide-eyed and slightly bemused. Much of the charm of this piece derives from this relationship between performer and audience, and its easefulness belies the astute nature of the interplay, and the complexity of the multiple layers of narrative, fiction and time. Few performances, however innovative or spectacular, achieve this level of genuine communication, and the combination of the performers' vivacity and Alex Byrne's subtle direction achieves a communality which is, in itself, a thrilling experience.

The narrative is simple: the life and love of a Russian woman living through the events of the 20th century. She and her husband experience international and civil war, birth, death, loss – and most traumatically of all, tea with the family. She is one hundred years old, but memory makes her young again, and, through a particularly extraordinary performance, we see her slip between youth and old age, and back again, like a child who falls asleep while playing an imagination game, and wakes to find that life has passed.

While the strong central narrative endures, the imperturbable cast make constant diversions, be they paeans to ornithology, or an instruction session on the creation of an 'imaginative door'. The players support or, more often, interrupt the story, with music, song, multi-lingual explanations, and improvisations, weaving together an exemplary piece of ensemble work, which also constitutes the centre of a trilogy. The intimate hints at the epic, the fall-about comedy is cut through with darkness, and the fabric of the piece is pinpricked with moments of intense beauty.

Cassie Werber



Floating

HOIPOLLOI

Pleasance 2

Floating is a celebration of the triumph of the little man, a paean to the unprofessional, executed with effortless precision. We are welcomed into the delightfully cluttered theatrical world of Hugh Hughes, whose coming-of-age story, his difficulty escaping the island of Anglesey, is transposed onto a cosmic scale as the island itself floats away on a journey around the northern hemisphere, with Hughes himself trapped on it.

Shôn Dale-Jones's incarnation is completely endearing as he and his enthusiastic if hapless assistant Sioned scramble through the postures of performance-art-esque low-tech trickery in a production dedicated to his Gran. Ordinance Survey maps, projections of sea and sky, metaphorical (and physical) lines, real water, real (if modest) nudity and an entirely surreal tale told in a hyper-real fashion, combine to destabilise notions of truth and fiction, depositing us squarely in the company's theatrical hands. Hoipolloi have created a complete alternative universe that absorbs you from the first step into the auditorium, where a nervous Hughes greets you from the side of the stage, to the post show in-character blog. In planned future collaborations between Hoipolloi and Hugh Hughes Productions we'll be seeing more of this character and it's an enticing prospect – for all its sophistication, the brilliance of this piece is that it never loses its sense of the human heart at the centre of its story.

It is a testament to the dexterity and ability of this company that even as they deconstruct their stagecraft they remain able to harness its power, creating moments of theatrical transformation which transfigure the stage. Hoipolloi aim to create theatre which stretches the imagination: *Floating* stretches your mind, and your heart as well.

Beccy Smith

BEYOND THE FRINGE

AUGUST IS NOT THE ONLY MONTH – THERE'S PLENTY OF PHYSICAL AND VISUAL THEATRE HAPPENING IN SCOTLAND ALL YEAR ROUND, SAYS ALASDAIR SATCHEL

Physical theatre practice in Scotland is currently riding high. In the last couple of years, Scottish artists have been crossing boundaries of all sorts in the creation of new work and the taking of that work to new places within and outside of Scotland. *Room*, a co-production between Edinburgh-based Grid Iron and the National Theatre of Scotland, was a site-specific voyage through Edinburgh International Airport. Al Seed's *The Factory* premiered at the Arches in Glasgow, then toured to various destinations in Scotland and abroad, most recently to the Edinburgh Fringe, where it was longlisted for a Total Theatre Award. Benno Plassman's Glasgow-based group *The Working Party* have made large-scale outdoor theatre at the Olympics in Turin in '05 and have an ongoing training initiative in Brazil. Catherine Wheels have taken physical/devised children's theatre to the international stage – as have *Cat In A Cup*, who mix devised and written work which often focuses on the darker side of life. Other names and faces include Glasgow's *Vanishing Point*; *Plutôt La Vie*, who create performances in which physical, visual and textual elements work together to drive a story; Sandy Grierson, who has worked with companies as diverse as *Lazzi!*, *Ariel Teatr*, and *Periplum*; Cait Davis, who has performed with *Grid Iron*; and Laura Cameron Lewis, of Edinburgh's experimental theatre collective *Highway Diner*.



BACK TO THE ROOTS

Physical theatre in Scotland kicked off in the late 1970s with the emergence of companies like *The Scottish Mime Theatre*. Not content just to play their shows, the SMT actively opened up their work and creative processes through workshops and touring to remote, non-theatre venues.

In the '80s and '90s, names such as *Communicado* and the Gaulier-trained *Benchtours* emerged. *Communicado*'s first production, *The House With The Green Shutters*, incorporated daredevil physicality, live music and song. They are one of the few Scottish theatre companies working in a physical vein who use the Scots tongue. *Communicado* still have an important profile, company founder/director Gerry Mulgrew being much in demand as both actor and director: he has recently directed theatre-clown trio *Peepolykus*.

Benchtours formed originally as *Théâtre Buffon*, performing brutally funny, politically charged street theatre pieces. Their first production as *Benchtours* was *The Splitting of Latham*, a curious melodrama devised with writer Michael Duke (now artistic director of *Tinderbox* in Belfast). They have toured internationally, and created the first adaptation of Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (a private performance was given to Mr Rushdie, his son and several bodyguards at the height of the *Fatwa*). *Benchtours* have always had a deep commitment to inclusive community projects, and have built a strong relationship with the *Brunton Theatre* in Musselburgh, where they have presented many of these projects, most recently *The Invisible Man* (or *A Brief History of Invisibility* in East Lothian).

The fiery torch which drove the early work of *Communicado* and *Benchtours* has been handed on to a barrage of young, exciting Scottish companies, exploring the possibilities of approaching theatre from a physical perspective. An important element in this development has been the role played by venues – in particular *The Arches*, a unique venue in Scotland and a real asset to the cultural scene in the support it offers to both emerging and established practitioners.

THE ARCHES – MORE THAN A VENUE

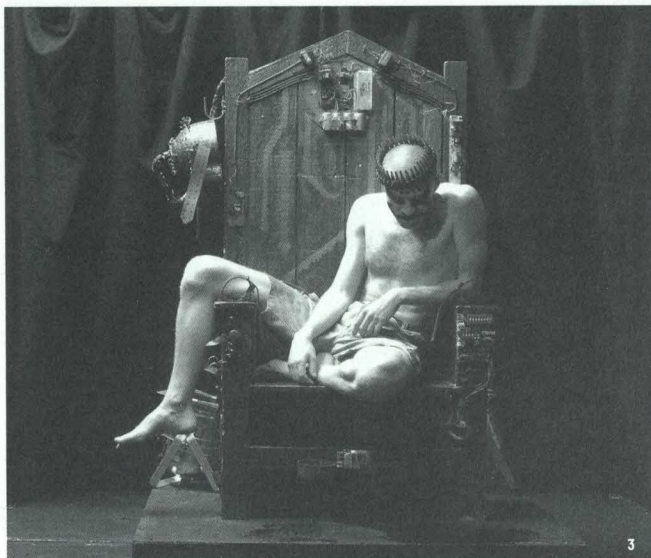
Having set up The Arches as a theatre space in 1991, under Glasgow's Central Station, founder/director Andy Arnold discovered that putting on club nights in the venue's various cavernous spaces was an excellent way to help support the artistic programme – and such is its status that The Arches was recently voted the tenth best club in the world by DJ magazine!

The Arches offers a diverse programme of year-round events, but just as vital is the support that it offers to emerging artists. The Arches Award For Stage Directors gives two candidates a solid budget and the space to explore and present their own projects. Run in conjunction with The National Theatre of Scotland, The Traverse and The Tron, the two finished projects are then presented at the Arches Theatre Festival in April before transferring to The Traverse in Edinburgh for a short run.

Arches LIVE! is a festival which takes place in September and, as their website states, 'offers a supportive environment allowing young companies a platform for creative experimentation and risk-taking.'

The Arches also have an artist-in-residence post: inaugural artist Al Seed is creating some of the most exciting physical performance work in the UK (he will be taking *The Factory* to the London International Mime Festival 2007).

As well as running the most diverse space in Scotland, The Arches also has an acclaimed theatre company who have been producing work for 15 years. Their latest productions have been extremely successful: Arnold's site-specific adaptation of Dante's *Inferno* in January '06 was a sell out, the action unfolding throughout the levels, caverns and recesses of the Arches, as shadowy forms brought Dante's hellish dreams to life.



AL SEED – PHYSICAL PERFORMER EXTRAORDINAIRE

With The Arches' commitment to fostering new talent in Scotland being at the core of their ideology, their first artist-in-residence post has been a resounding success. The post (inaugurated in July 2005) has enabled Seed to work in three areas: the production of his own work in the field of circus and physical theatre; the establishment of outreach workshops for young people in the Glasgow area; and to offer development and collaborative work with professionals and students based in Scotland. Originally drawn in to the theatre by a love of poetry, Seed studied at Glasgow University, where he co-founded *Vanishing Point* with whom he performed for three years. Feeling the need to move beyond working with text, Seed then went on to study at *Circomedia*, founding the renowned *Hoax Productions* with Ivan Marcos. *Raw Beef* by *Hoax Productions* visited the *Circus Space Festival*, gaining fantastic reviews for their generous comic performances exploring taboo subjects, such as suicide, whilst clad in peachy tutus and boots.

Al Seed's latest solo production *The Factory*, developed at the Arches, is the most visceral and exciting piece of physical theatre to emerge from a Scottish company in years. Seed's physical dynamism and focus on stage is awe-inspiring, an engaging performance that seduces the audience into the mad journey of the piece, which takes 'a long hard look at bureaucracy, the London bombings and the lust for power' and deals with the consequences of our wilful participation in contemporary society. Among the many delights of the piece, Seed assumes the gestures of politicians such as Tony Blair, weaving them into intricately choreographed moments that flash before your eyes, while in other sections he wrestles with *The Big Red Button* and all the cultural assumptions that go with it.

Seed's education and outreach work is of vital importance to him as a practitioner. He identifies a distinct lack of opportunities for training in physical theatre in Scotland, and is currently working with Simon Abbot of Fife's *Adam Smith College* to establish a permanent Higher National Diploma course in physical theatre and a professional development course for practitioners.

This is the sort of positive step that Al Seed says 'needs to happen' if Scotland is to have a sustainable, indigenous (and home-trained) physical theatre scene.

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MIXING IT

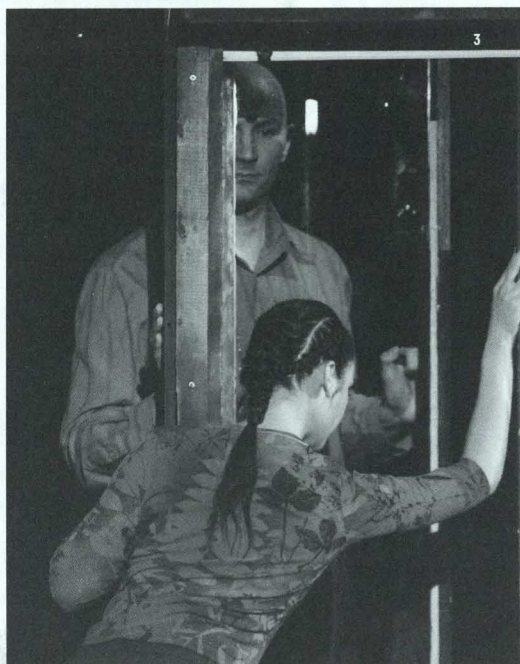
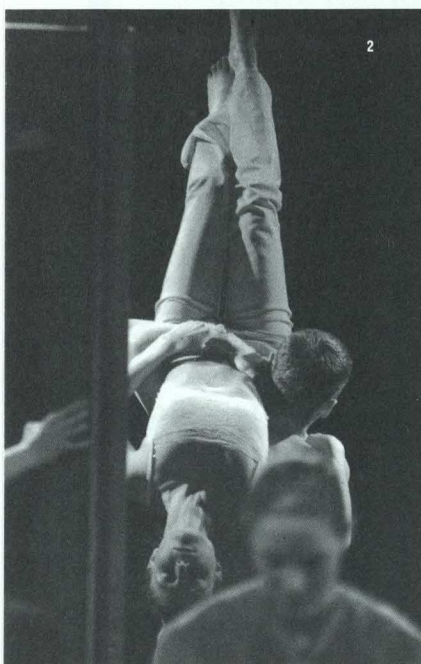
MARY BRENNAN TAKES A TRIP TO THE MAGYAR TANCFESTIVAL 2006 IN HUNGARY

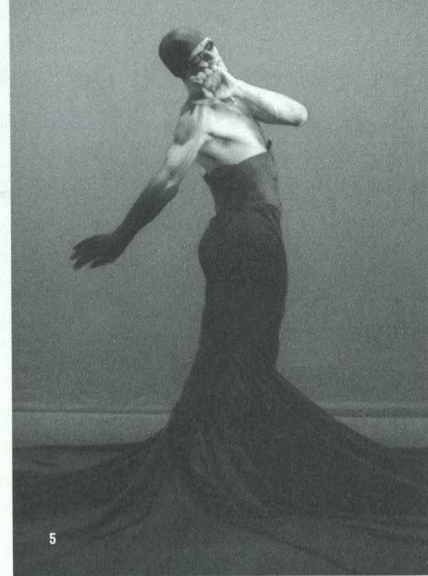


As audiences gathered in Gyor's National Theatre for the first night of Hungary's Fifth Dance Festival, they were stopped in their tracks by a figure in a vast, rippling swirl of blue – the skirt unfurling from a tight corset that revealed... a manly chest. Kristof Varnagy (a member of the Pal Frenak Company) was helping to launch the event with an installation based on Mennono, the solo show he would present later in the Festival. Not many major dance festivals choose to begin their programme with a piece of total theatre in the foyer – Varnagy performed a spontaneous episode that was at once cabaret (with nuances of Josephine Baker in the movements of torso, arms and hands) and yet had an element of serious theatre in its implicit questioning of gender boundaries and personal identity. But then Hungary's bi-annual dance festival has never really followed rigid lines of demarcation since its brave beginnings in 1998.

The festival logo – a white pointe-shoe superimposed against a black knee-boot (signifying folk dance) – made it clear from the start that there was no hoity-toity pecking order along the lines of 'some forms good art/others not'. The mix, then as now, was an all-encompassing one that reflected the various forms of dance – and dance-theatre – that were on offer all across Hungary. Yes, there was ballet – courtesy of the Hungarian National Ballet and others – and yes, there was folk dance. But there was always a vigorous tranche of contemporary work, both mainstream and experimental. The likes of Yvette Bozsik (one of the earliest recipients of a Total Theatre Award at the Edinburgh Fringe) and Artus, one of Budapest's most internationally acclaimed performance groups, were consistently welcomed into the programme because their innovative approaches to movement, visuals, music and design were a valuable reminder that creativity and culture should be responsive to changing times and the modern world.

I suppose if something similar were to be staged in the UK, it would have the Royal Ballet ranged alongside a Morris dancing troupe and maybe some Scottish Highland dancers, with Siobhan Davies or Wayne McGregor's company flying the contemporary flag while Forced Entertainment, Stan Can't Dance and Lone Twin lined up in the wings – and that's without taking into account the platform programmes for new and emerging talents. This eight-day juxtaposition of genres really sends the onlooking mindset into freefall. It's an intriguing, even liberating way of assimilating work, quite different from the intense focus that sets in during a stint of Live Art or unalloyed Balanchine. That's because the programming mix doesn't cluster styles together – this year, the Hungarian National Ballet performance was followed by Dream Team Theatre with a wry, stylised female duet of mannerisms and rivalries that pivoted (often acrobatically) around a four-poster bed. On another night, a razzzy-jazzy





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version of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (presented by Ballet Pecs with huge enthusiasm, lavish sets and more than a whiff of far-off Broadway) was followed by a piece of folk dance that really could claim to be total theatre. Szekek (*Chairs*) was inspired by Ionesco's Absurd drama of the same name. The last couple on earth are dying... You could, without much pushing or shoving, interpret that as an emblem of what is changing within Hungary, two years after joining the European Community. Already the kids on the block are emulating the street styles (of dress and dance alike) of the 'dudes in the 'hood' that they see on TV and on their computer screens. A temporary stage, erected in the square in front of Gyor's National Theatre, housed nightly displays of teenagers strutting their hip hop stuff... Does it herald a fading away of the traditional folk dances that used to fill so many public squares across the country, dances where passers-by, lured by cimbalon and fiddle, would just have to join in?

Not if the Bartok Dance Theatre of Dunaujvaros have anything to do with it. For in *Szekek (Chairs)* the dancers used percussive steps from folk dances to create a dramatic soundscape that hinted at the march of time, but also at a defiant resistance. On a stage bristling with wooden chairs, the dancers kept finding ways to navigate the space and form brief couples. One couple – the last on earth – never danced, but instead moved ever closer to the rudimentary wall, with window and door, that represented fragile civilisation. Gradually, the couples ceased to dance – all but one, their fading footfalls echoing out through the dying light. Whereas many folk dances arrive in a gorgeous flurry of brightly ornate costumes and showy footwork, this piece was pared-back, stark and highly theatrical – in its freeze-frames of stillness, as much as its studied actions. Folk dance, yes – but unexpected total theatre, and a way of celebrating traditions without going down the spectacular Riverdance-Czardas route.

Elsewhere, *Artus* were in resounding form with their part-installation/part-performance piece, *Don Quixote Mausoleum*. A limited capacity audience filed into a small black studio to find themselves face to face with various 'tableaux vivants' representing Quixotic figures from recent times: the boldly-going spaceman, the rock-star, the inventor: men and women who have tilted against the windmills of conventional wisdom and cosy complacency. Their raised stages are ranged around a small, square acting area, but it's only after we have wandered round – sampled the buffet in the corner, watched them go into their individual routines – that we are invited to witness the ultimate demise of *Don Q* as he struggles to perform for his elusive *Dulcinea*. Who might she be? A video backdrop of faces leaves us in no doubt: the audience, whoever or wherever it is, is the perpetual *Dulcinea* and *Don Q* is every artist who has striven to please, or inform, or amuse. *Artus*, led by founder and director Gabor Goda, consistently manage to do all these but as their *Don Q* is vanquished and

buried, the message of concern is clear: the arts are in peril from so many sides, in a world where folly is rife, but Quixotic foolishness/imagination is undervalued. But hey! creativity is irrepressible – and *Don Q* bounces back, literally, encased in a huge ball, like a child's toy. We tug him every which way – he can't be kept down. Whereupon the glasses chink and we all drink to the knockabout life of the artist, long may he (or she) roll with the funders' punches!

It is, quite simply a tour de force of total theatre: merry songs punctuate proceedings, the designs and working machinery – all deliberately low-tech but cunningly so – are a constant delight while the adroit physicality of the performances allows the narrative to tilt between daft comedy and genuine pathos. Some of the visiting producers had never seen *Artus* before – their shining, smiling faces proved the team had, again, used total theatre values to cross any obstacles of language or cultural difference.

To end where it began – with Kristof Varnagy. The full version of *Mennono* (choreographed by Pal Frenak) proved exquisitely memorable and, like *Artus*, a visual/physical highlight. Think erotic *Butoh*: a lissom body, slow-moving as if testing unknown waters – and indeed, when Varnagy abandoned the screeds of billowing blue silk, it floated out like an inviting pool. Or maybe a discarded chrysalis, for as the piece unfolded, it became ever clearer that this was a journey of discovery – an exploration of male and female selves, leading to an acceptance of a personal identity that embraced both. In a way, a perfect encapsulation of what this event continues to do – by giving support and prominence to dance and physical performance works of all persuasions, it celebrates the past, present and future of movement-based performance in Hungary.

IMAGE 1: ARTUS – DON QUIXOTE MAUSOLEUM

IMAGES 2-4: SZEKEK – CHAIRS

IMAGE 5: KRISTOF VARNAGY OF PAL FRENAGY COMPANY

Mary Brennan is dance and live art critic for The Herald newspaper, and a member of the Total Theatre Awards judging advisory panel for 2006 and in many previous years.

For further information on the Magyar festival, see their website www.magyardancfesztival.hu/ or for information in English, see www.vendegvaro.hu/en/35-25523

WHY ASK WHY?



WHY IS DOTCOMEDY SUCH A GREAT STREET THEATRE COMPANY? WHY? EDWARD TAYLOR HAS THE ANSWERS

Two smart – one might almost say smarmy – TV newscasters push a mobile news-desk along the streets and turn even the tiniest occurrence into breaking news. It might be a Coke can being intermittently blown around by the wind, it might be a parent carrying his child on his shoulders, or it might be someone who bears the tiniest resemblance to a B-list celebrity. The audience are occasionally asked to press their red buttons now if they want further information, but quite how you do this, or what might happen if you did, is not clear.

A man who happens to be carrying an inflatable hammer is apprehended and tried for possession of an offensive weapon. As he stands in the dock he is prosecuted and defended by two of the keenest legal minds there are. The prosecution offers some very imaginative and intimate explanations as to how and why an inflatable hammer might be an offensive weapon; the defence bats these outlandish accusations away, and all this takes place under the scrutiny of a judge who sits atop a wooden desk on wheels. The audience are the jury called on to decide his fate.

A gaggle of scientists in white lab coats follow their academic superior in an investigation of what's happening and why on a busy festival site. From time to time they stop, single something out and ask the professor to explain: 'Why has that man got so many tattoos?' 'Why are children small?' 'Why are aliens always on stilts?'

There's a tent in the middle of the street. It looks like one of those tourist information desks that pop up whenever there's a do on. The staff are well turned out, extremely helpful and there are lots of leaflets. Yet almost everything in the Mis-information Tent will lead you down the wrong path and tell you nothing like the truth. Competitions for free champagne, warnings about vultures on the loose, street maps of Brighton when you want to get around Manchester and details of a wind-farm to be sited in a local beauty

spot are some of the many, many nuggets of information offered up as helpful advice.

Steve 'Woko' Jackson, the Half-Naked Chef, gives a cookery demonstration on the street. The demonstration is a thinly veiled excuse to insult vegetarians, show off some extremely unpleasant nylon underpants and try and get the public to eat a meal made from Doritos, Sunny Delight and those baked beans with little sausages in them, the tastelessness of the recipe being a perfect compliment to the general lack of taste displayed in the act. The alarming and continual rise in the cost of his cookery book as the show progresses also gives cause for concern.

If you have visited a street theatre festival over the last five years, the chances are that you will have come across one of dotComedy's acts. You may well recognise one of the performances described above, or you may have chanced upon an archaeological dig, a makeover of your local street by some dodgy designers or perhaps three referees giving passers-by red cards for offences which generally have little to do with football. DotComedy have a big repertoire of work. As well as mobile street theatre shows, they specialise in installations and performances which carry on over the day so that the line between what's genuine and what isn't is well and truly blurred. This approach could lead to Trigger Happy TV/Jeremy Beadle/ Candid Camera style routines with one gag laboriously stretched out. However, the absurdity of what they are up to and their eye for the visual impact of what they do elevates it above such work. The humour is extremely sharp and benefits from their background in stand-up comedy. Of the two main people who run the company, William Wilding is well known on the cabaret scene as Woody Bop Muddy (creator of the record graveyard) and Richard Stamp (aka Stompy) has also done time indoors. A lot of the humour in street theatre quite rightly comes from context

and the you-had-to-be-there factor – but many of dotComedy's best lines stand up when re-telling them to those who weren't there. You don't usually hear so many good comic lines in outdoor shows.

Virtually every time I've seen them over the last three or four years they have presented a completely new show. In fact, by the time you've finished reading this article it's highly likely they will have invented something new. This feverish activity is the sort of thing you'd expect from a live art company. So it's extremely refreshing to see this coming from a street theatre company who are not sitting on their laurels, who are not self-consciously 'artistic', not refining their skills and not resting content with tried and trusted formulae but instead are trying new stuff out and seeing where it will lead them.

DotComedy's street animation acts can be seen as part of a British tradition of street theatre directly or indirectly influenced by the Natural Theatre Company's work. The basic premise takes the form of a group of characters dressed the same (often a recognisable stereotype) who are following a scenario that isn't immediately obvious to the public. The appeal is the attention to detail, the invention of the costumes or how they subvert that recognisable stereotype. The theatre takes place when the audience step into the narrative or get caught up in it. There are many good and original acts working in this manner, but there is also much that is derivative, lazy and too easily pleased with itself. DotComedy are definitely in the former camp: they have taken that basic premise and developed it into different areas. Street theatre should have a boldness to it; it should be an experience that could only have happened in a particular space at a particular moment in time, but it's also good to see a concern to create different moods and to encourage other possibilities to evolve.

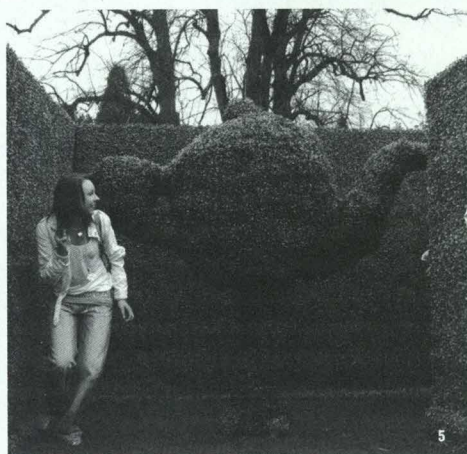


IMAGE 1: DOTCOMEDY –THE HALF NAKED CHEF

IMAGES 2-5: DOTCOMEDY – GET LOST!

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF DOTCOMEDY

AMAZING!

DOROTHY MAX PRIOR GETS LOST WITH DOTCOMEDY

DotComedy's latest creation takes them into new territories: Get Lost! (aka The dotMaze) is a large-scale installation-cum-performance piece. It is, as the name implies, a maze. The company describe it as 'the perfect environment in which to experience a healthy disregard for normality'.

From what you can encounter inside this maze, it would seem that Stumpy and co. held a 'yes' session in the early devising stages in which no idea, reference or train of thought was rejected. Maze = labyrinth = Minotaur? Check. Mazes = fairytale quests and journeys into the unknown, meeting magic helpers along the way? Check. Hedges = privet-bound suburban English gardens and the follies of mad gardeners? Check. Potting sheds? Check. Topiary? Of course, why not? Especially if it moves. There's an Alice-in-Wonderland feel to the whole experience.

The maze is populated by a motley crew of characters, drawn from mythology, fairytale and popular culture, threads of connection pulling them together in direct or indirect relationship with each other, and with the wandering audience members. Talking of threads, here's a tired and world-weary Ariadne offering a would-be Theseus a ball of twine so he can find his way out. There's a witchy Babushka enthusiastically pressing a talisman on a girl cornered in a privety dead end. The battiness of English suburbia is everywhere, but most dementedly expressed in scenes that spring to life from the Ladybird Peter and Jane books: terrifyingly overgrown versions of the wholesome siblings can be found munching jam sandwiches and bullying maze-journeymen into wrestling matches. And just don't go into the potting shed, that's all I'll say on that.

Get Lost! takes the audience on a surreal journey, but has also led dotComedy down new paths. With a 12-hour fit up time and a touring team of 14, walkabout this ain't. There's a pretty hefty number of collaborators. For a start, the team of performers includes the ever-engaging actor, musician and stand up comedienne Helen Kane, who made her name with her dangerously funny clown reinvention of Marilyn Monroe (and known to dotComedy fans as the judge in their rather cumbersome walkabout piece Trial and Error.) Another name on the credits is Graeme Gilmour, veteran of the visual theatre and street arts scenes, perhaps best known as Shockheaded Peter's designer/performer, but who has also worked with Welfare State International, Dogtroop, Walk The Plank and (most recently) Spymonkey.

The first year's outing for the show has taken it to a number of the UK's major festivals: Big in Falkirk, Streets of Brighton, Hatfair at Winchester and the Stockton International Riverside Festival. It's certainly proving to be a success, with more-than-an-hour-long queues to get in (dotComedy folks, do introduce a timed ticket system for 2007, please!). As we go to print, there are negotiations afoot for the company to pack their bags (and load up the fleet of haulage trucks) for the southern hemisphere, thus avoiding the dreary English late winter/early spring months.

God knows what other nations will make of Peter and Jane, but it is great to know that the Blighty madness of Get Lost! will be launching itself onto a wider world stage very soon.

DotComedy have plans to tour Get Lost! to Australia and Asia in early 2007. Venues and dates to be confirmed (see the website for an update).

For further information on Get Lost! and other dotComedy shows and projects, see www.dotcomedy.co.uk

MONSTERS

KATE RANDOM LOVE TAKES A TRIP INTO THE NETHER REGIONS OF SURREALISM

As the newly crowned Sun King strode majestically out of the darkened room upstairs at the Hayward Gallery, signalling the end of Ron Athey's performance, *Solar Anus*, there was a pause. And then applause. My clapping hands signalled more than appreciation; I was asserting the integrity of my own corporeality, reinstating a bodily boundary between myself and this grotesquely seductive Other. Applause didn't seem entirely appropriate, but what did any more? Ever since submitting myself to *The Monster in the Night* in the Labyrinth – an evening of contemporary performance inspired by the visions of Georges Bataille, co-curated by Lee Adams and Ron Athey – my spectatorial defaults had been challenged, had seemed quaintly naive and totally inadequate. The absence of any seating, and the swiftly changing and often obscured focus of the action, were only the half of it. But let's start at the beginning, which is apparently

a very good place to start.

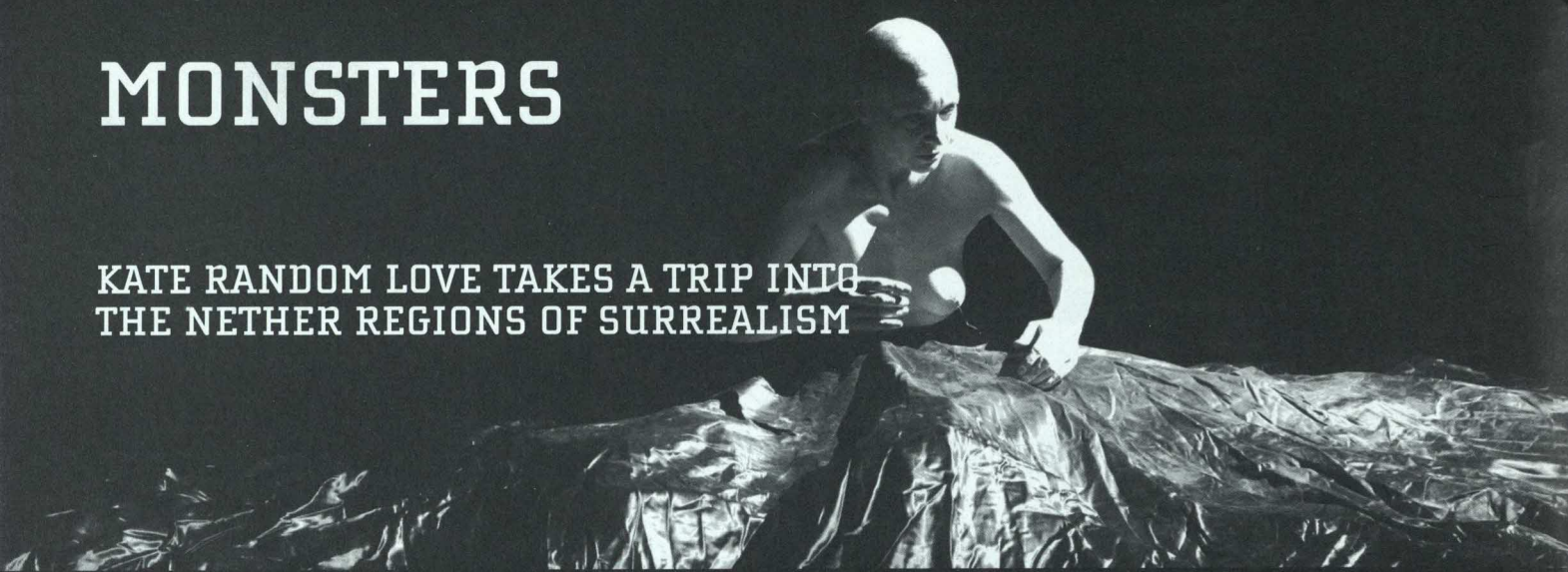
Upon entering the Labyrinth through a narrow corridor, my body jostling into other eager, expectant bodies – some old, some young, some male, some female, some straight off the tube from work, some from an altogether different underground system – I was confronted immediately with my first monster: a glorious arrangement of flowers towering up to the ceiling out of a strange milky white vase. But this 'flower show' was worlds away from Chelsea... Presented atop a plush red velvet cushion like a decadent gift offered to a lover, the beautiful marble container out of which the lilies bloomed was in fact the contorted body of Lee Adams, the stems jammed in and busting out of his anus. This static, durational performance takes its name from Bataille's c.1929 essay *The Language of Flowers*, which identifies inextricable bonds between the delicate beauty of blossoms, and eroticism, decay

and death: 'Even more than by the filth of its organs, the flower is betrayed by the fragility of its corolla.'

Just as Adams's splayed arsehole belied the phallic ideal of an impenetrable, homogeneous body evoked in the uniform whiteness and uncanny stillness of his form, refuting the distinction between beauty and the dirt which gives it life, the twigs that lay beneath the silken sea skirt of Helen Spackman's *Perdita* speared through the initial appearance of serene, otherworldly beauty, disrupting our pleasurable contemplation of her form through animating this strange, white mannequin into the pain and shame of existence. As the branches scraped against her flesh the creature became more and more human, with this very humanity exposed as a humiliating and constricting bind with the brutality of nature.

The Bataillean project of refusing to repudiate the filth from life is often enacted through a privileging of the lower bodily strata, specifically the anus. Ernst Fischer's *Anus Domini* performed this explicitly in the metamorphosis of his body into a fantastical hybrid figure. The performance played with the modes and methods of restraint, and referenced issues of gender and sexuality in its exploration of the transgressive possibilities for transformation and rebirth within oppressive systems. Swaddling his doubled-over body with grubby bandages to create a new 'arse-first' bodily organisation, and then crowning this new anti-phallic form with a giant fish head, Fischer's performance felt playful and celebratory despite the violence of the constrictions enacted.

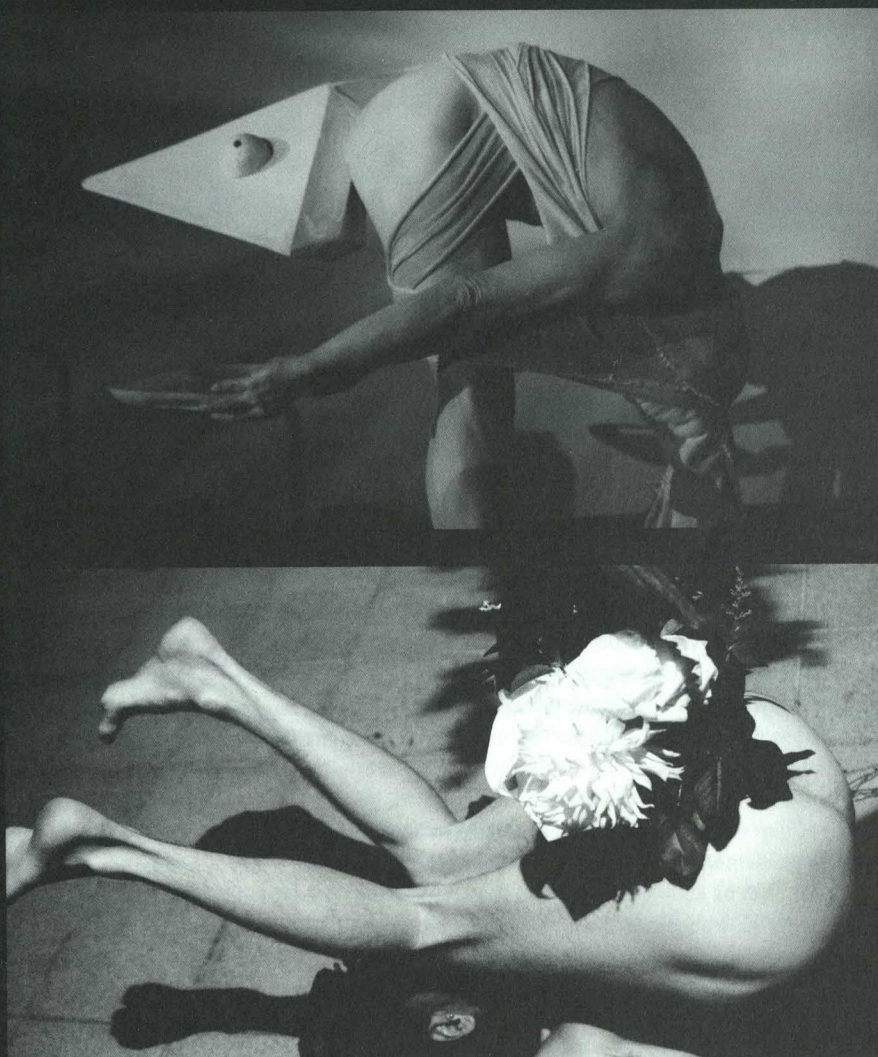
Themes of constriction and transformation were explored further in Stav B's new performance *Realising the Marvellous in the Mundane*, as a beautiful woman dressed in stockings, a negligee and heels produced a seemingly endless scarf on a knitting machine. Golden hearts were tossed into the sky, extolling the violence



of compulsive domesticity. As Ariadne's thread wrapped round my body, drawing me further into the labyrinth, I was forced to face the monster of my own complicity in this disturbing celebration of the eroticism of subservience.

Another monstrous femme dragged me straight into the next performance, Ernst Fischer and Helen Spackman's *Flight of Fancy*. Like a mad drunken aunt crashing a wedding in purgatory, with yellow teeth slashing through her white face like a terrifying vagina dentata, Spackman's old bird staggered through the crowd, spouting off a highly theoretical discourse on the historical and cultural links between birds and female storytellers. A besuited man appeared and covered his face consecutively in black tar/oil/shit, blue feathers, and finally a comedy mask of a beak with googly eyes. The humorous juxtaposition of the flamboyant feathered head and the strait-laced respectability of the suit effected a Bataillean destabilisation of signification, where laughter decomposes 'with a virulence that is so pernicious that it even puts in question composition itself, and the wholes across which it functions.'

Weakened and without composure, I sat down in front of the raised platform upon which Ron Athey would soon perform his legendary *Solar Anus*, and gazed up at a huge projected image of sunlight streaming from a tattooed arsehole. This visual pun – exhibiting Athey's (often overlooked) sense of humour – tricked me into a sniggering security that was quickly shattered by the dignified solemnity of Athey's entrance. Duly humbled, I was ready to receive this spectacle of extreme debasement without pity. As he pierced his skin, tugging his brows then cheeks into an ecstatic, horrific grin, I thought prosaically of gargoyles and facelifts, and was chagrined by my inability to accommodate the meanings proliferating from this fantastic vision. Finally, as he stuffed one and then another gigantic dildo into his insatiable arsehole, then deliriously dusted his face with white powder, something clicked. In a mortifying epiphany, I looked upon this narcissistic, infinitely penetrable figure and 'saw myself in him, that is, as a monster'. I don't think I was alone. Because as the newly crowned Sun King strode majestically out of the darkened room upstairs at the Hayward Gallery, there was a pause. And then applause.



The Monster in The Night of The Labyrinth was a live art event which took place at the Hayward Gallery, London 3 July 2006, featuring performances by Ron Athey, Lee Adams, Ernst Fischer, Helen Spackman, Stav B and the music of Black Sun Productions. Curated by Lee Adams & Ron Athey and commissioned by the Hayward Gallery as part of *Undercover Surrealism - Picasso, Miró, Masson and the Vision of Georges Bataille*.

For further information on referenced artists see:

www.ronathey.com

www.leadams.net

www.stav-b.co.uk

Photographs courtesy of Regis Hertrich:

www.cremaster.org.uk



HOWL

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE, VIOLENCE AND LIBERATION: CASSIE WERBER SINGS THE BODY ELECTRIC WITH ENRIQUE PARDO AND LINDA WISE OF PAN THEATRE

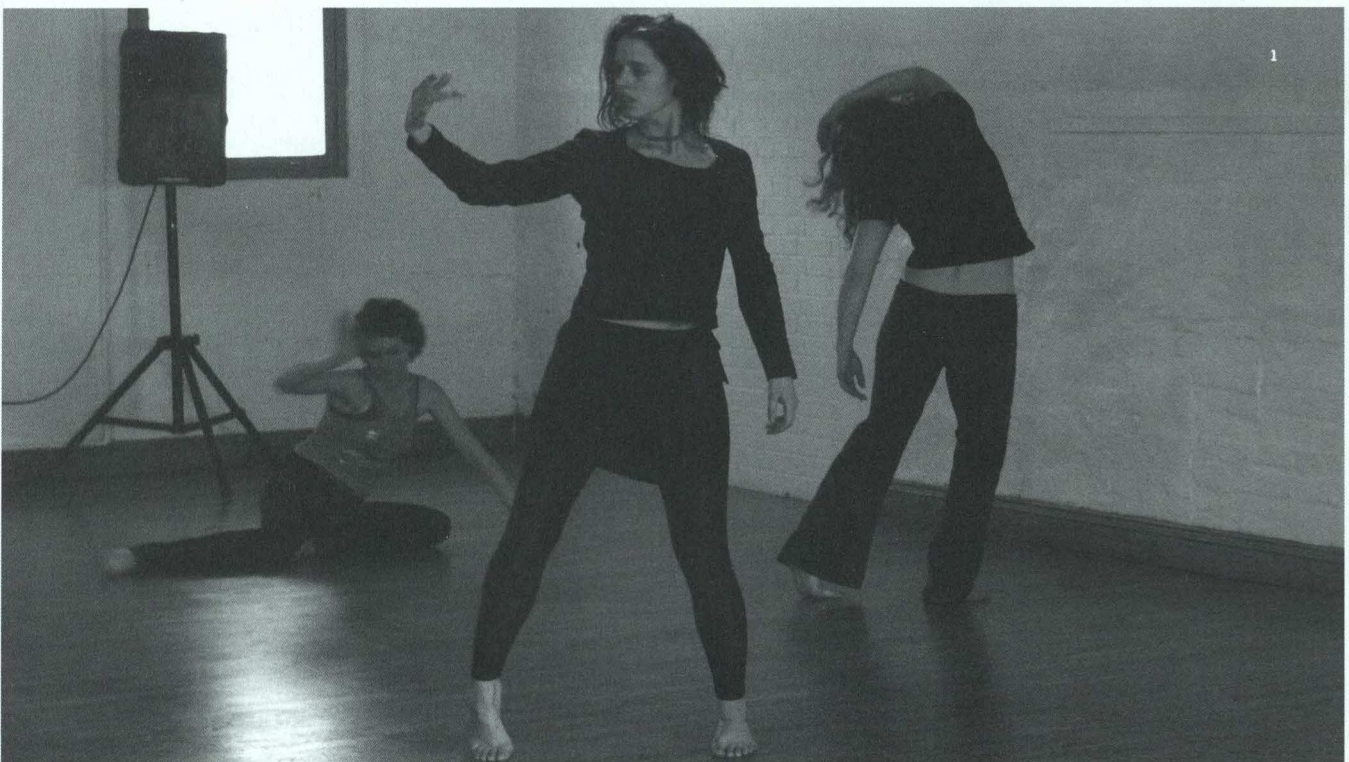
In a high-ceilinged, wooden-floored room flooded with natural light, twenty people have gone mad. Some are wrapped around the pillars in the centre of the room, whilst others slide slowly across the floor, dance, shout, whisper, or climb onto the piano, which a man is playing while sporadically singing, growling, calling out instructions and encouragements. This is Enrique Pardo, and at Farnham Maltings in Surrey, on a spring afternoon of brightness and rain, Pan Theatre's workshop is underway.

A peculiar energy is sometimes produced in theatre workshops, allowing participants to transcend norms of behaviour in ways which can be deeply creative and highly addictive. Once participants have accepted the offer of genuine freedom, there is an increased ability to sidestep inhibitions towards a full exploration of the possibilities of creativity. In a rehearsal situation, for example, constraints already in place often mean that real creative freedom is not an option, and any company is defined (not necessarily negatively) by the personalities and interactions of its members. At the beginning of the week, Enrique Pardo and Linda Wise offer the chance to travel outside everyday experience, inviting us to 'go places'.

Pan Theatre, founded in 1981 by Enrique Pardo, is co-directed by Linda Wise and Liza Mayer. Based in Paris, it retains close links with the Roy Hart International Arts Centre in Malerargues in Southern France, where a summer workshop is held in July. In the Farnham workshop, organised by Arts Council England, the various

ways in which the voice can be used – to speak text, to sing, and for all other forms of sound-making – and the relationship between movement and vocalisation, are the subjects to be explored. Towards the beginning of the workshop, some questions are posed, to be revisited throughout the week. We are asked to consider: What is singing? If singing is to take a sound and to then present or give it, then no vocal sound should be precluded. Perhaps, Pardo and Wise postulate, we should sing everything, concentrating rather more on exploring the possibilities of the voice than on creating a sound which is 'pure' or 'beautiful'. There is a cultural inclination towards beauty, Pardo explains, which makes us wary of exploring other realms, making other sounds, in some sense, subversive.

Everyone has learned a text, and experimentation with language is a part of Pan's core thinking. Etymology, and the relationships between words in various languages and in all their forms, clearly fascinate Pardo, and he plays on words continually, experimenting with their sound, and the phrases with which they are associated. Again, it is the possibilities which we are looking at, though here the meaning is also paramount. The sense of words is important, the explorations a way into that sense. Language itself is key to Pan's thinking about theatre; as Pardo good-naturedly asserts, 'Internationalism annoys me profoundly... the advantage which non-language performers have annoys me... the work [of Pan Theatre] should be rooted in particularism – which is





a limitation but also a glory! The watchwords for the first day of the workshop are 'N'importe quoi': words to which we will return and fail adequately to translate, but which Pardo and Wise use to signify a certain quirkiness, an off-the-wall quality, light but engaged, which they hope collectively to explore.

Practical work falls into three main groups, which increasingly overlap: vocal work, partner work, and ensemble. In each section, there are moments of revelation and discovery: a performer, having given up control of his own physicality, picked up and cartwheeled across the room while delivering a text both seductive and gently tragic; the chilling discovery of a mass grave described in a near-comic contralto which jars with the text in such a way as to make the audience listen all the more diligently; a dreamy meditation delivered as a rap. Such moments do not translate well into description, and perhaps not directly into performance. But the possibilities that they provide for opening up and digging into text are exciting for anyone interested in creating theatre.

In discussion of the use of 'broken sound' – all the vocalisations which are not speech or song: sobbing, screaming, croaking and growling, howling and hissing, etc. – it has early been acknowledged that many people, and especially trained singers, are wary of this work, which runs so much against the grain of traditional voice teaching. Pardo and Wise liken the work to back-flipping across a room: you would not do it without training or carry on all day, but you yourself are the best judge of when to stop. The possibility of accessing a more complete expression, especially of genuine emotion, is the goal. The feeling within the group, after a very short space of time, is of freedom and safety, a licence to wander in the darkest forests and come out unharmed. I am surprised, therefore, when Pardo references the idea of violence as key to the work, and questions this in discussion. Pardo and Wise outline the background of this work on 'broken sound', tracing its origins back to the 1940s.

Following his involvement, as a Jew enlisted in the German Army, in the massive violence of World War One, Alfred Wolfsohn (1896–1962) found himself appalled by the effects of trauma on the vocal powers of both himself and his compatriots. Suffering shell-shock, he began to hallucinate voices and, having been a singer before the war, lost his singing voice completely. After trying several forms of therapy, he began experimenting on himself. On escaping Germany for pre-World War Two London, he met Roy Hart, a young South African actor researching into the same area. The Roy Hart Theatre was formed in 1969, and Pan continues its explorations.

Pardo explains his reasons for placing the notion of violence at the heart of work that seems, in practice, freeing and supportive: 'the things of nature have their economy of violence. Humans have pulled out of that logic... the potential for violence that humans have is enormous. The killing power is immense. Human beings

have disturbed the balance. This needs historical, political and massive artistic reflection. The reflection itself doesn't have to be violent. You have to do violence to some of the pre-conceptions in order to examine some of these things.' There seem to be dual ideas at play: that of the perceived 'violence' of the work, of the sound itself, and our reaction to that, which is naturally defensive; and also the need for art to engage with and comment on an increasingly violent environment. Linda Wise qualifies the centrality of 'violence', giving an alternative viewpoint: 'I still have a problem with the word... I don't see the work as aggressive in that way.' Identifying a different way in which violence informs Pan's practice, she speaks of the 'huge importance in being able to express violence, one's own violence – confrontation in that sense. "Going beyond" can be very violent to one's idea of who one is.' The violence within the work, in this context, is creative, as opposed to the destructive violence that it helps to express: 'I think that a lot of violence comes from incapacity to act. [There are] violent ways of singing, dealing with the violence of death. Rape victims can lose their voices because they have been unable to scream. We are very afraid of those high-energy sounds.'

Back in the workshop, we have received complaints. The Opera Appreciation Society has been unable to appreciate because of us 'howling like a lot of dogs'. It is an illustration of the hostility, confusion and even fear that such work can instil. As Sharon Feder, a Pan collaborator, points out, 'People aren't used to hearing these sounds.' Pan Theatre apologises, explaining that the nature of the work makes it fairly impossible to impose quiet.

As the work progresses, we explore the idea of 'singing bodies'. After addressing, early in the process, the ego-based problem of worrying about what you look like doing something extreme and unusual, we begin working with it: with performance, pride, seduction.

'Refresh yourself,' Pardo counsels, reminding us that when working with emotion, it is imperative to retain the element of humour. 'Never shame yourself' is another useful injunction, shame being the ultimate killer of the creative spark. The workshop ends on a note of community and openness; we feel we have journeyed together. Instructed to yield to possibility, we yell. That may not be a word, but I think, in this context, it is allowed...

The Pan Theatre Workshop took place at Farnham Maltings, Surrey, in March 2006. For more information on Pan Theatre's training programme, including short courses and weekends in Paris, visit <http://pantheatre.free.fr>

IMAGES 1,2: PAN THEATRE WORKSHOP PHOTOS BY ALEXANDRA HUGHES

REVIEWS FROM EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

AL SEED THE FACTORY



SHAMS THEATRE THE GARDEN



TAYLOR MAC



Al Seed

THE FACTORY

Smirnoff Underbelly

A bored bureaucratic automaton is seduced by the glowing power of a throbbing scarlet button. Once pushed, he is drawn down into the smoking bowels of hell, where, claiming his crown of bullets, he is empowered to Caligula-like excess. Part mime, part Butoh-esque incarnation, Al Seed contorts through the various postures of power, terror and a sort of moral bankruptcy that leaves him pleading with the audience like an addict, desperate for his sense of power to be confirmed. Compared in his press release to the work of Beckett, the form fully embodies a state of being in the same way, but is far more charged with ideological content and specific ideas. Yet the content is never overwhelming in its polemic, oiled by a dynamic use of stagecraft and vigorous technological score. If there were moments when the clarity of expression was obscured, the jaw-aching tension and precision of Seed's physicality and the honesty of his performance carried us through.

It's exciting to see intellectual and political ideas being realised in physical and imagistic form: they are made all the more potent and accessible by this expression. This is a performance of incredible intensity. The sweat and passion of Al Seed's dystopic political tirade is impossible to ignore. The final image, of a suitcase of red buttons offered coyly out to the audience, emphasises our implication in the scenes we have witnessed, our shared responsibility. Sophisticated, absolutely compelling stuff.

Beccy Smith

Gomito Productions

LITTLE RED THINGS

Bedlam Theatre

The wide-eyed thrill of being inspired, the sparks you generate when you are doing something you love, the moments when you are buzzing and bursting with energy and life and there seems so much of it you think you might explode – where does it go? It makes a little red thing: a little red thing that floats into the air and comes down with the rain, ready to start all over again.

Being blessed by the self-generating life of a red thing (very cute and bright-eyed Furby-like puppet creatures) must be very similar to being in the presence of these bright performers. Brimming with human goodness and hope, it seems like this loose-haired, loose-clothed bunch of youths has bounded in from the local Steiner school. And lucky for us that they have.

Their narrative is refreshing, original and imaginative and their presence in front of an audience is exceptionally calm and measured. A sound skill-base in puppetry serves their ideas with precision and panache – notably touching is the configuration of one of the old trees in a forest: gathering itself up with a net, and with a mask for bark, its four animators bring a stroke of life to its trunk.

One of the well-placed touches of this piece is that it makes you believe that we are all responsible for each other's happiness. How uplifting. Born completely from its own ideas and thirsty to share them with the audience, this show leaves a warm smile inside you. Perhaps a little red thing has landed on my shoulder.

Marigold Hughes

Shams Theatre

THE GARDEN

Pleasance Dome

Centring on one man's return from the war-torn Balkan region, and investigating his past and that of his family, *The Garden* is a complex and genuinely thought-provoking piece of theatre. Tightly packed with ideas and interwoven themes, the piece sees the single performer interact with a variety of simple objects and beautifully projected images to tell this central story together with a historical parallel, with glimpses of what feels like dozens of others. Constantly inventive, the performance sees Jonathan Young play two doctors engaged in an argument; a policeman and suspect; a very old woman... Perhaps, though, we do not always get enough of the characters to be able to fully sympathise with them, and some feel more closely observed than others.

It is particularly satisfying, however, to be an audience to a piece of original theatre which has explored all its own avenues; there are no loose ends forgotten in the excitement of moving on, no hangovers from previous versions. The recurring metaphor of the garden ties the piece together, and the action buds and blossoms with great moments, like the viva which turns into an explanation of the student's own brain; the drawing which appears, simultaneously projected as it is sketched; the rainstorm in a watering can. Perspective is flipped, and objects transform with easy assurance. In such an intimate space, I sometimes wanted to be more included, for the fourth wall to be a little more tumbledown and full of chinks. But the piece feels mature and assured, a thorough exploration both of the form and of its subjects.

Cassie Werber

Taylor Mac

THE BE(A)ST OF TAYLOR MAC

Underbelly Caves

Taylor Mac is a beautiful man of the night. Bedecked in sparkling jewels, his face, clothes, smile and eyes shimmer with mystery and magic. Somewhere between an opulently decorative mannequin, a very masculine male and a defiant drag queen, Taylor Mac is something 'other'. Tricky to define, he makes darkness beautiful and makes sorrow sparkle.

Taylor Mac stands on a stage with his ukulele and sings. His songs are of his life and times – of his miseries and of his joys. He sings to make the sad people happy and the happy people sad. As long as, in the end, everyone celebrates being a bit of both. It is a truly absorbing performance. What kind of performance is, I think, up to you. He calls it theatre, so I am happy to call it that too. He tells stories, through pictures and song and monologue, that speak to you on an intangibly poetic level. In using song and music to touch upon the invisible threads that tie us all together, Taylor Mac reminds us that we are one group of people, sitting together, living through the same things and smiling as best we can; even, and especially, when the tears trickle down our faces.

Nearing the end of the show, he comes closer to us and sits down on the steps so he, too, can be part of this group. Bringing with him that twinkle to all that lies in shadow, his final lyric is: 'Everything is going to be alright'. It is hard not to believe him. Why bother trying? Surrender yourself to the Mac and emerge from the Underbelly Caves smiling, rubbing your eyes and wanting to kidnap Taylor, take him home, make him a nice cup of hot chocolate and insist that he becomes your best friend. And stays your best friend. Forever.

Marigold Hughes

FRINGE AUGUST 2006

RENEGADE DANCE THEATRE STREETLIFE



JO STRÅNGEN KOMPANI THE CONVENT



THEIMAGINARYBODY FOOD

Renegade Dance TheatreSTREETLIFEAurora Nova

Finally something that shows the world I live in... the strip lights and street lights and concrete and the ephemerality of NOW! Original in style, this spoke straight to my soul. Energetic and complex, I felt this show captured a truly unseen-before dirty urban atmosphere that got right away from any presumptions of devised physical theatre as whimsical and sentimental and cute. The movement was admirable – ugly, contorted, beautiful. The performers moved in dialogue with the live animation that layered graffiti on the backdrop – have you ever seen a girl dance with a cursor? Each performer had their own unique dance vocabulary. I had thought this might be a kind of hip-hop show-off show, but instead felt that the style said something no other could have. I found it moving, and such a relief to see shopping trolleys and fluorescent strip lights – items not normally imbued with theatrical magic – find their context on stage. I found the atmosphere eerie yet familiar, and beautiful – this will stay with me for a long time.

*Laura Cades*Licedei TheatreFAMILY SEMIANYKIAssembly St George West

A raucous and hilarious show that brought to light a few home truths about what it is to be a family. And what a family this is! There's the frightening baby who rips the heads off dolls; the permanently drunk father slouching and staggering through the auditorium; the terror children – one that is always sick, and one that tortures and torments her siblings. All have great moments, but the best by far is the swollen-bellied mother. The show opens with her slapping wet washing around the stage; for the next hour or so she takes on members of the audience, both keeps the peace and incites violence, and still manages to regularly seduce her wayward husband back into the bosom of the family.

The moments of slightly bigger budget tricks (such as an animated piano and a re-filling pint glass) were magical – but not in comparison to the clever moments of mime in which the performers simply do what they do best: the son starts scribbling frantically on an invisible chalk board that spans the length of the stage – by the time everyone has come to read it (and his mime is so exact that we can tell exactly what he has written) we are genuinely surprised when someone walks through the middle of it.

The audience is actively involved. We become the orchestra for the son to conduct, we are sprayed with water, and find ourselves in a giant pillow fight. During the final moment when thousands of paper streamers fall from the ceiling and cover the whole audience. I found myself completely enthralled: I caught the ecstatic expression on the little girl next to me, and found myself grinning in a shared moment of appreciation.

*Lydia Maxwell*Jo Strången KompaniTHE CONVENTAurora Nova

How many nuns does it take to change a light bulb? Moving around the chores and rituals of their convent with a great sense of decorum and poise, these three pious sisters initially show only hints of the madness that is to follow. Then: spontaneous combustion. It's all out in the open.

Like Pingu-on-Speed become these blasphemous nuns – blabbering away in an incomprehensible tongue, flapping about in black and white and engaging in lewd acts of absurd visual comedy that might not be entirely suited to a typical Pingu-loving audience. You can almost taste the mischief and the dirt of this production. A special kind of irreligious dirt this is – taking place, as it does, in the Aurora Nova venue of the converted St Stephen's Church.

These are three nuns at the edge of the world, at the edge of their minds, losing their faith, losing their purpose. Amongst all this loss, there are things – quite unexpected things – that they find. Two of the nuns have a penile bulge beneath their cassocks, for one. Shock, horror. Oh no – they are only rolls of bread stuffed into their pants. Those cheeky nuns.

Exploding out against each other in true Lord of the Flies fashion, their convent gradually crumbles around them. Blood flies. Cassocks are ripped off. Voices burst wildly into demonic music. Then they row away: to what and where we do not know.

Beautifully absurd, gloriously irreverent and expertly performed, The Convent lets you breathe a sigh of relief (amidst the raucous laughter that is), relief that even the ones that might seem to have got it all worked out can be as mad as all the rest of us. Thank God for that.

*Marigold Hughes*theimaginarybodyFOODThe Traverse

Food is to performance what haute cuisine is to cooking – expertly conceived and executed, beautifully presented, but there is substance too. Text-heavy, the script has been collaboratively realised by devised work for the company and a writing partnership between NSDF award winning writer Joel Harwood and director Christopher Heimann. The resulting treatment of the text, physically realised through great ensemble work and a sensitive use of rhythm and image, creates a physical counterpointing to text and subtext much more sophisticated than standard devised (or written) fare.

There's a great central performance from Sean Campion as a character almost over-familiar yet very distant to ourselves – a good contemporary translation of the concept of the tragic hero. The direction is consistently strong and inventive, the design and sound design are creative and well integrated, and the performance decisions are intelligent and satisfying.

We are left with a strong consciousness of the bodily reality of the stage, which plays up one of the more potent themes – of the interrelatedness of body and meat, food and person, substance and character. This play could easily have become simply an intelligent and wittily relevant comment on the culture of celebrity professionalism. Instead, a more holistic approach to theatre making engenders both the physical and metaphysical worlds of the play with more depth, dynamic and complexity. Food advocates the possibilities of the form to a wide audience whilst being a 'well-made play' of excellence in its own right.

Beccy Smith

CRUNCH!

Pleasance Courtyard

Being greeted by a cheery man merrily plucking away at his guitar is a lovely way to start the day. Not only to start the day, but to launch the beginnings of our universe as we go back, back, back to when Eve took her first bite of the apple: shame for mankind, bonus for Crunch.

From Adam and Eve we travel through the stories of Isaac Newton, Snow White, William Tell and many more. With all the action stemming from this spherical fruity delight, the timelines, the facts and fiction surrounding it can skip and twist, with The Apple always anchoring the piece to its core. Charming, witty and playful, the four actors give self-assured performances; they know their subject matter inside out and commit to the light-heartedness of it all with genuine sincerity.

The songs are great but there are too many of them and they slow the pace of the piece. And, like the mini doses of cyanide that we are informed the pips contain, there are dips of quality in the performance that do leave a bad taste in your mouth. Luckily, the good outweighs the bad.

At the end of it all, I am handed an apple and I feel lucky. Never have I found apples so interesting and I feel honoured that this one will become a part of me – quite literally – and I will take my place in its history. Making the seemingly mundane magical and doing it with sparse simplicity, Crunch is a tasty, bite-size, coup de théâtre.

Marigold Hughes

Darren Johnston/Array

OUTRÉ

Aurora Nova

Outré is a series of after-dark cabaret style encounters featuring the choreography of Darren Johnston and using music by artists from the cult music label Warp Records. I enjoyed the stylised Twilight Zone Victorianaesque freak-show ambience, particularly the atmospheric lighting design and the excellent use of projections that framed the performance space (creating a real stage within the projected stage). Behind an almost invisible gauze, chillingly lit, entrancing exhibits danced in a group before us, beguiling us with their dark grace, before one by one surprising us with their unique deformity. Among them we had the smartly suited headless man, the vulnerable puppet/doll woman, and the Diva Siamese twins. I liked this work and felt absorbed, but felt some of the freaks' solos continued for too long after their oddity/malformation was revealed. And the subject matter and style begged comparison to the astounding BlackSKYwhite's Bertrand's Toys – the Outré freak-show characters were dark, but nowhere near as disturbing...

Miriam King

UDI GRUDI OVO



Udi Grudi

OVO

George Square Theatre

These Brazilian masters of ingenious trash transformations fabricate a miraculous world set within a rubbish tip. In the inventive hands and imaginations of three playfully eccentric tramps, other people's refuse becomes animals, friends, fashion items and musical instruments. The object animation and clowning was enriched by live 'junk samba' percussion. I was constantly amused and enchanted – for example, by a pet dog puppet rapidly created from green plastic bottles. I particularly enjoyed the opening: the visual impact of a vast sail-like structure made from thousands of white polythene bags, tied and laced onto and into a huge concealed net. However, I felt that the performance pace dipped after the impact of the opening scenes, although it picked up its impetus again during the latter half.

Miriam King

Karola Gajda/Peta Lily

MY POLISH ROOTS (AND OTHER VEGETABLES)

Gilded Balloon Teviot

My Polish Roots is a confessional-autobiographical investigation of cultural identity and family history using verbal narration, film and made-before-your-eyes beetroot soup. It shifts with ease from everyday observations about food, haircuts and handbags to the big issues of cultural displacement and the legacy of the Holocaust. Karola Gajda's mode of presentation is intimate, relaxed in an engaging and slightly nervous here-I-am-in-front-of-all-you-people way. Her onstage persona has a clown-like quality of personal insecurity transposed into a theatrical plus-point that I suspect has been nurtured by collaborator/director Peta Lily (mime-clown and veteran self-as-the-source theatrical performer).

We are carried through the lunchtime hour with ease, only realising afterwards the depth of theatrical experience that we have absorbed. Images stay to haunt, the mundane and the monumental merging (as they do): an on-screen chat with a Polish

hairdresser about a perm that goes wrong; trails of deepest red beetroot juice on a white apron echoing bloody footsteps in the snow; the recounting of shameful memories (and believe me, people do feel shame about memories of abuse and persecution) about the Nazi abuses and persecutions that resulted in the loss of loved ones and the fleeing to foreign lands where you are forever 'other'. How do we respond to such awful truths about the human condition? We make soup. We affirm the value of life, the need for nourishment, the continuation of traditions – affirmations and weapons that counter oppressions. A lovely piece that is full of heart and soul. Good soup too.

Dorothy Max Prior

Big Wow in association with

Richard Jordan Productions

INSOMNOBABLE

Belly Button at Smirnoff Underbelly

We all know that insomnia is the stuff of nightmares but who would have thought it could be so funny. In Insomnobile (which was an eleventh-hour wild card addition to the Total Theatre Awards longlist), Big Wow took us on a high-octane, break-neck, anarchic trip through the life and mind of office worker Keith.

Keith (Matt Rutter) is trapped in a monotonous routine that begins to fracture into paranoia, delusion and chaos as his insomnia-fuelled angst takes hold. Tim Lynskey plays Everybody Else – a series of finely observed comic grotesques that populate Keith's days and nights, real and imagined. The stripped-down set and everyday clothes liberate the two performers to make the most of their comic skills. Rutter's expressive face conveys the increasing psychosis creeping into the repetition of his everyday routines, exploding into anarchic rebellion and then cringing back to remorse and confusion. Lynskey is superb as Everybody Else with wonderful comic timing and precision. He gives a performance tour de force (playing a dozen or so characters) in a scene where Keith joins an Insomniacs self-help group. The group descends into a fast-paced argument and riot whilst the highly-strung group leader desperately tries to keep it together and make Keith feel welcome. Lynskey's precision, energy and timing are exhausting to watch and gained him a well deserved standing ovation from the audience. This is accessible comic physical theatre at its best.

Donna Close

Richard Dedomenici

DID PRIYA PATHAK EVER

GET HER WALLET BACK?

Pleasance Dome

The show's a performative lecture, the essence of the show an exploration of moral dilemmas that circle around artist Richard Dedomenici's relationship to the Old Bill, explored through the work of the Watford (centre-of-the-universe or at least an OK place to live) based artist, which takes in 'poetic acts of low-grade civil disobedience' such as scaling prison walls; 'anarcho-surrealist interventions' on such subjects as Guantanamo and the war on terror; and mock anti-art graffiti (is it illegal to deface an illegal fly poster? You tell me) – the frame a question about a wallet found on the street and handed into a police station. So did Priya Pathak ever get her wallet back? We the audience are the jury – and at the end of the show, it's the majority vote that counts, and justice is seen to be done.

The delivery is in a laid back, deadpan 'non performance' mode. Good: there are too many 'performers' out there. It's art, but is it theatre? Of course it is. We are gathered together to share this space in this time. There's storytelling (a contemporary take on the round-the-fire scenario) and pictures too (footage of RD's jolly art-rumps captured in stills and moving image, and merged into a mock-corporate Powerpoint presentation). Questions remain: will the real Priya Pathak please stand up/ever get in touch with our hero Richard? Maybe one day; are British Bobbies good, bad, benign, neutral? They are human beings, so the answer is yes, no, maybe, sometimes. Is R. Dedomenici still an artist? I think so, I know so.

Dorothy Max Prior

Precarious Dance Theatre

JUNCTION 8

C Central

I really liked the attitude of the show. I mean that beyond the skill of the performance, or even the mode of the performance, the core creative principle was that every person has an inner life, and that all these lives have value. Junction 8 was a dance-theatre piece about a motorway service station and the people who worked there or passed through it, all roles taken by two hardworking, quick-changing performers. It was divided into a series of acts – I suppose partly for costume changes – which kept the narrative taut and prevented boredom or overstatement. The dialogue was in verse, which was an odd decision, but somehow a right one, getting to the heart of what the characters experienced. It felt concentrated. It was a series of scenes picked for their dramatic value, chronological but not real time, which accumulated to form characters and a meaningful story. I know this is the norm for theatre, but in total theatre it's at least worth a mention.

John Ellingsworth



DR ROBERTS' MAGIC BUS

MISS HIGH LEG KICK'S FASHION BUS

Ben and Holly
TABLE FOR TWO

David Leddy
THE AURICULA SERIES: REEKIE

Chris Dobrowolski
LANDSCAPE, SEASCAPE,
SKYSCAPE, ESCAPE!

Escalator East to Edinburgh/
Dr Roberts' Magic Bus.

The Magic Bus was a talking point at this year's Fringe: an innovative venue cum programming initiative that took 'live art, wonder and weirdness' to Edinburgh, with performances sited in and around a Routemaster bus parked in The Meadows.

Treats on offer included Miss High Leg Kick's Fashion Bus, in which Miss Kick, initially clad in clippie garb (hot pants, fishnets, cute cap and a resolutely non-digital ticket machine), together with a roster of accomplices (Dorian Gray, Boogaloo Stu, Miss Knickers et al) presented a parade of fashion victims as witnessed on London routes from Peckham to Piccadilly, Bank to New Bond Street. There is a nod towards audience participation in the allocation (involving wig and shades) to an audience member of the role of '80s fashion supremo Karl Lagerfeld. Disco beats ruel as each character (be-hoodied teen terror; raunchy old bird in pop socks; posh bag-lady with a fetish for labels; break-dancing businessman; pissed hen once pretty in pink) struts their stuff. It's anti-cool performance art, a fun frolic. Not world changing, but joyful and witty and enhancing our existence on this muddled planet – that'll do nicely.

A rather different kettle of fish/meat/vegetables/trifle was Ben and Holly's month-long piece Table for Two, in which the artists, 'who have a very intimate relationship but are not in love', consume identical foods of identically sized portions for the duration of the festival. Joining them for their 6.30pm evening meal, I'm a little sceptical. It seems to be one of those durational pieces in which not much happens and you wonder why you've bothered. He's downstairs with his roast lamb and cabbage, she's on the top deck eating the same meal, each silent but able to view the other via video cam. Two minutes in, I'm thinking of leaving. Then I start to read the roughly typed menus, diary entries and notes scattered on the bus floor or bluetacked to the windows – and I'm hooked. Think about what it really means to have to ask someone else before you have a sandwich, a cup of tea or even a glass of water. How do you shift your own desires to take account of those of another, and to respect their needs? How well do you know someone – even someone you love? Is meeting their physical desires head-on something to be dealt with or too much to cope with? Are they worth the bother? How does your body adapt to the physical demands of another? What are the resentments and inhibitions you feel as a result? We are used to asking these questions about intimate relationship in the context of sex: here, we are asked to address them in the context of another bodily function, nourishment. It's a seismic shift, and Table for Two ultimately does what all good art does: it wakes you up to what you feel: about yourself and others, about life (the meaning of...), the universe, and the great cosmic stew that we all find ourselves in.

David Leddy's Reekie took the form of a tour around the streets of Edinburgh. You were issued with an MP3 player and a map; you started at The Bus and theoretically ended there. Snag: the instructions were rubbish – I wasn't the only person who failed to even start at the right point. The recorded text made an assumption that people would follow the map – wrong. If you turned off the player to get your bearings sorted, it somehow went back to the beginning. And if (like me) you are the sort of person who never walks down the street with headphones on, because actually you think you shouldn't cut yourself off from your environment in that way, you are liable to be run over by a truck when crossing roads. Perhaps it was a deliberate exercise in disorientation. In the end, I gave up and sat under a tree to listen to the soundscape, which worked very well, conjuring up images that didn't need the actual walking the streets mentioned to validate the experience. This was essentially an aural piece – so trust the artform to deliver! This would have worked better on the radio – perhaps broadcast on the bus?

Dorothy Max Prior

Anthony Roberts' clever commissioning and programming for the Magic Bus is particularly evident in Chris Dobrowolski's Landscape, Seascape, Skyscape, Escape! The quirky intimacy of the setting provides just the right rough and ready backdrop for Dobrowolski's story of attempted escape from art school, by the method of fashioning a series of increasingly ambitious machines, beginning with a boat which floats (for a while), and culminating in... well, it would be unfair to preempt the destination of this warm, satisfying piece about journeys.

The do-it-yourself nature of this performance-lecture, in which the single performer employs music, slide and video projection and an easy, conversational delivery, aligns well with its subject matter, the creation of interactive pieces of art, machines with a tendency to break down. Self-deprecating in style, the performance raises interesting questions, including the origins of artistic impulse, and the place of art in society. Through the gentle narrative, we find ourselves considering where is the best place for a piece of art; Dobrowolski gives us several options, including the mud flats of the Humber and the pristine interior of a dedicated gallery space. Along the way we consider where 'legitimate' inspiration comes from, and where the products of that inspiration should go. When the young Dobrowolski releases a fleet of small, beautifully fashioned boats into the tides with only a few blurry photographs to record their existence, ideas of expendability, value and the investment of objects with preciousness come into sharp focus.

Those who taking this imaginative bus ride find ourselves pondering the questions it raises long after the temporal adventure is over.

Cassie Werber



JOSEF NADJ/MIQUEL BARCELO PASO DOBLE



60TH AVIGNON THEATRE FESTIVAL JULY 2006

The popular hit of the Festival was Paso Doble, a two-man performance by Serbian born Josef Nadj, dancer, this year's associate artist, and the painter Miquel Barcelo. The 12th-century Eglise des Celestins is turned into a state of the art theatre and in place of the altar is a wall of soft red clay, which flows onto the floor. Nadj and Barcelo enter in black suits and use primitive wooden-handled farm tools to pummel, dig out and scrape a tapestry of shapes and indentations in the clay. A persistent but low-key electronic sound score plays in the background. The men then disappear behind what has now become a 3D mural to return with large clay pots, which they then put on their heads. Because the clay is soft they can mould them, poking out eyes, pinching noses and pulling out ears. It sounds playful and it was, but when Nadj is eventually staggering beneath the weight of four or five pots which Barcelo has put over him he is transformed into half man, half beast – an impressive moment of theatrical imagination and manipulation. Nadj ends up literally buried in the clay of the wall, like a human fossil, while Barcelo takes a large hose and covers the entire sculpture, Nadj included, in white paint. Paso Doble invoked the '60s happening but without a hint of pretension. Two master craftsmen showing that something very simple can still create resonance, humour and moments of alchemy. The audience loved it.

Brook's Festival production of Sizwe Bandi est Mort was performed in a schoolyard just outside the old town walls. Classic storytelling from this wily theatre shaman, acted brilliantly by the two Mali actors, Habib Dembélé and Abdo Ouologuen – a real celebration of the human spirit runs through this show. As it does, but for very different reasons, in French director Eric Lacascade's production of Gorky's Les Barbares. Influenced by Grotowski but still heavily rooted in a very particular French theatre practice, this show finished at

2.30 in the morning, four and half hours after its 10pm start, and received a rapturous reception from the 1,600 or so audience in the Palais des Papes. Evidence that large-scale live theatre can still achieve intimacy, sensuality and the subtlest of erotic nuance.

On the OFF, erotic nuance at the other end of the scale came from Montréal butoh dancer Martine Viale and sound composer Christophe Bailieau in their show La Sonde, part of the City Sonics event. Martine danced her way out of a glass cabinet in a small empty shop on the Rue Thiers, with a capacity seven in the audience inside and around ten or so passers-by on the outside. At the Caserne des Pompiers Clara Cornil's two short solos, Bruisse and La, also had improvised electro-sound, but in addition a mad sequence of live clarinet. Clara's dancing was extremely watchable, intensely sensual in a weirdly there kind of way, a real example of performer presence. Later in the same theatre, juggler Adrien Mondot had them queuing up to see his Convergence 1.0, a clever piece of interactive projection, live cello and classy juggling.

One of the OFF Festival highlights was Parallèle 26 – a co-production between circus company Archaos and dance company Sylvie Guillermin. A packed out tent holding five hundred and more watched four dancers and four circus artists perform in and around a metal cage made up of a circle of metal poles and high level cross bars. The show's starting point was containment and captivity, but no blatant reference here to well-known internment camps: instead, a genuine incarceration as they crawl high up in the metalwork, weaving up, down and around the cage bars. This was circus and dance working at the most intense and challenging level – an emotional score of human yearning, frailty and the desire for escape. As the piece concludes the performers begin to wrap the whole cage in white lengths of cloth. They are being shut in, enclosed. One gap is left and a young woman steps

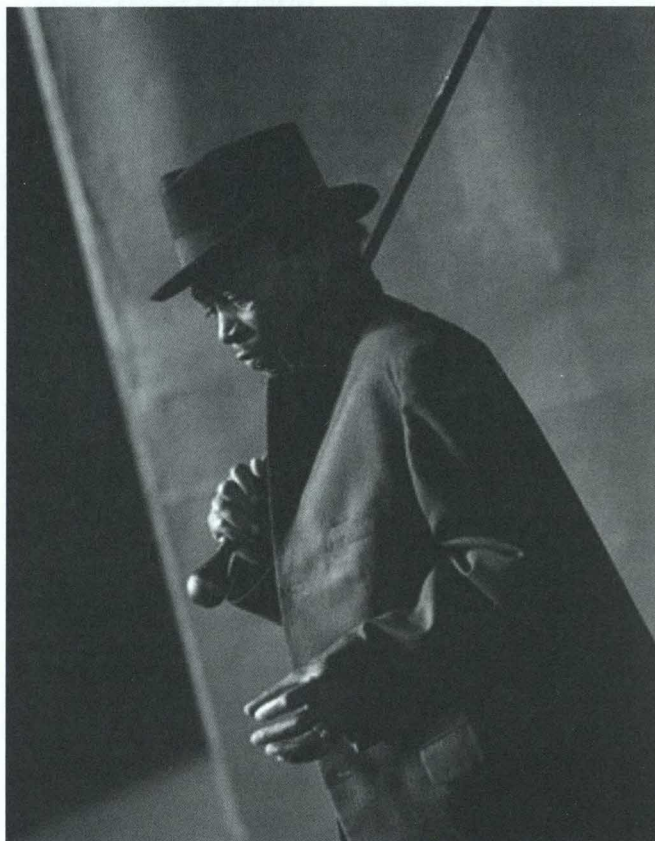
outside – the first time anyone has. If she stays there she will be shut out or free, depending on how you look at it. The gap is closing fast – she turns and goes back in, the cage is completely sealed. The piece had a standing ovation from the audience, and rightly so.

Back finally to the main Festival, and Bartabas, leader of Théâtre Equestre Zingaro. He is what you might call a choreographer of horses and humans. A bus takes you to the Avignon Hippodrome (racecourse). The warm animal smell of horses is everywhere, you can hear them, you can glimpse them looking at you, ears pricked up, inquisitive. Inside the tent thirty or so horses stand around a bright blue-lit column of water, which pours from the ceiling of the big top down to the floor. A horse meanders underneath it. The sight

and sound of pounding blue-lit water on the unmoved and unmoving horse is stunning. Then it's fast and furious, non-stop galloping action. What Bartabas calls 'créscendo sans cesse'. The riders and their horses go full speed, kicking up grit and sand into the faces of the audience who happen to be sitting in the front row. But they know what to do, clapping in time to one or other of the two bands high up in the balcony – one fiddles and accordions, the other trumpets and drums. A man gallops on, jumps off and runs with the horse at full speed – thunderous applause, genuine appreciation, genuine skill. High adrenalin entertainment, a display of instinctive knowledge and wizardry.

Barry Edwards

PETER BROOK'S SIZWE BANDI EST MORT





BOCK + VINCENZI HERE, AS IF THEY HADN'T BEEN, AS IF THEY ARE NOT

Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre

THE FLOWERBED

Barbican Theatre BITE

June 2006

The classic dynamics of Romeo and Juliet are exhilaratingly and movingly transposed in Keenan-Dolan's adaptation, through contemporary social stereotyping in the social microcosm of a suburban cul de sac. When the uptight, distinctly haughty middle-class residents are invaded by the sexually profligate, beer-swiggling chavs who colonise the menacingly police-taped house next door (a nice touch: has this played out before?), the stage is set for Channel 5-style conflict. The clichéd oppositions offer large scope for brilliantly observed and physically bombastic social commentary and the expressive character interactions are superbly nuanced. Keenan-Dolan's closely observed direction never flinches from the possibilities for comedy and pathos as the central metaphor of the title is played out in a battle for garden supremacy – the perfect lawn or a garish intrusion of flora.

However, it is when the obvious comedy of cross-dressing and ridicule of the characters gives way to more sophisticated glimpses of the characters portrayed – the rage suppressed beneath the taut control; the boredom and loneliness masked by the flamboyance – that this production really starts to fly. The central duet between Rachel Poirier as a superbly boyish Romeo and Daphne Strothmann's Juliet is heartbreakingly lyrical, the choreography managing a fine balance between playfulness and sensuality which evolves effortlessly, naturally into a beautifully played lovemaking scene on a swing – another aptly thoughtful metaphor.

This production makes palpable the sense that the tragedy whose inexorability charges the flashes of violence and sexuality that dart through the piece offers the only hope of redemption for all of the characters in this dystopian world. Yet redemption is fleeting – the grotesques which dominate this flamboyant, colourful, ultimately recognisable vision can only destroy both themselves and the rare beauty which has unknowingly flowered between them.

Beccy Smith



GED BARRY, DAVID HARRADINE, JO MANSER THE SHOW'S THE THING

Back + Vincenzi

HERE, AS IF THEY HADN'T BEEN, AS IF THEY ARE NOT

Laban London

May 2006

A stage full of people, bloody ghosts in the machine, in limbo, or a Bardo of Becoming (or maybe Dantes's Purgatorio), making tracks, following paths – solo, in pairs, in groups of three or more. Jarring noise-music, tremendous scenic moments of change as lights cut or a suspended curtain falls, compulsive-repetitive movement motifs, and dramatic shifts of intensity in the intensity of sound or light or mood. This epilogue to the company's 'invisible dances' project (an investigation of absence and presence) feels meaningful, but meanings escape me, the memory of sensory experience (mostly of assaults to the eyes and ears) remain; the after-effects of sensation are the ghosts that haunt. What is seen and what is imagined become blurred in the unfolding dreamscape onstage.

This is the final part of a long research process, the last in a sequence of three performance pieces. It is unashamedly an art piece; reference points might include: the European tradition of dance-theatre work (Pina Bausch and Alain Platel), the industrial electronica of *Einstürzende Neubauten*, the butoh-inspired physical theatre of recent work by Derevo, the live art work of artists such as Stelarc. All and none of the above.

How the audience feels seems unimportant; how we are responding to these visions doesn't seem to have any bearing on what is happening on stage. The series of moving images sometimes engages but often passes by leaving mere traces in the air. I have little real interest in the (mostly intense and angst-ridden) performing bodies in front of me: the exception is Rose English, who, dressed in an elegant black evening dress, moves on a mostly sideways or diagonal trajectory, painfully slowly, whilst reciting a repeating text which seems to change in nuance and meaning throughout the performance, but that may not be true. 'I'd be happy just watching her all night,' says my companion, and I can't help but agree.

Is it good? Do I like it? Questions that I can't answer.

Dorothy Max Prior

FUERZABRUTA

Roundhouse London

June 2006

Re-opening the refurbished Roundhouse is a grand spectacle, the latest show from the team who brought us the sensational (in all senses of the word) *De La Guarda*. And boy, do they have a whole lot of toys to impress us with; wind machines and moving walkways, towers of cardboard boxes and shredded paper blowing across the space, a sideways metal trampoline type thing, moving walls of shimmering foil and, most spectacular of all, a great plastic water tank that descends (not once but twice) to just above our heads, allowing us to press our hands against the membrane that divides the landlocked mortals from the mer-people swimming so tantalisingly close above. It's a promenade piece – sort of – but we are harried and herded by moving objects and over-zealous ushers, rather than guided through the space. I'm afraid I'm a bit resistant to it all, having tired of this sort of post-Artaudian theatre of the senses. It's all superficially impressive, but it lacks theatrical logic. Not because there's no obvious linear narrative – theatre can be a book of poems rather than a novel – but because there seem to be too many decisions based on needing to get the most out of all this elaborate kit: I suspect the goldfish bowl thing comes down twice because it is such a big expensive effect that they need to make the most of it.

It's fun while it lasts, but there's nothing too much that stays afterwards, although there are a few moments of real theatrical achievement: the first time the shimmering foil surrounds us, so that we lose track of where the walls are, figures climbing and swinging and swaying alarmingly around the full 360 degrees encircling us; a group of people dancing exuberantly in what seems to me to be a shanty town house; a scattering of boxes walked through. But I want more, and more, and more, and more.

Dorothy Max Prior

Ged Barry, David Harradine, Jo Manser

THE SHOW'S THE THING

Alexandra Palace

July 2006

Activates every fantasy you might have concerning abandoned buildings, alternate worlds, theatres, ghosts. Activates also every fear – or at least at first. *The Show's The Thing* was a light and sound installation set in the abandoned Victorian theatre of Alexandra Palace (last in use over 70 years ago for a Gracie Fields show, also called *The Show's The Thing*). It was for an audience of one, persons admitted at half hour intervals through a little-known door, admitted remotely by the stroke of a Bakelite clock on the wall outside, entering alone to pass down a makeshift tunnel into another world.

Without saying anything too specific, because I hope they will bring it back, the show set each of its audience members off on a gentle emotional arc. At the start, the overwhelming feeling is anxiety. There is isolation and darkness, and I think perhaps the *Opera Phantom* type fantasies – so effectively drawn by all the mystery surrounding the show – are running at full power. But this shifts into relaxation and a sense of well-being as the audience member becomes a benign witness to something beautiful and distant. It felt a little like watching nature; it was that same kind of feeling. The final mood change is to bemusement, exiting out into the foyer of the Palace's ice-rink, assaulted by horrible ice-rink '90s pop music which I'm going to pretend not to have recognised.

It was honestly captivating. The keenest observation I can offer here only makes sense if you saw the show: I didn't crunch my mint until I was back outside.

Johan Ellingsworth



THE WRONG SIZE LUMINOUS



WINCHESTER HAT FAIR JULY 2006

Clod Ensemble

THE RED LADIES

The Bullion Room, Hackney Empire

June 2006

There is a distinct sense of anticipation surrounding The Red Ladies' appearance at the Bullion Room. It's exciting to catch glimpses of enigmatically trenchcoat-clad ladies in '40s-style red headscarves and bags proliferating in unexpected sites around the theatre. High on a fire escape; leaning nonchalantly in the square; can that be another in the distance under the bridge? The Clod Ensemble superbly blend the real and the performed in the show's introduction, spinning a surreal edge to our experience of the streets of Hackney. The intrigue is palpable.

The idea of a marching troupe of 22 Red Ladies who can agitate an urban setting, distorting its reality with their own, before melting away again into the crowds, is an enticing one—but this, like many other ideas in the production, fails to achieve its full potential. When The Red Ladies swoop in, their sheer volume and energy is absorbing, but the performances then lapse into devised set pieces, although complemented by an exhilarating live band. Too often the piece relied only upon the pattern and scale of the performers in movement. The production was naive in their handling of the inevitable gender statement, focusing on arbitrary activities in their women's lives.

Despite the time period suggested by the costume, references were generalised with the loosest sense of context and so the sense of danger, and an engagement with the real world, were lost. Inevitably certain characters emerged from the crowd, leaving the others in the slightly disappointing posture of extras. And for a sound-led piece, an awareness of dramatic rhythm was surprisingly lacking—the structure was repetitive and we experienced a couple of false endings.

The Red Ladies is ambitious and imaginative in its scope and effectively generates a sense of event: I can understand why this works well on the street. There are moments of musical and almost mathematical brilliance in the arrangement of sound and bodies in space. However, for it to be effective as an indoor theatrical performance a more thoughtful treatment of the characters and ideas is much needed.

Becy Smith

First OZSTAR AIRLINES: circus tricks and hula-hooping and acrobalance from two air hostesses, Tracey and Stacey—one smooth, one fragile—notable for (a) generating the most good cheer of any show I saw, and (b) dealing extremely well with a small child who wandered into the performance space and just, like, strutted around in there while his parents made zero effort to retrieve him. Next up ARTIZANI'S REVOLUTION, a love/marriage story in verse, acted on and across and around a revolving, ever-changing set where the walls collapsed and unfolded and locked into new configurations—the whole thing powered by bicycle. It had an odd delirious edge that was different from anything else at the Fair, but there was no time to dwell on it because it was off down the road to SWIZZLESHAKER, stopping for STRANGELINGS who had what felt like an early-stage show, inventive but unalike. But forget that because on to SWIZZLESHAKER—who may or may not have been SWIZZLESHAKER, despite the claim of the chalked sign (there's some debate)—but whoever juggled for about ten seconds and participated a member of the audience and spent most of the show scaring her (but in a nice way), the whole thing carried by the performer's considerable charm. Then off up the road past two fire-jugglers and a human statue and a man covered in blood and mortally wounded, up into the Cathedral grounds and further into the twisted world of Fool and Hat Fair founder JONATHAN KAY, where I became an ostrich. We all did. And we wandered around the grounds worrying and participating strangers, lining a pathway and applauding whoever walked down, the whole thing strange and exhilarating, but, on reflection, maybe focused outward in a way that was detrimental and a little smug, the inhibitions of strangers getting a rougher ride than our own. Then England lost on penalties. Then exiting a pub encountered a coiled, springy dragon made from hubcaps cut and reconstituted, placed atop a customised wheeled chassis and pushed forward by four warriors who loved to drum—this DRAGON HEART

BEATS by POSITIVE PRODUCTIONS. It ran down Broadway, which has a pub every thirty yards, it seems like, picking up disconsolate fans on the way and depositing them at a large stage. There followed a musical interlude with some human beat-box people. Then the BUREAU OF SILLY IDEAS spent approximately half an hour trying to replace a streetlamp's lightbulb, falling over each other and sometimes just falling over, doing acrobatics and basic clowning. It never pulled the audience all the way in, but was worth it for the late stages where the BUREAU brought out the aerialists, and, better, an enormous crane/lighting rig/aerialist cradle that was a real monster, some kind of—osaurus for sure.

John Ellingsworth

It's the Hat Fair and the sun is shining (Hat Fair without rain, can this be?). I'm sorry to be perverse, but I like the grey gloom and rain of a British summer, and it really is too hot for me. I wander round pretty aimlessly, find John, miss most of the things on my allotted schedule. I join in with the JK ostrich business (have been one before, at The Big Green Gathering last year, where we were also sheep and where people performed impromptu stripteases at Jonathan's invitation—the home crowd at Winchester are a little less forthcoming). I also see the STRANGELINGS' new show, which I agree isn't quite there yet, and I have reservations about these mock-Caesar Twins piss-take male acrobalance thingies—there's a few of them around at the moment, cf Freaks in a Box etc—come on lads, bananas? Now, I must see some shows on my own schedule. I fail, mostly. Aha—a refuge from the sun. A tent/booth type thing in which I find THE SÉANCE. The latest from female clown extraordinaire PASCHALE STRAITON is a little gem; I'm a sucker for these street arts sideshow sort of things, and this one's great. We are welcomed in by the Madam of the establishment (FZ's Flick Ferdinando, on great form). She's all wide eyes and gypsy flowing robes and kohl eye make-up and high camp melodrama, warning us of the perils of dealing with the dead. She takes us through and we are

drawn into a tale of murdered lovers, weeping portraits, and dead canaries who return to haunt... In the corner is our connection to the spirit world; medium Paschale S is all lumpy, heaving bosom, angsty groans and projectile vomiting ectoplasm. Wonderful stuff!

At last, the cool of the night... my allocated shows in the Saturday evening programme are the arty, dancy ones on and around The Great Hall Steps (which are as grand as they sound). First up is THE WRONG SIZE with LUMINOUS. I've seen an earlier version of this piece at The Circus Space Cabaret, but here it really comes into its own: a half-dozen ethereal figures in white, on stilts (can you be ethereal on stilts? I think so) are decked with lights, creating a symphony of ever-changing colour combinations as figures move from background to foreground in cleverly choreographed combinations. That's it basically. But if you are into Goethe's colour theory, you'll know the power of colour combination as a dramatic event. And even if you aren't, you can appreciate how lovely it is to have an array of glowing, moving figures weaving and waiting before your eyes. This was followed by NUTKHUT'S BOLLYWOOD STEPS, the big commission of this year's Hat Fair. Referencing Bollywood (mostly) but with more than a nod to Hollywood (Grease, Dirty Dancing, Saturday Night Fever et al), this is an exuberant celebration, a great big wonderful ensemble of moving bodies—dancing solo, in group formation, with partners. As in Luminous, the dramaturgy of light is key—the dancing figures are lit by ever-changing washes of beautiful soul-enriching colour: fuchsia and turquoise and amber and lapis lazuli and jade and emerald and ruby and amethyst. It's exhilarating, joyful, nurturing, life-affirming—a jewel of a piece.

Dorothy Max Prior



Mem Morrison/Paradoxs Film

UNDO

Jacqueline and Nicolee Smith

THE BOX

Birmingham Rep

Fierce Festival Birmingham

May–June 2006

Mem Morrison's return to his schooldays in *Undo* is a very interesting performance in many ways: a combination of documentary film, recited poems, and physical performance. A particularly strong element is its inclusion of the audience. Being asked to rise, open our hymn books and sing, the audience participates actively in re-creating Mem's schooldays; it is also interesting to see how the gaze is turned and he observes us, while many members of the public can be seen to glance around, observing each other. Similarly, the presentation of his school photos, handed out to everyone in a sealed envelope, leads to an atmosphere of shared childhood memories. Mem does not coerce his audience into participatory acts, but plays skilfully with distance and the direction of the gaze. Even during the film that documents some of his classmates' memories and their reaction to Mem's photo, arguably one of the most passive moments for the audience, he is still sitting on the stage, between us and the screen, and one wonders which way he is looking...

The Box is also a mixture of film and performance designed to involve the audience, here in an exploration of fear. While the film (in order to introduce the topics of the causes of fears such as arachnophobia) uses the loose story of a victim turned guru, Dr D. Ablo and usherette Candy create live effects that accompany the images on the screen. The idea is promising. Sitting in a darkened small box, looking towards the screen, one's back and side are vulnerable for direct audience–performer interaction, and the images on the screen prepare the audience for unpleasant surprises. The concept would, however, benefit greatly from practical improvements: with the exception of a monstrous spider that passed our heads fast enough to prevent second thoughts, most elements of the performance are slightly too foreseeable to create the desired effect. An interesting approach, but here the spectators' distance would have to be reduced considerably by better timing, better lighting and a bit of magic to allow the audience to explore their own demons.

Ursula Canton

Big State Theatre Company

FETCH

Rondo Theatre Bath

June 2006

'Did all this really happen or is it too far-fetched?' asks our heroine at the end of the piece. Well, whether it did or it didn't doesn't seem to matter in this high-energy, fast-moving journey through the obsessive world of animal-loving. *Fetch* is a three-hander performed by a hugely talented cast who don the characters of what must be at least half a dozen personae each throughout the piece.

It's the story of Lula, a female pet-sitter, who is found floating out at sea (girl on a buoy) by the crew of a passing submarine who then make it their business to interrogate her. Through flashbacks we learn that she has been given the job of pet-sitter to a mad woman (Mrs Thing) who seems determined to own an example of every known animal.

In a wild kaleidoscopic journey that employs elements of Alice in Wonderland and Noah's Ark, the company also use digital video and live film projection beautifully to advance the plot and supply filmed backgrounds. In this there's a nod to the techniques of the Brittonioni Brothers, but Big State use their filmic moments more as a way of showing us what's going on elsewhere in the awful claustrophobic world they inhabit. The design is particularly inventive: a vast grey and pink cityscape set is cut through with doors and cupboards that are satisfyingly employed throughout the show, and the exaggerated costumes also come in shades of pink and grey. There's more than a touch of Tenniel in the costume designs with Lula and Mrs Thing resonating echoes of Alice and the Red Queen respectively.

Fetch is a delightful night at the theatre – highly recommended for both animal and theatre lovers alike.

Brian Popay

Greenwich and Docklands Festival
June 2006

A tractor had been augmented by a powerful DJ tower, making it some kind of disco-tractor; it moved forward in reverse, at slow-walking speed, and sent out beats which ruled the masses. Guys in hoodies were out in force, apparently having a time. I also saw a couple of about 70 years of age dancing along to pumping house music.

COMPAGNIE OFF, the French street artists (who at the 2003 Greenwich and Docklands Festival did a bizarre and much-talked-about performance where two opera singers on a raised stage were chased through East

London by luminous red giraffes) were back, in LES ROUES DE COULEURS, to roll a load of varicoloured wheels – ranging in size from man- to house-size – down Roman Road in Bow. Not much happened other than the music and the wheels and occasional explosions that rained paper discs onto the crowd, but the energy was infectious. The procession ended in Mile End Park, where the two largest colour wheels were lifted by crane and turned into spinning hypno-discs. There was another explosion, a wave of heat from it, and then the Cie Off performers (covered in clay, looking alien) shook hands with the front-rank audience. I think for 90% of the park it would have been a lost transition – distance to closeness, macro to micro – and even from close up (I was close up) the sense of resolution was spoiled slightly by the fact that the damn big colour wheels were still there. I know it was a difficult thing to bring to an end, but letting the DJs reign over the park for a little while longer instead of shutting them off might have kept the atmosphere going while people's attention drifted away from the performers.

STRANGE FRUIT: six performers on six flexible but (one hopes) unbreakable poles. Strapped in at the legs, they undulated and drew slow circles in the air. They did precise figures-of-eight, narrowly avoiding hitting each other. They danced a little. They leaned back and then threw themselves forward, reaching forward. Picture a long dive with a wide parabola, dived, then thrown into reverse. Looking up at the performers put the gigantic sun-glazed towers of Canary Wharf into view, which maybe projected the piece's themes of alienation and loneliness onto the cityscape, but mostly just looked nice. Mood shifts were a little weird sometimes – happy dancing to intense, desperate reaching (there was a lot of reaching). The slow-motion spectacle of people falling and then being yanked back up again was at times repetitious and strange, giving me the creeps, plus the performers' faces were heavily made-up and they were all formally dressed, which of course caused further creeps. But this was the lesser part, and necessary to give the scenes where the performers worked hard to join hands some emotional depth. These scenes worked in a predictable and manipulative, yet real, sort of way; but the best was when each of the six performers picked someone from the crowd to fall in love with, then acted out a little routine. The longest and sweetest was a woman trying to give a grounded man a single flower. She kept urging him to jump and throwing herself forward, closer each time. When she finally made it all the way and handed him the flower, the audience cheered.

John Ellingsworth

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Tel: +44 (0) 1384 399458
theatre@ghc.rmet.org.uk
Tel or email for full details of current classes/workshops.

INDEPENDENT THEATRE COUNCIL TRAINING PROGRAMME
London
T:+44 (0) 20 7403 6698
training@itc-arts.org
www.itc-arts.org
Total Theatre subscribers save 15% on ITC one-day training courses and seminars! The majority of their courses take place in central London and cover everything from fundraising to press relations; employment law to producing and touring; finance to leadership.

THE KELMAN GROUP
Leeds
T:+44 (0) 1484 851227
www.kelmangroup.com
Regular workshops in the improvisational techniques of Scott Kelman. Kelman works Exploring is a new approach to physical and vocal skills, making discoveries in complexity, presence and composition and developing sensitivity in ensemble work.

MAC
Birmingham
T:0121 440 3838
www.macarts.co.uk
Autumn courses and workshops in physical theatre, dance and movement, and circus.

MOVE INTO LIFE
West Dorset
T:+44 1297 560511
www.moveintolife.co.uk
info@moveintolife.co.uk
A training in non-stylised movement practice with Sandra Reeve. 24 – 26 November. £100.

PANTS ON FIRE
www.pantsonfiretheatre.com
Adventures in Space course – a unique 10-week part-time course in ensemble and physical storytelling led by Lecoq trained tutors and presented by Pants on Fire. Adventures in Mask is another 10-week course in mask performance. See website.

THEATRE TRAINING INITIATIVE
London
www.theatrettraining.org.uk
info@theatrettraining.org.uk
Developing the art of live performance through challenging, intercultural practice. Weekly classes, intensive workshops and creative development opportunities. Previous workshops have included Butoh, Suzuki, Kalarippayattu and Yoga for Performers. Full details on the website.

THE WHY NOT INSTITUTE
London
T:+44 (0) 20 7739 8363
whynotinstitute@aol.com
Clowning courses with De Castro, eccentric dance and more.

THE WRIGHT SCHOOL
London
www.thewrightschool.co.uk
Classes and workshop programme led by John Wright – see the website for full details.

CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND SYMPOSIA

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PERFORMANCE/SEMINARS
www.brunel.ac.uk
susan.broadhurst@brunel.ac.uk
Series of Wednesday lectures in November and December. Includes 'Realtime Media in Performance: The use of sensor and video motion sensing technologies in installation and performance'.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – OVERSEAS

ACADEMY OF LIVING MOVEMENT
Vienna, Austria
T:+43 1 8892945
www.livingmovement.org
info@livingmovement.org
Four-year professional training in performance/movement theatre. Incorporates bodywork, eurhythm, ensemble, devising, neutral mask, scenography, storytelling.

BUTOH-CENTRUM MAMU
Göttingen, near Hannover, Germany
T:+49 (0) 551-7906245; M:+49 (0) 172-2754785
www.tadashi-endo.de
gendo@butoh-ma.de
Intensive workshops with Tadashi Endo throughout the year. Next is 1 – 16 December. Fee: 480- plus 50 Euro for accommodation for the whole duration. Join the mailing list to be kept up to date.

CIRCO A VAPORE SCHOOL OF THEATRE
Rome, Italy
T:+39 06 700 9692
www.circovapore3000.it
circovapore@tiscali.net
Two-year professional training. Further info (in English) available on request – email above.

DELL'ARTE
California, USA
T:+1 707 668 5663
www.dellarte.com
info@dellarte.com
Dell'Arte is the North American centre for the exploration, development, training and performance of the actor-creator, and offers the only MFA in Ensemble-Based Physical Theatre currently accredited in the US, in addition to its one-year Professional Training Program for Physical Theatre Actors. A Bali program will run 30 Jan – 2 March, allowing students to study traditional dance, shadow puppetry or mask carving with village masters and Dell'Arte faculty.

ECOLE INTERNATIONALE DE THEATRE JACQUES LECOQ
Paris, France
T:+33 1 47 70 44 78
www.ecole-jacqueslecoq.com/index_uk.htm
contact@ecole-jacqueslecoq.com
Two-year professional training together with the Laboratory of Movement Study (LEM).

ECOLE PHILIPPE GAULIER
www.ecolephilippegaulier.com
ecole@ecolephilippegaulier.com
The school begins in October and ends in June and includes the following workshops: Le Jeu, Neutral Mask, Tragedy, Bouffons, Melodrama, Masked Play, Characters, Shakespeare, Clowns, Chekhov, and Writing and Directing a Show.

ESCOLA DE CLOWN DE BARCELONA
Barcelona, Spain
T:+34 933 042 846
www.escoladec clown.eu
email: info@escoladec clown.eu
Comprehensive clown training programme covering both practical and theoretical aspects of the clown arts. 3-Month Clown Studies Course: search for one's personal clown and create original performance. Work also covers: play, improvisation, failure, the fool, the trickster, clowning in theatre/street/circus, clown consciousness, hospital clowning and theoretical/historical studies.

ESPACE CATASTROPHE
Brussels, Belgium
T:+32 (0) 2 538 12 02
www.catastrophe.be
espace@catastrophe.be
Training in circus and performing arts.

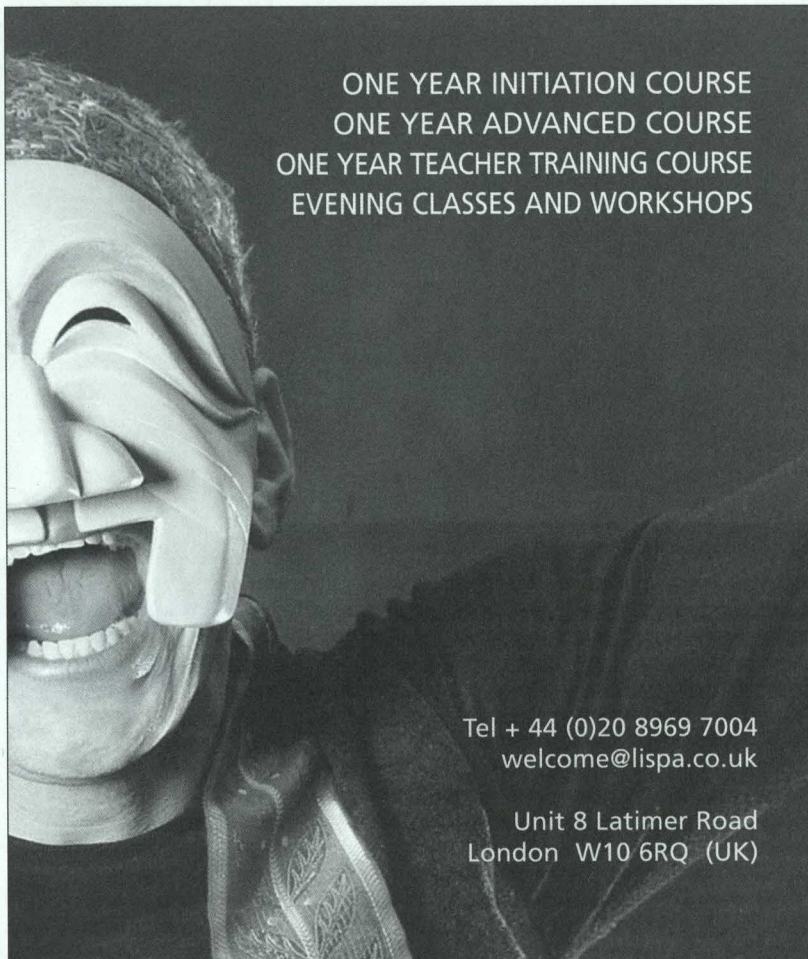
MIME CENTRUM BERLIN
Berlin, Germany
www.mimecentrum.de
Courses in mime and physical performance including Meyerhold's Biomechanics.

NICA
Australia
T:+61 3 9214 6975
www.nica.com.au
The National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) encourages applications to its Bachelor of Circus Arts from talented people with a background in circus, gymnastics, sports acrobatics, trampolining, martial arts, dance, diving, extreme sport, performing arts or physical theatre. International students are encouraged to apply by video.

PATRICIA BARDI, VOCAL DANCE & VOICE MOVEMENT INTEGRATION
Amsterdam, Netherlands
T:+31 (0) 6 120 38733
www.patriciabardi.com
info@patriciabardi.com
Curriculum consists of Vocal Dance; Body-Mind Centering; Anatomical Studies; Developmental Movement; Bodywork Principles and Practises. November 2006 – June 2007. Certification programme in Vocal Dance and Voice Movement Integration (VMI) Practice also offered.

TOTAL THEATRE SCHOOL
Australia
www.totaltheatre.com.au
sophie@totaltheatre.com.au
One and two-year intensive courses in physical theatre techniques.

ZID THEATER LAB
Netherlands
T:+31 20 4888449
www.zidtheater.nl
info@zidtheater.nl
Training for performers and directors. Summer school and artists in residence programme – see website for full details.



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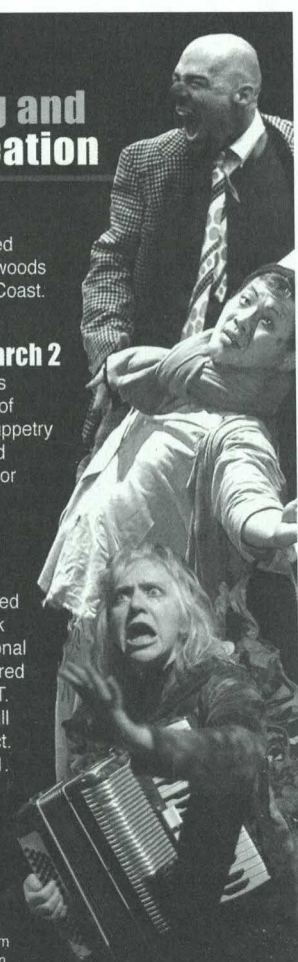
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 Blue Lake, CA 95525
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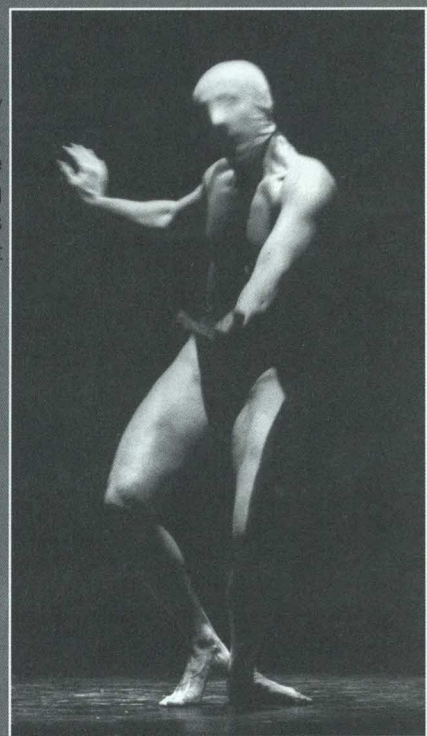
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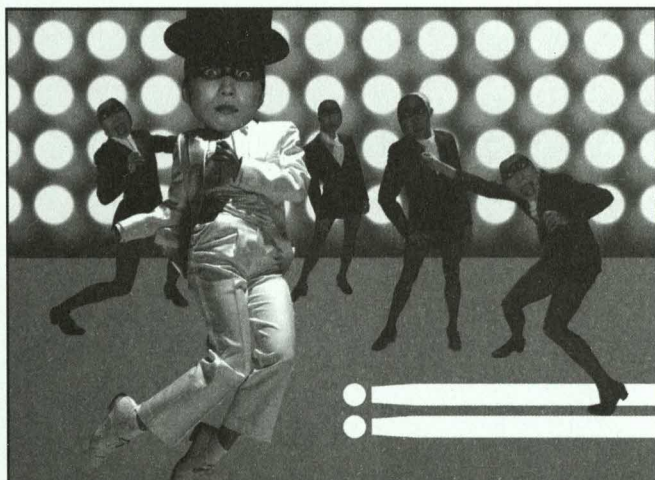
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www.catherinekontz.com
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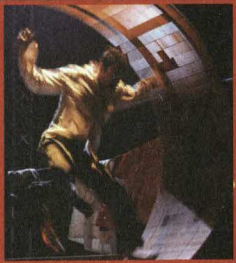
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