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The magazine for Drama and Theatre at York St John University

ISSUE 12. CREATE FESTIVAL EDITION. SPRING 2016

THEATRE PAGES

ISSUE 12. CREATE 2016.

Welcome to the Create Festival edition of Theatre Pages.

Create is York St John's annual graduate showcase, including performances, exhibitions, screenings and other events from across the Faculty of Arts. For final year theatre students it marks the end of their degree and celebrates their creativity and vision.

Drama and Theatre at YSJ is characterised by its diversity, its aesthetic experimentation and its engagement with social context. During this festival you might excavate the legacy of the 1984 miners' strike, witness verbatim stories of Syrian refugees, watch theatre for children or experience a theatrical exploration of the relationship between Mother Nature and the cycle of life.

Beyond the Create Festival, this edition also features two very different outdoor performances: *Goodnight Starman*, by our first year theatre students, and *Thanks Allot(ment)* by MA Theatre and Performance students. Theatre is literally everywhere.

And also...

This year for the first time we are presenting Co-Create, a two day festival within a festival. Programmed by senior lecturers Rachel Conlon and Jules Dorey Richmond, Co-Create celebrates the making of theatre with, for and by members of our local and regional community.

And finally...

We are delighted to include short articles from three of our current theatre students – Georgie Fishkin, Jamie Heelbeck and Ashley Marshall. These articles present examples of the kind of theatre work from outside of York St John that our students witness, are inspired by, or even help to create.

Editors: Kiran Tanna and Matthew Reason

Cover image: *Nóstos Álgos*, by Rachel Wilson (Level 3 Theatre). Photo: Sam Gray.

If you would like to find out more about Drama and Theatre at York St John University, please visit www.yorks.ac.uk/theatre

FESTIVAL LISTINGS

Monday 2nd May

9.00pm – *Thanks Allot(ment)*. MA Theatre and Performance. Northfield Allotments.

Friday 6th May

8:30pm – *Goodnight Starman*. Level One Theatre. York St John University Quad.

Monday 16th May

12:00pm – *'84*. Excavate Theatre Company. Theatre 1.

2:30pm – *Happy Now*. Chrysalis. Theatre 3.

4:00pm – *Borders*. Compact. Arts Workshop.

Wednesday 18th May

2:00pm – *Life's a Beach*. Into Perspective Theatre. Theatre 1.

3:30pm – *Through The Gap*. Phoenix Theatre. Theatre 3.

5:00pm – *Measured in MLS*. State of Change. Arts Workshop.

Thursday 19th May

1:00pm – *By Invitation Only*. Almost Moving. Theatre 1.

2:30pm – *If You Loved Me*. Chalice and Eagle Theatre Company. Theatre 3.

Friday 20th May

12:00pm – *Nature Nurtures Man*. Omnipresent Theatre. Theatre 1.

4:30pm – *The Story of the Honey Bees*. Stardust. Theatre 3.

Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th May

Co-Create: Igniting Community Theatre. York St John University.

For further information and bookings please visit: yorks.ac.uk/create

Thanks Allot(ment)

MA Theatre and Performance

Thanks Allot(ment) is a devised performance, responding to a commission from David Richmond, Jules Dorey Richmond and York St John University.

This work explores the relationship between theatre-making and the live environment, focussing on the origins of the May Day Bank Holiday and the Haymarket Affair.

Also known as The Haymarket Massacre and The Haymarket Riots, The Haymarket Affair was the aftermath of a bombing at a labour demonstration that took place on the 4th of May, 1886, in Haymarket Square, Chicago, Illinois. The rally at Haymarket Square was organised by labour radicals in protest of the killings of several workers by the Chicago police during a strike about working rights.

The performance will take place at dusk on the 2nd May at Northfields Allotments.

The four performers, Simon Bedwell, Jessica Chaney, Charlotte Goodlad and Yanzhe Zhao will directly respond to the site using techniques unearthed through their collaborative practice.

For further information on MA courses at York St John, visit yorks.ac.uk/MAPerformance



Image: *The Allotment*, by O Bedwell.

GOODNIGHT ★ STARMAN

Level One Theatre

David Bowie's death left the world in mourning.

Goodnight Starman reinstates a little bit of colour back into our world. You cannot trace time, a wise man taught us that.

So, in honour of an extraordinary human, please put on your red shoes, dance the blues away, take your protein pills and put your helmet on.

Join us for a night of dazzling stardust, homage and oddity as we discover if there really is life on Mars...

This is for you Bowie...



'84

Excavate Theatre Company



'84 is a devised performance made in response to the 1984 miners' strike, an event that happened a decade before the members of Excavate were born – but one which has been passed down to us in folklore.

We are a collaboration of six practitioners who enjoy creating theatre images through play in the space. We believe it is important to tackle historical events in order to keep their stories alive and relevant.

We explore why the mining communities were dismantled whilst trying to understand the effects of the pit closures, in what is said to be “the biggest industrial dispute in British history”.

Throughout our process we have looked at mining as a model through which we could replicate 'excavation' in a theatre space. We were able to explore new found territories, through voice and movement. Through the sense of us, came a sense of togetherness.

Using verbatim theatre, we explore the essence of solidarity within the mining community during the strike in 1984. Respectfully, we reflect on the events that we were not there to bear witness to.

'84 asks you to join us as we present our findings and tell the stories we uncovered.

Excavation is the exposure, process and recording of remains.

We excavate to find the stories.

We excavate to expose knowledge.

We excavate to understand the past.

Excavate are: Nesta Cooper, Beth Curtis, Samuel Gray, Megan Hardcastle, James Knight and Connie Rawding.

Happy Now

Chrysalis

I don't normally do this sort of thing...

Based in York, Chrysalis Theatre are dedicated to touring shows, specialising in creating audience awareness. Our motivation is the understanding that certain subjects, such as mental health, are often neglected by society and are heavily stigmatised. We want to highlight the importance of the fact that one in four people has mental health issues.

As a company, we want to create a safe environment where people can speak openly, without the worry of being judged or stereotyped. We intend to do this through the use of verbatim theatre and autobiographical narratives in our new performance, *Happy Now*.

We have used these two techniques so that true portrayals of the diagnoses can be honestly conveyed to the audience. Our name was inspired by the imagery of a caterpillar in metamorphosis, changing into a butterfly. We hope to help people transform the way that they think about mental health.

*I feel like a deflated balloon
I feel like a glass of wine
I feel like the whole universe*

Happy Now has been created through various workshops and improvisations. The piece explores multiple stories in a non-linear form, with overlapping narratives vying for a place in the spotlight.

We're doing better now...

Chrysalis Theatre are: Katie Wardman, Michael Watson and Lois Woodman.

crystalistheatre.wix.com



Borders

Compact

Before you stand six strong women, telling real stories of the refugees fleeing Syria. Their homes have been demolished, friends, family and lovers have been killed, they had no choice but to leave.

Borders reflects the strength of the human spirit, even in the most atrocious conditions. Presenting sourced verbatim stories, these six women will move you, inspire you and teach you. Through inventive play, music and movement, the stories come alive before your eyes. These six women are not imitators, they are vehicles for communicating.

Who are the refugees? What pain have they suffered? What was their life like before the war? How can you help them? This work seeks to explore and portray these questions in order to inform.

This thought provoking performance will take you on a journey, to question everything you know about your home, and its importance within our lives.

Compact are: Holly Justice, Lauren Hall, Sarah Parker, Geneva Rust-Orta, Ashleigh Stephenson and Emilie Tomlinson.

compact.puzl.com



Life's a Beach

Into Perspective Theatre

Doomed to float together on a fragment of pier washed away in 1959, *Life's a Beach* charts the story of five traditional British variety acts trapped in an existential postcard world where the destination is... not all there!

For nestling in the great in-between, there is an Oh-zone, there is the toe zone! The Sea Zone! Oh we do like to be beside something soft and gritty. Waiting for something odd to happen, and it does. With a BANG!

Life's a Beach is an absurdist pantomime with original music inspired by Vivian Stanshall and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. It will take you on a journey inspired by Tristan T'Zara dadaism.

We are the lost, the failures, the dreamers, clinging to what is left, desperately disappearing into the fog that is our future. We are End of Pier performers, clinging to a social enclave where the ridiculous is normal and the normal is surreal. We are waning, being replaced by Butlins Holiday Camps, Television and Pole Dancing.

So come visit Into Perspective Theatre!
We will never be the same again!

Into Perspective Are: Jack Clark, David Harrison, Clare Meadows, Tom Nightingale and Janice Newton.



Through The Gap

Phoenix Theatre

We are Phoenix Theatre Company. Our vision is to explore the stigma associated with women offenders, in order to challenge the public's perception.

Over the past year we have accumulated resources and material surrounding women within the criminal justice system. We will be adapting this material to show the public what it means to be a woman in prison, from losing their identity to looking towards the future.

We are women, working with women.

Women who are mothers, sisters and daughters.

Women who want to be heard.

Phoenix are: Georgie Fishkin, Casey Fox, Jodie Glover, Kate Higgins and Jess Robson.

Photograph: Jess Robson



Measured in MLS

State of Change Theatre

We are extremely excited to be working on our current project, Measured in MLS: every drink has a story.

Measured in MLS is a performance and workshop created for young people, questioning our experience of alcohol, using verbatim techniques, combined with movement and spoken word texts.

Young people are at the heart of our company; we strive to create work for them. Work that benefits and entertains them and shows the importance of tackling issues which occur in many young people's lives is vital. Growing up is a hard enough task already, why should it be even more of a challenge?

We think of our work as a 'rehearsal for life' for young people. We hope that, in the future, the messages in *Measured in MLS* will stay with the young people, and help them make informed choices, state what they believe in and have a strong opinion. They deserve these chances to explore life through theatre, to have that rehearsal for life. And we are here to give it to them.

Make your choice, take your own stance, and change the future.

State of Change are: Justine Buchanan, Paige Slater, and Niaoma Treloar.

stateofchangetheatrecompany.puzl.com





By Invitation Only

Almost Moving

Audience members will be denied entry without an invitation but, once admitted, will find themselves in a precise and delicate dining room alongside three gracious hosts who will escort them to their seats.

A soft sprinkling of classical music, perfectly polished silverware, wine and, of course, roses. You will receive a dinner of sorts consisting of a starter, main, dessert but will have no say in what is thrown your way – sometimes literally.

In this immersive physical theatre piece the hosts make every attempt to impress their guests in any way they can. Attendees must prepare for a dinner of perfect ideals, but are asked to remember, an idea doesn't always become a reality. It is so often in our society that we wear a mask, we cover up our faces and our opinions by a joyous laugh or simply just with silence. In some cases however the endless cycle of pretence gets too much and chaos will inevitably ensue.

With ideas stemming mainly from Vsevolod Meyerhold's Biomechanics, but also with roots in physical theatre companies such as Frantic Assembly and DV8 this piece has a variety of performance styles which range from animalistic behaviour to precise and intricate dance-like sections where the three performers create vibrant images.

The use of text in this piece is limited and the main focus is on the movement and use of space. It examines an endless cycle of insanity, showcasing the ridiculous nature of human beings and our obsession with perfection.

This piece is a visual representation of western culture and its unrealistic ideals of social norm.

Almost Moving are: Duane Goodyear, Gemma Louise Keane and Kayleigh Lawson.

If You Loved Me

Chalice and Eagle Theatre Company

We are Chalice and Eagle Theatre Company. Our name derives from the symbols of York St John. The Chalice represents a solid dedication to a service, and the Eagle, freedom and truth. These symbols embody that which our company is striving to achieve: presenting a piece of compelling theatre which explores the impact of dating violence in teenage relationships.

Alex: Age 15. Liam: Age 17. *If You Loved Me* explores the journey of our two protagonists venturing into the exciting, scary and uncertain world of first love. Will it be remembered for all the right reasons? Exploring teen culture, social issues and relationships, we aim to educate our audience about what is and isn't healthy. The complexities of teenage relationships both family and romantic provide the foundation of this story.

Through conversations stemming from workshops created for schools, we ask questions in our work that have been articulated by teenagers themselves. Our work is relevant to our audience because of the voice we have given the community. What is right and what is wrong? Is it ever a simple case of black and white? When do the lines become blurred?

We see Alex and Liam go on a first date to the park, we see them look at the stars and we see a dream of happy families. Encouraging audience participation, we place the lives of Alex and Liam into your hands. Can you help them see the stars and achieve their dreams? Or will it all end in tears...?

Chalice and Eagle are Verity Brown, Jamie Heelbeck, Hannah Measham and Amanda Thursby.

chaliceandeagle.co.uk



Nature Nurtures Man

Omnipresent Theatre



Omnipresent Theatre present an exploration into the relationship between Mother Nature and the cycle of life.

If you could go back and change it all, would you?

Roots pushing upwards.

Your mother screaming.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes.

Man will fight over the dust and choke on the fumes of his own destruction.

Man will bring down the Amazon and paint the sea black; but who will survive time?

Mother Nature was. Mother Nature is. Mother Nature will be.

Join us as we explore the birth and inevitable end of humanity.

Watch man crawl forth from the womb of nature.

Watch man learn to hunt, kill and see the birth of religion.

Spring was our beginnings, as humanity swung in trees.

Summer was our heaven, as we ate honey from the bees.

Autumn is our current place of technological purgatory.

Hell, is what we're building, in this parable, this story.

Winter is nigh.

The storm is still coming.

If you could go back and change it all, would you?

Omnipresent Theatre are: Jack Lay Flurie, Lydia Oliver, Bobbie Parish, Keelan Swift and Rachel Wilson

omnipresenttheatre.wordpress.com

The Story of the Honey Bees

Stardust Theatre

We are a children's theatre company who specialise in storytelling performance aimed for 5-7 year olds, in which we seek to achieve meaningful, exhilarating and adventurous theatre.

Through our performances we hope to spark the audience's imagination and bring our stories to life. Throughout our creative process, our primary intention is not to dictate but instead to inform.

The Story of the Honey Bees tells a story about Goldie's teddy bears and how all they desire is their delicious runny honey. The only way they're going to get more is by helping Goldie do her science homework. We join Goldie and her bears - Buttercup and Bluebell - as they embark on a magical adventure to find an everlasting source of their beloved honey.

Through twists, turns and the help of several mini beasts along the way, we can speculate whether we may see them gain victory through their teamwork or not. Join us this spring to experience the magical story at the bottom of the garden!

Stardust are: Emma Gowland, Emma Hoyle, Sophie Montague and Chloe Suffell.

stardusttheatre.webs.com





Image: *Out and About* (Create 2015). Photo: Jen Todman.

Co-Create

To co-create is to make something together, to collaborate, to work in the community, to give voice, to share, to stimulate debate. Co-Create is a mini-festival within Create 16 that celebrates the making of theatre with, for and by members of our local and regional community.

Over these two days Co-Create will bring together current YSJ students and staff, young people from local schools and youth groups, professional practitioners, teachers and other community partners. Together we will witness and participate in workshops, performances and debates around current theatre practice.

Drama students from local and regional schools have been invited in to engage with the festival and get a sense of the possibilities of studying theatre at York St John. Across the two days other participants will include young people from a diversity of youth settings, actively fulfilling a widening participation agenda.

We are interested in theatre as a vehicle to promote social justice, participation and community empowerment. Co-Create marks our commitment to these ideals and our engagement with a diverse range of communities, highlighting the value of being a socially engaged University.

Igniting Community Theatre

Monday Morning

Workshop: Theatre talk and theatre skills workshops.

Performance: Student solo or ensemble performance.

Campus tour from YSJ widening participation

Monday Afternoon

Workshop: Theatre talk and theatre skills workshops.

Performance: Student solo or ensemble performance.

Campus tour from YSJ widening participation

Monday Evening

YSJU has a collaborative relationship with York Theatre Royal, including with the theatre's Youth Theatre.

This includes students taking up placement opportunity with the youth theatre, as assistant directors and designers, and hosting youth theatre groups on campus. Two performances by YTR youth theatre are showcased in Co-Create.

6pm *The Holding Place* - Theatre 1

Followed by a post show discussion
8pm *This Changes Everything* - Theatre 1

Tuesday Morning

Workshop: Theatre talk and theatre skills workshops.

Performance: Third year solo or ensemble performance.

Campus tour from widening participation.

Tuesday Afternoon

This afternoon brings together a number of community partnership projects, where our staff and students have been working over the last year to create performance work. This practice often takes place in community settings. Co-Create offers an opportunity to welcome them onto campus in order to celebrate and share this work with a wider audience.

Our partners are: The Prison Partnership Project, Fuse Theatre, Changing Lives and the NSPCC.



Image: *It's not Okay!* Photo: Jen Todman.

Making Theatre, Making a Difference

Theatre in Education

'It's not OK' is a Theatre in Education performance delivered to all year 7 pupils in all of the secondary schools within the City of York to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation. The project was funded by the NSPCC and Connecting Youth Culture and led by YSJ theatre lecturers Rachel Conlon and Jules Dorey Richmond.

Here Level 3 theatre student Jamie Heelbeck talks of his experience of being involved in the project.

Chances come and go; sometimes it is a matter of being in the right place at the right time. It was one of those times, when, in Spring 2015, I was given the chance to work on a project that would see me performing in secondary schools,

promoting awareness of online safety for young people. I have wanted to be a drama teacher since the age of 14 and this offered me valuable experience; so, even though the role required me to shave off my beloved facial hair to play the character of an 11 year-old boy, I jumped at the opportunity.

This was how I found myself working with three other practitioners, as well as theatre lecturers, Rachel Conlon and Jules Dorey Richmond, to devise a show about E-Safety, exploring the potential dangers online and the ways in which the virtual world can have consequences offline. As performers, we all played characters of similar ages to our target audience of year 7s, and each had something distinctive about our character that we hoped would resonate with some of the young people. My character, Mikey, held an Xbox remote most of the time he was onstage and the young people, particularly the boys, instantly related to him because of that. I was frequently asked questions about my FIFA Ultimate team and what level I was on GTA, and I'm sure the young people would know if I hadn't known my stuff. It was an odd form of Xbox-specific authenticity that allowed them to see themselves in my character. For these young people, a lot of their learning came via Mikey, and through myself as a facilitator.

There are always risks with issue based theatre – we were doing a show for young people that touched on sex, violence and bullying – but it is with those risks that the impact is made. If just *one* young person can identify that it is happening around them and seize the moment of change that we explore in the workshops, then we have succeeded in our aim.

It is really important to us that impact is made, because even if the young people aren't experiencing these issues at the moment, there may be a time when there is the potential for such a situation to manifest in the future. This is why drama is such an effective medium: it can often further young peoples' understanding by enabling them to experience an issue in a safe place, allowing them to rehearse that moment before it has chance to occur in real life.

One of the real rewards of the process has been working with the other actor/facilitators, all of whom are graduates of York St John. They are Lisa Thornton, who has worked on several amazing theatre projects in the north of England; Sarah Rumfitt, who is soon to qualify as a drama therapist; and James Aconely, who has worked in youth theatre across North Yorkshire. As graduates of the course, they demonstrate the range of possibilities that are open to somebody with a little ambition and a lot of hard work.

All this work is an extremely rewarding, inspiring and something that I am extremely passionate about. It was quite daunting at first as we didn't know what to expect. However I was more excited than anything else. I was being given a fantastic opportunity and getting paid for it, so I was going to throw myself into it as much as I possibly could. I am now excited to finish my degree and use all of the skills and contacts gained through this to provide great and engaging theatre for young people, as both a teacher and a theatre practitioner.

Words: Jamie Heelbeck



Image: *Sweatbox*, Clean Break. Photo: Jen Todman.

Sweatbox

Experiencing Clean Break

In October 2015 I found myself, along with 15 other York St John theatre students, shut inside a prison van. The door was closed and locked behind us, giving no escape from the claustrophobic atmosphere inside. It was then that the performance began.

The performance was *Sweatbox*, by Clean Break Theatre company, which allows the audience to witness three women's journey in a police transport van, as they are moved to prison, giving a very personal insight into their emotions along the way.

In some ways the experience began slightly earlier, for upon arriving at the van – parked on the University campus – the audience were able to watch the performance through CCTV cameras on a screen in the waiting area. This CCTV relay meant we were able to view the actors individually inside the van cells, and were able to see aspects of the performance, but with no sound – adding to the already anxious yet curious atmosphere about what we were about to watch. Then it was our turn, as a prison warden ushered us into the van with the command of 'In you go ladies.'

Inside the van there were three 'cells' and about a dozen audience members were allowed in at a time. The space was very cramped, leaving the audience no choice but to be face to face with each other and the women inside the cells, who themselves barely had enough room to turn around.

Shouting to each other from cell to cell, each woman presented a fragment of their story which connected to their arrest or to do with an emotion which they were feeling. For the audience, many of whom had never had any kind of connection with the criminal justice system, the intense closeness of the actors and their unfolding stories allowed us to form a link with the characters. For myself, I could relate most of all to a character who was obviously very claustrophobic and was beginning to have a panic attack. In order to calm herself down, she began to count, reminding herself to breathe. As a sufferer of panic attacks myself, I began to bond with her, empathising with her situation. As events unfolded, this helped me to realise that her character was worried about what might happen to her little boy, and that she didn't want to leave him. Prisoners are often de-humanised, and people forget that these women are also mothers, daughters and sisters. They have lives beyond their immediate circumstances and it is this that the performance communicated most profoundly.

Sweatbox was performed by graduates of Clean Break's theatre education programme: Eddy Emenike, Carrie Rock and Jade Small. I had an opportunity to interview the actors after the performance and discovered how they had done a lot of research into the lives of women prisoners prior to the performance; including through interviews with women in the criminal justice system.

They had used this to develop the characters and create an authentic script. They discussed how they had each taken an aspect of their own personality to mingle into the character which they were playing.

The size of the space inside the van was one of the most important elements of the performance, providing a very physical insight into how it would feel to be in the position of a prisoner. This was a very effective way to challenge an audience, and to introduce them to the harsh realities of the criminal justice system. When speaking to the one of the director's at Clean Break, Imogen Ashby, I was told that the toilet inside the van was designed for the use of men and consisted of little more than a hole. The way in which it was designed meant that it would be impossible for a woman to use, which led to one character wetting herself. The uncomfortable feeling I experienced at this point was only intensified at the end of the performance: as the women were brought out of their cells one by one, I was able to see that she was pregnant, and had been struggling to hold her bladder for the long period of time that the women had been kept in the van.

Sweatbox was a hugely enlightening piece of work, performed beautifully and authentically by the women involved. This work, and theatre like it, is profoundly important: it is vital that the wider community is given opportunities such as these, to experience things we would normally avoid, from the perspectives of those people in society whom we often ignore, or sometimes forget about all together.

Words: Georgie Fishkin



Image: *The Notebook*, Forced Entertainment. Photo: Hugo Glendinning.

The Notebook

Forced Entertainment: Always Pushing Boundaries

Two actors take to the stage, each holding a notebook, and the performance begins. *The Notebook* is Forced Entertainment's latest production, an adaptation of Ágota Kristóf's novel.

As a long admirer of their work, I was excited to be seeing the company perform live for the first time. Walking into the theatre, I was immediately confronted by the vast open space, empty except for two chairs.

From this sparse setting, Forced Entertainment tell the story of twin brothers, forced to stay with their Grandmother from the beginning until the end of the second world war. Deprived and misunderstood, the brothers have an air of mysteriousness about them: whenever they speak they do so simultaneously, their voices becoming one and it is hard to differentiate between the two characters.

This is at once muddling and intriguing, asserting the togetherness of the two characters who are united as if one. I find myself sitting back and listening to a story, something somewhat surprising given Forced Entertainment's reputation and I find it interesting how the company seem to have returned to narrative in contemporary theatre. The company are better known for their lack of developed characters, storylines and use of non-linear narratives.

However, in *The Notebook*, this all seems reversed. The audience is invited to engage with the emotional investment in the piece, and it's quite compelling.

Forced Entertainment have influenced me from the very start of my university career. Their work pushes the boundaries of what might be considered traditional theatre. During my time at York St John I have been exposed to a vast array of contemporary theatre and yet still it's something about the post-dramatic style of Forced Entertainment that I keep returning to.

The post-dramatic form often seems to shun developed characters or emotional plot lines, with companies like Forced Entertainment creating performances that are self-referential and often about the form of theatre in and of itself. The form allows for theatre makers such as Tim Etchells, artistic director of Forced Entertainment, to explore what performance might mean in a contemporary world at a purely theatrical level without engaging in narrative or naturalism.

For me as an artist that is what I enjoy when creating work; engaging with my own personal narratives, energising my personalities without focusing on a specific story or explicit meaning.

And this was why I was surprised by *The Notebook*, which seems almost to return to character and narrative.

Perhaps Forced Entertainment have opted to shock their audience by doing something almost conventional. Even so, *The Notebook* retained the sensibilities of post-dramatic theatre. Rather than acting – that attempt to pretend to be somebody – the performers were 'narrating' so to speak. Everything was stripped back, almost a radio play on stage.

Here, Forced Entertainment have created a piece of work that is both engaging and entertaining, asking us to question our ability to tell stories on stage without having to act, whilst duping its audience into imagining it as a piece of traditional theatre.

There is a surprising amount of craft involved in doing something in an apparently really simple manner. As a company, they aren't attempting to create a piece of spectacular visual theatre, neither are they interested in emotional investment for its own sake; yet their work remains at once profound, hard-hitting and enjoyable.

Forced Entertainment seem to be interested in the pure thrill of creating and re-creating theatre as an art form, and, for me, that made it a truly memorable piece of performance.

Words: Ashley Marshall