



The future of touring and distribution  
for contemporary theatre and Live Art

A publication developed from a major symposium at Nuffield Theatre,  
Live at LICA, Lancaster University, on Saturday 12 May 2012  
Publication edited by Mary Paterson and Theron Schmidt  
Published by Live at LICA and Live Art UK



LICA LANCASTER INSTITUTE FOR  
THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS



Live Art UK

This document reflects on and responds to *Getting It Out There*, a one-day symposium exploring the future of touring for contemporary theatre and live art. The symposium was originally conceived by Tamsin Drury of hÅb to be developed with greenroom. Following the latter's closure, it was developed and co-produced with Live at LICA and held in Lancaster on 12 May 2012, bringing together panels of art-form specialists to ask questions about the role of curators, programmers, producers and venues. It considered the wider implications of the structures used to fund, develop and present new work, and emerging models for touring countrywide.

The event included creative interventions from artists sustaining a practice across contexts and regions, including Kazuko Hohki, Claire Marshall, Richard Gregory and Darren Pritchard, as well as the UK premiere of Franko B's *Because of Love*. Panelists included Lyn Gardner, Lois Keidan, Rajni Shah, Bryony Kimmings, Steve Slater, Kate McGrath and Giles Croft, with a keynote by Judith Knight.

Full programme information can be accessed here:

<http://bit.ly/TFQu19>

<http://bit.ly/JlkP3E>

Videos of panels and interventions, plus social media content:

<http://bit.ly/wRrE19>

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# Introduction

Dear reader,

The voices contained in this publication are all speaking to you about a conversation that was hosted by Live at LICA at Lancaster University in May 2012, entitled 'Getting It Out There'. This one-day symposium set out to respond to changing circumstances in the ways that performance work is commissioned, produced, and toured in the UK. As Judith Knight describes in her keynote address (reproduced below), fixed structures have changed. Where there once may have been clear distinctions between the activities of producing, creating, and touring work, these categories have shifted and blurred over the past decades. New kinds of structures, and new ways of thinking about what the 'work' of performance is, have emerged as a consequence.

The symposium invited a range of artists, creative producers, and representatives from venues to reflect on these changing circumstances. Some of the questions asked by the organisers included: how is in-house production affecting the way venues receive touring work? Is touring dead? How are artists and venues trying to reach wider audiences? Why is the division between experimental practices and main house programming particularly difficult to bridge in the UK? For this publication, we asked some of the artists and producers to provide short case studies of ways in which they have addressed these problems. We also reproduce a reflection from Claire Marshall on her experiences touring with Forced Entertainment, and a dialogue conducted after the symposium by Matt Fenton (Director) and Alice Booth (Creative Producer) of Live at LICA. Finally, we extended an open invitation to participants in the symposium, whether they were in the physical audience or watched the live stream online, to contribute reactions. These have been edited to form the responses at the end of this publication.

Underlying these collected materials is the assumption that performance is uniquely characterised by the way it creates direct encounters between people. It needs an audience, and it addresses itself to that audience. As people who care about performance, then, we care about this personal connection; for some of us, perhaps, that capacity for co-presence and live connection is more important than the content of performance, or is itself the form with which we're interested in working. So it's perhaps unsurprising that many of the responses to the day directly address a specific reader or are built from personal, human-scale recollections: Marshall's postcards to her aunt; the emails between co-workers Fenton and Booth; the provocations from audience members, intimate and aspirational. As editors of the publication, we also chose to construct our response in the form of a dialogue. These modes of address do not just focus attention on audiences, however. They also represent the work that surrounds the live event: the relationships and practices over time and distance, dedicated to shaping that moment of encounter.

And so we've also addressed this introduction to you, whoever you may be. What's in this for you? Perhaps you were not in Lancaster in May, but we assume you're reading this because you, too, care about the kinds of exchanges that performance alone can provoke. Maybe you run a venue and you're not sure that the way that your predecessors did things are still relevant. Maybe you're an artist and not sure what the wider landscape might be for your work. Maybe you're a funder and wondering where the gaps are that need addressing (hint: look at opportunities for mid-career artists, and bridges between innovative practices and established main houses). Whatever the case, we hope you find something in here that is addressed to you.

with best wishes

Mary Paterson and Theron Schmidt, editors

# Keynote

## Judith Knight

I have to say when Matt [Fenton] asked me to do this introduction I was hesitant, because the relationship between artists, audiences and venues is so complex and constantly changing. The more I thought I found some answers, the more I raised more questions. The fact that I've been producing the work of artists *forever* doesn't mean I know everything, and looking at this audience, it's clear that I'm not going to tell you much you don't already know. The very thing that has kept me interested after all these years is the constant change – the fact that I am always learning, that things never stand still. But I'll try to give us a bit of background, seen through the lens of Artsadmin, from which to start the conversation, so that at the end of the day we might all know what *we think* we're aiming for – at least until everything changes again!

I was at the IETM (International Network for the Performing Arts, [www.ietm.org](http://www.ietm.org)) meeting in Copenhagen talking to some French people about touring, and one of the French delegates immediately said, in an authoritative way that only a French person could, 'Touring is *finished*!' Today we're looking at whether touring is finished, or whether it is just different. If we're still getting it out there, then how and why, and where? And if it's not working as we'd like it to, how can we change that? In case we're not sure exactly what touring *is*, Arts Council England have kindly given us a definition which is on their website:

Touring activity is defined as 'where the same artistic programme or event is taking place in two or more venues'. This covers all artforms, scales of work, and kinds of places, from outdoors to indoors, local to national. The artistic programme or event may involve live performers and/or exhibition artworks; it would be fundamentally the same event offered to all, but may involve some adaptation to suit the different spaces and contexts in which it was being presented. (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/our-priorities-2011-15/touring/>)

Well that's pretty clear then!

A quick introduction to Artsadmin to put this in context: I started the organisation in 1979 with Seonaid Stewart, in response to the lack of support for some of the amazing and innovative work that was happening then, and to try to give the work a longer life through touring. Touring nationally and internationally has always been a major part of what we do. We were two people in a tiny office in those days, no funding – no email, no fax, no websites (quill pen and gas lamps almost) – but we did organise tours using those ancient methods of the phone call and the post. When I look back it's difficult to imagine how we did what we did, but it all did happen, mostly without calamity, reasonably efficiently, and quite extensively. We now have a much bigger organisation with a staff of 25, proper funding, a building at Toynbee Studios, an Advisory Service and Bursary Scheme and an education strand – but the process of *getting it out there* is still at the core of the organisation.

But in those dim and distant days, we booked a tour by telephone. We were mostly booking shows into black box theatre spaces. Armed with a copy of the British Alternative Theatre Directory, we made lists of venues, categorised as follows:

- A: 'likely' to 'possible'
- B: 'possible' to 'unlikely'
- C: 'unlikely' to 'very, very unlikely' – the last ditch, the dregs!

We embarked – full of optimism – on our A-list first of all. These were venues which were keen on 'experimental theatre', as it was called in those days, and who might, if we were very lucky, offer us two nights on a 70/30 box office split: the Green Room in Manchester; Theatre in the Mill in Bradford; Birmingham Arts Lab; Chapter in Cardiff; the Midland Group in Nottingham; and, in London, the Oval House and of course the ICA. Not all of those venues are still around, as you know. Some are very much missed. And if they are around, not all are presenting live art or performance. (What *happened* to the ICA?!)

Beginning with the As, we went down the list enthusiastically talking about the projects, and then with our optimism draining away as we reached the B and the C lists – where the responses were:

- the work was ‘too risky’;
- they ‘couldn’t describe it to audiences’;
- therefore they couldn’t publicise it;
- there wasn’t an audience ‘for this sort of thing’;
- it didn’t have an interval to enhance bar sales;
- there was no money;
- the amateur dramatics were doing Oklahoma that week;
- and the immortal response from one northern theatre on offering to send them more information: not to bother because ‘If it ain’t Perry Como it ain’t worth the price of a first class stamp!’

It wasn’t easy.

So what was the touring like? Well lots of companies had a *van*. This became a status symbol of sorts as the Gulbenkian Foundation funded some companies to enable them to buy rather flashy Mercedes vans. Hesitate and Demonstrate had one; so did Lumiere and Son; so did Hull Truck. Welfare State International had loads of vans, and caravans. They all had their names plastered all over these vans, and they looked (and were) very expensive. Mike Bradwell, who founded Hull Truck, recently reminded me of a story about 7:84’s van. The technician drove into a garage to get petrol and the garage attendant asked him what ‘7:84’ meant. The driver explained that it was a radical theatre company, and the meaning of 7:84 was that 7% of the population owned 84% of the wealth. (Is that now 1% and 99% I wonder?) On hearing the explanation, and looking at the van, the garage attendant said, ‘Well, there’s no need to brag about it, mate!’

Even if you had a posh van, and when you did get a tour booked, there were some horror stories. Sometimes the company might turn up to an empty venue with no one to greet them except a rather grumpy Front of House or Box Office manager. There might be a miniscule audience (there was an unwritten rule in those days that if the size of the audience was smaller than the number of performers on stage, the show should be cancelled). The company might spot a huge pile of posters and

leaflets that had been dutifully sent up by us but had remained on the floor of the office and would be shortly bound for the dustbin. There were B&Bs with nylon sheets and paper thin walls, and breakfast that ended at 8 am on the dot.

There were brilliant venues of course, and we did get our tours together, and the exciting and interested venues which did take the projects worked really hard against difficult odds to bring in and build up audiences. But it was hard work for them and for the touring companies. I often remember the early days of Forced Entertainment. Everyone looks at them now as an example of a fantastically successful touring company, which of course they are, going all over the world and rarely worrying about audiences. But they were missionaries and really did their groundwork – slogging around the not-so-glamorous venues playing to small audiences, but gradually building up an audience which has grown up with them – a real example of how it works. But it isn’t instant.

Artsadmin stated to work internationally in the 1980s, mainly because the most exciting theatre in Europe at that time – Mickery in Amsterdam – liked the companies we were producing and programmed them. Pip Simmons Theatre Group, Hesitate and Demonstrate, Mike Figgis. Not for two nights on a 70/30 box office split, but for a week, two weeks, even three week runs. To good audiences. We took shows to French provincial theatres which played to 98% houses for three weeks, through their system of abonnements with audiences pre-booking months in advance. Pip Simmons in particular was embraced by the French, doing extensive tours in regional theatres all over the country with the support of ONDA (Office National de Diffusion Artistique). It wasn’t just the length of the run, or the audience or the fee (a fee!), but the attitude to the work – which was taken much more seriously. It wasn’t ‘fringe’, it was serious, and it played in serious venues. What was it about Europe that enabled them to do that? What was it about the UK than prevented us? Was it just Thatcher who was to blame?

Here in the UK, we didn’t nurture those companies. At that time the mainstream didn’t embrace the likes of Pip Simmons and Lumiere and Son. They continued to work independently and outside of the mainstream: Welfare State International thrived, Mike Figgis moved into film, The People Show continued and still continue despite their funding being cut in 2008. But none of these extraordinary artists and companies were invited by our own National Theatre, for example, to make work, preferring to look abroad for the innovative, and bring in international artists such as Robert

Lepage. Was it the lack of funding that prevented such collaborations, or our own attitude to home grown, devised and experimental work?

So, skip a few decades. Where are we now? A complicated pattern of independent artists, touring companies, venues, non-venues, artist-led spaces, creative houses, platforms, showcases... how does it all fit together? How should it all fit together?

I suppose we should start with the **artists** – because we always should! – and in particular with emerging artists and the many new opportunities open for them. Years back I worked at the Oval House in London, which, together with the ICA, presented the most radical and experimental work to be seen in London. It rather famously had a ‘right to fail’ policy for young companies trying out work in the small studio. It was of course a rather negatively named version of ‘scratch’ performances. Both have been important steps to help emerging artists, as have the ‘showcases’ and ‘platforms’ – the most important of which was the National Review of Live Art, which began its life at the Midland Group in Nottingham and then developed to become so important to artists and audiences under the inspirational and tireless lead of Nikki Milican. We can’t mention Nikki without acknowledging the real tragedy of what happened to New Moves, and the disaster it has been for the organisation, for the countless artists and most importantly for Nikki herself.

Many other platforms were developed: East End Collaborations led by Lois Keidan at The Live Art Development Agency (LADA) and Lois Weaver at Queen Mary, University of London (now FRESH AiR); In Between Time led by Helen Cole and still flourishing; SPILL Festival’s platform; Brighton Basement; The Showroom, Chichester; The Junction, Cambridge; Colchester Arts Centre; Farnham Maltings’ Caravan; BAC’s scratch performance festivals.... These are all amazing opportunities for emerging artists to show their work. At Artsadmin we give bursaries to artists and a space to show their work to peers, producers, venues or friends. It seems there has never been a better time for emerging artists to take the first steps, and all these initiatives are crucial for the development of new work.

There has been an increase of opportunities for scratch performances following BAC’s lead. As Lyn Gardner wrote recently on one of her blogs, audiences do like to see works in progress, and the growth of scratch festivals has been a really important factor in the development of artists’ work. But I would add a note of caution about scratch, as artists are becoming aware of

the expectations of a paying audience, and the views of critics, and are understandably nervous about having their unfinished work ‘exposed’. Sometimes, therefore, scratch performances end up being rather over-polished, though they still may be far from ‘finished’.

Increasingly artists have been taking things into their own hands as a reaction against lack of opportunities in venues, setting up artist-led spaces. Camden People’s Theatre, Stoke Newington International Airport, the unstoppable Forest Fringe, other pop-up spaces where companies can present their own work.... These are all brilliant DIY initiatives, some of which survive, and others, which are temporary. These venues, like the Platforms and Showcases, offer more places for emerging artists to show their work, and have achieved pretty regular audiences, many of whom are artists themselves. That’s great – but if we’re really ‘getting it out there’ we should remember what Neil Bartlett said at LADA’s Trashing Performance last year: really radical work is only radical if a new audience sees it, rather than the playing to the ‘converted’.

But the really big issue is what happens next? As important as the platforms and showcases are, mid-career artists have different demands. Where do the emerging artists perform once they have emerged? How to move from the unpaid/low paid platform performance to the tour? Or, more pertinently, a fee-paying tour? What about commissioning projects on a bigger scale? It’s not as simple, or as cheap, as supporting the emerging artists. And are we in danger of always wanting the new? Are some artists too old to be fashionable? I think this is the most difficult area: independent artists who may not want to move into the mainstream, who may not be as ‘big’ as Punchdrunk or Forced Entertainment, but who are too grown-up for the showcases and platforms. This is the point where we need to change the relationship with **venues**.

Companies and artists see before them a sort of hierarchy of venues. While they are prepared to perform at showcases for nothing, or at artist-led spaces for next to nothing, they expect the large institutions to pay proper fees. It’s great that the venues are moving towards presenting more of this work, but they shouldn’t expect it for free! As well-funded organisations they have responsibilities to nurture and support young companies, not just paying lip service to the *emerging*, but offering performance slots to the *emerged*. And in this relationship between venue and touring company, it is important that the companies are meeting the venues on equal terms.

Where, for example, does the wonderful Stacy Makishi

perform in the UK? At sympathetic and supportive venues such as Chelsea Theatre, Brighton Basement, Colchester Arts Centre. But in Turkey last week she was performing to almost-full houses of a 1000-seat theatre. Is that her aim? Does it matter if it isn't? Despite the advantages of bigger fees, wider audiences and greater profile, sometimes bigger isn't always better. For years we worked with Bobby Baker, and for me one of the highlights of our work with her was *Kitchen Show*, performed first in her own North London kitchen to an audience of 40-odd people, but subsequently performed in kitchens all over the world. Some years later she made it to the main stage of the Barbican with *How to Live*. It was amazing to draw in those numbers, but the context lacked the personal intensity of *Kitchen Show* or later *Box Story*. If we're *getting it out there*, are 'bums on seats' the ultimate goal? Does it matter? I suppose what we *really* want is for artists to have the choice.

While the artist-led venues and platforms continued to focus on emerging artists, something brilliant happened in Scotland and Wales with the National Theatre Scotland and National Theatre Wales, two inspirational examples of NO VENUES, if you like, or maybe MANY VENUES – from the streets to urban drill halls to rural village halls of Scotland and Wales. Is it this approach that also allows NTW to collaborate with some of the most innovative of companies and organisations, such as Campo in Ghent, or Rimini Protokoll? Is it the lack of venue that allows them to continually re-invent themselves, adapting to the changing work of the artists and attitudes of audiences? Is the theatre *building* the problem?

Unlike Scotland and Wales, England has a National Theatre with a building. We also have big theatre venues up and down the country, which for years had no interest in live art and new performance work. But as Lyn Gardner pointed out in another piece she wrote on the *Guardian* website, things are changing here too, at places like the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Northern Stage, Bristol Old Vic, Nottingham Playhouse, and the new Arts Council initiative in Exeter which will secure a collaboration between the Northcott and local companies. At last it seems that the regional theatres have opened their doors to the wider arts community around them, which is like a breath of fresh air in terms of new work and new audiences. Our own National Theatre has yet to follow this example, though the National Theatre Studio's support of artists like Barnaby Stone, Geraldine Pilgrim and Non Zero One is a step in the right direction. Of course the NT took Shunt and Punchdrunk under its wing, as the Old Vic supported Living Structures and other

companies who performed in the Old Vic Tunnels, but can't we ask more of these venues than an (albeit very strong) marketing campaign? The Barbican has been an example of good practice, with a real integrated programme of innovative work, programmed alongside the work of Complicité and Deborah Warner, and given equal billing on the programme – as they should be (but often aren't). And of course the Tanks, the new space at Tate Modern, is very promising as a new space for performance and live art.

There's a lot of talk in these difficult economic times about **collaboration**. At a meeting a while ago of a group of 'big' venue directors talking about how they could collaborate, I said that Artsadmin would collaborate with anyone if it meant getting the work of our artists presented. One of the group turned to me and said, 'I think, Judith, that's called prostitution!' Call it what you like, but collaboration is the way forward, and it doesn't mean the big and powerful organisations leaving their doors slightly ajar to let 'our work' in. Real collaboration benefits everyone equally. And a good co-production works best when there is artistic involvement from the very beginning, rather than an offer of a receiving house and a budget.

The rise of creative houses, as opposed to touring venues, has to be a good development, and the places I've mentioned are great examples of how an equal relationship can work. But we need to keep a balance so that they don't attract *all* the talent and *all* the funding, however brilliant they may be. As positive as it is, the independent sector needs to remain strong – and *independent!* We need the mavericks who *don't* fit into the system. We don't want to see the work they make inhibited by more mainstream venues; for example, one young company told me that the contract with a venue stated that the work they presented must not be illegal, offensive or *inappropriate!* Certainly the latter two adjectives are open to wide interpretation.

However, we must always remember that if we want our work to be seen in mainstream venues – and as I said that is not always a given – then we also have a responsibility to make sure the work we are making/producing is really *good!* It can be new, it can break boundaries, it can be innovative, it can be devised, it can be extreme, it can be whatever it is, but it must be strong, and despite the endless financial constraints, it must be ready. Is the development process long enough? Are the shows ready for the main house? With hand on heart I know this has not always been the case. Not that everything the mainstream produces is perfect either – far from it! – but we should prove we can be better.

Over the years there have been very positive developments, but now we have the current economic climate to deal with. Are out-of-London venues becoming more cautious about presenting work because of the state we're in economically? Is the issue of 'subsidy per seat' tempting venues and touring companies to tour more 'popular' and tried and tested work? Well, clearly not at Manchester International Festival! But Kate from Fuel tells me that there are certainly fewer touring opportunities than there used to be, that commissioning theatres are producing more of their own work, that fewer venues pay fees, and that most are box office splits. Box office splits are not such a good thing if the company is left to do *all* the marketing (a bit of database sharing would help), or if the company has a tiny audience capacity, making one-to-one projects etc. But Fuel are certainly 'getting it out there', and see the importance of touring to different audiences in the development of a production. Perseverance pays off, just like the example of Forced Entertainment, with return visits to venues. Kate quoted the example of one venue which had booked a show by an artist completely new to them – and had a tiny audience. A return visit by the same artist had a tenfold increase in numbers. They will go back, maintain the relationship ... but it's a slow process! We also talked about exclusion zones, which is clearly a huge frustration for many touring artists. Many venues still have 30-mile exclusion zone clauses in their contracts, even for one-on-one companies. Fuel rather wonderfully though toured Will Adamsdale's *Jackson's Way* to 26 London venues consecutively. If that isn't an example of the nonsense about exclusion zones, I don't know what is!

I asked Kate for her thoughts because Fuel are clearly doing much more 'touring' than we are at Artsadmin. On our part, this is because some of the artists we're working with have evolved their practice much more towards site-specific and participatory work. And this development isn't exclusive to the artists we work with... it is a growing trend. Over the last ten years or so, many of the artists we are working with have moved in this direction. Why?

- For many artists it is more interesting and more satisfying to have a longer deeper relationship with a place, with an audience, with participants, with a locality.
- Many like to specially create work around a particular context or place.
- Slower, longer runs build an audience through word-of-mouth – much more satisfying than one- or two-nighters.

- Some artists just don't like touring, especially when they are getting older!

Graeme Miller used to make touring theatre work – his seminal piece *A Girl Skipping* toured to stages all over this country and abroad, including here in Lancaster – but Graeme's work now embraces film, sound, installation, and site-specific pieces, created for a particular context. The most significant of these is his permanent three-mile-long sound installation *LINKED*, which tells the story through the voices of people who lived in the area demolished to build the M11 link road in London. Artists these days, such as Graeme Miller, Tim Etchells and Lone Twin, are rarely of 'one-discipline'. They are multi-talented 'renaissance' people, and their work is now created and distributed in numerous forms – performance, film, writing, online, film, installation... I think the art-form boxes are finally well and truly dismantled.

Other artists have made what we thought were one-off projects, but have subsequently 'toured'. Station House Opera's extraordinary *Dominoes*, made for the CREATE Festival, was an 11-kilometre domino run of breeze-blocks. It was guided by 500 volunteers as it ran through East London and under the Foot Tunnel to Greenwich chased by a vast local audience. This was one of the most difficult projects we ever produced, and we're delighted (but somewhat daunted!) that it is continuing to be presented in France, Finland, Denmark, Northern Ireland and Australia.

Graeme Miller's *Track* was first made for the Shimmy Festival in Wandsworth, and audiences lay back under an English sky and looked up at the sky and the trees. It then toured to Dijon in France where they lay under a warmer and sunnier sky and looked up at an avenue of French poplars. But recently Fierce Festival wonderfully presented it in Birmingham on a day in April under Spaghetti Junction. It offered another view of the world - and that view can change! (A little audience anecdote about *Track*: after the successful first presentation in Wandsworth Park, I followed a group of young people who had just participated in the project and were talking about it. They and I passed a big banner advertising HOME LIVE ART which had curated the Festival. One young man said about *Track*, 'That was really brilliant. I loved it. But why do they call it *art*?' I think there's a lesson in there somewhere.)

*The Haircut Before the Party* was a one-off project which we commissioned for our 'art and activism' festival Two Degrees. In an empty shop in Tower Hamlets, two artists gave free haircuts in exchange for political and artistic conversation and exchanges of ideas. But

the project caught on, also touring to Fierce as well as to festivals in Austria, Holland and Sweden, engaging directly and turning passers-by into participants and audience.

I love this way of working. Instead of planning a production and booking a tour of something that is still unknown (even to the artist), where we're all working in the dark, these are projects that were created with a different intention, to have a short but dazzling life. But then new opportunities enable the piece to have a second life (or many more), to evolve and develop and to reach a whole new audience.

Having mentioned Fierce leads me on to **festivals**, which of course are also a major part of the touring ecology: Fierce, LIFT, Brighton, SPILL, Norfolk and Norwich.... Many companies still feel they are not 'proper' touring companies until they have performed in Edinburgh, whether part of the British Council Showcase or not, but as we all know that can end in triumph or in tears, with loads of international bookings or loads of debts. Festivals such as Glastonbury and Latitude offer another good showcase opportunity: large audiences, free festival tickets, but no fees. By their very nature, festivals can reach parts of the community that venues cannot. They present site-responsive work, they can engage their community to a greater extent (albeit for a shorter time), and they can bring in an audience who may never step into a theatre or gallery. It's more difficult for venues to respond to the sort of work festivals are able to present. They may have interest in the work if they keep alert and responsive to it, but it's a struggle to find the capacity and to work in that way when they also have a building to programme.

There may be help at hand in the form of the Arts Council's new 'Strategic touring programme' (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-for-funding/strategic-funding/grant-programmes/strategic-touring-programme/>), which I think is a really good initiative and could result in some amazing long-term projects with whole new audiences. It might allow longer runs and really enable us to create radical work for an audience who are not 'the usual suspects'. It might also help increase possibilities for live art and contemporary performance to reach rural audiences, which are tough networks to crack. There's no upper limit on the funds we can all apply for, so let's just hope the whole lot doesn't get gobbled up with the first few applications – and that all the funding doesn't get directed towards 'the big cheeses'. The Gulbenkian's participatory performance programme (<http://www.gulbenkian.org.uk/news/news/194-Gulbenkian---s-major-arts-programme-for-participatory-performance----->

[selection-announced.html](#)) is also very special, offering a substantial sum of money to one outstanding project. That's the only downside, there's only one!

Both the Arts Council's touring scheme and the Gulbenkian's scheme focus on **participation**, recognising that this is one of the best ways to engage new audiences. Matt (Fenton) is doing a ton of participatory work here in Lancaster – and he feels this is something we in the UK are doing pretty well. They have commissioned Ursula Martinez to work with local pensioners, Lou Wilson with national park rangers and bird watchers, Quarantine with serving soldiers, Invisible Flock with Morecambe Bay coastal guides, Ockham's Razor with local choirs, and Rajni Shah with 'pretty much everyone' in Lancaster. Matt and Alice (Booth) even had local residents programme the Nuffield in 2008. None of this was participation in the old sense (sort of education and outreach, or even audience development), but rather bringing artists into true and prolonged engagement with people unlikely to be in the audience for their next touring show, and located in places that evidence a marked drop-off in their core audience attendance.

**Digital** is of course now the future – Minister for Culture Ed Vaizey says so! But the artists we're all working with have been on this case for years: Blast Theory, Forced Entertainment, Rimini Protokoll, Station House Opera all use a combination of live and digital, in their practice and as a distribution outlet. Station House Opera's experiments with joining performers and audiences from across the world in a simultaneous production resulted in their funding being cut, but brilliant experiments they were, and now the idea is almost commonplace. The ACE/BBC initiative *The Space* (<http://thespace.org/>) has got huge potential to get the work out there – to have a place in people's lives – if this pilot is continued.

**International touring** is also changing. We used to look with envy at 'Europe', with their relatively vast cultural budgets, but things are changing there too. We can still play for longer runs and perform at higher profile venues and festivals in Scandinavia, France and Germany, who seem to be protected from big arts cuts, but look at Holland, Slovenia, Hungary, Spain, Italy and Portugal, where things are looking very grim, and comparatively we are doing very well – so far! Co-production money from European venues has long subsidised UK companies. For many years it was one-way traffic with UK companies touring abroad, but now there's a real focus on international work coming into the country.

But of course, directly in conflict with the international touring, and probably the *most* important of all, is the **green issue**. Artsadmin has been focusing on this question for some years now, commissioning work on the subject such as our recent collaboration with LIFT to present Michael Pinsky's *Plunge*. We've also held our Two Degrees festivals and our collaboration with the European Imagine 2020 Network. We've worked a lot with Julie's Bicycle and with Tipping Point, and we are part of a group led by Platform that, I rather proudly think, helped persuade the Arts Council to ask National Portfolio Organisations to have a sustainability policy. But while lots of buildings are reducing carbon footprints, there is still the vexed question of touring. Our Slow Boat symposium held in 2009 with the British Council looked at lots of ways of we can change how we tour, and there are some good examples:

- 'slower' international touring, staying in one place longer, doing residencies, more local performances
- longer runs
- booking geographically proximate tours, not hopping backwards and forwards all over the world
- sourcing the set locally instead of transporting it
- sourcing the performers locally – La Ribot, Gary Stevens and Jérôme Bel have done this
- green riders with the contracts, from both the venues and the companies
- getting rid of exclusion zones, really, really important internationally – they only seem to be there because of the egos of festival programmers!

We commissioned Richard DeDomenici to create *Plane Food Café* a couple of years ago. This was in response to the remark by Marcus Wareing that pub food in the UK was so bad that you'd be better off getting on a plane to eat your dinner! Richard found this remark

rather environmentally irresponsible and created *Plane Food Café*, which sells genuine airline food in plastic trays delivered straight from the airport factories and served at ground level by DeDomenici and his cabin crew. When this toured, only Richard travelled, and he travelled on a train. The set and other performers were all sourced locally. It was one example of many now, and it's good to see people really taking this issue seriously. In fact only the other day I saw that National Theatre Scotland were touring an entire 300-mile tour to primary schools in Scotland – including cast, crew, set and props – by bike!

But there's a long way to go. I'm sure all of us would rather see artists flying around the world than bankers, but we have to ask ourselves whether this is now a luxury that we can no longer morally afford as the effects of these flights are felt in Pakistan, in China and in Bangladesh. This is just another thing to add into the pot of questions that we should be trying to answer today... and in the case of climate change, we haven't got long to answer it.

How to sum up this mass of contradictions? I said at the beginning that I didn't have the answers, but I guess I am in a very luxurious position of being able to pose some of the questions. On re-reading this I realise I sound fairly positive, but the truth is I'm not the world's greatest optimist, and I know how hard everyone is struggling to deal with the economic situation, artists earning very little and attitudes to art and culture. We have an appalling government, an ever increasing gap between the rich and the poor and a pretty grim global picture. But the optimistic thing is the imagination of the artists and the dedication of the people working with them. The work we produce is radical, and at this point in time, radical is what we need. When it is at its best, this work really can change lives. If the artists can create it, then it is the responsibility of people like us to 'get it out there' ... otherwise what are we doing it for?

Judith Knight  
May 2012

# Editors' dialogue, part 1

Dear Theron,

The first question to ask in any reflection on the one day conference, 'Getting It Out There' is: who is 'It' for? Kate McGrath, Producer of Fuel, said the point of touring is 'so audiences and artists can meet,' and the assembled body of artists, producers and venue managers sitting inside Nuffield Theatre on that sunny day in May would agree: audiences are central to the enterprise.

The artist Bryony Kimmings talked about developing audiences in partnership with venues and over time. She has spent two years working with Contact Theatre in Manchester, which has led to her performing to a larger audience on the main stage. Kate McGrath spoke about immersive experiences for audiences – at *FuelFest* at Unity Theatre, Liverpool, Fuel presented a spectacular night out, in which audience members were invited to take part in free performances in the foyer. And Live at LICA's director Matt Fenton described the Nuffield's programme of audience development, which includes going outside the venue to meet people on their own terms.

But I must proceed with caution.

Firstly, we are not all talking about the same people when we say 'audiences'; nor are we talking about the same audiences when we re-use the term. The reason I'm writing to you, Theron, is because I know who you are. Like Claire Marshall writing postcards to her aunt from market towns and unfamiliar high streets, I am choosing my words with you in mind. Writing to you humanises the nebulous cloud of 'audience' and distils it to a specific act of communication.

Secondly, it's all too easy to blur the boundaries between 'audience development', 'marketing' and 'participation', as if the processes are equivalent instead of interrelated. As the artist Rajni Shah pointed out, there is a material conflict between the conditions of touring and the processes of participation. Touring means limited runs, packing up, moving on: the prioritisation (as Rajni put it) of 'knowing' over 'not knowing.' In contrast, (her) participatory practices of community or social engagement aim to be democratic, responsive, process-based and context-specific. Rajni described this as a practical rather than a conceptual conflict – *in practice* (rather than *as practice*), community engagement is difficult to replicate inside the pressures of a touring schedule.

So, Theron, while thinking of you, I want to begin by laying out some assumptions that shaped the debate about touring artwork at LICA on that sunny day in May. This is the terrain of the publically funded art sector: from my perspective, the springboard for experiment, risk and collective adventure:

1. The work, conditions and manifestations of art should be artist-led.
2. The industry as a whole is not only interested in developing relationships with existing audiences, but also in reaching new audiences.
3. The embodied experience of theatre – of audiences and artists being in the same room – is an essential and meaningful part of the medium, and cannot be replicated digitally or in any other form.
4. The ambitions of art are not (necessarily) to make sure everyone enjoys themselves: art is not equal to entertainment, and cannot be subsumed into a service economy.

Yours,

Mary

# Provocation

## Claire Marshall

Dear Alice, and dear All,

I'm 46 now and I've been touring since I was 23, that's half my life; so I figured I should have something to say...

Ten years ago my great-aunt May died, and when we were clearing her house we discovered a pile of postcards that I had religiously sent her from the early years of touring with Forced Entertainment; a shoebox full of neatly written, enthusiastic and highly censored memories. Descriptions of small towns in Winter and slightly underwhelmed audiences. Tales of truly fantastic performances, of loading and unloading endless lengths of scaffolding, of televisions that suddenly stopped working; and buzz's and hums and driving at night, and of people that said, "that show was just like my life".

I wrote wishing her good health and sunny days and hoping she was still getting out to the hills; thank you's for birthday tenners and how they were spent, excited news of imminent trips abroad and hopes for our own rehearsal space. Repetitive and a bit dull. I didn't tell her everything.

In Leicester we went to nightclubs in shopping centres

In Dursley they opened the off-license for us at midnight

In Wolverhampton I bought shoes for to wear at my Grandpa's funeral

In Scarborough we danced to Pulp in the secret cellar bar

In Kendal I got the news that my niece had been born and was seriously ill

In Portsmouth we found a taxidermy museum where all the exhibits were road-kill. A diorama of "Wind in the Willows" –all their little faces smashed up.

In Glasgow we (I) forgot the costumes

In London we made birthday cakes at 3am

In Cardiff I bought buttons shaped like roses and hearts

In Bedford we measured our weight loss or gain by squashing ourselves into the 12" gap between the dressing room double doors

In Cambridge my school-friend told me she was leaving her husband and kids

In Totnes we fell over in the sea

In Nottingham we plotted an experimental theatre 5 a side football league

In Southampton we bought cheap sparkly tops to wear after the show

In Leigh we got depressed

In Portsmouth we played pool in the launderette

In Edinburgh we nearly killed Bob

In Crawley we shared the bill with the Chippendales

In Leeds we barely fitted on the stage

In Cardiff tumbleweed rolled slowly across the stage...

In Manchester we discovered how difficult it was to buy fairy lights in May

In Lancaster we lived at the Farmers' Arms

We did all the things you do. In towns that were foreign but became familiar we learned where the best places were to collect fallen leaves, where to buy chalk that would produce dust, where to buy streamers and balloons and the right sort of party hats; where to get beer after hours and pizzas with no sweetcorn.

We loaded and unloaded vans. We drank instant coffee. We played cards during long sound checks and made up buckets of blood. We drank and drank and smoked and ate crisps and flapjack and bananas. Children were born and people died. We returned to the same places over and over. We watched high streets homogenize, we sent rubbish presents and late birthday cards with apologies; we stayed up late watching rolling news of elections and wars.

We did the things you do; in Birmingham and Brighton and Newcastle and Milton Keynes and Aberystwyth and Basildon and Stamford Bridge and Bristol and Sheffield and maybe some other places too.

I stopped taking photographs because they all started to blur - stick figures on November beaches wearing long dark coats; us in a bar, us in another bar, us in another bar, us all squashed into a chintz-thick bedroom where "contractors are always welcome". More late night conversations.

We started to say: let's be more nimble

let's play bigger stages

let's do fewer gigs for more people

let's find an audience to grow older with us

We began to refer to "a tighter bombing pattern"

This is nostalgia: sentimental and incomplete. I don't really want to go back there - but there is something; something about sideshows and circus and vaudeville - end of the pier - shysters and charlatans that I miss. Different towns that are sort of the same, the rhythm of returning at the same time of year (England in the Autumn), meeting people, re-meeting people, missing people; arriving, doing the show, leaving - your only traces being talcum powder on the blacks or some bit of costume hurled in the air and stuck in the rig. Tourists maybe - tourists who can't help but come back with a new bag of tricks.

We said it would be ridiculous if we were still doing this when we were forty....

So we started to play bigger spaces and left some of those towns off the map. We made it to the States with a bunch of similar souls brought together by Lois and Catherine at the ICA; and driving in a real yellow taxi from JFK to Hotel New York (home from home for those seeking “transient chic”) Ronnie Fraser Munro drawled “I see nothing here that can compare to Crewe Station”.

And now we do play some bigger stages – and some small. And we still stay up late. And we say: we don’t like buildings where the audience and performers never really meet, buildings where they’re surprised that you can do the laundry and perform, buildings where they want to know who wrote it; buildings where there isn’t a bar people actually want to stay in.

In all sorts of places we and what we might refer to as our filthy collaborators are still asking: What the hell is a good show? Who comes to see us and why?

I’m sorry that this is just looking back, I acknowledge that I’m ignoring all sorts of work that operates out there! I think I’m trying to make sense of it all by going back maybe; re-telling and reinventing. We still want to be nimble, to respond and make in all sorts of ways and to surprise ourselves, and maybe the demise of touring is okay: more work made for specific places – big shows and small shows, shows that work outside of 2 hours in a dark room, live streaming... it’s exciting and it’s complicated.

People can watch a theatre performance beamed live from London in the comfort of a multiplex, with close-ups and everything... but I really liked being in Taunton not so very long ago – with a disparate bunch of people who wanted to be in the same room, the kind of gig where small connections are made; where someone can talk to me about what they saw and how it punched them in a way that they didn’t expect; the kind of gig where they say “and when are you coming back?”

With very best wishes

Claire

## Editors' dialogue, part 2

Dear Mary,

In reading your provocations, I'm reminded of something I learned about Lone Twin's Boat Project for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. When they began turning their idea into reality, collecting over 1200 donations of wood and stories to build a boat, one thing they knew before they knew anything else about it was how big it would be: European regulations stipulate the maximum length and width for anything that is to be pulled by a trailer, no matter what it is. I like this example because it so concretely illustrates the way that material conditions give a shape to the work of art, even when everything else is up for grabs. And if we look around at the kind of theatre and performance that is prevalent in the UK, it often seems as if the contexts are shaping the work as much as the other way around.

For example, I notice the way that a 'DIY' or 'scratch' approach, while it began as an initiative of certain venues, now appears to be a kind of aesthetic (rather than context) for a lot of work that we see. Or the way that, twenty years ago, the Arts Council wouldn't fund solo performance, but current funding structures overwhelmingly favour solo performance. I heard a great story about the old system, in which Rose English got around the restrictions by having a second performer who did little more than sit on stage with her. Whereas in the new regime, perhaps the exemplary performer is Bryony Kimmings – who told us how she did 86 shows in 8 months, a punishing schedule that no one would ever ask someone else to do, and whose flexibility and adaptability extends to her brilliant knack for self-promotion.

I notice the way that a lack of support structure and platforms for mid-level work means that UK artists must find international partnerships – or start their own platforms, as in the Pacitti Company's SPILL Festival. Or the way there's been a recent trend toward the development of what might be called 'trusted brands', not so much for artists or for venues, but for the curatorial vision of producers like BAC or Fuel, or even the anti-brands of Forest Fringe or Hatch. Being produced by one of these entities already shapes the kind of encounter audiences will have with the work.

So, I'd like to suggest the following addition to your points:

5. The form that performance can take is determined by the available material circumstances.  
Thinking about these circumstances should be understood as part of the work of making theatre.

But even if we agree that we should talk about this, how and where should that conversation take place? For the conditions of that conversation, too, will determine what can emerge within that conversation – for example, whether it's something talked about by a group of funders in a room with a whiteboard, or a comment thread on a *Guardian* blog, or a government policy initiative, or an email correspondence between two friends.

I guess one way of thinking about your points, together with mine, is to describe artists as being interested in making structures of encounter. As you put it, it's the live experience that's important. It's the encounter with the unknown, with the not-entirely-predictable, that excites both artists and audiences. But the job of creating these structures of encounter is also one shared by venues, producers, funders, critics, and, yes, even European regulations. For me, one of the important questions that *Getting It Out There* asked is how we might think together, and think creatively, about this shared task.

best

Theron

# Case study

## Bryony Kimmings

## CASE STUDIES



*7 Day Drunk* by Bryony Kimmings. Photo: Liquid Photo

In 2013, Contact Theatre in Manchester are set to co-commission my new performance piece *Credible Likeable Superstar Role Model*. But this relationship didn't emerge out of nowhere. Here are all the encounters I had with Contact over two years leading up to this project, and how I tried to develop an audience in an area I am not from.

- Baba Israel (Artistic Director, Contact) and Kate Catling (Programme Manager) come to see *Sex Idiot* in Edinburgh in 2010.
- I visit Manchester for a meeting and go for drinks afterwards with local artists I have never met before. New local friends made. I meet the Eggs Collective, an active group of young artists from the area who are superb and very plugged in.
- I teach a day long workshop as part of the Flying Solo Festival 2011 for 10 local artists.
- I host the pitch party at the Flying Solo Festival.
- I go on local community radio and BBC Radio Manchester to plug my work with an interview.
- I present 4 nights of *Sex Idiot* in the studio space as part of Flying Solo. To a total audience of 280.
- I go for drinks with local arts enthusiasts, artists and Contact friends at the end of Flying Solo.
- Contact books *7 Day Drunk* for Flying Solo 2012 before it has been made.
- Contact come and see *7 Day Drunk* in Edinburgh 2011.

- I have an informal feedback meeting with Contact at Forest Fringe during Edinburgh run.
- At the end of 2011 I visit Contact to do a guest slot at Mother's Ruin cabaret to an audience of 100 and plug my show in the spring.
- I nurture my friends and twitter followers from Manchester 1) because I love them 2) because in some way I know they will help me when I visit.
- In 2012 I spend three days working with a local artist DawN Crandell on her show *Xenophobadelica* and meet the Eggs Collective and other local people for dinner. I go out for drinks with local people. New friends made.
- I come to Flying Solo 2012 and do a workshop for 10 new artists.
- I go on local community radio and BBC Radio Manchester to plug my work with an interview.
- I present *7 Day Drunk* in the main house for one night to an audience of 186. This compared to 4 nights for similar numbers the year before.
- Contact agree to come onboard and partner on my new show *Credible Likeable Superstar Role Model*. I spend a week in Manchester in September, for more socialising, twitter developing and friends-making. I work with young people from the area, a new audience opening up for me.
- I work with DawN Crandell again in October 2012, visiting the area and the Arts Council again.
- The show tours to Manchester in 2013/14 and I hope it does a week in the main house.

This relationship took me 2 years to build. I am proud of it.

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

# Case Study

## Fuel

### Kate McGrath

Fuel is always looking for ways to develop our partnerships, to work more closely and efficiently together, and to collaborate to develop audiences for the work we tour. Co-founded in 2004 by me and Louise Blackwell, we are a producing company, dedicated to producing fresh work for adventurous people by inspiring artists. Since we first began, we have been committed to finding ways to reach the widest and most diverse possible audience for our work, often through touring.

In spring 2012 we experimented with a new model for touring our work at the Unity Theatre in Liverpool, at the invitation of Artistic Director Graeme Phillips. Graeme invited us to present a short season or festival of work - to bring a range of our work to his audiences, under the banner 'Fuelfest'. We presented four shows, for two performances each, along with wraparound activity including workshops for students and local artists, post show talks after every show, film trailers in the theatre's public spaces, and an audio installation in the foyer.

'Fuelfest' lasted four weeks. We offered discounted multi-buy tickets, and encouraged audiences to attend as much of the work as they could. The feedback – quantitative and qualitative – was very positive. Our audience numbers were higher than on previous visits to the theatre, there was a surprisingly high take up on the multi-buy offers, and the wraparound activity had high attendance and positive responses.

In some ways this tour drew on our experience ten years ago as producers at BAC when we toured four emerging companies out of OctoberFest, BAC's annual flagship festival, to a consortium of regional venues led by Warwick Arts Centre under the banner 'This Way Up'. We are now looking to develop this model, with another pilot at the Tramway, Glasgow, in November 2012, where the festival will be shorter and more densely packed, and we hope to expand and experiment with this format at other venues in the future. We believe the focus, context and framework of a festival or season can provide audiences with a better understanding of the new work we are presenting, and enable them to feel confident to take risks, and to go on an adventure with us.

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

# Case study

## Hatch

### Michael Pinchbeck

#### *Getting It In Here*



Priya Mistry's *Ping Pong Crash* at Hatch Scratch. Photo: Julian Hughes

When Hatch began in 2008, we were not producing a problem but responding to one: the lack of opportunities for performance in Nottingham. Our city used to sit proudly on the national circuit for live art, when people would travel to NOW or eXpo or The Powerhouse. But somehow our city fell off the performance map.

Hatch was devised as a space for incubating and nurturing performance-y work from artists based in Nottingham. It soon evolved into a space for artists from across the East Midlands to try out new ideas in front of a performance hungry audience. Hatch has now become an opening onto an arts scene for work that might not normally find a home in the region. Action Hero, for example, has only performed in the East Midlands twice and both times were at Hatch events. Sometimes, we are not so much *Getting It Out There*, as *Getting It In Here*.

So for us, touring is not dead, but it has been revived. We have tried to draw lines between venues and programmes that might not normally be drawn, to think nationally not regionally. Seeing Krissi Musiol and Leentje Van de Cruys perform at greenroom in Manchester led to an invitation for them to take part in NEAT11 at Nottingham Playhouse. In July we took a bus load of artists from Nottingham to Manchester to perform at Hazard 12. We want to take part in the national conversation about live art, to act less locally and more mobile-ly. We want to challenge the vocabulary of the sector. We want to ask why we can't talk about a B-stream instead of a mainstream? Like we might say a B-road instead of a main road, or a B-side instead of an A-side. Or a B-Movie. Or a Plan B. Because there are a lot of Plan Bs at the moment. We want to talk about overground instead of underground, hi fi instead of lo fi, low profile instead of high profile. Do It Together rather than Do It Yourself.

We want to work outside theatres and at the same time we want to turn theatres inside out. We want to pitch a tent outside a theatre and tell stories in it to one person at a time. Or walk onstage at a theatre and tell an audience we have nothing to say and see what happens. Or perform for 24 hours in a foyer to the people passing through it and to see how long they stay. We want to make areas in venues that are usually corridors into destinations. We want to turn carpets into stages, strip lights into spotlights, windows into proscenium arches. We want to break eggs in chief executive's offices or spill red paint on the floor. We want to give the audience a kiss or a cuddle or a shower or a shave. We want to take them into the dressing room or the rig or the control box or the box office and say this is a performance space too. We want to stretch risk assessments until they tell us what is possible, not what isn't.

We want to sign venue contracts but then say: 'Now we would like you to sign this. To say you have read our manifesto and you are happy for us to take over. To say you know that some people might walk out but other people might walk in'. We want to hyphenate the relationship between performer and audience, venues and the outside world. We want it to be a relationship, not just a one night stand.

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

# Case Study

## Rajni Shah Projects

### Rajni Shah

#### *Glorious*



*Glorious* in rehearsal. Photo: Jonathan Brisson

The *Glorious* project was conceived out of frustration with the current touring system and a commitment to making a show that could genuinely engage with the people and places we encounter when we tour. The project addresses some of the following questions:

What would it mean to tour slowly?

What if touring could be less about a product and more about a process, but nevertheless involve a large-scale high quality performance?

What if anyone was welcome to take part?

What if we could work in public spaces as well as in theatres, using our show to bring together people who wouldn't otherwise meet?

What if touring was about dialogue and listening rather than just presenting?

What if touring a show to many different places was a way of gathering people into a complex and growing community?

Here's a summary of how the project works:

- Rajni Shah Projects (RSP) and a Presenter (festival or theatre venue) sign a contract and agree on a final performance date for Glorious at least three months in the future. The basic structure of the show (set, narrative structure, original songs, basic staging) is already in place.
- RSP's Musical Director Suzie Shrubbs liaises with the Presenter to identify a group of musicians or music students who might like to work on Glorious in that location. She does several site visits, and meets all potential musicians, regardless of experience or style. Whichever musical group feels that the project is the right fit for them is then invited to work with Suzie to reinterpret the six pre-existing Glorious songs in their own style. This might mean bringing together a group of individuals, working with a class of students, or collaborating with a pre-existing group.
- RSP and the Presenter identify a public space (e.g. a cafe, library or shopping centre) within which to present a bespoke letter-writing activity. This activity is delivered about a month or two before the show, and invites passers-by to write letters to strangers. Any of these people who wish to can then come to one or more workshops with RSP where they will create a series of autobiographical pieces of writing.
- The RSP team work with these workshop participants on selecting a piece of writing that they will read in the show, whilst the Musical Director rehearses with the local musicians.
- A week or two before the final performance, the whole team of musicians and participants come together and meet the full RSP team. This includes costume designer Lucille Acevedo-Jones who works with each member of the local cast to find an outfit for them to wear on stage - a meaningful outfit of their own, with additions and/or alterations as necessary. She ensures that each person on stage feels comfortable with and excited about what they are wearing, but also considers the overall design of the space.
- The show is performed once only, with monologues delivered by local residents as the only spoken text, and a full soundtrack created by local musicians. At the end of the show, the audience is invited to exit in their own time via the stage, thus witnessing the stage space up close and gently entering into the process.
- RSP and the Presenter follow up each show by sharing documentation, writing and images with all volunteers through a private social network for everyone involved in the project. Glorious Writer Mary Paterson collects stories from all participants which are to be woven into the Glorious Storybook - a copy of which will be sent, along with a DVD, to each participant at the end of the tour.

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

# Case study

## *The Haircut Before The Party*

### Sam Trotman

*The Haircut Before The Party* collective met in 2009 through Artsadmin's *Two Degrees* Festival, a commissioned project by The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination. The Lab created a two-week course for young people to collectively learn about art, activism and permaculture, bringing together a group of strangers who found affinity and later lived communally in squatted housing in London's East End. It was here that Lewis Bassett and Richard Hougueuz set up the first of their hair salons: a safe and nurturing space for dialogue about domestic, local and global politics. In the house the salon was the space where opinions were aired, hairs were split and tangled relationships were combed out. This was the beginning of a practice that has gone on to be shared in over 5 countries with over 900,000 people worldwide.

Two years later *The Haircut Before The Party* Salon was programmed as part of Artsadmin's 2011 *Two Degrees* Festival, opening in an empty shop on Toynbee Street in East London on the day David Cameron announced his devastating cuts to the public sector. Offering free haircuts in exchange for conversation, it was no coincidence that the Salon became a hub for people to vent, to be riled, to question the current political system and to be heard. People came for different reasons: to hang out, to drink tea, to get a trim, to store their sleeping bags and to plan direct actions. However, this space was always temporary and although it fulfilled a strong community need it was unsustainable in the longer term.

But it had a future. Originally intended to be a one-off, it soon became clear that it could, and should, have a touring life: a mobile hair salon in the streets, as well as in more temporary spaces/empty shops, which - because of the economic state we are in - were not in short supply.

So THBTTP packed up tools and went mobile: taking to the streets, joining picket lines or setting up at demos. The barber's chair provided a spectacle that was media friendly in these situations. Reporters wanted to broadcast what people sitting in the chair had to say. Channel 4, the *Guardian* and BBC1 featured an array of voices and opinions from the street while THBTTP shaped and trimmed in the background.

THBTTP upgraded their makeshift "barber's chair on a bike trailer" into two beautifully crafted, self-sufficient bike-pulled trailers that contained barber's chairs, a library, information boards and all the tools of a fully-fledged hair salon. These would flat-pack onto trains, fit into bike racks in ferries and could roll up to city squares and arts institutions across Europe. A sustainable model of touring had been found.

So how did this happen?

THBTTP Mobile Salons were extremely prescient, identifying a need and providing a framework to fulfill that need. It was timely - the Occupy movement had just started, so when the Mobile Salons began to tour to city streets and town squares, the discourse around these acts in public space was already formed. People understood the politics that were being discussed and acted out in front of them. Artsadmin helped to find new opportunities, spread the word nationally and internationally and now includes it as a touring project, alongside work created for theatres and galleries. THBTTP enables public spaces to function as just that - public spaces. The Mobile Salon supports communities, and encourages social interaction. For us at Artsadmin it is as much a touring piece as any theatre project or visual arts installation. Long may it continue to be.

[www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/the-haircut-before-the-party-thbtpt](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/the-haircut-before-the-party-thbtpt)

## Case study

### *Up To Nature*

#### Helen Cole (In Between Time) and Thomas Frank (brut Wien)



Nic Green's *Slowlo* at *Up To Nature*. Photo: Oliver Rudkin

*Up To Nature* started in 2009 in a Finnish forest. Here, in dappled autumn light, we conjured an unusual kind of festival. This festival would take place across forests and woodlands on the outskirts of four European cities. We would embrace the outdoors regardless of the weather, use trees, undergrowth, pathways and the very concept of 'forest'. We would confront the night creatures and do something we have never done before.

The concept for *Up To Nature* was driven by the basic idea to produce an unplugged performance festival with a series of co-productions designed to adapt to the different geographical and cultural environments in Vienna, Bristol, Oslo and Kuopio: a programme that would explore cross-cultural, eco-political issues, as well as the particular specifications of the various sites. Thus, the curatorial framework was pretty strict. No technical support must be used. The productions should fit in and, moreover, work with the locations chosen by the producers. Six productions from Austria, Germany, UK, Norway and Finland were chosen by brut Wien, In Between Time Bristol, Black Box Theater Oslo and Anti Festival Kuopio.

As the festival organisers talked, we became increasingly intrigued by what it would feel like as an audience for the artwork to be in a state of constant flux due to nature's changing conditions. We wondered how it would feel to have the artists moving away from you, or disappearing into the densely wooded landscape. We thought of the idea of journeys into the unknown, of genuine risk, of being unplugged, of leaving the urban, and all that we think we know behind.

With support from the EU Commission and Arts Council England, we developed the concept of a festival which could tour, continually adapting as it went - from Vienna's Wienerwald, to the deciduous

woodland of Gloucestershire in June, from a pine forest in Norway in August, to an uninhabited island in Finland in September. The project would span the seasons from high summer to a snow-covered autumn.

We found artists who were as excited as us by the idea of making artwork outside usual arts contexts - Annti Laitenen, Nic Green, Johanna Kirsch, FrenchMotteshead, Martin Nachbar, Fiksdal Languard and Becker. In each case the challenge was to create artwork that was open and robust enough to deal with whatever conditions, nature would throw at it.

The artists took the provocation to work outside of artistically determined spaces as a form of liberation from habitual ways of working. And the new and very different encounter with the audience became an enriching experience simply through the possibility to share time out of the usual buzz of everyday urban life - at the bonfire in the evenings, while queuing for the shower in the morning, at the food stations throughout the day or while searching for the next performances in the forest glade.

For Up To Nature, all conventions of the artistic event have had to be re-invented for the outside location by the festival's producers, artists and audiences. Here, the context is less under the control of the producer, and more affected by the audience, the location, the weather. As a consequence, even though the core artworks are the same, the festival is a very different one in Vienna, Bristol, Oslo or Kuopio.

[inbetweentime.co.uk/up-to-nature](http://inbetweentime.co.uk/up-to-nature)

## Editors' dialogue, part 3

Dear Theron,

You're right that material circumstances shape the artwork, and become part of it. This is true of all the conditions in which we make art, of course. But it's particularly pertinent with touring, because the problems with the form are so clear.

Touring is expensive (perhaps, financially unviable), wasteful (perhaps, ecologically irresponsible) and difficult to sustain (perhaps, materially incompatible with other ways of (earning a) living). As Lois Keidan from the Live Art Development Agency pointed out, access to digital networks means that touring is no longer the only way to connect with audiences over distance. If artists and producers find themselves interested in touring, then, it might be useful to make a distinction between the conditions that make it difficult to produce work, and the conditions that give rise to new paths, or forms, or encounters. This distinction is an open question, or perhaps a series of them:

Are festivals a welcome relief from the limitations of buildings? Or is the festival circuit just the old venue circuit by a different name? If artists are mobile, what else has to be immobile – the producers, the venues, the audiences? Are audiences really immobile? Is that what 'local' means? What goes on tour – is it the 'work of art', the company, the brand, the show, the marketing policy, the tour itself? Is it the relationships?

The artist and writer Michael Pinchbeck pointed out that the industry often deploys the vocabulary of conflict when talking about tours (a marketing 'attack', an 'invasion' of ideas, 'hitting' the public). He suggested we hyphenate audience-artist-venue to acknowledge the kinds of collaboration we are, in fact, trying to create. And the theatre-maker a smith said that instead of talking about what we do, we should talk about how we behave towards each other. These two points serve as reminders that it's not just artists who are interested in types of encounter, but everyone.

So perhaps the work we are describing is less about material conditions, and more about people. As you point out, material conditions are part of the artistic material, and it's how we respond to them that matters. But the talisman of 'good relationships' is not a simple answer to the questions of how to tour. Indeed, relationships produce more questions of their own:

How can artists and producers develop long term relationships without fostering elitism? How do new artists start building relationships without a proven track record? And what of those 'mid-career' artists – not famous enough to fill the main stage, but not so in need of exposure that they are prepared to work for free?

Yours,

Mary

# Email exchange

## Matt Fenton and Alice Booth

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Case study Intro and first extremely convoluted question  
Date: Wed, 4 Jul 2012 16:09  
From: Fenton, Matt <matt@liveatlica.org>  
To: Booth, Alice <alice@liveatlica.org>

Alice, we talk a lot about our participation work as now being central to the organisation, and that our focus on *process* and the development of new work should be reflected in that. It also feels important that the results are presented in our core public programme, not only as an audience development strategy, but in an attempt to shift perceptions locally of our organisation, the artform and who the work is 'for.' But actually, this is probably the luxury of hindsight - it feels more like most of the time we were just following our noses, supporting the artists who excited us and who wanted to work not only with people similar to themselves (and ourselves), but to engage with people from all walks of life: soldiers, grandparents, park rangers, young mums and so on. A sense that our core audience was very far from representative, and a conviction that the work we presented was too good to be seen only by the live art cognoscenti and students. What do *you* think we were doing in those first projects we supported together (*Relative*, *Morecambe Dances*, *OAP*)?

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Case study Intro and first extremely convoluted question  
Date: Wed, 4 Jul 2012 20:48  
From: Booth, Alice <alice@liveatlica.org>  
To: Fenton, Matt <matt@liveatlica.org>

Yes, I think you are right, we followed our noses. It seems to me that when I took the job at what was then the Nuffield, seven years ago, we worked in quite a different way. We didn't analyse what we were doing or even reflect on it very much (or probably enough). We worked in a way that felt very responsive. We seemed to cook up ideas, act on them, and turn them into projects very quickly back then. We didn't plan so far ahead. Or we brought artists together because we saw a dialogue between their practices - like choreographer Nikki McCretton and video/sound artist Kathy Hinde in *Relative*. It was great to put Kathy and Nikki together and just listen to them bat ideas around and open up their ways of working to create something really quite remarkable with a group of grandparents and grandchildren from Morecambe. It felt like the artists were pushing their practice in an interesting and different direction, as well as giving us an opportunity to engage with folk that were clearly not buying tickets to the Nuffield.

But, as you say, I don't think we really believed that the people that took part in *Relative* would come to the rest of our programme. We didn't really look at it in those terms. And it's also true that back then those projects actually weren't very visible to our regular Nuffield audiences. What was the point, for you, when this shifted? When did you start to see our participation work as much more integral, or indeed central to how we think about the whole organisation?

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Case study Intro and first extremely convoluted question  
Date: Thu, 5 Jul 2012 14:08  
From: Fenton, Matt <matt@liveatlica.org>  
To: Booth, Alice <alice@liveatlica.org>

I think we were part of a broader shift, probably a catching-up in a European context, around how participatory activity was viewed (that word – participation – is a problem really, given that most of the artists we worked with wouldn't frame the work as participation, maybe more as *investigation*). Shows with major elements created with local residents are now a regular feature in our visiting programme - Herman Diephuis' *d'Après JC*, Nic Green's *Trilogy*, Mem Morrison's *Ringside*, Rajni Shah's *Glorious*. But 10 years ago I was very influenced by Richard Gregory and Renny O'Shea of Quarantine. I saw Quarantine's *Eat Eat* in Leicester in 2003, a performance meal created with new arrivals to the city. I followed it to Belgium in 2004, as *Rantsoen*, made with immigrants in Ghent. This was also my first experience of the Belgian organisation Victoria (now Campo), who supported that project.

I think my eyes opened from that point: to see Victoria working with some of the most interesting European makers – Alain Platel, Josse de Pauw, Wim Vandekeybus, Caterina Sagna – in ways that in the UK might have been thought of as community theatre, youth theatre or outreach/education work. The projects seemed a very long way from this; to my mind excellent, risk-taking investigations into particular ideas, particular lives, particular cultures or sub-cultures. As I've said before, it took a Belgian organisation to commission Tim Etchells and Gob Squad to create works with young people - no British theatre would have thought of them.

For me this sits alongside the rise of both verbatim theatre and, more interestingly, the kind of documentary theatre practiced by companies like Rimini Protocol and Berlin. But to answer your question as to when our participation work become really central, it was probably a process of no longer seeing the organisation as the building where it was based, our programme as not confined by it, and our audience not just the people who buy tickets to see live art. I remember we spoke a lot, Alice, that the Nuffield could exist wherever and with whomever we were working at the time. Bringing people back to the venue was secondary, sometimes even an irrelevant concern. All a long way from traditional audience development, or the myth that participation turns magically into new, diverse audiences overnight.

Alice, I'm interested in the specific moments in the work, in your incredibly close relationship with the artists we support and the finished shows that result, that remain for you - moments of small revelation or insight, or just hints as to what it was, exactly, we were up to in all this?

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Case study Intro and first extremely convoluted question  
Date: Sun, 8 Jul 2012 11:43  
From: Booth, Alice <alice@liveatlica.org>  
To: Fenton, Matt <matt@liveatlica.org>

Thanks Matt. OK. Now I get what you're asking me. But first, to respond to your email...

Yeah, those bloody Europeans. So far ahead. I remember seeing Josse De Pauw's *Ubung* in London and at Tramway in 2002 and thinking similar things - a piece of work that literally took my breath away - idiotic and drunken adults on film 'played' live and in

synch by a cast of serene, mature and quite brilliant kids. I loved their slightly oversized clothes. Probably the first time I had seen people so young in really contemporary work. Again seeing an unlikely group of lads in Quarantine's *White Trash* in Manchester. (Remember? It was the first thing we went to see together when I got the job. Yes, the one where we had to stand for the whole show and I actually passed out and collapsed behind a plinth. Luckily there was loud music at this point and hardly anyone noticed. I was still *very* embarrassed). *Ubung*, and (what I saw of) *White Trash* both made me ask lots of questions, not least about who performs, when and in what context.

Certainly a few years ago we talked about being blighted by *our* context. We were keen to get work 'out there,' that is, out of here, out of the hard walls of the university, beyond this world of students and academic research, to... well, the heart of things, to the people *out there* - the people from 'all walks of life' that you mention in your first email. That barrier has always felt significant to us, given that there is the physical divide between the campus and the city (people don't just 'drop in' to see what we're up to - they have to drive or take the bus the 3 miles out to us). And the psychological barrier is perhaps even greater - the perception that we show work that you need a university degree to understand; or the mistaken idea that we only show the work of students. So getting it *out there* felt very important - as you say, trying to see the theatre not as a building, but as something without edges, something made mobile by its artists, that finds its (right) contexts. This was at least one way of opening up a set of really interesting processes (you call them investigations) to different sorts of audiences or participants.

So to your question. I'll have to limit this to one project, as this will get way too long. The first project I ever produced was *Relative*, so let's start there.

1. One of my first jobs was to recruit grandparents for *Relative*. I went to all the places I thought I'd find older people (some more stereotyped than others) and mainly in Morecambe: pubs, teashops, writing groups, sing-alongs and tea dances, among others. At a tea dance at the Platform in Morecambe, I must have been the youngest by about 50 years. I was whizzed around the dance floor by five or six men, and got chatting to most people in there. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised, but many of the grandparents there lived far away from their grandchildren; one lady sat with me for some time, rather sadly telling me about her grandchildren and how much she missed them. It got me thinking about when family units were close-knit as relatives lived nearby. A romantic reflection I'm sure.

2. Nikki McCretton choreographed a 'motorbility' buggy ballet to take place in front of the Eric Morecambe statue in Morecambe. I spent many windy days chasing buggies down the prom, enlisting 'dancers' to take part; I roped my own mother into the dance when one of the old ladies dropped out due to ill health; we borrowed buggies from the participants and caused mayhem by testing out the (non)accessibility of local shops.

3. I said goodnight to Kathy at midnight as she prepared to stay up all night editing for the projection on Morecambe's (then derelict) Midland Hotel. I made her a sandwich.

4. Kathy and Nikki stayed at my house (like many artists since) and we sat in the yard 'til late most nights, working out logistics and making plans. We drank wine, drew maps and sketches, and I wrote copious notes.

5. We drank proper northern tea in Rita's café in Morecambe, the site that became the beginning of the promenade performance (starting at the café and moving all the way up the prom to the Eric Morecambe statue). We became very attached to Steve who ran the café (son of Rita) as he announced meal orders through a mic and bantered with the local customers. What better way to open the show, than with this man's already theatrical repartee?



*Relative. Photos: First Stop*



6. It was hard to persuade one of the older grandchildren to take part; her and her gran had a difficult relationship. They got to talk, and ask each other questions that might never have been asked. There was still tension, but it felt like a start.

7. Along with Kathy and Nikki, I really fell in love with Morecambe. Since *Relative* you and I have repeatedly brought artists to this dilapidated seaside town (recently Manuel Vason, Rajni Shah, Invisible Flock and Talking Birds); a place geographically nearby but that sometimes feels miles away, culturally, from the Lancaster University campus.

8. The project took a year, with Kathy and Nikki coming back and forth, and keeping in touch with the participants by letter. It was a strong group by the end, and we had a fantastic goodbye and thank you meal at your flat, Matt, do you remember? We both cooked a big meal, and we had four generations there.

This is just a tiny portrait of a project we did some years ago and that, as I said, lasted well over a year. So what were we doing in all of this? This project and many that have gone after it was utterly different from programming a touring show that we'd had no real stake in. We got to bring the artists, Kathy and Nikki together, and they tapped into each others' skills and learned many more from the participants that took part; the artists and participants succeeded in making a beautiful and extraordinary piece of work with materials, minds and sensibilities that some had never had the chance to access before; the artists got to slow down, to engage with each other and the participants in a really in-depth, meaningful way over a full year; as producers, we were part of making a theatre out of Morecambe's prom, that drew in many unsuspecting audiences from the pubs and cafes... most of whom had not been to the Nuffield (and probably haven't been since).

Obviously this drive for deeper engagement with communities or individuals is a very different sort of process for artists than the traditional touring model of applying for funding to make a show, tour it to a number of venues across the country and then start work on the new show. It presents a different set of demands for an artist, is less product-led and less lucrative if you think solely in terms of an artist making a living. Do you think these deeper engagement projects are a threat to touring, and ultimately a threat to artists' sustainability?

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Case study Intro and first extremely convoluted question  
Date: Mon, 9 Jul 2012 20:43  
From: Fenton, Matt <matt@liveatlica.org>  
To: Booth, Alice <alice@liveatlica.org>

Thanks Alice. I think it's so interesting how the first major participatory project we did together still resonates so strongly with us both (I learnt things from your email that I didn't know, and things I had forgotten). It's also worth remembering that *Relative* actually grew out of a project pitched to me by Mark Whitelaw and Ursula Martinez almost the first day I arrived in Lancaster: to make a show about ageing (that became Ursula's show *OAP*). Some of the participants in that show – Ursula's *Pensioners of Morecambe* chorus – became grandparents in *Relative*. And I still find myself returning to those projects and how they established a way of working for us that has continued for a decade – probably without the artists being aware of the fact.

I'm not sure if I have an answer about the impact of such practices on the business of making and touring work. Participatory and community-based work is nothing new, though hopefully it has some renewed status as a potentially radical and experimental art practice. What was clear at the GIOT conference in May this year was that live art and performance makers are working across all kinds of contexts, scales, forms and locations, as

well as the digital domain. The studio-based, tourable show is one element of many artists' practice, but for some an increasingly tenuous and unsustainable one.

The question of audiences is maybe more pressing. Who is the work (and the subsidy) for? And where are the new audiences for new work? What about the 90% not regularly buying tickets for contemporary performance? We know that the cross-over from our participatory work to our core audience is tiny. More often participation leads to the desire to participate again (and to encourage others), less so to buying tickets.

What is interesting, to me at least, is that our participation work led me to think again about programming – our relationship to the shows touring in to the Nuffield. Less Getting It Out There than Getting Them In Here. As you know, it resulted in me taking a year out from programming in 2007-08 to pass my role to other people. I suppose the Nuffield was in danger of becoming the preserve of a shrinking number of touring companies, and we were working in a commissioning relationship with many of them. I was getting worried that people were starting to second-guess us, and that there were fewer routes in for young makers.

In hindsight, it was obvious to invite 15 or so artists to programme artists that excited them (and that we hadn't seen), to tour to the venue. The result was this kind of amazing greatest hits season that was really popular with audiences (embarrassingly so for me, as official programmer). The real leap of faith was then to put out an open call for local residents to extend that process - to hand over the budget and artistic control (and a big bag of dvds) to 7 local residents who replied to the advert, most of whom were not regular attenders - and then present their invited season as our core programme in Spring 2008.

Just as audiences have a thirst to see people from all walks of life on stage, I suspect many in the audience that season came to have a look at what the group of local residents had put together. And they came in larger numbers than any previous Spring season I had programmed. Again, embarrassing. But it started to reveal to me how programming and curatorship might become more facilitative, more open; less a private conversation between connoisseurs. Now the Nuffield has merged with a concert hall and art gallery, it has led to many other projects based on that first programming experiment. Artists, gallery support staff and local children have now curated art exhibitions, and we're in the middle of a game of performative Exquisite Corpse instigated by Andy Smith (a smith) that is currently taking us all round the world (though unfortunately not in person). Who knows where that one will end up?

*Over the last 10 years, Nuffield Theatre Lancaster (now part of the combined arts organisation Live at LICA) has commissioned and supported scores of artists to develop new work in a range of social and cultural contexts outside of the institution. Working with the likes of Quarantine, A2 Company, Rajni Shab, Ursula Martinez, Louise Anne Wilson and Invisible Flock, projects have brought the organisation into places and communities with low or zero attendance as audiences for core events.*

## Editors' dialogue, part 4

Dear Mary,

It's no secret that personal relationships are often at the heart of the way that much work gets made and is programmed: someone knows someone and wants to help them, or one friend asks another for recommendations for a new season. We don't like to talk about it openly because we want our systems to give access to new voices and perspectives, and a network of friendships can be insular and elitist, as you suggest. But isn't there also something to be valued in a crisscrossing fabric of personal relationships? In connections of trust and respect that enable risk and experiment?

What's encouraging, then, is how presenters at Getting It Out There talked about ways to deliberately acknowledge these personal relationships, keeping them human-scale while also opening out to a widening circle of connections. Giles Croft from the Nottingham Playhouse declared 'I will meet anyone who writes to me or wants to talk to me,' and sure enough, he recalled how a conversation about the Beatles with Michael Pinchbeck in a pub led to a theatre piece based on *The White Album*. Alice Booth and Matt Fenton at the Nuffield gave over an entire season to be programmed by artists, bringing in work that Alice and Matt themselves had not seen. Rajni talked about spending weeks in each town that *Glorious* visits, setting up letter exchanges between strangers in shopping malls – but also nourishing an ongoing relationship amongst previous participants through an online social network. Helen Cole reflected on her time at the Arnolfini in Bristol when her proudest achievement was getting *out* of the building, creating what she called 'a different kind of event' – and she eventually left the Arnolfini to develop In Between Time as an independent production company. And Thomas Frank from Brut in Vienna cultivated tenuous relationships over extended periods with the Chelsea Theatre in London, with Moscow, and most recently with *Up to Nature*. 'Touring is a one-way communication; I'm more interested in exchange projects,' he said.

But even amongst friends – or perhaps especially so – it is easy to misunderstand one another. We might take it for granted that we have a shared vocabulary and a shared understanding of what each of us is hoping to achieve, but this is not necessarily the case. As in Michael Pinchbeck's criticism of the vocabulary of conflict to which you referred, the language that is available to us is an important part of the material circumstances that shape the work: how we talk about the work *is* the work. There were delegates from the Arts Council at the symposium, and their presence reminded me that ACE shapes artistic practices not only through the way it awards money, but also in the language it gives us: the vocabulary and categories that we adopt before we even step into a studio. Tamsin Drury of hÅb tracked the shifting valence of the term 'local'; fifteen years ago, she said, you couldn't give away local work, and now it seems impossible to get an audience for anything that isn't local. Helen Cole lamented the way in which performers' own promotional copy describes the event; too often, she notes, 'it sounds like hard work.'

Indeed, this term 'work' is a crucial one. We use it as shorthand for a discreet object of performance that can be negotiated, traded, and circulated; but, as the symposium revealed, that negotiation and circulation is an overwhelming part of the work that an artist does. Thinking about 'work' as 'labour' might also be a chance to examine the distribution of tasks and responsibilities within which we play our parts. Who does what for what recognition? Whose work is designated as 'creative' and whose as 'administrative'? What are the multiple ways in which we might describe risk and investment? Value and reward? Quality and inclusion? Where, finally, are the places for this kind of 'shop talk'?

many thanks

Theron

# Responses

The publication editors extended an open invitation to participants in the symposium, whether they were in the physical audience or watched the live stream online, to send short reactions and provocations by email. These have been edited to form the following responses.

**a smith**

Dear Theron, Mary,

I wanted to use this opportunity to think some more about behaviour. There is something important for me in the idea of behaviour and how we behave with and to each other; to each other as practitioners, artists, critics, technicians, academics, students, or audiences, but really just to each other. ...

In many enterprises there is a competition. There are economic pressures. There are the needs -- to greater or lesser extents -- to operate as a business. We talk about audiences in terms of data, statistics, and information. We rarely talk about them just as people, or others. It's hard to do. We often create, operate, and strengthen systems that mean we reach as far as possible to an audience, or sometimes just an idea of an audience, in the circumstances given. These are circumstances that sometimes mean (in my experience, and opinion) that we do not behave quite as well as we should toward each other and towards the audiences that we want or that are present.

I'm looking for an element of something like a humanity and an openness toward others in the work that I make and, as importantly, in the processes that I use to make it.

It is OK if people don't like or respond to it positively. It is of course OK if they do. However they might want to respond, I would hope they respect the fact that it is another human being or set of human beings that they are responding to, that are getting this out there.

Michael Pinchbeck used a phrase that I am also often trying to reclaim from our currently elected government: we are all in this together. Whether that means ripping the tickets or standing in the spotlight. Each other is an element in the process. When things get tight, as it seems they are at the moment, I think we would do well to remember this, and make sure we act accordingly towards ourselves and each other.

I'd like to think that in one sense we are all in a state of emergence. Whether we have been doing this for 20 months or years or shorter, or even longer, there is still a vulnerability present in the processes and production of a work and getting it out there...

**Chris Wolfe**

... thank you for a) hosting Getting It Out There and b) streaming it live. I only found out about it today, but even if I had heard about months ago I would not have been able to attend; the opportunity to watch and take part online was a gift.

First some (unanswered) provocations:

1) How can audiences, producers, artists get more in sync? How can social media and online spaces help us do that?

2) How can artists, curators, producers ensure there is an audience for our work? Must we always guess or play to our own tastes and intuitions?

Artists must speak to audiences, and audiences must speak to artists; part of the creation of a show should be the creation of an audience; audiences should help create the work that they will one day be audience to; we must not only identify different types of audiences for different types of work, but also for the different stages of a work as it is being created.

Louise Wilson spoke to the power of community-based performance and the ways it breaks down distinctions between audience and performers, writers, and other theatre-makers. I can attest to this: I took part in a month-long residency (with Cornerstone Theater in the US) in a rural community where we created a community-specific adaptation of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*; it was one of the most powerful performance experiences of my life. There was no better audience for this show, which was largely comprised of members of the community. Clearly there is a need for more active, developed practices around community-based performance but this makes me wonder how to harness online communities in a similar way: Can we do a better job as artists in engaging the community online in the creation of our works?

Soon, there must emerge the technology to better knit together the needs and wants of artists, producers, and audiences. It feels imminent. Perhaps this new technology is not a new form of social media, but a way of uniting or filtering the streams of information these groups produce in a meaningful way. Perhaps it's not a new technology at all (at least not in the electronic sense) but a new and evolving set of best practices around how live performances are created, refined, marketed, watched, and responded to — and not, most emphatically, not in that order. ...

### **Tim Jeeves**

... In a day, we were never going to be able to define all the possible manifestations of artistic practice. Nevertheless, a lot of emphasis was put on one particular mode of artistic career at the symposium, with little acknowledgement that there are other modes of artistic being. I would like to think about some of those other ways....

- We should remember that the 'there' that we're 'getting it out' to need not be very far. It could be close to here.
- Work does not need to be a part of a financially sustainable practice to be successful. There are alternative forms of financial stability to touring. You do not have to regularly jet-set off to far-away places to be an artist.
- Most artists I know have developed a number of income streams, and these streams need not always relate to the arts. A lot of important work can't be funded / won't be paid for.
- A relationship with 'success' is a massive component of a wide range of artistic practices. I think it's important we maintain breadth to our definitions of 'success'; else we risk stifling potential with misdirected energy.

## Julia Wilson

... Rather than asking 'is touring dead?' – I began to think about re-imagining what touring might be. What do artists want to tour: work, ideas and or/ artists? How do we tour ethically and sustainably? What can touring add to the practice and to the people and places visited?

I wondered about what it might be to think about taking a journey with a piece rather than touring a piece. If considered as a journey how might pieces change, grow develop? How might pieces connect with specific times and places? ...

## Rajni Shah

... "It's impossible not to make a difference. Every choice we make leads either towards health or toward disease ... The question is not 'How can I, one person, make a difference?' The question is 'What kind of difference do I want to make?'" (Julia Butterfly Hill)

I guess this underlines what I really wanted us to talk about: not just

*how do we oil the machine of touring?*

- but -

*what kind of machine do we want to make, right here, right now?*

I'd like to recognise responsibility and responsiveness, and to encourage an ecology where we recognise the power - however limited - that each of us has to influence the direction we're heading in. We have this power as human beings, but especially as artists, as human beings who have chosen to put ourselves in a very public place, who have chosen to say something ...

# Biographies

## Publication Editors:

### Mary Paterson

Mary Paterson is a writer and curator who works between visual art, text and performance. Her critical writing has been widely published in magazines, journals, books and experimental formats. In 2008 she formed the writing collaboration Open Dialogues, which explores writing on and as performance. Her poetry pamphlet 'So' will be published in 2013 by Lemon Melon.

### Theron Schmidt

Theron Schmidt teaches theatre and performance at King's College London. In addition to his academic research, he has written widely about live art and performance for a variety of publications, including magazines and artist books, and also as part of innovative critical dialogue projects that foster interaction between audiences, artists, and critics. He also makes performance as a solo and collaborative artist.

## Partner Organisations:

### LANWest

LANWest (Live Art North West) is a network of regional promoters and producers in contemporary theatre and live art. Current members include Axis Arts Centre (Crewe), the Bluecoat (Liverpool), hÅb (Manchester), Live at LICA (Lancaster) and Contemporary Arts - UCLAN (Preston). As well as co-ordinating the Getting It Out There symposium, LANWest has collaborated on a successful 3-year distribution project (*In Transit*) establishing touring routes for NW artists alongside training and mentoring, and an online video showcase site for regional work.

[www.lanwest.org](http://www.lanwest.org)

### Live at LICA

Located on the campus of Lancaster University, Live at LICA (Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts) presents and commissions high quality professional theatre, dance, live art, music and visual art for the

campus, the city of Lancaster and the NW region. Live at LICA was formed in 2009, bringing together Nuffield Theatre Lancaster, Peter Scott Gallery and Lancaster International Concerts, alongside the opening of the new LICA arts building. The symposium takes place on the final day of Live at LICA's annual site-based project, Curate the Campus (1-12 May 2012) featuring Tim Etchells and Ant Hampton, Ludus Dance, Talking Birds, Daniel Gosling, Maja Bugge, Marguerite Galizia, Murray Wason, Leentje Van de Cruys and Tine Feys, as well as the premiere of Franko B's new work, *Because of Love*.

[www.liveatlica.org](http://www.liveatlica.org)

### Live Art UK

Live Art UK brings together key promoters and facilitators to support and develop the Live Art infrastructure for the benefit of artists and audiences. The Live Art UK network explores new models and partnerships for the promotion of Live Art; develops new ways to increase the national and international visibility of Live Art; initiates strategies for a more sustainable future for Live Art practitioners and promoters; and aims to provide a representative voice for the Live Art Sector in the UK.

[www.liveartuk.org](http://www.liveartuk.org)

### hÅb

Based in Manchester, hÅb is a producer, developer and advocate of contemporary performance, live art and sited work in the North West. greenroom's key partner for over a decade, hÅb aims to maintain its legacy, working in collaboration with a range of venues to produce showing opportunities, platforms and artist development projects like emergency, Turn, Hazard and Works Ahead. It also produces a new public-facing brand: Word of Warning, a regular bulletin and peripatetic programme of contemporary live work in Manchester and beyond.

[www.habarts.org](http://www.habarts.org) | [www.wordofwarning.org](http://www.wordofwarning.org)

# Publication Contributors

(in alphabetical order)

## Alice Booth

Alice Booth is the Creative Producer at Live at LICA, the public cross arts organisation at Lancaster University. She is a founder member of theatre company, imitating the dog, with whom she has devised and toured work all over the world, most recently to Taiwan. She completed a practice based PhD in 2004 exploring narrative in contemporary practice, and has taught performance and cultural management in Lancaster and across the UK over the last 15 years. She is chair of Quarantine's board of trustees.

[www.liveatlica.org](http://www.liveatlica.org)

## Helen Cole

Helen Cole is Artistic Director and Chief Executive of In Between Time. Helen was previously Senior Producer at Tramway, and Producer, Live Art and Dance at Arnolfini in Bristol where she established its live programme as one of the UK's most influential contexts for live art and contemporary performance. She created the In Between Time Festival at Arnolfini in 2001 as an international biennial of live art and future performance practices. In 2009, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation awarded Helen a Breakthrough Award for Exceptional Cultural Entrepreneurs and she established In Between Time as an independent. Helen is the artist/curator of the live memory project, We See Fireworks, first commissioned by SPILL Festival and now touring extensively in the UK and internationally.

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

## Matt Fenton

Matt Fenton is Director of Live at LICA, the public interdisciplinary arts organisation at Lancaster University. In 2009, he oversaw the merger of Nuffield Theatre Lancaster, Peter Scott Gallery and Lancaster International Concerts. A practising theatre director and dramaturg, Matt was previously Director of Nuffield Theatre Lancaster, and Head of Theatre and Dance at ICIA, Bath.

[www.liveatlica.org](http://www.liveatlica.org)

## Thomas Frank

Thomas Frank is co-artistic director and business manager at brut Wien. From 2000 to 2004 he was assistant artistic director, dramaturge and curator at Künstlerhaus MOUSONTRUM in Frankfurt. From 2005 to 2007, he was dramaturge and head of programming at Sophiensaele Berlin. In 2007 together with Haiko Pfost he formed 'brut Wien', an interdisciplinary production centre for performing arts in Vienna. [www.brut-wien.at](http://www.brut-wien.at)

## Bryony Kimmings

Bryony Kimmings is a Live Artist based in the East Region. She creates full-length performance works, cabaret acts, homemade music, audio installations and spoken word. Bryony has performed and exhibited at Glastonbury, Duckie, Latitude, Roundhouse, Brighton Festival, NRLA, Frieze, The Secret Garden arty and the Barbican. In 2011 Bryony was Associate Artist at The Junction, Cambridge and A Soho6 Artist at Soho Theatre.

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

## Judith Knight

Judith Knight is the co-director and founder of Artsadmin. Over the last thirty-two years, the organisation has initiated, supported and produced the work of contemporary artists and companies working across artistic disciplines. Artsadmin has developed its base at Toynbee Studios in East London into a centre for the creation and development of new work, where it manages the rehearsal spaces, and runs a free advisory service and bursary scheme for emerging artists, an education programme, residencies, showcases, workshops and performances. Judith has produced numerous projects by different artists, nationally and internationally, in locations all over the world. She works with the *Imagine 2020* European Network of venues and festivals producing artists' projects about climate change, including Artsadmin's *Two Degrees* festival and most recently Michael Pinsky's *Plunge*. She is on the Board of the IETM and Julie's Bicycle Theatre Group. She was awarded an MBE in 2007.

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

## Claire Marshall

Claire is a founder member and performer in Forced Entertainment, the performance ensemble based in Sheffield, UK. The company has worked together since 1984 to produce theatre works as well as related projects in installation, digital media and film. The work grows from project to project, using text, technology, soundtracks and other elements in varying degrees. Predominantly a touring company, Forced Entertainment receive regular funding from Arts Council England to create and tour work in the UK and overseas, and have established a growing network of artistic collaborators.

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

## Kate McGrath

Kate McGrath co-founded Fuel in 2004 with Louise Blackwell. Fuel is a producing organisation working in partnership with some of the most exciting artists in the UK to develop, create and present new work for all. Fuel is currently working with artists including: Will Adamsdale, Belarus Free Theatre, Clod Ensemble, Inua Ellams, Fevered Sleep, David Rosenberg, Sound&Fury, Uninvited Guests and Melanie Wilson.

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

## Michael Pinchbeck

Michael Pinchbeck is a writer, live artist and performance maker based in Nottingham. He co-founded Metro-Boulot-Dodo in 1997, leaving the company in 2004 to embark on a five-year live art project – *The Long and Winding Road*. Michael was commissioned by Nottingham Playhouse to write *The White Album* (2006) and *The Asbes* (2011) and was awarded a bursary by Theatre Writing Partnership to research a new play – *Bolero*. He is currently working on a trilogy of devised performances inspired by Shakespearean stage directions: *The Beginning*, *The Middle* and *The End*. He has worked as dramaturg with theatre makers and choreographers including Lea Anderson, Siobhan Davies, Hetain Patel and Reckless Sleepers. Michael is a co-director of *Hatch*, performance platform in the East Midlands.

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

## Rajni Shah

Rajni Shah is an artist and producer working in performance and live art. Whether online, in a public space or in a theatre, her work aims to open up new spaces for conversation and the meeting of diverse voices. From 2006–2010 she conducted a three-year enquiry into the relationship between gift and conversation in public space called *small gifts*. From 2005–2013 with her company Rajni Shah Projects she is producing a trilogy of large-scale performances (*Mr Quiver*, *Dinner with America* and *Glorious*) addressing the complexities of cultural identity in the 21st century.

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

## Sam Trotman

Sam Trotman is an Arts Producer with eight years experience of commissioning and producing projects with a strong, in-depth commitment to young people. For the past six years Sam has worked at Artsadmin, setting up and running the Education and Participation Department, where she programmes and produces new work with an emphasis on engaging young people, supporting early-career artists and opening up conversations around social and environmental justice. Sam has also worked for Camden Arts Centre, Chisenhale Gallery, University of Hertfordshire, You Me Bum Bum Train, English Heritage and Crying Out Loud. She studied Fine Art Sculpture at Brighton University and went on to develop her producing practice at CreativeTime (NY) and Eyebeam Arts and Technology Centre (NY).

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

# Credits

*Getting it Out There* was a LANWest project, co-produced by hÅb and Live at LICA, funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and presented in association with Live Art UK. It was developed and curated by Alice Booth, Tamsin Drury and Matt Fenton, with the support of Lois Keidan and CJ Mitchell. A greenroom legacy project.

Design: David Caines

