INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL CARDIFF

3 - 22 JUNE 2014
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Welcome to this first edition of the International Performance Festival Cardiff. I hope during these three weeks the festival programme and even the festival book distributed across the city or downloaded at some place in the world will lead you to some new discovery: possibly a dead-end, but always with considered thought about how we can be better audiences, a better community, or how we can better understand ourselves.

Performance can refer to so many parts of our culture these days, from the workplace to opera, stadium shows to TV. In their spare time or with their full time people dedicate much of their lives to this curious aspect of our culture and how we communicate with each other. Perhaps indeed there is a trace of something indefatigable in a few people gathering to share a song, or dance, tell a story. So how do we look at and learn from this art form?

What are its possibilities?

The artists brought together for this programme have each developed a practice that is responsive to certain communities and artistic forms across the world. I wish it can bring inspiration to what we might consider as new, exciting, and also possible, in how we live.

James Tyson, Director.
THURS 5 – SAT 7 JUNE 8PM
CHAPTER ARTS CENTRE

SICILIA

LA COMMUNAUTÉ INAVOUABLE [PARIS]
CONCEPT, WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY CLYDE CHABOT
OUTSIDE EYE & SCENOGRAPHY: STÉPHANE OLRY

“Sicilia is an autobiographical text, a monologue voice which strives to put together the broken pieces of an almost bygone family puzzle by using as a starting point close to forgotten names of family members, cities, villages: Palermo, Messina, Agrigente. It is the logbook of a trip I have undertaken, following the path of my mother’s family, that of my grandparents, of my great-grandparents, of my great-great-grandparents, who, one day, decided to leave behind their ancestral land, “Sicily”, and sail to, first, Tunisia and then to France. Seeking for a better future or what they pictured as such. Going back in time from origins until now, as an attempt to reconstruct my own identity though these interrogations: Who were these people? What trace is there left of them? What archaic traditions am I now unknowingly the bearer of?” – Clyde Chabot

An intimate performance taking place around a dinner table. Artist Clyde Chabot retraces the pasts of a family history towards the making of a new community, a reconciliation.

£12 / £10 / £8
The scene is taking place within a shop, within a shopping centre. The scene will involve body, sound, sculpture, text and voice. Behind the scene a relationship with a seagull is formed.

The scene:

So I opened my mouth and you look inside. It is enlarged now and is easy to follow the arrowed path down to the heart. You reach its beat.
The Vena cava is stretched at length. It has darkened.
The Aorta, a distant throb, a distilled ripple.
The landscape is forming, between the mouth and the heart. It grows at its own pace and is measured in colour. The mouth makes noise. This noise, a fuzz of sound causes light to freeze around objects. We become poetry. We become beat. We become beat poets.

Born in Huddersfield, Beth Greenhalgh studied Time-Based Practice at Cardiff School of Art and Design. Recent works include ‘Little Tokyo’ The Tate London, ‘Little Green’ National Eisteddfod, Wales and ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’ The ATTIC, Cardiff. Her work utilizes highly aesthetic scenes to evoke uncanny ritual and images alluding to a mythical reality based on a distorted “popular culture”.

Free
SAT 7 JUNE 2-5PM: WORKSHOP
SAT 14 JUNE 7PM: RESIDENCY PRESENTATION
CHAPTER ARTS CENTRE

INSIDE “NEW WORK FOR THE DESERT”
+ RESIDENCY PRESENTATION: CORE
BETH GILL (NEW YORK)

This workshop shares the practices unique to the development of choreographer Beth Gill’s recent performance ‘New Work for the Desert’ (2014) including: improvisational scores, readings, structured discourse, and phrase material. This evening-length dance abstracted the themes of ambition, journey and love within an aesthetic world inspired by Gill’s memory of Trisha Brown’s 1987 masterpiece ‘Newark’ and the natural landscape of the United States’ Southwest desert.

During her residency Gill will begin researching early choreographic ideas for her newest project ‘Core’. The initial inspiration behind ‘Core’ is to redirect a focus in Gill’s body of work away from externalized, image-based constructions and into internal realms of kinetic experience and imagination.

Beth Gill is a choreographer who has been making contemporary dance and performance in New York City since 2004. Her body of work critically examines issues within the fields of contemporary dance and performance studies, through a focused exploration of aesthetics and perception. Gill has been commissioned by New York Live Arts, The Chocolate Factory Theater, The Kitchen and Dance Theater Workshop. Her performances have toured in the United States and abroad including: Fusebox (TX), The Nazareth College Dance Festival (NY) and Dance Umbrella (UK). She has been a guest artist at Barnard College, Eugene Lang College the New School for Liberal Arts, Arizona State University and New York University’s Experimental Theater Wing.

*Workshop: £10 / Residency presentation: £7*
THURS 12 JUNE 7:30PM: HOW TO SCORE IN CANTON
SUN 22 JUNE 3PM: ART VIDEO SCREENING
CHAPTER ARTS CENTRE
PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS + ART VIDEO PROJECT
+ HOW TO SCORE IN CANTON
DAVIDA HEWLETT (CARDIFF)

This is an opportunity for inclusive, creative expression and an attempt to consider how we can make this more a part of our daily lives. For several years I have been working with the idea of ‘creating conditions’ as a form situated between art practice and teaching, and a potential space for social change.

There will be Participatory Workshops open to those across the community aged 5 – 100+ which I will lead with local dancers, artists and film-makers. The workshops provide an opportunity to share the process-based methodologies of the pioneering American artist and pedagogue Anna Halprin and her late husband, landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. Some of the workshops will involve generating material for the Art Video Project made with my neighbours, something like a Super Gran for Canton, where we have fun putting things right in our community, using home-made special effects, and through collectively creating surreal and liberating scenarios. This will be screened on the last day of the festival. The historical and theoretical background of the project will be presented in How to Score in Canton, a performance lecture, including works-in-progress and recent conversations with Anna Halprin.

Davida Hewlett is an artist/educator living and working in Wales. Her interdisciplinary work has been presented widely at leading venues and galleries throughout the UK and internationally. Davida’s projects are often humorous, made in collaboration with others, and range from touring site-specific pop songs, full scale musical extravaganzas, and participatory events to artist survival manuals, talking books, home alone installations and low-fi videos. She also led the Introduction to Performance Art course at Chapter Arts Centre, and is an Associate Tutor at Cardiff School of Art and Design.

Lecture / Workshops £4 (check box office or website for workshop schedule)
RESOURCES OR WHATEVER WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH IN MAKING ENVIRONMENTS AND LIVING IN THEM: TREES, TRAFFIC, BUILDINGS, PLANS, OTHER PEOPLE, ANIMALS, SCHOOLS, SUBWAYS, AND SO ON

SCORES, OR HOW WE ARRANGE RESOURCES FOR ACTION; HOW WE DECIDE THE THINGS WE ARE GOING TO DO TO AFFECT OUR ENVIRONMENT.
WED 18 – FRI 20 JUNE 2-5PM: OPEN STUDIO
SAT 21 JUNE 6PM-10PM: OPEN PROCESS SHARING
CHAPTER ARTS CENTRE
SPHERES OF INFLUENCE / THE NATURE OF FORCE
HELLEN SKY (MELBOURNE)

Art in process…
What is it that you call? This. Festival.
Some things are carried from here, literally, from St. Kilda, Melbourne.
Materials, and threads of thoughts, found objects; spheres;
different colours, sizes, work-site barriers; bright orange plastic mesh,
bags, recycled from super markets, they are memoric, analogous, they move me
the barrier; a network, a matrix of pixels, a screen to be woven,
spheres; a molecule, a planet
bags are cells
cell from Latin word cella; a small room, a chamber
biologically an organism with permeable walls capable of independent functioning.
There are 100 trillion little rooms in the universe of my body
There are 100 trillion stars in universe
100 trillion IP address on the Internet
100 trillion neurons in my brain
I am sitting on a shore,
on an island
off an island
on the edge of the ocean.

Hellen Sky is an Australian digital choreographer/performer/director/writer. Her
projects bridge dance, performance and installation at times extended through
new technologies and data generated by the moving body as a fluid interface
between micro-movements, media, virtual-electronic and physical architectures,
words and objects. As co-founder of new media performance company Company
in Space (1992-2004) and as Hellen Sky and Collaborators she has presented work
across Australia and internationally.

To book a place please contact box office at Chapter.
SONG
RANTERS THEATRE WITH LAURA LIMA AND JAMES TYSON
(MELBOURNE / RIO DE JANEIRO / CARDIFF)

SONG is a living installation that takes the idea of a performance, removes the stage, and transforms the space into an artificial landscape of sounds, scent and light. Inspired from a series of songs performed intimately and from a distance concerning place, relationships and the nature of purposeful existence.

Ranters Theatre is one of Australia’s leading contemporary theatre groups established in 1994. It has created fifteen productions and since 1999 has toured to over thirty international venues and festivals in Europe and North America.

Laura Lima is one of Brazil’s foremost contemporary artists. Recent solo exhibitions include: Bar Restaurant at Migros Museum, Zürich; Cinema Shadow at Luisa Strina Gallery, São Paulo and MUAC, Mexico City (2013); Grande at Casa França Brazil, Rio de Janeiro; La Centrale, Montreal, Canada; and Cinema Shadow Project at The Eva Klabin Foundation (2011). With artists Marcio Botner and Ernesto Neto she also runs the gallery A Gentil Carioca, one of the most important platforms for young artists in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

James Tyson is a theatre director, songwriter, performer and co-founder of the Intangible Studio, which since 2011 has led projects with artists from New York, Seoul, Cardiff and Hong Kong.

£10 / £8 / £6
SAT 21 JUNE 4PM  
CHAPTER ARTS CENTRE  
SOLSPEIL  
A WORK-IN-PROGRESS  
NIKI ORFANOU & ANNA KRZYSTEK  
(ATHENS / GLASGOW)  

CONCEPT: NIKI ORFANOU & ANNA KRZYSTEK  
TEXT, DRAMATURGY, VOICE DIRECTING: NIKI ORFANOU  
CHOREOGRAPHY, PERFORMANCE: ANNA KRZYSTEK

‘Solspeil’ is a landscape made of physical movement and spoken language. In their constant coming together and pulling apart, the body and the voice negotiate different kinds of scenic formations, shifting from the factual to the perceptual and the imaginary. In this piece, scenography is the construction of fluid interfaces that collude and collide with each other, redrafting our sense of place, and transforming the events performed in it. Inspired by the sun-mirrors of the town Rjukan in Norway, ‘Solspeil’ develops around a square of light, and reflects the actual clock time of a single day: from the moment of the first rays of light of the new day till the coming of the dark.

Niki Orfanou is a playwright and director based in London and Athens. Her work involves new forms of theatre writing and has been staged in various cities and festivals in the UK and Greece.

Anna Krzystek is a performer and choreographer based in Glasgow, and a core member of Helsinki based performance company Oblivia. In the last ten years she has developed a series of solos on the premise of waiting. Her work has toured internationally.

£5
TUES 3 JUNE 7.30PM  
SOUTH RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE  
FESTIVAL OPENING: ACOUSTIC TUESDAY

This monthly acoustic music club is a regular event led by the hospitality of pioneering local musicians and singers Frankie Armstrong, Darien Pritchard, Mary-Anne Roberts, Bob Evans and Mikey Price. Acoustic Tuesday each month is a festival of sharing, listening and the inspirations that make music. From distant songs, through time or space, to those well known and newly composed, the Acoustic Tuesday will provide a rare, low-key and vibrant opening event to this first International Performance Festival Cardiff.

£5 (including tea and cakes)

WED 4 JUNE - SUN 22 JUNE  
ARCADECARDIFF  
FESTIVAL HUB OPEN CALL

The two empty shop units of ArcadeCardiff on the basement floor of the Queen’s Arcade shopping mall make up one of Cardiff’s most active independent gallery spaces. ArcadeCardiff will be open the entire three weeks of the festival, hosting the residency and evolving artwork ‘Bloody Poetry’ by Beth Greenhalgh (see p.6), and also as a Festival Hub, for an ongoing programme of events. If you have an idea, for a poetry or book reading, a performance, an intimate concert, or a discussion to take place in Queen’s Arcade or somewhere in the city, please send your idea by 30 April to info@intangiblestudio.co.uk

A full listing of the International Performance Festival Cardiff Open Call Programme will be announced 20 May. See www.intangiblestudio.co.uk/ipfc for details.

SUN 22 JUNE 9PM  
GWDIH

CLOSING PARTY

A night for dance (DJs!) and possibly some live music in Cardiff’s best intimate music/club/bar space.

THURSDAY 10-11AM  
RADIO CARDIFF 97.8FM  
FESTIVAL RADIO

Listen to ‘Pitch’, Cardiff’s most enlivening arts and cultural review and discussion programme, with guests and interviews with artists from the festival and other events in Cardiff and around Wales.

www.radiocardiff.org
THE ERGO MOTH
(DEATH'S HEAD SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM)
ALESSANDRO SHEEDY

THE HUM OF STATIC ... NEAR THE COAST, ON THE EDGE OF A STRIP OF LAND, NOT QUITE A PENINSULA, THERE IS A BUNGALOW ... IT FACES THE EAST, TOWARDS THE OCEAN ... THE BUILDING IS UNTENANTED ... IN THE OFFICE BACKING OFF FROM THE HOUSE, THE SOUND OF SHORTWAVE RADIO ... THE FREQUENCY IS SHIFTING FROM ONE SIGNAL TO ANOTHER ... OUTSIDE, IN THE BACKGROUND, HEAVY RAIN ... THEN, THE SHIFTING STOPS ... BENEATH THE SQUALL AND THE RADIO WAVES, A BROADCAST ... A FEMALE VOICE INTRODUCES ITSELF ... COUGHS, THREE TIMES ... IT THEN PROCEEDS TO TELL A STORY ...“I am sitting in a room..........................................................

“Jah Rastafari, King and Saviour…”
“Do you really have to put that in? It sounds so priapic.”
“Sigils of protection don’t answer to the phallocentric order, sweet. I’m nearly finished anyway.”

Klara, her face full of pillow, murmured consent. After five months of needle-pain, during which she had been unable to lie on her back, and another two months of invocations to the Dread Lion, interspersed with Esme’s sweet nothings, the tableaux was finally on the verge of completion. When the design had been first mooted, over a hashish-charged discussion on the benefits of sex magick and the tantra during the time of judgement (‘ya, it bi comin’), Klara had been quick to play the willing adept. Whether it had been a true lapse in her incredulity, as she had hoped, or merely a wish to please the girl whose bed
she shared, she had mouthed the words of the decayed scripture as though she believed in their catechism. She had chosen the draft sketch herself, had researched scrupulously the animistic significance of the ermine and the anthropological roots of the inverted caduceus, had even consented to attend the notorious left-hand-path ceremonies with the old Rastafarian shaman (‘Jah bi watchin’ova you guurrl’). Now, all Klara could do was conceal her distrust of a lore which seemed alien, a philosophy that barely masked its centuries-old misogyny with a modish veneer of neo-Pagan egalitarianism. And yet, and yet, Esme’s presence amid the rituals of abandonment and cleansing meant that part of Klara remained entranced by the gnostic drama of her predicament. Her lover had been a priestess of the mysteries since she was old enough to write the name of her daemon-spirit in charcoal. Surely, she would never lead Klara astray.

“Done!”

“Well thank Jah for that. I hope he realises I’m a shoe-in for the wisdom of Zion now.”

“You know, you shouldn’t joke about that stuff Klara. Especially being a lay-person, with that design on your body you need to start taking a more respectful approach to the customs.”

“I’m sorry, I know. I’m just really stiff. And in pain. And I need a shower – I stink.”

During the last two weeks of her ordeal, she had been forbidden to bathe. It was necessary, said the lecherous shaman, for the daemon to discover for itself her “true scent.” Naked, she stepped off the bed and immediately felt the discomfort of her toes touching wood for the first time in over four hours. Hopping from one atrophied foot to the other, she made for the dirt-floored bathroom at the back of the bungalow.

“We still need to attend the absolution ceremony tonight, so make it a quick one, yeah?”

“Oh babe, can’t we leave that till tomorrow? I have to work this afternoon. Anyway, that part of the ritual seems apocryphal to me. It’s just another chance for the old spiv to ogle me from behind.”

“Klara.”

“Fine whatever, I’ll have to work this morning then. But that means you can’t disturb me for a few hours. Promise?”

“More time spent in front of that fucking radio, right? I thought that going through this ceremony from beginning to end would have cured you of that shit.”

“Now it’s you who needs to take a more respectful approach.”
“I respect it Klara. That’s just the point. I fear it. And I fear for you when you mess with it, that’s all.”

Klara softened as she saw the worry in Esme’s face, the leonine disquiet of her mouth and the frozen tears which always framed her irises in moments of high emotion. Klara returned to the bed where Esme sat, hands idle in her lap, and kissed her mouth, kissed her eyes, kissed her wherever golden brown skin was visible.

“You have your magicks, and I have mine, my love. Trust that I know what I’m doing.”

An hour later, after having proved to Esme yet again that she knew what she was doing at all times, Klara was again plugged in to the network. She felt exhilarated, as the static’s language of storms assailed her, drew her along its chromatic pathways straight into the ionosphere. Beyond thought, and equally beyond the pitiful compromises of earthly discourse, she comprehended their idiom as the ermine and the stoat grasp the urge to run and hide, to stand and fight, to taste the blood of mice on the circumpolar wind. The upper MF waves broke against the outline of HF’s living cryptogram, and once again Klara felt the ether expand and contract as the signals came and went, spiralling towards the gates of an unknown Abaddon. This time she would find it. The gateway. The door that stood at the very edge of the skip zone. It couldn’t be far.

At the very beginning, when she was still a pierced teenager haunting the derelict underground of Laughlin City’s old copper-network continuum, Klara would spend in excess of twelve hours at a time making eight-track recordings of her navigations into the abyss. She was analogue-punk’s only child, and had stayed with the scene long after it had split, disintegrated, or dovetailed into Cyber-Anarcho-Schism on the back of MKULTRA’s false LSD-dawn. Most of her friends – those who had remained civilians – had sold out, gone to work for sundry black-book government projects where the most you could hope for was a free supply of ethogens. She had burned those bridges long ago in disgust. Marconi, not Leary, was the true godhead. Like the most tunnel-visioned acolyte, she had ridden the breakers of ionospheric reflection until they were swells. Then, when the masked men of N.U.L.L. had come looking for her, she had sought an out from Laughlin’s squalid viaducts and grottoes. She had met Esme at a girl bar on the outskirts of New L.A. after having spent most
of that month flat broke and living in a rat-infested co-up with a smack-dealing ex. The Jamaican girl with the undercut and the loa-tatts and the wild-eyes, not wild from any stimulant outside of the faith she tried to fob off on the poly-girls, all gimlet-eyed with New Age Agnosticism. When shy Klara had first found the nerve to speak to her, she was attempting feverishly to multi-task an unorthodox reading of the tarot with giving a hand-job. Later, when they were both more than slightly drunk, Esme had told Klara that there was nothing strange about this routine; that it descended from an ancient Celtic rite practiced by the druidesses of Cernunnos when they gathered around the so-called Pillar of the Boatmen on Lammas Tide. Klara was familiar with enough Pagan ritual to know that this mashed-out Diana was making it all up. But still, the way she embellished such beautiful apocrypha as easily as talking about warmongering or the weather made Klara a follower of her every word. It was clear to her that, in some disharmonic phantom-reality adjacent to this one, everything Esme uttered was prophecy.

Not long after they had moved in together, the N.U.L.L. men regained Klara’s scent, traced it to the dark corners of the city, casually murdered her acquaintances from the bar, and left behind their calling-cards of stygian typescript (‘Duppy-man gon’getcha,’ the shaman had noted, and he was close to being right). The skip zone, they said, was locked to her. It was then that Kingston, and Esme’s offer of an unconventional protection, seemed the only way out. Now, nothing was locked to her. Here, in this demilitarized territory of backwater hexes, the loa was the law of the land, and the organisation could touch her if they dared.

Before she was ready, the haze of sideband murk dispersed into a vacuum of relative silence. Klara started, almost falling off her chair. Righting the headphones’ position excitedly, she adjusted the frequency on the monitor. There was something sticking its head out from the undulations of interference, transmitting below the surface of the bandwidth. To Klara, who knew all the sounds made by shortwave carriers, it resembled something like an old Continuous Wave pattern from the fifties, back when Morse code was used more frequently by the military. Rapidly, however, the signal took on flesh, transfigured itself spasmodically into a more or less rhythmic conglomeration of syllables with tone and tenor. A human voice, female. For some reason, hearing this unexpectedly human signifier amid the inhuman traffic of disembodied code made Klara nervous. She knew that by rights there should not, and never had been, anything more than the ghosts of human transmission on this frequency. Still, reminding herself that she was at home and in her element, Klara continued to clean the signal of static residue. Perhaps it was a clandestine station being purposely
misdirected by N.U.L.L., scrambled and bounced over to a derelict frequency where its incendiary words would meet no listeners. She listened. Slowly, the voice modulated itself, emerging from the vestigial darkness like a fugue. The words were English, but sounded somehow anomalous, their syllables spoken by an alien or brain-damaged tongue. It seemed, at first, to be some kind of radio-play:

... I am speaking from a room in a building I haven’t set eyes on. Its geographical location is, likewise, unknown to me. I was blindfolded on the way here, and so far I have been unable to ascertain any information in regard to where I might be being held. My captors do not speak to me. I rarely get glimpses of their faces. Occasionally I can make out scraps of whispering dialogue from behind the door of my room. The whispers have a strange accent, which yet somehow seems familiar. My last mission took place in the Geisterfaust Sovereignty, on the border with Zero Republic. In view of this, it seems conceivable that my captors might be Eurasian, perhaps from the Coda Steppes; their idiom, you see, has the ring of a dialect to it. I feel sure they know who I am. It doesn’t matter now …

... My name is Evangeline Dessais. I work for Trondheim. I should say ‘worked’ for them. If my identity has indeed been compromised, I can expect no welcome wagon, no chance of extraction. This, I feel, will be the last time I address the outside world. It is only a matter of time before my captors discover my wire, and then speech as well as freedom and orientation will be denied me …

... If you’re listening to this broadcast, which is being transmitted on a sideband Trondheim frequency, then you are my closest friend, my angel, my God. I don’t believe in God. But, I believe that you hear me, whoever you are, and that you’re listening with sympathy, with compassion, and with love …

... I have no identity, apart from my name, which isn’t really my name anyway. I have nothing to tell you, you who are the dearest person in the world to me, apart from what I can make out in half-light of my room. This room, I feel, was always meant for me. I can sense intently my belongingness, like the feeling one gets when one returns to a childhood
bedroom many years after the death of one’s parents. But, despite this, the room engenders no sense of wistfulness, no melancholy bordering on regret. If anything, I feel the inverse of nostalgia, like the fungal atavism drawn from a dream, almost but not quite remembered. The perpetual dusk is an effect of the blue, sunless light glaring from behind white muslin curtains. It hurts my eyes. The ceiling sheds cream paint. Cracks in the walls make faces, noses, and bulging lips. As a child, I used to think walls and ceilings were alive with beings, goblins, fairies. Now, I know them to be fossils of something else, the sedimentations of an elsewhere. On a wavelength adjacent to our own, occasionally sharing a signal. This elsewhere, I feel, evolves coterminous with us, but is always just beyond our reach, always there in the faces we see, those faces in the walls and ceilings which shouldn’t be there, and the faces we don’t see, the absent faces on human bodies which we should see but don’t …

… It’s odd to think I’ve never thought in these terms before. It must be the room that’s doing it, making me phrase it all this way. I’m sure that …

The voice of “Evangeline Dessaix” cracked, desisted and was lost in the soup of static. It was a glimpse, no doubt about it; if not quite the zone itself then an eye to its ziggurat. Klara should have been half-conscious with ecstatic withdrawal. She should have been on the net, chasing up names, lost dates, hints of off-the-books MIAs and failed missions in the Geisterfaust (and Coda, those mountains). Instead, she was crying. It was as though someone close to her had died and, in some place she couldn’t fathom, was still dying.

After Klara’s encounter with what she took to be an actual inhabitant of the zone, the absolution ceremony came and went without her noticing. She was an anonymous participant, parroting words that had nothing to do with what she knew, or how she felt. This, in itself, was not unusual. However, when it came time to strip naked, yet again, and allow the coterie of oily, ganja-rank voodoo-men to inspect her design, she felt newly unembarrassed, cold with disinterest. The salutary embrocation, which consisted mainly of downing large quantities of absinthe along with the ubiquitous spliffling, dulled only her reflexes. Inside,
she was fidgeting. She longed to get back to the transmitter, though she was in no physical shape to actually use it. Really, Klara had no idea what had taken place within her as she had listened to her radio-ghost’s desultory monologue. All she knew was that somewhere, along some little-suspected frequency of her own being, she had been hailed, pulled onto a pathway branching off from the network, into entropy, into the “charnel signal” as her scenester friends called it. But, even as she felt the decay passing through her, she knew that she wanted to go back, to drink again from its chiaroscuro well. In the skip-zone, after all, there are more things …

The morning brought another change, in which Klara was obliged to shake off the previous night’s torpor. Esme awoke screaming from a nightmare. It was a singular occurrence. Esme practised lucid dreaming, had become a master of it in the short time she’d been alive. Nightmares were, as a rule, a sign of an undisciplined animus. Even when faced with the not insignificant devils of her psyche, she typically knew how to play them against each other, invoking the greater power of the nightside loa to instigate her own petty dramas amongst them. This time, the sheets were soaked through with both sweat and urine. Klara had run to the bathroom, raided the medicine cabinet, forced Esme to swallow some vallium (though she knew she detested it). It was close to a seizure, and it lasted for several hours. During this time, Esme raved about what she had seen, even as Klara urged her patiently to stop.

“I … he was here … where? … Here! … The ladder to the moon … The irradiating signal … The destroyer and usurper of Pan … The insectile thrum … Atropos King of Nowhere … Errata of creation … Spectral backprojection … The chromatic ontology … Dying forever … The Third …”

“Breathe, darling, breathe!” But Klara couldn’t help herself. “Who… who is it that you saw?”

“Anonymous Godhead, drawn towards the light, our light, extinguishing it … The Candlesnuffer … The phantasmatic proboscis … The stain of history … The ruined chrysalis … The prolonged pregnancy … The eternity of threat … Betrayed temporality … The necropolis of the real … Eviscerated in advance … Everything … His work …”

The description trailed away into murmur. Klara stopped paying attention to the words, thought only of bringing Esme back to the world. It wasn’t until the early hours of the dawn that the chemical cocktail took effect, and the girl subsided into what seemed to be easeful rest.
Klara, however, felt anything but restful. Esme’s dream had stayed with her, its kernel of import dragging her back to that sense of protracted death she had felt after yesterday’s discovery. The bungalow seemed to swell, its rooms bloating into corpulence with the increasing heat of the sun, chambers of a cadaverous womb soaking up the stagnant air. Throughout the morning, as Esme continued to sleep, Klara tried to defer the inevitable lapse into depression with dramamine. It made her nauseous as well as febrile. Resisting taking the cold shower her body desired, she instead sat down listlessly in front of the transmitter. Left on absent-mindedly last night in the rush before the ceremony, it was still set to the same hiccupping carrier wave that had disseminated the strange broadcast. In her present state, the lollop of the deviating amplitude resembled something like cancer-breath. Unbidden, Klara remembered the sound and the movement of her brain-dead father’s jaw. Idiotically, it mouthed scar-tissue beneath its oxygen mask in the palliative care ward. “Take it off him, he’s trying to talk!” “Relax, it’s just a disengaged brain-signal.” To Klara’s child-self, the exercise had resembled an insect’s clumsy attempt to speak our language. A mess of mandibles levering up and down ineptly against retractile nodes of proboscis. The waterless gurgle too, as he sucked dryly from the straw of the cup proffered by Klara’s mother. The sound was of some nectar-strangled larval-thing, gargling and lapping its own afterbirth. As she remembered these things, Klara found herself speaking aloud, to no one.

“In the hospital, the doctor made a clicking sound with his jaws as he talked.”

… Are you still there? …

The radio had started by itself. Evangeline’s voice was closer now, less submerged, in the room with Klara. Somehow, this didn’t seem odd.

… My rations have been cut since they found my wire. I don’t know why I’m still speaking to you. I know you can’t help me. And yet, part of me remembers you from long ago – I’m probably going insane but I feel like you’re here in the room. I have nothing but this room, and the memory of our last conversation…

… This room. I haven’t even told you the most interesting aspect of it.
The fireplace. It lies in the wall facing me. This wall, unlike the other walls and the ceiling, seems to be spotless, as though newly painted. But the fireplace itself... It is large, too large for any manageable fire to be lit in such a small room. Consequently, there are no ashes in the grate. Inside, in the place where the wood is normally laid, lie two of the most extraordinarily large insect carcasses I have ever seen...

...Do you remember when you would accompany your family to a winter lodge or a shack, tenanted only once or twice a year? I'm sure you do – everyone has memories like this. If so, do you recall how the first thing your father would do once inside was to check the fireplace and clean the grate of insect remains? There would always be a handful of half-living crawlers in among the vast majority of dead ones. Sometimes it was difficult to tell what they were in their prime – beetle, wasp, gnat, moth. The death throes made them generic, mere bugs, anonymous in the mouth of negation. Your father would push them into the dust pan and toss them outside or over the balcony, just as if they'd been balls of lint scraped off the carpet...

...But my father died before I started school. He isn't here to clean the grate of my new room, my forever room. Here, the dead insects are my co-tenants – even in reduced circumstances, they forbid me to rank myself above them in importance. I find I am looking at them more and more with something bordering on affection, even empathy. If one tries hard enough, one can reduce even the most eloquent metaphor to a gross analogy of our pitiful condition in space. Despite this, I am drawn to the unafathomable poetry of such a comparison; whatever they are, whatever they once were, they belong to the scenery of this room in the same way I myself am beginning to become a part of it...

...The wallflower and the two lobsters, that's how I refer to us, myself and my dead friends, in this endless privation. And they do resemble crustaceans, overgrown silverfish whose decay has brought them closer to insect-hood. Their legs are long, thin, translucent, with curled shrimp-like carapaces. They seem to have been shrivelled by sun, and yet no sun ever shines on them, never shines anywhere in this room. Their eyes are tiny drops of oil hardened into black buttons, serenely
untroubled by the lack of a soul...

...Now that I have discovered them, I rarely sit on the chair, except on the occasions, rarer now, when my captors come. Now, I sit and sometimes lie on the floor in front of the fireplace. At times, when lying, I will put my dry, malnourished fingers into the fireplace, feeling the ash, feeling the rough yet brittle chalk-like shells and the folded wings, safely tucked away, soft as silk fibres...

...My friends will, occasionally, visit me in sleep afterwards. In my dreams, they are larger still, more solid, less brittle. They tell me their names: the one on the left is called Cicatrix and Murk is the one on right. They have lived long, perhaps longer than memory itself is possible. They are twins, and rarely differentiate between each other, though each has a different temperament and will to live. Cicatrix is a harlequin; she plays at being different things, a glorious participator in the “Myriad of life,” as she calls it. Murk is a scholar; rarely participating beyond the basic need to understand and observe life. He speaks only infrequently and spends most of his time cocooned in his carapace, where he reads from something similar to books, bound in the hides of the lesser beetles...

...I am aware of being among the few who have known them as separate entities; for long epochs they have been known as the Twofold, coming and going through small windows and large, visiting certain of us, to close doors and to open others. At times they whisper to me of a third one who occasionally joins them on their travels when the stars are right, and who is certain to come again very soon. In tones like the snap and crackle of flaming paper, they whisper that they are afraid of this third, for he is younger, madder, more anonymous than they. His coming is part of the world, bound to the things in it, and every premature birth and untimely death is tied like an afterthought to some mention of his name. They will not tell it to me, except in a riddle that I can make nothing of. “ERGO PROXIMA,” they say, “WHEN IT WILL HAVE BEEN.” Again (…)

Again, the signal folded in on itself. The voice became the arabesque of an echo, its syllables sliding off into multiple trajectories. For some reason, ERGO PROXIMA,
that nonsensical Latin injunction, made Klara think again of her father. The protracted dying, the death always hoped for but never completed. Always too soon and too late, as though the ‘then’ and the ‘next’ were always in league against them; twin doors slamming shut on each horizon. She wept, even as she thought the memory lucidly for the first time. Death, *when it will have been*…

The wrong dream. That’s what Esme called it, when she had the mind to call it anything. Even then, in the weeks that followed, she spoke very little. The nightmare, if that’s what it had been, had taxed her mental and physical energies to such a degree that she spent much of the time gauze-wrapped in a fug of chronic. Klara, for her part, tried to play the nurse, as she had done successfully the night Esme had returned home from the bar having suffered a terrible beating from one of her clients. This time however, her administrations were barely acknowledged, let alone appreciated. Esme looked at her differently after that night. Her eyes had lost the glimmer of buried tear; now their pools were dry, reflecting nothing. She would repeatedly complain of retinal strain due to the darkness of the room, but would protest the minute Klara moved to open the bedroom curtains. Apparently, the extremes of light and dark were sufficient to bring on a migraine. So they would settle for half-light only, carefully balanced at a median grey. Klara, feeling guilty, dragged all the bungalow’s lamps into the bedroom, carefully covering each bulb with a sock or a scarf. By the time she had finished, the room was a drab chrysalis tessellated by the whorls of smoke rings blown indolently by the blanketed form on the bed. Their conversations, what few there were, were caught between snatches of half-baked description – Esme’s insistence that the furniture in the room resembled cuttlefish mired in bayou-silt, say, or that breathing the air reminded her of tasting mosquito blood in her childhood – and glowering reminiscence.

“Have I ever told you about my loa, my real loa?” she asked one day.

“No.”

“Everyone has a loa you know, what William James would call the sick part of your soul. The thing in you that longs for negation, the thing that you spend your whole life running from fruitlessly, only to learn that you’ve been running towards its silhouette the whole time. Mine, I called her the “wineglass lady.” She was a shrivelled old white woman, not white as in Caucasian – death-mask white, the kind of white that bleaches bones. She wore a nightdress, white also, but like
lard or soap next to the white of her skin. But her teeth and eyes were black like chips of onyx. I remember that she would smile at me with those teeth and those eyes. She was hairless, or if she had hair I never knew. Her head was covered by an enormous hat or bonnet, shaped like a chandelier draped with a curtain. On the many ends of the “branches” of this thing she wore were wine-glasses. I should say, that’s what they looked like to me. No way to be sure if they had ever been used for serving wine, I suppose. They just sort of hung there, chiming like dulcimers whenever she moved. And she moved a lot. Mainly around my childhood home as it existed in dream. I would play a fevered game of hide and seek with her night after night. Silently on dream-feet I would move past doors, through halls, up and down staircases, and there she would be, around the next corner or bend, not jumping out at me, but appearing white out of grey like ghost-breath. Moving without moving. Sometimes I would know her presence before I saw it by the sound of those glasses tinkling ahead of me…”

“Why are you telling me this?” Klara interrupted. Her head burned with the wrong chemicals. The design on her back began to itch.

“Because we’re a product of our haunting, Klara. The only reason we get birthed by our mama into this fucking world is to drag another one of them over with us. We’re a side-effect of future ghosts, nothing more. And you should know this better than most. What do you think you’ve been doing in there?” Esme gestured to the study, where the shortwave was kept.

“You know what I’m doing. If I can access the skip-zone, decode its language, then we’re free, all of us. We don’t have to run and hide anymore. We can live life rather than dull it all away.” Klara was crying again; the tears kept and stored like precious things over the past several months of pain drained away until there was nothing left but dregs.

“You stupid bitch. You’ve given yourself away to them, that’s all you’ve done. And now you’re a part of it, a contaminant.”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“We’re the eggshell Klara, the eggshell and the womb. And we’re always pregnant with them. Fear of Earth, or Night and Day, fear of getting out of bed in the morning, or seeing a face outside the window or reflected wrongly in the glass – all of these things are contractions, birth contractions. And you could have been pregnant with my child. But your fucking obsession with this zone of yours, it killed our child, whatever hope it had.”

Klara could not listen. All she heard was the sound of her own crying, and somewhere beneath, static. She turned away from Esme and the bed, half-walked
half-ran to the back door, threw it open, crouched down among the broken whiskey bottles and badly potted herbs. It was only late afternoon, and the sun was already setting. Breathing the fresh air, Klara forgot about the tears, forgot too the pressing need for sleep. She took notice of her surroundings for what seemed the first time in months. The yard was flecked with man-made grime and disrepair. There was a gate, hanging on a single hinge, leading down to the beach from the road to the left of the bungalow. It made a sound like a dying horse as it dangled against the sea-breeze. It would have whinnied louder, too, if, as Klara noticed, its single hinge had not been half-mended by the abandoned web of some benevolent spider. Was a spider web sufficient to hold such a door together against the elements? Or was it some other kind of insect? As she looked closer, Klara saw that the “web” was not nearly as professionally made and structurally secure as it had appeared. There was no craft or symmetry to the design at all; what she had taken to be a forgotten home was simply a brittle mesh of dirty sinew, a sticky deposit that had grown over time to take on the dimensions of a tiny grotto. Wiry and off-white, it was occupied by the remains of nameless bug-detritus. Little lives lost in the flux of their becoming.

It was all wrong. Klara rejected it all, closing her eyes to the patchwork of corpses, caught now in the furrow of a threshold. In this moment, the world remained forever unsalvageable. No cloister without the cold creeping in, without sleep fissured by the thought of dispossession. Where was that happy home with the front porch and the well-tended plants, those lights that once seemed to beckon, inviting her in? What would it take for those lights, distant beyond memory now, to be turned back on? Truth was a place, a skip-zone concealed away not in the stars and constellations, but in the gaps between people and the signals they sought; in the bright, gleaming nothings honed from simply existing in a world without fear. (Father?) And she would find it, there was no question. She would find it, even if Esme’s faith in her had gone completely.

The grey of the bedroom had been eaten by the night. The wisps of smoke rising from the ashtray refracted the light of the lamps, each casting its own little variation on the shadow-play of dying embers. Esme was sleeping again when Klara returned. It would do. This way at least, she wouldn’t have to share the dream, to pass on its decay.

The wireless was muttering its dead language as she entered its closet.
It would not take long to find the signal again, she knew that. As she sat down, she could almost feel it about her, the skipping thrum of a heartbeat deep down in the hollow earth, and yet above her also, birthing stars and satellites in some echo-chamber beyond the cat’s eye of the universe. Somewhere, Evangeline lived, in an empty room, her captors long dead, but her friends – the mock lobsters – still with her, whispering their secrets. Perhaps, and Klara knew it was more than just perhaps, Evangeline and herself had met each other long ago, in some hospital. She and Evangeline may have played outside the palliative care ward, may have invented a story in which they were the chief protagonists. They may even have speculated about the sign of the hospital, thinking it resembled the shell of a funny bug with antlers like an Erl-King and overlarge wings, like an archangel (Urial, perhaps?). In their play, which was more of a game, they may have pretended to be bound by some obscure will or fate to share the same dream, over and over again. That dream would be to listen to the grayman with the antlers and the greenish wings, listen to him as he gurgled make-believe words, which yet were not words but numbers, numbers in a strange cipher that could only be read after a certain death had been endured. When it will have been, it said, the Then and the Next would be Now, only Now without end. Then, the last freckle of light in the world would snap out. Then, and only then, the Dream, that great dream from beyond some great DOOR at the end of the world, would turn again in a new cycle.

Klara felt nothing, a nothing beyond nothing, as the code revealed itself, emerging out of static into her mind’s sleep-limned eye:

**ATROPOS… SLOUCHING TOWARD BETHLEHEM…**

A flurry of wings, small knives cutting the dark. Then Klara heard a sucking sound, a coruscating lisp of dredged earth and burnt air. The light from the bedroom faded behind her. A harvest of sorts, she knew, had come and gone. She found herself laughing. At what point had the skip-zone become all there ever was to dream and to know? Had it always been there, at the edge of her vision, the remains of an empty chrysalis tempting her to re-enter, to right the wrong of her accidental birth? Evangeline called to her from the room, there where the door had been locked for centuries. She called to Klara to place her hand on the doorknob, to cast her eyes to the fireplace, and to see the three carcasses lying there, the third with its legs jerking in the arrhythmia of recent passing. She would learn that its carapace was different from the others. A face emblazoned it, a new
principle emerging from the dust of uncreation. The Death’s Head, cast into the shell like a brand. The Death’s Head, the ERGO that had finally come home. Come home, Klara…

Somewhere at the back of the room, a shadow assumed solid form, then another. Eyes like finely polished rubies surveyed the shape and curvature of the room. As usual, Murk said nothing, although Cicatrix made a sound like a spool of laughing thread. They were here to watch the same scene unfold again. The birth of a new signal was a painful process. Witnesses were needed to shoulder the burden of the new, light-starved thing that crawled, in pain, from the flesh-sac of the old.

When the voice began, for the last time, the room was already empty. Empty, except for the low chirruping of the form carried away by now, departing into echo, then silence. Empty, except for a shrivelled black flap lying on the chair, as if left behind. Nameless detritus, though still there remained a flicker of a shiny something on the surface. Like unshed tears framing an absent face.

…My world is no longer of sitting and standing, talking and walking. Now, I find myself crawling along the floor; what food they give I eat on all fours, my hands as legs. I while away the time by pretending to fly, using my hands, little more than claws now, to mimic the flitter-flutter of parched wing. The room seems to be dustier now, dirtier, less white. My skin too is mottled, suffused with the life of leaf litter after the rain. I rub my face on the floor and hear the rustle of shedding skin, the membranous scrape, the child’s joy at prising off a scab. My body moves sideways, around angles, along strange detours between lines. I fold it all up into the foetal position, staying contorted as long as my frail muscles are able to maintain it. It began as an unnatural shape, but, the more I practice it, the less foreign it becomes. I GROW NEW LIMBS IN THE DARK…………………………

(………………)

Alessandro Sheedy is a writer and PhD student based in Hobart, Tasmania. He is writing his thesis on H.P. Lovecraft, weird fiction, and post-structuralism. He is primarily interested in bewilderment.
ESSAY

TRINIDADIAN DANCE, POSSESSION AND THE PERFORMANCE OF WELSH MEDIEVAL POETRY

MARY-ANNE ROBERTS

Mary-Anne Roberts trained in classical ballet, contemporary dance and theatre in her native Trinidad and Tobago, where she enjoyed a successful career in theatre and television before migrating to the U.K. in 1988. She has been a performer for thirty-five years and an educator through performance for twenty-five years. A founding member of Trinidad Tent Theatre, she was the theatre’s choreographer for six years. She has led workshops on performance throughout Europe and continues to work in theatre. With Robert Evans, she formed the crwth and voice duo, Bragod, to perform medieval and later Welsh music and poetry. In 2013 Bragod released, ‘Llatai’, the latest of three groundbreaking CDs. As a singer in her own right, Mary-Anne has made solo appearances at singing festivals throughout the British Isles, toured with the a capella group Sanfferian and fronts the calypso string-band, Domestic Violins. She co-hosts the monthly Acoustic Tuesday (the listening space) at South Riverside Community Centre, Cardiff.
From earliest awareness I recognised my appetite for performance and have a strong memory of dance, song and storytelling signalling the end of the working day in my grandparents’ rural household. Our amazing bodies could do all this, giving immense reciprocal and increasing satisfaction and pleasure to performer and onlooker.

Exploration at Trinidad Tent Theatre consisted mostly of researching and performing historical archetypes, especially the historical masquerades of Trinidad and Tobago’s pre-Lenten carnival. Stage and street presentations of these dynamic characters increased my interest in the effect of movement on the voice and breath, how different voices affect movement and emotion, breath quality dictating performance quality and ultimately quality of life. There was also the experience of being captured, unawares, by my masquerade, where the character I intended to play, took me over and played me.

‘I am ‘mas’ and ‘mas’ is me.’ - Nari Aproo, veteran traditional masquerader, Trinidad carnival

Space, body, breath, movement, voice. I now add climate and age.
TRINIDAD AND WALES, PARALLEL PRACTICE : NOT FUSION

There are overlapping areas of my work as a carnival artist and reviverist and my work in reviving medieval poetic and musical performance as part of Bragod. In the case of Trinidad carnival, there are still a very few, very old men who are in the position to transmit the whole richness of the tradition - movement, voice, costume construction, context. In the Welsh case, medieval poetry is available in beautiful editions but the music intended to accompany and amplify the poems has been silent for nearly four hundred years. Recent musicological scholarship, including Bragod’s work, has restored to us the sound of this music. Bragod seeks to reunite Welsh classical poetry with its contemporary Welsh music. How was it performed? To answer the profound questions which arise in tackling this giant task I explore the same boundless internal landscape of resources I have learnt to navigate when realising the archetypal characters of the Trinidad carnival.

In Bragod’s first years, 1999 - 2001, totally absorbed by the richness of the form of Welsh in and from my mouth, I made little or no movement. I danced with my mouth and my voice in a space created by the sound of the crwth. A collaboration with the Gypsies of Rajasthan, early 2002, encouraged some element of gesture in my performance with Bragod. The instinct to ‘manipulate’ the viscous consistency of the crwth’s sound with my hands and fingers, quickly extended into a porte de bras. I also
found that I could use gesture to measure the different intervals needed to sing in Pythagorean tuning. As we developed our medieval repertoire, the delivery of my poetry came to depend on the binary patterns identified in Robert ap Huw’s musical manuscript of 1613, which is at the compositional core of Bragod’s work. The patterns became an aide memoire and using my arms to mark these patterns, developed into binary dances. The Robert ap Huw manuscript names twenty-four measures, one of which underpins each piece of music Bragod chooses to accompany a piece of poetry. For example, our setting of ‘Yr Wylan’ (The Seagull) by Dafydd ap Gwilym, is accompanied by a piece from the manuscript underpinned by the measure IIOOIIII, called mak y mwn byrr.

I dance in part to acknowledge these patterns and their formulations as derived from the ‘Music of the Spheres’, an orthodox doctrine concerning the creation and maintenance of the universe from ancient Greek times, throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. A detailed account of this doctrine is given in Boethius’s ‘De Institutione Musica’ (c. 510 AD). Boethius was quoting all the available Greek and Roman sources especially the last-Roman Ptolemy. ‘Music of the Spheres’ is also known as ‘Cosmic Music’ generated by the revolving spheres of the heavens and expressed in great cycles, such as seasons and tides. It is one of the three kinds of music familiar to those who lived in medieval times, the others being ‘Human Music’ found in the body’s harmonious proportions, co-operative physical activity and ethical behaviour, and ‘Instrumental and Vocal Music’ - what we call music today, the technical aspects of making music. To engage in instrumental and vocal music was to participate in human and cosmic music. The ‘I’s of the binary pattern represent the cosmic or stable elements of the universe, the ‘O’s represent the human and instrumental/vocal elements which are unstable or changeable.

The route to ‘Cosmic Music’ begins with ‘Human Music’. The power of repetitive, patterned movement to drive us into an altered state is well known and in carnival, I do it for myself. In Bragod’s performances I do it for the audience. In medieval Wales the seers and the creators and performers of bardic poetry and music were known as the awenyddion (inspired ones), who achieved a mental absence to create and perform their ritual poems and music.

My carnival experience has taught me that to play a character requires no emotional input. In carnival the context - history, culture, time, space and the audience give me permission to play mas. Intention, helped by rhythm and music
enables a character to invade a body, forcing a particular quality of movement, specific gestures and even voice or chant. Likewise, in medieval performance, the emotion is already intentionally bound into the sense and sound-play of the poems. I deliver them to the best of my physical ability with voice and body, trusting the material.

These experimental performances allow us to test the mnemonic features which were consciously and skilfully embedded in the poetry and music and to examine how they inform presentation. ‘Dancing the Universe’ amplifies the ritual nature of the Instrumental and Vocal music and enhances understanding, enjoyment and conscious participation in all three kinds of music, for audience and performers.

Modern audiences cannot be expected to have the same social and ritual experience as a medieval audience. Our society, religious ideas and comprehension of the texts have changed too much. That context has gone. The challenge of how best to present this material now, is ever present.

Bragod’s performances honour the rigorous forms underlying medieval Welsh bardic music and poetry through the following principles: historically-informed music, using musical instruments of the period and historical tunings; poetry we have researched with the help of leading scholars in the field; a voice production to match the strong, buzzing tones of the instrument and the ritual nature of the poetry; a newly devised language of gesture to precisely represent the compositional building-blocks given in our source musical manuscript.

My movement acknowledges the binary patterns from which Robert ap Huw’s music is made and illustrates the grid upon which the poetry is hung. There are no illustrations of late medieval datgeiniaid (specialised singers of Welsh bardic
verse) but an illustration of a 16th century Irish rakry, the exact equivalent of the datgeiniad, shows him in vigorous, open movement. I draw on my background in physical performance and dance as an aspect of my role as datgeiniad.

Movement marking the space, the binary pattern chosen for the piece and dancing the pattern throughout and further, beyond the poetry reveals the medieval mindset, which links our imperfect, changeable world to the stable perfection of eternity and the ‘Music of the Spheres’.

Only in the last twenty years or so has Robert ap Huw’s tablature of late-medieval bardic music been understood enough to engage scholar-musicians in playing the music. Here is an utterly different idea of the music played in medieval Britain. My desire to present these unfamiliar and beautiful sounds credibly, beautifully, has led me to introduce mark making, gesture and dance, resulting in the creation of an exciting new performance practice.

1. ‘Dancing the Universe’ is Bradod’s term for my dance embodying the interplay of the fixed and moveable elements of the universe as understood in ancient times and represented in Robert ap Huws’s manuscripts by ’I’s and ‘O’s. When I perform poetry to ap Huws’s music, I dance the universe to mirror the repeating binary pattern Robert Evans plays on the crwth or lyre.
J'ai choisi ce titre La Communauté Inavouable en prolongement de ma découverte de ce texte de Maurice Blanchot en 1992. Il analyse le lien à l’autre : le lien amoureux et le lien social. Pour lui « la base de la communication n’est pas nécessairement la parole, ni le silence qui en est le fond et la ponctuation mais l’exposition à la mort non plus de moi même mais d’autrui dont même la présence vivante et la plus proche est déjà l’éternelle et l’insupportable absence ». Ainsi je me reconnais dans la pensée de Lévinas qui écrit à quel point être humain c’est être concerné par l’autre, son caractère mortel, son absence déjà tangible, perceptible.

Le théâtre me semble ainsi le lieu du recueillement, du deuil collectif possible de ses désillusions, de ses morts. Le lieu aussi de l’accueil de la vie en soi, de sa mise en représentation et en partage ; la vie dans ses facettes sans cesse renouvelées au
Le choix de ce nom pour ma compagnie correspond au fait théâtral : les silhouettes qui se rassemblent dans les théâtres forment une communauté inavouable qui a besoin de se regarder, se représenter, s’interroger en commun sans savoir au fond exactement ce qu’elle cherche, sans pouvoir se l’avouer. Comme si l’avouer annulerait le théâtre, sa nécessité, parce qu’on aurait trouvé ce qu’on cherche ; donc on n’aurait plus besoin d’y retourner. Garder ce caractère inavouable de la motivation d’aller au théâtre permettrait ainsi d’en reprendre sans cesse le chemin. La communauté inavouable, la communauté de ceux qui cherchent et ne peuvent résoudre le manque, le besoin de savoir ou à défaut le besoin d’interroger individuellement et collectivement ce que c’est que d’être humain, individuellement et collectivement.

du Sud.

La justesse de ce nom pour ma compagnie m’est apparue à nouveau comme une évidence en janvier dernier au moment des représentations de SICILIA au Théâtre l’Echangeur de Bagnolet. Ce projet réunit les spectateurs autour d’une table comme s’il s’agissait des membres de ma famille. Secrètement, cellulairement, je tente un lien de présence intime avec chacun qui est accueilli dans sa singularité et son histoire personnelle. Nous avons doublé en janvier la jauge passant de 25 spectateurs autour d’une table à 50 spectateurs. J’ai ressenti très fortement non seulement le lien que je pouvais tisser avec chaque spectateur mais aussi les liens qui se créaient entre tous les spectateurs dans leur façon de se servir du vin, de se faire passer les photographies, le pain... Je me suis rappelée le nom de la compagnie et eu la sensation d’avoir créée, un soir en particulier une telle communauté inavouable.

Un spectateur m’a dit à quel point il ressentait le texte qui prenait corps à travers moi et la façon très particulière d’inviter chacun à sonder sa propre histoire et sensibilité à travers ce moment partagé autour d’une table. Je ne connais pas d’autres compagnie qui travaillent à cet endroit non pas de convocation de la communauté du public de théâtre mais de petites communautés dans lesquelles chaque membre est accueilli dans sa fragilité et invité à être présent dans son corps, sa mémoire, son présent.

Clyde Chabot is the Artistic Director of La Communauté Inavouable, an experimental theatre company established in 1992 and based in Saint-Denis, Paris.
Good cop bad cop is the creative partnership of John Rowley and Richard Huw Morgan. After meeting and collaborating as members of seminal Welsh performance company Brith Gof in 1990, they began to reinvest their wages in a radical exploration of performance possibilities.

This began in 1992 with Das Wunden, a collaboration with Slovenian sound-worker Robert Merdzo, performing in a theater, an art gallery and a night club. In 1996 good cop bad cop (gcbc) was formed through the replacement of Merdzo with photographer Paul Jeff. From 2006 Rowley and Morgan have operated as a duo with the inclusion of invited guests and audience members as and when necessary.

gcbc have produced over forty conceptually led works that operate at the fluid boundary between experimental theatre performance and fine-art performance. There is rarely a common development process in works. Ideas might remain dormant
for years or be acted on spontaneously according to available opportunities. While performances are frequently in non-theatrical spaces, this is also a question of circumstance rather than any fetishization of “the real”, and may, or may not, be either site-responsive or site-specific.

Duration of performances is similarly variable, according to the needs of the work, but frequently tends towards extended durations. Their weekly radio programme ‘Pitch’, which began as part of the ‘Croeso I Gymry/u Fwyaf!’ project in 2011, has now been running for 119 hours over a period of three years.

JR - I think one of the reasons why we may have never done interviews like this before, and the reason why I work with Richard, is because we don’t have to explain anything to anyone else, and this is why the work is how it is. We don’t have to explain anything or very much to each other as to why we are doing something.

We don’t talk about the process. Anything might be possible and anyone has a stake, which may be equal or unequal to each other, from the very start to the very end. So even in the performance, I can be looking at Richard and at some point thinking “Oh god, that’s not a good decision for me, I don’t like that.” But that’s the way we work, and I accept that and it forces me to make some other decision. I might just say, “Well I’m going to do this anyway. I don’t like what he’s doing. He might not like what I’m doing, but we’re going to do it anyway, and we’ll deal with the consequences of that in two or five minutes time.”

Making work on invitation is a practical way of existing for us. Sometimes the longer we’ve spent on bits of work the more they’ve fallen apart, or become not the most interesting pieces. So when you get an invitation that says, “We want you to make a work for this festival. You can do it on Thursday night”, we can say, “OK, we’ll make ourselves available for that and we’ll work on it two weeks before it happens.” And that’s the way we’ve worked since 1992.

RHM: Because we’ve only responded to available opportunities, we’ve never actually built anything up where we have to get into making things in order to maintain something.

JR: Das Wunden’s ‘18:40 20:40’ we did three times, and after that we thought, “Why would we want to do this anymore?”. And that’s probably
what’s affected touring for us.

RHM: I would not have come to this
day of working without having had
the wonderful situation with Brith Gof, where there were regular periods
of work with regular money, which
also gave you regular time away from
work. But because we were bound up
in that way of earning money it meant
you didn’t really plan or structure
your own work, it had to be this
reactive thing, and I suppose it’s still
the same. Because there is something
about the work that is ideas-led, it is
reactive to what is going on around us.
Rather than “Oh we’ve got to make
a product that’s got to do something
within this whole context and find a
niche.”

JR: A lot of the work early on was
about drinking together and being
together as friends, and once you start
drinking and talking, an idea comes
out for a show. And you think, “let’s
do that, let’s try and do that”.

RHM: And there’s no reason not to
do that.

JR: At the time Chapter was an easy
place to make work. You could go
to Janek Alexander [then Theatre
Programmer and later Director of
Chapter) and say “We’ve got this
idea, it sounds a bit silly” and he’d say,
“Well, you can have some space to
work, but there’s not much money”. And we’d say “that’s all right, we’ll take
a box office split or whatever.”

RHM: It’s about building a context.
That’s why I like the work that we
make because it is a deliberate poke
at the entertainment arts world which
says “Here are these nice objects
of desire”. So it’s about making
something which is perhaps a bit shit,
and saying that we’re actually really
proud of this, it’s a serious statement
that’s going out there.
JR: I think we’ve always made things that look good. We’ve always been concerned with what the thing looks like. The things always look credible, artistic, well-thought out. Even in their shoddiness, it’s a considered shoddiness. There’s a part of me that is always trying to entertain people, and when we are thinking about ideas, we’re always thinking about where we are in the work in relation to where the audience is and what they are seeing. And that’s all about trying to give them an experience - maybe we can’t call it “entertainment”, but we are considering what the audience is experiencing. We can’t control it, but we can certainly say, “Have a look at this. Now have a look this. Now pull back and have a look at this.”

The thing that helped us from very early on is that we both worked with Mike Pearson in Brith Gof. We went to the workshops, which were about “This is the way to make a show: you have seven sections of ten minutes”. That was both in our heads, so when we made the first show, it wasn’t like, “What do we do now?”. We said, “Let’s divide it up into six parts of ten minutes, this part is Robert on his guitar, this part is us falling on our knees.”

RHM: But for the second one, ‘Caucus’, we just threw that out of the window and said, “We’re not going to talk to each other at all. I don’t care what you are doing. You don’t care what I’m doing”.

JR: And we invited a lot of other people into that one as well. We didn’t talk to them and tell them what to do either.

RHM: The reason why I got into performance was to explore what an ‘us’ produces, which is about the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Which is why I see us as a partnership, rather than a company, because a company is the object that you try and feed to do something, whereas this is about what happens when what is going in the world and what is going on in your head, and what is going on in books and TV and stuff, somehow grows. It’s entirely ideas led, rather than end-user led.

JR: I think we’re always unconsciously trying to surprise ourselves with whatever we’re doing. We find something to do and then within that
thing, we don’t really know how to drive that thing, but all of a sudden by some sort of accident you think “That is the way to drive that particular idea, and you think “God, that is a revelation, let’s go along with until it stops working.” And then you find the next piece, and you think, “Well, we’ve got an idea, we’ve got some lighting idea, how does that fit with that thing.” And that processing starts happening and the processing comes from experience, what you’ve done and what you’ve seen.

HR: What I enjoy about your work is this sense of decision-making in the moment. It is a quality that I associate more with performance art. With a gcbc performance there is often a very tight structure, a very clear formal idea, such as, “this is going to be six hours and it’s going to be a press conference and we’re changing it all the time”. As an audience we are always made to know the rules of the game. But then in the moment unexpected things happen, and they happen because the performers make a decision in the moment. You can go into a gcbc performance and it can be really dull for half an hour and then something amazing happens. It is something I really appreciate.

RHM: One of the phrases that I think best describes what we are doing is that it is about irrevocable acts: “Shit that’s happened, now what do we do with that?”

HR: There’s an unpredictability about this, in spite of its tight structure. How much work goes into setting the frame?

JR: The safety net which allows us not to rehearse is always that structural set-up, because no matter what happens to us we know that this is happening there, there are five sections of this, so you are never completely “Oh, I don’t know what to do and where it’s going to go for the next half hour”, because you’ve always got something that you know is going on even if it is just that structure.

RHM: With ‘Mas o Amser’ we did work out beforehand what we were going to do. JR: But we never actually rehearsed
the action, because that’s not very interesting. Because you don’t want to be bored by the time you put it in front of an audience for the first time.

HR: So rehearsals are more like negotiations.
RHM: They are conversations really.
JR: Yes, we might say, “Well, you could do that there, couldn’t you?” And you say, “I could, or I might not.” That’s what you usually say, Richard! I try to get you to say, “Yes I’m going to do that!” gcbc is me and Richard and our moods, our personalities. What we watch on telly, it’s the books we read, it’s the arguments we have, it’s the people we see outside of it. It’s bringing the outside in. Not necessarily making sense of it, but trying to process it.
RHM: We thought that what we might be doing with all this is struggling to communicate. It is really trying to say something but I’ve got no idea what it is trying to say, apart from the fact that if you put different things together in different combinations you get something completely different. And they might be quite ordinary, every day things.

HR: How important is the audience’s presence?

JR: I think in the work we make it is everything. When we make the work we are always thinking about the audience and how they might feel about something. From the Brith Gof days, from those pieces of work the audience was frightened by, you know you are doing something to the audience. I think we always try to get them to feel something. The question I am always asking myself is, “What would I want to be watching if I was seeing this thing now?” And putting myself in the position of an audience saying, “How would I like to react to this thing? What would I like to be shown? How would I like to be shown it? What’s it going to do to me?” When I go to the theatre I’m looking for those kind of experiences that don’t make me just sit in the seat and feel nothing or experience nothing physically. That’s one of the big steering things for all the pieces or what I do in them. I’m hoping or I imagine that’s the same for Richard.

RHM: I think I’m intrigued as to why audiences are there, and to give them something to carry on this relationship of intrigue, with them thinking, “why is he doing that?”
JR: When I’m performing live in something it’s not like this shamanistic thing, which you see in a lot of performance art, where I’m trying to leave my body or have this out of body experience. I always feel a bit of a machine thinking “OK, I know what
happens. If my eyes meet the eyes of the audience, I’m doing something.” It’s a technical act. The way I’m sitting: am I going to sit away from you, am I going to turn my head? Or if I walk beside you, I know I’m going to have an effect. And that’s a technical, learnt thing and I quite like that. It’s not this kind of actorly thing that says “I am inhabiting this beast”, I don’t like that at all. That’s what drama school did to me, I turned that off very early on. It didn’t make any sense to me, people saying they were having these experiences. I like giving the effect that I might be in that state, but to be fully aware of the technical things that I’m doing to achieve that.

JT: Could you describe any particular or defining differences between 1994 to 2014 in Cardiff as a site for the investigations of gcbc?
RHM: What we are doing feels much more alien now to the city. It felt perfectly normal and natural when we were first doing it.
HR: Why was that, because there was more similar work around?
RHM: Yes, both domestically produced and the stuff that came here. Particularly since 1999 when Wales had its semi-national aspirations achieved, we’ve become a cheaper version of what happens elsewhere, and that’s the game people are playing these days. We came out of a very particular circumstance of an art-led company with Brith Gof, rather than a policy and how-it-fits-into-the-system kind of structure. I don’t think things like that exist anymore that are attractive to people like me. Prior to Brith Gof, I had no interest in theatre or the arts, and I think it’s only when you’ve got an arts scene which is attractive to people who aren’t already in the arts that you’ve got development.

JR: Because I moved from Essex to Wales, I’d have to explain to a lot of people, even when I’d go abroad, why I’d come to Cardiff. They’d say, “Why would you go to Wales to do what you want to do?” and I kept on saying, “Well it does feel a place where things can happen. Other things that aren’t the mainstream”. When we were here to start with, that really was the case. But if someone asked me that question now, I would say, “I don’t know… what would you find here now?”
TICKETS

A festival pass to all events (subject to capacity) is £30 (full price) / £25 concessions.

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