

BODIES IN FLIGHT 30TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

FLESH & TEXT

TREATMENT

TARGET AUDIENCES:

Students & academics; artists & producers of contemporary performance & dance; general public interested in the arts, particularly performance & dance.

VENUES & DATES:

WICKHAM THEATRE, FOYER, 8TH FEBRUARY – 8TH MARCH 2019

Including Launch Event 5.30pm Friday 8th with artists' talk by Simon Jones & Sara Giddens, chaired by Prof Andrew Quick (Lancaster University)

LAKESIDE ARTS NOTTINGHAM, WALLNER GALLERY, 14TH – 30TH JUNE 2019

ANGLIA RUSKIN, RUSKIN GALLERY, SEPTEMBER 2020

UCLAN PRESTON, PR1 GALLERY, 28TH FEBRUARY – 9TH MARCH 2022

PARTNERS & FUNDERS:

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE (UOB)

THEATRE COLLECTION (UOB)

DANCE 4 (NOTTINGHAM)

LAKESIDE ARTS (NOTTINGHAM)

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)

CREATIVE FORUM

CONTENTS:

The exhibition will include four main elements:

1: **display boards** containing images and text which give an insight into the company's work. There will be 9 AO-sized, full-colour boards, organized into 3 parts that detail the company's early professional practice; the development of its practice-as-research methodology working across a range of collaborations; and finally its recent work collaborating with different communities. There will also be information on the company's engagement with performance documentation, most notably its AHRC-funded CD-ROM project – *Flesh & Text*.

BOARDS SPECIFICATION: FULL COLOUR AO SIZE,
WITH A4-SIZE IMAGES FROM SHOWS
+ SMALL IMAGES OF RELEVANT POSTER/PUBLICITY ARTWORK

2: **display vitrines** containing artefacts, artists' note-books, objects and props from the Theatre Collection archive and personal archives of the company.

3: **3-screen video montage** to be presented on 3 monitors containing audio-visual material from the archives of the company's work. This will be further developed for editions of the exhibition in gallery spaces with multi-media facilities: e.g. Ruskin Gallery is focused on digital arts.

[SEE BELOW]

4: **photographic montage** prepared by long-time collaborator photographer Edward Dimsdale who has regularly documented the company's work since 1991 and collaborated on their theatre work *Model Love* (2008-11).

5. BANNER FOR ENTRANCE:

TO ADVERTISE EXHIBITION,
BASIC DETAILS,
LARGE IMAGE WATERMARK,
2 OR 3 SMALLER IMAGES FROM SHOWS

BOARD 1

IMAGES:

WORKING ON CONSTANTS

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

About the Company

BODIES IN FLIGHT, co-directed by Sara Giddens and Simon Jones, make performance *where flesh utters and words move*, that challenges and re-energizes the conventional relationship between audiences and performers, and audiences and place. Based in Bristol and Nottingham, our work comes from the careful and rigorous development of interdisciplinary and collaborative methods, often with new technologies in cutting edge venues. We insist on the buzz of ideas, on philosophy and poetry, using words and images, movement and stillness, voices and bodies, with which we aim to move audiences emotionally and spiritually.

Reflecting now on 30 years of performance-making, the exhibition is organized into three parts that detail three broad phases of work and a set of deepening concerns: the company's early professional practice; the development of its practice-as-research methodology working across a range of collaborations; and finally its recent work collaborating with different communities. Our first shows (1989-1995) thrilled to the energy and excitement of the late eighties and early nineties UK experimental performance scene where physical and dance theatre encountered performance and live art, where challenging work in body art mixed with experiments in multi-media. These shows were high-energy, action-based, erotic and political; they increasingly involved poetic text and choreographed movement. They pastiched both popular and esoteric forms; they were irreverent, slyly provocative and unremittingly satirical. They consistently explored theatre's capacity to make meaning, to affect its audiences, to comment on the world.

In 1996, with our eighth show *Do the Wild Thing!*, we formalized these concerns with a specific research imperative: to explore how performance achieved these affects. We began to deconstruct and examine what we called the *mixing of flesh and text*, which we deemed to be performance's unique contribution as an art-form. We achieved this through a series of collaborations with sonic and visual media artists (1996-2003), developing a strategy of duetting between bodies and technologies, texts and spaces. We extended our interest in siting performances in specific places, including the virtual online environment. We took these collaborations across continents and cultures, so that bodies with radically different experiences were brought together in the work. And yet, in each new work, the concern remained to explore *how we mix* in the event of the performance itself, however and wherever that might be.

Our current phase of work (2004-present) extends further our collaborations to include working with different communities, some of place, others of skill-sets, for example – choirs and gymnasts, taking the work to global cities, seaside towns, galleries and gymnasias, mixing different kinds of expertise with different kinds of personal investment. In these ways we have increasingly opened out our practice to different understandings of everydayness: how commonplace experience might help us fashion a new idea of community, however realized in the performance event itself.

Sara Giddens & Simon Jones

About the exhibition

All archives are timely, both full of *times* and *of* their time: a mixing of hapless memories, wayward gestures, technological tricks, deep socio-cultural narratives, personal-political manoeuvrings, all “retrospectively” organized into a seeming logic, a history, *the* account.

The ghosts of this activity - BODIES IN FLIGHT’s twenty performance works, so painstakingly and pleurably done over these thirty years, are the only real things to remain, once the arranging and sifting, this archiving has been revealed as the partial truth we always knew it was. The memory and the trace are all that will be left of us; and that persists most splendidly in the minds and fleshes of everyone with whom we have had the honour to make work, and every audience-spectator who has honoured us with their attention at our performances. We feel a profound debt to a variety of different canons and practices; and it is precisely and regretfully when vital parts of that recent genealogy are threatened – funding is re-aligned or withdrawn, university departments and venues are closed, that the duty to contribute to the preservation and consolidation of those practices is most pressing.

We accept that the live ‘eventhood’ of performance cannot be copied and *re-produced* through documentation. Why would one want to? This exhibition is something else: as an opportunity to engage with the work and its contexts in a number of ways, it expresses the concerns of interdisciplinarity that drive our work. This exhibition then alludes to, registers and reflects live performance’s otherness and its *separateness*: its resistant claim to uniqueness: its parasitic persistence in a culture dominated by the industries and technologies of the recordable and transmissible - *the digital*.

There are many people who have supported our work at different times in the development of the company: we cannot thank them all here. However, we wanted to acknowledge the crucial support of the following individuals and their organizations over the years:

NIKKI MILICAN (NATIONAL REVIEW OF LIVE ART), STELLA COULTANBANIS (BONINGTON GALLERY, NOTTINGHAM), HELEN COLE (INBETWEEN TIME), RICHARD DUFTY (BAC, LONDON), KATE YEDIGAROFF (MAYK, BIRSTOL), PAUL RUSS, BECKY ARAM, REBECCA HAYTER & JIM HENDLEY (DANCE 4), MARTIN BLACKHAM & TONY JUDGE (CREATIVE FORUM) and all the staff at the WICKHAM THEATRE (BRISTOL)

LOGOS:

UOB, DANCE4, LAKESIDE, TC, ACE, CREATIVE FORUM, UCLAN

BOARD 2

IMAGES:

DEADPLAY

EXHIBIT

LOVE IS...

IWANNABE

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

DEADPLAY (1989-90)

Play dead play playing dead somehow/ by a deployment of bodies in flight (is creation, they say) and properties culled from the commonplaces (you know, Wagnerian musical chairs/ Caravaggio's nowyouseeitnowyoudon't) they hope to pull it off.

It is blind faith in the plague that drives them on. Through the various theatrical deaths/ the hysterical posturing.

(Replicate in panic, the old man used to say.) These days to describe is to name catastrophe.

There is an old story-about a body that in flight/headlong down the double helix/freefalling across the desert/actually broke through (by deceiving the third eye). The spectator (incidentally an actor in real life) desires to know the mechanics of the trick (it's a showstopper).

On this point/as on many others/we beg to defer.

What turned out to be Bodies in Flight's first show was a playful piece on how performance can find its roots in children's games: in this instance, their delight in playing dead and coming back to life. Set to the austere music of Wagner's *Parsifal*, an opera about death and renewal, it deliberately trod a fine line between solemnity and parody of physical theatre's often grandiose concerns, attempting to have its cake and eat it: to enjoy playing dead whilst mocking the po-faced, "cool" performance scene. Working with students from the Department of Drama, University of Bristol, we entered an open platform event at Arnolfini (Bristol) and got selected for the National Review of Live Art (Glasgow); we were then selected for the "best of" NRLA at The Place (London).

RIK BOULTON performer, DEAN BYFIELD performer, RACHEL FEUCHTWANG performer, SIMON JONES deviser & director, MARTIN PLUNKETT performer, BARNABY POWER performer, JUSTIN O'SHAUGHNESSY performer.

Music: *Parsifal* (Richard Wagner)

Performed at: Bristol University (February 1989), Arnolfini (Bristol), National Review of Live Art at Third Eye (Glasgow), Playroom Lancaster University, Wickham Theatre (Bristol), The Place (London).

EXHIBIT (1990)

What're you gawping at? what d'you think you're doing? + there's nothing more to be said (I get it, this is a dialogue) + don't look at me like that: stop peering at me like + like what he said: not a question: you're the one strutting your stuff (naff, but carry on): I didn't force you + no: there was no arguing with that: but don't sit back in your seat like you weren't responsible (well naff word that, but keep going) + o not scruples: o not education: o no not: he was in full flow: all that jazz (embarrassing) (you started it). (no I didn't) + I'm going to expose myself physically and (applause, then hush) (hurry up). We settled into our seats, the arguments rehearsed. There's always one smart Alec that holds up the show. (dim lights). They're going to remove their (shhh, don't spoil it). Let's watch and see what happens (go on then).

We returned to the National Review of Live Art with our second work – a montage of hard-hitting scenes that explored our culture's exhibitionism, our desire both to see and be seen, to expose ourselves and to peer into the private lives of others, all set to a loud and unrelenting soundtrack. With a curtain that was constantly opened to reveal and closed to tease, the show set out to provoke and challenge the voyeurism that underpins both our popular culture and its experimental and avant-garde counterparts.

LUCY BALDWIN performer, JON CARNALL video camera, SIMON JONES deviser & director, JUSTIN O'SHAUGHNESSY technical manager, SIMON PEGG performer, BARNABY POWER performer, CHRIS RATCLIFF performer, CHARLOTTE WATKINS performer.
Music: *Lust for Life* (Iggy Pop), *Piss Factory* (Patti Smith), *Tight Pants* (Iggy Pop), *Das Lied der Deutschen* (Nico), *Fall in Love with Me* (Iggy Pop).

Performed at: Wickham Theatre (Bristol) & National Review of Live Art at Third Eye (Glasgow)

LOVE IS NATURAL AND REAL BUT NOT FOR YOU MY LOVE (1990)

*A challenge brings something into being
A seduction tempts it into another form
Upon the fictionalization of a passionate affair
(the necessary kiss-and-tell)
Upon the ecstatic chaos of seductions within seductions
(love's strange attractors).*

A manifesto for lovers: combining original score and text with stylised choreography, the piece is a meditation upon the implications of the science of chaos for the politics of desire.

This show represented a step-change in our work across a range of areas: choreographer Sara Giddens worked with text written by director Simon Jones for the four performers; rather than found music, we worked with an original score composed by Christopher Austin and a set designed by Bridget Mazzey. We made the work alongside *Exhibit* and in many ways in complete contrast to it: where *Exhibit* was all sound and fury, in-yer-face posturing, *Love is...* was abstract, elusive, philosophical in its concerns, musing on the relations between chaos theory, quantum mechanics and human relationships. The only record of the show, apart from the script, is a series of black-and-white photographs, since at the time we were very anti-documentation as we thought it was attempting to steal the soul of live performance.

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN composer, NITINCHANDRA GANATRA performer, SARA GIDDENS choreographer, SIMON JONES writer/director, URSULA LEA performer, BRIDGET MAZZEY designer, JUSTIN O'SHAUGHNESSY performer, KATHERINE PORTER performer

Music performed by: ROBERT LAMB flute/piccolo/alto flute, LARA MEPHAM oboe/cor anglais, ROBERT PLANE clarinet/bass clarinet, COLIN APPLEBY horn, JEREMY LITTLE percussion, DIGGORY SEACOME percussion, JAMES HOPPER violin, SARAH OGDEN violin, BECCIE PEARCE violin, LISA ISTED viola, ALAN CHARLTON cello, BEN GROENEVELT double bass

With: LUCY BALDWIN photography, DAVID JONES set construction

Performed at: Wickham Theatre (Bristol), Playroom (Lancaster University), Prema Arts (Dursley)

iwannabewolfman (1991-92)

A farce

*in loving memory of mama and papa
who were taken from us in that terrible accident
the never-ending wake through which the siblings sit
forever telling tales about the da and ma
about the time it all went wrong
the time they can't remember when
oh god have mercy on their souls
for they know not what they have done.*

BODIES IN FLIGHT's fourth show is a horror story about the slow death of the family, the glimpsed deaths of a whole lot of things in ways so terrible they can only be imagined. Combining original score with new text and choreography, this piece is pure nostalgia, a family romp through detritus of the comfortable home - photo-albums, teatimes, abuse, Sundays. This is what happens when you play mummies and daddies for real.

This work was the first to focus explicitly on what we called “everydayness”, something to which everyone could relate and invest in emotionally and intellectually – here the family. Based on a TV documentary which told the lives of twin sisters trapped in an almost psychotic routine of domestic work in the home of their deceased parents, we labelled the show “a farce” and explored the grim edge between earthy comedy and chilling Freudian nightmares, children’s games and adult’s desires.

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN composer, LUCY BALDWIN costume designer/performer, JON CARNALL performer, SARA GIDDENS choreographer, SIMON JONES director, BRIDGET MAZZEY set designer, SIMON PEGG performer, KATHERINE PORTER performer, BARNEY POWER performer, CHARLOTTE WATKINS costume designer/performer

Music performed by: ROBERT LAMB flute/alto flute/piccolo, JACKIE PAWSEY oboe, ELIZABETH PURNELL trombone, JOHN CORNICK trombone, JOSEPH COOPER percussion, CHARLES STRATFORD percussion, RICHARD TOWERS piano, RICHARD WADE violin, LISA ISTED violin, JANE SAMUEL violin, KATE THOMAS viola, EMMELINE BREWER cello, MARGARET WILLS double bass, CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN conductor

With: CAMERON EVERLIZE photography, DAVID JONES set builder, JUSTIN O'SHAUGNESSY stage manager

Performed at: Battersea Arts Centre (London), Wickham Theatre (Bristol), Now Festival (The Powerhouse, Nottingham), Traverse (Edinburgh), Powell Theatre (Sherborne), The Old Bull (Barnet), Bath City College, Cheshire School Dance and Drama, Queens Hall Studio (Widnes), Dovecot (Stockton-on-Tees), Nuffield Theatre (Lancaster)

BOARD 3

IMAGES:

ROUGH

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

LITTLUNS WAKE

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

ROUGH (1992-93)

A passion

Aphrodite (aka Venus), Cupid (aka Eros), Diana (aka Artemis) and Dionysus (aka Bacchus) are on the run, holed up in some motel, where a sex thing happens. They've changed their names so many times now. We don't know whether we were supposed to believe in them. They don't know which land they're in. They keep telling stories of a life to come. The interstate never stops the free circulation of trade.

Combining original score with hip-hop, story-telling to the nth and speciality acts with virtual choreography and a mobile motel room, we hope this passionate and true tale of gods and goddesses in the new Europe will entrance you, move you to tears, run rings around you and give you a deal of faith in the future.

Articulated through a run-down variety act touring to seedy venues, we focused on the comedic skills of our performers to tell a story about gods fallen on hard times, about our culture's loss of faith in the grand narratives of progress and history, the common decencies of community and shared values. We used stand-up and very bad club-band playing, including a Stylophone, to wow the punters. We were fascinated by the power and ambiguity of directly addressing the audience: this became a consistent theme in our work. As did jamming together popular forms (the club band) with the experimental (Christopher Austin's score for ensemble).

CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN composer, SARA GIDDENS choreographer, SIMON JONES director/writer, BRIDGET MAZZEY designer, SIMON PEGG performer, KATHERINE PORTER performer, GRAEME ROSE performer, CHARLOTTE WATKINS performer

Music played by: ROBERT LAMB flute, alto flute, piccolo, SIAN EDWARDS clarinet, ELIZABETH LANE horn, PAUL CLAVERT trumpet, JOSEPH COOPER, JEREMY LITTLE, DIGGORY SEACOME

percussion, JANE SAMUEL piano, CATHERINE BUSWELL violin 1, RUTH LORD violin 2, ELIN JONES viola, EMMELINE BREWER cello, JULIAN DALE double bass, CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN conductor

With: PETE BRANDT synthesized score, JON CARNALL production assistant, CAMERON EVERLIZE photography, DAVID JONES set construction, ELEANOR JONES video star, EWEN MACLEOD production assistant, CHRIS RATCLIFF stage management, SHEP ROBSON production assistant, TIM SPRING urn construction

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol), Shaftesbury Theatre (Cheltenham), The Old Bull (Barnet), Powerhouse (Nottingham), Wimbledon School of Art (London), Wickham Theatre (Bristol), Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff), Bath Festival Fringe/ The Rondo

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS (1994-95)

Lessons in exterior living

Beautiful Losers chronicles a heavenly quest. Three evangelical curators scour Britain for the relics of faith. Each site they visit yields some small miracle of the life to come. As they bear witness to the heaven held in these everyday things, they deliver up to us lessons on how best to prepare for the afterlife. Not only do they share their prophecies and revelations with us, but they also share their snacks and packed lunches. Their faith is simple as their doubt complex. They are working towards the millennium, like the rest of us, riddled with despair and distrust, driven by hope and innocence. They are the Beautiful Losers.

During one of these lessons a terrible accident happens and all hell is let loose. We can't say anymore about that now.

Inspired by the preachers who stand on street corners telling of the end of days as commuters hurry on by, this work imagines that heaven has fallen into the everyday and it is the job of our intrepid performers to convince the audience of the miracle. We abandoned the proscenium-arch set-up to make an environmental performance that had to be adapted to respond to each site it was played in. Not only did it help us to intensify even more powerfully the face-to-face relationship between performer and audience-spectator; it also began our fascination with working in non-standard formats and locations. We worked for the first time with computer-based sound-artist Darren Bourne to create a quadrophonic soundscore that both surrounded and filled the performance space. In 2003, Singapore-based performance company Spell#7 revived the show and set it in a shop-house in the Little India district of Singapore.

DARREN BOURNE sound designer, JON CARNALL performer, SARA GIDDENS choreographer, SIMON JONES director/writer, BRIDGET MAZZEY designer/performer, CHARLOTTE WATKINS performer

With: KATIE BURNELL head construction, CAMERON EVERLIZE photography, SIMON PEGG graphics

Performed at: Nott Dance Festival/Bonington Gallery (Nottingham), Courtyard Theatre (London), Arnolfini (Bristol), Wimbledon School of Art (London), Powerhouse (Nottingham), Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff), Wickham Theatre (Bristol)

LITTLUNS WAKE (1995)

A wake

Elder's trying to bury his little brother, but Littlun won't stay down. He's invited perfect strangers to the wake, but then the woman whose love they shared turns up. He's making up stories about what a bastard his brother was, but everybody knows different. Grief does funny things. Meanwhile the caterers fail to show and the coffin lid won't screw shut. Bodies in Flight's seventh show LITTLUNS WAKE invites you in as mourner to the death of something very much more beautiful and graceful, the relationship that anchored everyone to reality, the life that gave meaning to the struggle, the boy who made everyone feel really good about themselves. In the shared space of the wake, in intimate and intense performance, Bodies in Flight continue their exploration of the most collective and contemporary anxiety of all - the future and did we really mean it. Come, view the corpse, reminisce, pay your last respects. See if you can catch him breathing.

This brought to a close a trilogy of works that focused on contemporary belief, or the lack of it, what replaces religious faith in a secular society. Again, staged as an environmental piece, the audience was first invited to gather around a metal coffin, suspended in the air and packed with ice slowly melting onto the floor, then to sit on benches along a single long table, as haunting sounds emerge from small speakers and one of the performers drank through his "grief" with real whisky. Subtitled "a wake", in hindsight, we realized it also brought to a close the first phase of BODIES IN FLIGHT'S work in which we playfully explored the possibilities of performance and took a satirical stance on issues of gender and sexuality, identity and politics.

DARREN BOURNE soundtrack, DEAN BYFIELD performer, JON CARNALL performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography, SIMON JONES director/writer, BRIDGET MAZZEY design, CHARLOTTE WATKINS performer

With: CLARE ENGLAND technical assistance, HUGO GLENDINNING photography, ELIZABETH JONES dressmaking, EWEN McLEOD technical assistance, JOHN PEELING coffin construction

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol), Insights Conference, Intersect (Dartington), Bonington Gallery (Nottingham)

BOARD 4

IMAGES:

DO THE WILD THING

REDUX

STILL MOVING

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

DO THE WILD THING! (1996)

A peep show

*The three lovers are in the big f*** scene. They tried to escape its gravity but the bed centre stage has pulled them in. Like everybody else, that's the leap their imagination made. Only trouble is it's only big enough for two. So one must look on, like you and me. And anyway who believes intimacy was only ever two. It's always been crowded out by that third person, the one with all the dreams. The light burns the bed, scours the skin of the boy and the girl; and the man sees that we see all there is to see in an instant. Then he begins the real exposure. Of what we like to call love, of the motives behind our intimacies, of the overwhelming desire in our tiniest of exchanges, the littlest of our making a move. Of what hides in love itself. And what shows itself through love.*

Our eighth show marked a major shift in our practice, as we set out to explore a specific research question for the first time: we pulled apart the fundamental relation between what we see and what we hear on stage in order to investigate the different ways in which our senses work, the different meanings and affects that each sense conveys. Inspired by Andy Warhol's voyeuristic movie *Beauty#2*, which improvises a scene of a couple questioned about their relationships and sexuality by an unseen interlocutor off camera, we set up a similar situation in which a couple lie on a bed as an unseen narrator sitting behind a curtain imagines the potential worlds of their relationship to the strains of a live string trio, mocking the classical lovers' tryst. The work deconstructed the theatrical and asked uncomfortable questions of its audience's erotic and libidinal investment in the show, whilst at the same time demonstrating the sheer power of performance to affect, disturb and engage them. Whilst cinema may be all about the erotic gaze, theatre is the only art where fleshes and senses actually mix; and it was this mixing we wanted to unpack and interrogate.

CHRIS AUSTIN composer, JON CARNALL performer, JANE DEVOY performer, DAN ELLOWAY performer, SARA GIDDENS choreographer, SIMON JONES director/writer, BRIDGET MAZZEY designer

With: BEN ROGERSON cello, SARAH SMALE viola, LIZ WHITTAM violin

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol) & Now Festival/ Bonington Gallery (Nottingham)

DO THE WILD THING! REDUX (2012)

Commissioned by Performing Documents, this project saw four of the original collaborators return to their archives of *Do the Wild Thing!* (1996) by working independently until the day of installing the work in Arnolfini Light Studio. Each produced a separate new work in their own medium – dance, photography, text and video. Like a hologram, shattered, we offered a set of different perspectives, (literally) through-seeings on to the object that was no longer there.

Still Moving: Moving Still was a durational dance duet, performed a number of times over *Redux's* opening weekend. It was then developed into two site-specific performances at Nottingham Contemporary for the 2013 Dance in Galleries Season (Dance4) and at Birmingham Conservatoire of Music as part of the International Festival of Dance 2018 (DanceXchange).

In *Make the Fixed Volatile, and Make the Volatile Fixed*, one photographic technology was reworked through the frame of another, specifically re-figuring old photogravure techniques with the digital.

I'd Like to Call You Joe Tonight exploded the single perspective of the 1996 multi-camera video-document by harnessing the potential of high-resolution imaging and hard-drive synchronization, to produce a three-screen video-work that reinvented the show from each of its actors' points-of-view.

Muse, as installation and prose work, explored the bonds between flesh and text in the 1996 performance. One of the show's original performers read from a limited-edition book that mused upon the relationship of writer to performer.

TOM BAILEY performer, EDWARD DIMSDALE photography, DAN ELLOWAY performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography, SIMON JONES writer, ELLA JUDGE performer, TONY JUDGE video, MARTHA KING performer, USHA MAHENTHIRALINGHAM performer, PARMJIT SAGOO performer, RUTH SPENCER performer, JEN SUMNER performer, JUSTYNA URBANCZYK performer, KERSTIN WELLHOFER performer

On video: CHRIS BIANCHI performer, POLLY FRAME performer, JAMES D KENT performer

With: MARTIN BLACKHAM 1st assistant director, JAKE CHANNON set technician, TERRY FLAXTON director of photography, PAUL GEARY runner, ADAM DJ LAITY focus puller, PETER MILNER camera operator, JONATHAN SCOTT audio recording, PAM TAIT wardrobe

Presented at: Arnolfini (Bristol), Nottingham Contemporary, Birmingham Conservatoire of Music

BOARD 5

IMAGES:

CONSTANTS

DELIVERUS

DOUBLE HAPPINESS

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

CONSTANTS (1998)

A future perfect

She is rehearsing her love just one more time. Over three score and ten, now she needs to get it just right. Time is running out for her, as it is for the rest of us. But in this constant instant, this endless replay of those lines he might have said, the moves she kind of made, the images you will see, her time is also filling up and brimming over. Her past pours into the future, which is where we are all going. In this old woman's reverie, memory compresses upon memory, the images so vivid we do not know whether they or she are for real. What actually happened and what could still happen saturate one another. And at this point of letting go, does it really matter whether our memories retell the past or help us write the future?

Collaborating with composer Darren Bourne and multi-media artist Caroline Rye, Bodies in Flight's ninth work challenges the assumptions we make about the ageing process. Two women performers, one twenty-three, the other seventy-four, interrogate the differing capabilities and experiences of each other's lives. Using choreography and text, sound and video interactively, they conspire and conflict to stage our culture's anxieties over, attitudes to and depiction of the old. Their bodies become the intimate site upon which to celebrate the ageing process as both beautiful and terrible, as the one, truly shared experience of human existence.

If the "body beautiful" had been the centre of attention in the previous work, here we focused on the ageing body, the body in a palpable state of decay, as 74-year-old Sheila Gilbert made her way from the walls of the space to its "dead" centre, moving through the seated audience, often using them as physical supports for her painful journey inwards. Collaborating with media artist Caroline Rye, for the first time, we integrated video technology into our making process with Sara choreographing a dance with and for camera that conceived of the performer being in a duet with the technology. Accordingly, we

presented the work both as a media installation (work in progress) and as a performance: we began to understand that a single work can have many different manifestations; and that material and media can duet the one with the other.

DARREN BOURNE sound composer, PATRICIA BREATNACH performer, SARA GIDDENS co-director/choreographer, SHEILA GILBERT performer, SIMON JONES co-director/writer, CAROLINE RYE media artist

Performed at: Celebration Nottingham - Bonington Gallery (Nottingham) work in progress, Bonington Gallery (Nottingham) show, Arnolfini (Bristol)

DELIVERUS (1999-2000)

A romance

the maths: 1 weekend: 1 flat: 1 locked door: 1 phone off the hook: 1 full freezer: 1 bed: 2 lovers: how many loves?

1: look into your lover's eyes for a very long time indeed: what do you see? 2: study his face like your life depended on it: is his smile your working definition of trust? 3: close your eyes tight and imagine a world without her. (Pause a bit.) Now, that wasn't so hard, was it? 4: why isn't there world enough and time enough and love songs enough for this?

By falling in love with love, Bodies in Flight's second collaboration with media artist Caroline Rye continues our fascination with what happens when flesh meets image-text, when the apparition encounters the incarnation. Choreography, text, video interact to explore that interface with the divine that we all experience when we fall in love, the anxieties and ecstasies, the unbearable and yet undeniable undecidability of that first chance encounter that leads to the blissful/ terrible [delete as appropriate] forever-after.

Inspired by the long scene of Sunday morning post-coital reverie in Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*, this piece charted the whole arc of a love affair from first-night ecstasies to end-of-romance recriminations. To intensify the focus on minute action and choreography, we built a small theatre-in-the-round in every venue we performed in, so that the audience felt they were right in there with the lovers. Audiences who turned up "in couples" were asked to sit across the space from one another. Thus they were able, if they had so wished, to re-enact in their own mutual gaze that of the performers, looking over the space of the performed gaze of "fictional lovers" to perform their own "reality." Re-using Caroline's handheld mini-cameras added a forensic gaze to this intimacy, as the absence of any sound-score reinforced the sense of the lovers' self-contained world ... until at the end (of both the show and the affair) the TVs are retuned to whatever was broadcast at that time on that night.

MARK ADAMS performer, POLLY FRAME performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography/direction, SIMON JONES text/direction, CAROLINE RYE video

With: JON CARNALL artwork, EDWARD DIMSDALE photography

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol), Now Festival 99/Bonington Gallery (Nottingham), Wickham Theatre (Bristol), The Roadmender (Northampton), The Green Room (Manchester)

DOUBLE HAPPINESS (2000)

A transport

an international web & performance collaboration with Spell#7 (Singapore)

fluffboy visited hunny.bunny's website.

shygirl7 met 6wasabe9 in a chatroom.

Now it's double happiness twice over.

But real life's messy. Do you know where he's been? Does she?

Across continents where differences of language and culture, shoe-size and disease-resistance create turbulence in the flow of information and capital, Double Happiness jacks into the body that braves time-zones and economy class to get fleshy with another.

This web-event & live performance mixes text, movement, digital sounds & video to distil WAPness into a distinctly wet-ware double-take on 21st century sex.

This marked our first international collaboration and explored the then-novel world of internet dating with an inter-continental double wedding celebrating the possibilities of the world-wide web and cheap jet travel to bring communities and cultures together. We continued to develop our integration of new technologies into our working method by using webcams and a specially authored website that extended and blurred the boundaries of the performance: for the first time, the platform for the work moved fluidly from theatre space to online environment.

CHONG LI CHUAN sonic artist, BENJAMIN CLOUGH performer, DAN ELLOWAY performer, SARA GIDDENS choreographer/co-director, KHOO EE HOON production manager, SIMON JONES writer/co-director, DOROTHY PNG lighting designer, PAUL RAE director, KAYLENE TAN performer, MARIANNE WEE performer, HANINDAH ZAINOMIUM new media/graphic designer

With: BEN DAVIS video operator, EDWARD DIMSDALE photography, JESSICA MORRIS lighting operator

Performed at: The Black Box, Fort Canning Centre (Singapore), Digital Summer/Contact Theatre (Manchester), NOW/Breathing Space, Bonington Gallery (Nottingham), The Drama Studio (Loughborough), Breathing Space/Arnolfini (Bristol)

BOARD 6

IMAGES:

SKINWORKS

WHO BY FIRE

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

SKINWORKS (2002-04)

A valentine

Three handles appear in a chatroom, they're anonymous, they're anybody, everybody, they're angels, demons, they're hermaphrodites, they're making a new kind of love mailing valentines into the void.

Three performers cruise the web, crashing chatrooms, flipping identities, spinning yarns, beguiling, ensnaring unsuspecting novices, seducing each other, pushing imagination beyond the tech spec.

No flesh given, no harm done.

Made as a collaboration with the band Angel Tech, film-maker Lucy Baldwin and new-media artist Nicholas Watton, the show continued our exploration of cyberlove by turning the online into the actual: we physicalized a sex chatroom in the performance space. In this way, we investigated the shifts in contemporary identity construction: how new desires and moods of love emerge from the irresponsibilities of sex without bodies. Partly made in Chicago and the UK, the work developed into a series of linked outputs – a radio broadcast, installation, lectures, web and performance events across the UK and internationally in Brisbane, Chicago, Victoria (Canada) & Singapore – thus pushing the boundaries of what constituted performance, and demonstrating how different media could dialogue with one another to produce an expanded work.

TIM ATTACK sound, LUCY BALDWIN video, DOUG BOTT sound, POLLY FRAME performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography, NEIL JOHNSON sound, SIMON JONES text/direction, GRAEME ROSE performer, KAYLENE TAN performer, NICHOLAS WATTON new media

On video: MARK BOOTH, BEN CLOUGH, STEPHEN FIEHN, STACY GOLDATE, OLEN HSU, MALIN LINDELOW, TYLER MYERS, ETHAN ROEDER, HAMZA WALKER, CHRISTOPHER & RIA

With: EDWARD DIMSDALE photography, JULIAN HANBY graphic design

And additional text by: Mark Booth, Stacy Goldate, Olen Hsu, Ethan Roeder, Hamza Walker

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol), BAC (London), Colchester Arts, Crewe & Alsager Arts, ICA (London), Hoxton Hall (London), Now Festival/Bonington Gallery (Nottingham), Wickham Theatre (Bristol), School of the Art Institute of Chicago (USA), Year of Living Digitally Festival (Singapore), Speculate & Innovate (QUT, Brisbane), Collision Interarts (Victoria, Canada).

WHO BY FIRE (2004-05)

An opera.

The party's done.

Five hangers-on share bizarre stories of accidental deaths, killing time before going home, on the eve of something big. Facing the void: like children facing the future, lovers facing each other, the old facing death.

Combining the music of the band Angel Tech with the intimate performance style of Bodies in Flight, this is another powerful piece of performance, where everyday materials – simple language, mundane actions and gestures – fuse into poetry. The performance centres on that strange in-between time after the party's over and before the day that just won't dawn.

Beginning with a long improvised dialogue between performers and musicians, this show blurred the distinctions between who did what on stage to produce a rock opera on our fascination with how people die and how that most personal of all life-events is shared. This grew out of our growing concern with the theme of generations, with ageing and how one generation passes on its knowledge to another. This show moved from the private language of preverbal twins to the frail voice of an old performer singing a shanty to her lost love. It became not only about death, but how we acquire and then finally lose our capacities and skills, life as all possibility then all memory. This inter-generational theme was further developed by Sara in her three-screen video collaboration with Tony Judge – *Triptych*.

TIM ATTACK sound, DOUG BOTT sound, BEN CLOUGH video/performer, POLLY FRAME performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography, NEIL JOHNSON sound, SIMON JONES lyrics/direction, TONY JUDGE video, GRAEME ROSE performer

On video: Mark Adams, Sheila Gilbert, Ella Judge, Sam Lamshead, Alisdair McKee, Tom Wainwright.

Performed at: Opera 2004/BAC (London), Mayfest/Bristol Old Vic, ICA (London), Wickham Theatre (Bristol), Sensitive Skin Festival/Powerhouse (Nottingham), Bretton Hall (University of Leeds)

Triptych screened at Quad (Derby), Bonington Gallery (Nottingham), Beetroot Gallery (Derbyshire), Goldsmiths University (London), Banff (Canada), Musse Festival (Cologne), Artist Researcher in Performance Conference (University of Bedfordshire)

BOARD 7

IMAGES:

FLESH&TEXT

OTHER DOCUMENTS

BOOK COVERS

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

FLESH & TEXT, a document (2001)

When we started making work in 1989, we were sceptical about documentation, fearful that the documents of performance would be used to replace performance itself, that it was easier to watch the video than go to see the show. This meant that the archival remains of those early works are patchy and incomplete. In 1996, with *Do the Wild Thing!* we realized that companies who had good documentation were better able to thrive, so we decided to ensure that all our future work would be well documented. We produced multi-camera video records alongside catalogues and booklets of scripts and images.

In 2001, in collaboration with Iain Simons from Suppose design and Tony Judge, we made *Flesh & Text*, the first CD-ROM collection of archival materials from one performance company. Covering our first 11 shows, it included scripts, publicity, photographs, video, interviews with members of the company, written reflections from a range of commentators, and two extended hyper-texts from the co-directors that linked together the various documents to tell the many stories of the many bodies of Bodies in Flight. As a research project that crossed both professional practice and academia, it was jointly funded by Arts Council England and The Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Today, developments in software mean that this document is inaccessible – the fate of much digital art and archives. However, an emulation of some aspects of the CD-ROM's functionality is presented here.

Since producing *Flesh & Text*, both co-directors have published extensively on the company's work in journals and edited collections (see examples below).

BOARD 8

IMAGES:

SECRECY OF SAINTS

MODEL LOVE/ SHOW/ INSTALLATION

TRIPTYCH

HYMN

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

THE SECRECY OF SAINTS (2006)

A work-in-progress for Inbetween Time Festival of Live Art & Intrigue 2006

For BODIES IN FLIGHT, a new work emerges partly from the previous show's un-worked material. In this work-in-progress of THE SECRECY OF SAINTS, choreographer Sara Giddens and performer Polly Frame re-use the video footage of the inter-generational relationships between three women from our recent opera Who By Fire. Writer Simon Jones and musician Neil Johnson (from the band Angel Tech) add new text and music to this re-working to make an inbetween work especially for this major Live Art festival. Here, we begin THE SECRECY OF SAINTS' exploration of the instant when two strangers' accidental eye-contact morphs into the mutual gaze of lovers.

This one-woman performance used wireless video technology and a poetic, allusive text to explore the inner workings of the mind of a recluse, isolated from and fearful of the world. This became a metaphor for the fragility of anyone's identity, the precarious relationship between our senses, our environment and the stories we tell ourselves to give us a feeling of solidity and integrity. Performed four times on one day in a gallery space of Arnolfini, it became a hallucinatory experience for the performer, moving from a closed, anxious figure, physically constrained, to a rapturous, open person claiming her space before her public.

POLLY FRAME performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography/co-direction, NEIL JOHNSON music, SIMON JONES text/co-direction

With: EDWARD DIMSDALE photography

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol)

MODEL LOVE (2008-11)

A lovers' manual.

Somewhere between soundbytes, sonnets and songs, Bodies in Flight's fifteenth performance work - a dark and surreal exploration of modern dating - begins with a mysterious book of photographs - a lovers' manual - claiming to record that exact moment when two strangers' eyes meet and it's love at first sight.

Known for their innovative collaborations with sonic and visual artists, Bodies in Flight are for the first time working with a photographer - Edward Dimsdale whose bespoke photo-books are at the passionate heart of this new work.

Part investigators, part impersonators, three performers bring to life his unique series of images with Bodies in Flight's characteristic mix of live music, poetry and high-octane performing. Raiding dating sites and surfing handy hints on how to speed-date, MODEL LOVE guides you through the maze of rough-and-ready, disposable self-portraiture towards the holy grail of all lonely hearts – romance.

We began with three location shoots – a hotel room, a library, a lake. These became three books of photographs, from which we developed the work exploring how our ready-to-hand technologies of image-making produce multiple self-portraits with multiple potential performances of self. At the end of the show, we invited audiences up on to the stage to examine the books at close hand: their animated interaction with the images inspired us to continue developing the work into an installation and a one-man show that focused on the many ways in which the images are manipulated, printed, consumed. In addition to the two performance versions and installations, Simon took Sara's choreography to make a video with Tony Judge, entitled *Hymn*.

EDWARD DIMSDALE photography, CATHERINE DYSON performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography/co-direction, SAM HALMARACK lyrics & music, SIMON JONES text/co-direction, GRAEME ROSE performer, TOM WAINWRIGHT performer

With: TIM BISHOP production assistant, JON CARNALL print artwork, PAUL GEARY video documentation, TONY JUDGE video-edit & website, KATE YEDIGAROFF producer

Performed at: Arnolfini (Bristol), Alsager Arts, Technologies of Transmediality (Bristol), Wickham Theatre (Bristol), Ustinov/Bath Theatre Royal
Installation version: Mayburst/BAC (London) & Quake (Derby Dancehouse).

BOARD 9

IMAGES:

DREAM-WORK/ DREAM-WALK

GYMNAST

LIFE CLASS

WATERMARK IMAGE:

TEXT:

DREAM→WORK/ DREAM→WALK (2009-16)

AS DREAM→WORK

Every working day millions of us get up still half asleep, look in the bathroom mirror and start the daily task of putting on a public face: we try to work out what on earth we are doing – with our lives, with the lives of others, our lovers, children, friends, or just the must-dos of the day ahead. As we commute to work, this daily day-to-day construction of self continues through a strange overlaying of both public and private spaces: what happens on the street with what happens in our heads. Only when we get to the workplace are we finally ready to play “ourselves”.

Our original aim had been to take our method of investigating the everyday out onto the streets, to join and mingle amongst commuters as they went to work. Collaborating again with Spell#7, we took on the role of ex-pat worker, as Spell#7 played the local going back home. We moved that ex-pat back to the UK to Nottingham and Bristol, to disappear into the commuting crowds, and then suddenly through song and dance to appear amongst them as performer. With each new edition, as we made the work, people would come up to us on the streets and share stories of their towns: these approaches changed the direction of the project. Over seven years and seven editions, it morphed from being about the experience of commuting to explore place and identity through these memories of local inhabitants, from the global city of Singapore to the British seaside of Skegness, from the miners' strike of 1984/5 to recollections of circus animals on the streets of Bristol.

AS DREAM→WALK/ SKEGNESS EDITION

Off to Skeggy! Freed from the daily grind for a day, a week or a fortnight in caravan or B&B! Fun in the sun, sea and sand!

Commissioned by Dance4 as part of Big Dance 2012, Bodies in Flight make a welcome return to SO. Their seaside walk celebrates the Great British Seaside Holiday. Accessible for any age group, the walk will take you from the station, along the Grand Parade, to the sea, exploring

*through a sensory mix of soundscape, movement and performance the funny, intimate and sometimes profound experiences we all have when we holiday by the seaside.
The walk lasts 35 minutes. You will be provided with a headset to experience the specially composed soundscape and guided by the performers along this dream walk.
This is an outdoor walking commission, please dress accordingly.*

In each place, the work was made anew, inhabitants were interviewed, about their memories of place to their hopes for the future. We began to work in closer partnerships with festivals and funders - who variously wanted to draw attention to the architectural history of a town, the 30-year commemoration of the miners' strike, the life of West St in Bedminster (Bristol). We interviewed the young and the very old, from a diverse mix of communities: these interviewees became our collaborators.

TIM ATTACK musician, POLLY FRAME performer, SARA GIDDENS choreography/co-direction, SAM HALMARACK music/soundscore, NEIL JOHNSON music/soundscore, SIMON JONES original text/co-direction, GRAEME ROSE performer, TOM WAINWRIGHT performer

With: TONY JUDGE video documentation, DUNCAN SPEAKMAN audio consultant

Performed at: Singapore Arts Festival (2009), Nottdance (Nottingham 2009), Mayfest (Bristol 2010), Wirksworth Festival (2011), SO Festival (Skegness 2012 & 2013), Productive Margins (Cardiff 2015), Know Your Bristol On the Move (Bristol 2016), and shared alongside *Still Moving: moving still* video as part of a seven-screen video installation, *Still-ing* presented at *Talking, Thinking, Dancing* (2017), as one of two works representing the UK at the Artistic Doctorates in Europe (ADiE).

GYMNAST (2011-13)

Bodies in Flight in their 17th performance project GYMNAST delves into our fascination with the athlete's drive to physical excellence, their supreme attention to bodily task, the high point on the parallel bars, the thousands of minute adjustments needed to hold that still. In collaboration with video-artist Tony Judge and composer Jen Bell and Night Bus Choir, GYMNAST uses the training session as both source and structure, from warm-up routines to the display of gymnastic exercises, from novice to expert, to explore the continuing power of the Olympian ideal of athlete as interface between human and superhuman, the mortal and the divine.

This project responded to the 2012 Games by exploring the athlete's drive and determination to acquire the skills necessary to achieve physical excellence, both from the insider's point of view – the trainee gymnast, and from the spectator's – the admiration we feel in watching the achievement of physical mastery. Using the gymnast's training session as both source and structure, moving from basic warm-up routines to the display of gymnastic exercises, we developed a micro-choreography revealing the beauty of the gymnast's supreme attention to bodily task, placed alongside new writing set to music and sung by a choir. In parallel, video-maker Tony Judge created the video consisting of interviews and sequences capturing the training regime and micro-choreography of the gymnasts' movements. The work was presented in various forms: as multi-screen video installation, sometimes with live gymnastics and/or live choir; as theatre performance or a gymnasium presentation. Four videos were selected by the BBC for their Big Screens contribution to the Cultural Olympiad and shown at 22 locations nationwide in the run-up to the Games.

NICOLE ANDREW gymnast, JOSHUA AVALLONE gymnast, JENNIFER BELL composer/conductor, SOPHIE GAUNT gymnast, SARA GIDDENS choreographer/co-director, SAM HALMARACK composer/post-production, SIMON JONES lyrics/co-director, TONY JUDGE video/photography/artwork, BEN TAYLOR gymnast

The Night Bus Choir: Martin Bailey, Dominic Cauldwell, Jamie Darwen, Bertie Goffe, Lucy Goldsack, Kate Howson, Alex Kalinowska, Andy Marshall, Adrian Mantle, Phaedra Mawle, Alex Reid, Ruth Russell, Gemma Smart, Jan Swann & Katy Wilkes

On video: gymnasts from the following clubs - Alfreton Leisure Centre Gymnastics, Amber Valley Gymnastics Club, Notts Gymnastics Academy, Sharley Park Girls Gymnastics Club, The Belgian Gymnastics Federation, Tibshelf Gymnastics Club

And their coaches: Diane Andrew, Rachel Dixon, Colin Edwards, Ian Kime, Amber Moore, Gary Newton, Sue Snelgrove, Claire Starkey, Andy Sverdloff (Sports leader), Jemma Thurgood & Barry Winch

Interviewees: Joshua Avallone, Abi Barnes, Becky Downie, Jack Grist, Aiden Gwyther, Jake Houtby, Katie Johnson, Charlotte Matthews, Chloe Pryce, Evie Washington, George Woodhouse, Jennifer Woodhouse & Abbie Woolley

Performed and presented at: Ferment/Bristol Old Vic, Surface Gallery (Nottingham), Arnolfini (Bristol), Atkins Gallery (Hinckley), Mayfest/City of Bristol Gymnastics, Rushcliffe Academy (Nottingham), BBC Big Screens (nationwide)

LIFE CLASS (2019)

Life Class draws upon the Tea Dance to celebrate our greatest, most memorable, most requested role - ourselves, and asks how we ended up playing the part ... in this scene ... with these lines ... and wonders – who's this playing opposite?

Through poetic text and detailed choreography, inspired in part from work with Tea Dancers and community choirs, this brand new performance explores how our response to the call of the other determines who we are: how it makes us us.

Taking as its starting point the fictional encounter between two lovers at a dance many years ago, our twentieth work extends our collaborations with different communities to work with a group of senior social dancers to explore the role that dance has played in their lives, and how one incident in a person's life can change its direction forever. Thirty years ago, Bodies in Flight began its artistic journey with the child's game of playing dead, focusing on performance's uncanny need to concretize what is impossible to imagine. Today we return to the most basic performance situation: beginning with two people on stage in front of an audience facing one another; we return to the duet and to the mixing of texts, both verbatim and imagined; to the mixing of bodies – performers and social dancers, singers and audiences; as yet another iteration of our exploration of performance's fundamental processes – a constant return to beginnings: to imagine the world anew.

SARA GIDDENS choreographer/ co-director, NEIL JOHNSON composer/ sound, SIMON JONES writer/ co-director, TONY JUDGE video/ web design, GRAEME ROSE performer, OLIVIA WINTERINGHAM performer

Performed at: Wickham Theatre (Bristol), Lakeside Arts (Nottingham)

VIDEO MONTAGE:

INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

DEADPLAY

EXHIBIT

WOLFMAN

ROUGH

BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

CONSTANTS

DELIVERUS

DOUBLE HAPPINESS/ 3 SCREEN PARIP

WHO BY FIRE

TRIPTYCH

MODEL LOVE

HYMN

DREAM-WORK/-WALK

GYMNAST