Ridiculusmus

The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland

Arts House, Meat Market
Wed 12 – Sun 16 November
1hr 30 min, including interval
Post-Show Q&A Thu 13, 9.10pm

artshouse.com.au
ridiculusmus.com

The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland has been commissioned by Sick! Festival, Brighton (UK); and is supported by Shoreditch Town Hall, Metal, Stephen Joseph Theatre, and the City of Melbourne through Arts House. Ridiculusmus is supported by Arts Council England and Wellcome Trust.
Artistic Credits

Written by: David Woods & Jon Haynes
Performers: Ben Grant, Nicola Gunn, Jon Haynes, David Woods
Set Designer: George Tomlinson
Lighting: Mischa Twitchin
Sound: Salvador Garza

Executive Producer (UK): Jane McMorrow
Producer (Australia): Erin Milne
Associate Producer, Productions (UK): Jake Orr
Associate Producer, Learning and Engagement (UK): Natalie Clarke
Associate Production Manager (UK): Suzy Somerville

Script & Performance Collaborators:
John Burns, Louise Bush, Meredith Davies, Nicky Harley, Rupert Jones, James King, Ranjit Krishnamma, Brian Lipson, Persis Jade Maravala, Sally Marie, Dominic McHale, Valentina Muhr, Marnie Nash, Cindy Oswin, Patrizia Paolini, Minsun Park, Lisa Rammidge, Richard Talbot

Medical Advisory Panel: Charlotte Burck, Neil Cole, Graham Music, Jaakko Seikkula, Ben Sessa, Suresh Sundram

Artistic Notes

In *The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland* we are attempting a technical feat beyond our experience and knowledge: a simultaneous performance of two plays involving the same set of characters in two different times; with dialogue that intersects and occasionally intertwines in a complex but decodable way. It is a form that seems to us an appropriate vehicle for the material we are investigating; and one that conjures, as best we can, the experience of auditory hallucination and the disarmingly ordinary chaos of psychosis. Our aim is to de-stigmatise and normalise psychosis, and ultimately to engage you in a quiet revolution in social interaction.

The play is informed by (but is by no means a demonstration of) a way of working known as ‘Open Dialogue’; which emerged in Finnish Western Lapland over a 20-year period and has since practically eradicated schizophrenia from that region. It uses a ‘dialogical’ approach to therapy inspired by the Russian literary philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin; its guiding principles include tolerating uncertainty and allowing a polyphony of voices in the treatment process. As part of our research in Finland, our characters took part in a series of treatment meetings and on every occasion we were overwhelmed with the emotional intensity of the work. We returned home glowing with the power of possibility. We wanted the play to struggle with this knowledge – that such a successful approach exists but is not yet within reach of the UK health system.

For more information on Open Dialogue please see the website:
www.opendialogueapproach.co.uk

David Woods & Jon Haynes
About Ridiculusmus

Ridiculusmus's origins are in the shadowlands of theatre and comedy. The company began as a rabble of graduates from the Poor School in London, adapting comic novels for the London fringe; and has evolved over the last quarter-century into a robust double act. Driving and leading as author–actors, the company’s co-artistic directors David Woods and Jon Haynes have established Ridiculusmus as a flagship UK performance group touring nationally and internationally, with works passionately wrought from minimal resources, and with an oxymoronic aim: to be both serious and funny.

The company was founded in 1992, when David Woods and Jon Haynes, together with fellow student Angus Barr, started busking comic songs from the music hall era on the London underground. They ventured into comedy clubs, then started their own Dadaist version called ‘The Tomato Club’. The audience was given tomatoes to throw at acts who considered themselves ‘bad enough to appear’. Kicked out in a river of fetid tomato seeds, the three newly graduated performers thought they could avoid the unimaginative boxing of the commercial theatre scene by making their own work; specifically, ‘something or anything’ for the Canal Café Theatre, which had had a show cancelled and was looking for a last minute fill-in. Boldly, David suggested doing *Three Men in a Boat* with a smattering of their comic songs. In one week the ‘something’ was duly delivered and the theatre company was born. It was christened ‘Ridiculusmus’ after a line from one of Horace’s epistles:

‘Parturient montes nascetur ridiculus mus’ (‘Mountains heave in childbirth and a silly little mouse is born’) – Horace, *Ars Poetica*, Ep.II.3, p. 139)

Three exciting and turbulent years ensued, during which the company toured its two Flann O’Brien adaptations – *The Third Policeman* and *At Swim Two Birds* – to an expanding network of mostly unconventional venues. Now down to just David Woods and Jon Haynes, Ridiculusmus established a base in The Playhouse in Derry/Londonderry, unencumbered by artistic policy, funding or a sustainable working method.

It took another five years of living out of boxes in the company’s office to reach the point where Ridiculusmus was able and confident enough to make its own work and articulating its methods – which they called ‘ARSEFLOP’, standing for Attitude, Reality, Sensitivity, Edge, Focus, Listen, Open (your heart) and Play.

By 2000 Ridiculusmus had a body of original works – *Say Nothing*, *The Exhibitionists* and *Yes Yes Yes* – that was touring internationally from a new base at London’s Battersea Arts Centre. Revenue status with the Arts Council of England, superlative producing and administrative collaborators followed.

Ridiculusmus proudly continues its efforts to make work driven by the company’s passions of the moment, with a flowing pool of like-minded collaborators.
Thank You

Ridiculusmus would like to thank Accessible Arts, Sydney; Tim Harrison and Helen Medland at The Basement Brighton; Joshua Boland-Burrell; Michael Carney; Marco Cher-Gibard; Laura Collier; Joanna Crowley; Gwyn Daniel; Dew; Pekka Holm, Eija-Liisa Rautiainen and staff at the Dialogic Practices conference in Hameenlinna; Rosemary Gallagher; David Garrett; Hannah Grace at Felsted School; Nicola Gunn; Samara Hersch; David M. Hough; Kate, Louis and Stan; Timo Haaraniemi and staff at Keropoudas Hospital in Tornio; Barry Laing; Matt Fenton and colleagues plus staff and students at Lancaster University; Ian Brownhill, Jodie Miller, Mirta and Jenny Porter at METAL Edge Hill; City and Hackney MIND; James Monaghan; Jaime Montford; National Theatre Studio; People Show studios; Peter Rober; Ryedale MIND drama group and the Cambridge Centre, Whitby; the University of Salford’s School of Arts and Media Performance Research Centre, plus Ian Cummins and colleagues in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work; Mark Salter; James Saunders; James Pidgeon at Shoreditch Town Hall; John Shotter; Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough; Hans ‘Hasse’ Stigzelius; Markku Sutela; the Centre for Practice as Research in Theatre at Tampere University; Elena Timplalexi; Trinity Buoy Wharf; Persis Jade Maravala and Jorge Ramos at UEL; and Warwick Arts Centre programmers Matt Rudkin, Jamie Wells and Rachel Wilson.

Arts House

Arts House presents contemporary arts in programs encompassing performance, exhibitions, live art, residencies and other activities that nurture, support and stimulate cultural engagement. We value work in which artists at different stages of their careers, as well as our diverse audiences and communities, are actively involved in creating an imaginative, just and environmentally sustainable global society.

Arts House’s programs include two curated public seasons of multidisciplinary work each year. Approximately half of this work is selected through an Expression of Interest process. We seek artists who are responding to the urgent issues of our time in imaginative and surprising ways, taking artistic risks and offering multiple ways for audiences to engage with or co-author their work.

For more information, please contact us on the details below.

521 Queensberry Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
(03) 9322 3720
artshouse@melbourne.vic.gov.au
artshouse.com.au

---

Facebook: /artshousemelbourne
Twitter: @artshousemelb
Instagram: @artshouse