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Arts House at  
North Melbourne Town Hall

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Two Jews  
walk into a theatre...  
Brian Lipson &  
Gideon Obarzanek

Image: Sarah Walker

Arts House



Season 2

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Tue 23 – Sun 28 August, 60 minutes  
Post show Q & A: Thu 25 August

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## Creative Team

Deviser/performer:

Brian Lipson &  
Gideon Obarzanek

Director & Choreographer:

Lucy Guerin

Lighting Design:

Bosco Shaw

Stage Manager:

Bindi Green

Producer:

Wendy Lasica

Music:

Oren Ambarchi

Auspiced by

Auspicious Arts Projects Inc.

## Artist's Statement

### Gideon Obarzanek

While Brian and I are often involved in many other aspects of show making and presenting, the bulk of my professional experience has been as a choreographer behind the scenes and for Brian as an actor on stage and screen. So here much of our enquiry has been concerned with what we can do together on stage. I can't remember lines and after many years of doing so, Brian hates learning them. In this performance the content has been agreed but there is no script. Rather, it is a complex game guided by prompts and played to rules.

When we began the objective seemed obvious – play our fathers. I mean, who knows them better than us? And of course we've already had a lifetime of experience imitating them in jest, annoyance and sometimes in shocked surprise when speaking to our partners or fathering our own children. But, and beginning with the three words with which my father starts most sentences, 'The truth is', I see my parents through a very narrow, often solipsistic lens. This show is in fact about Brian and me. Personating our fathers is an attempt to step out of ourselves and make sense of our own memories and perceptions. The show looks at how we have been individually and intrinsically shaped by our intergenerational social, economic and political history.

### Brian Lipson

This project, like several others, originated from a wonderful Australia Council Fellowship that I received in 2011. During the course of that fellowship I elected to work with 25 different artists with a completely open brief for one week each. One of those artists was Gideon Obarzanek. During my week with Gideon we hit upon the idea of having a conversation as our fathers. We found the experience both liberating and shocking, and that improvisation forms the basis of this show. This is the third time we have tested the exercise: we did a previous development at Arts House and a First Draft development at the Sydney Theatre Company (both under the direction of Lucy Guerin). Each iteration has revealed new layers and subtleties to this seemingly simple format, while revealing complex problems of style and presentation. Over the last five years our understanding of the four men involved (or six if we count our grandfathers) has developed in ways that would not have been possible otherwise. It's been hard work but it's been fun. I would recommend this form of therapy to anyone.

Image: Sarah Walker



## Biographies

### **Brian Lipson**

Deviser/performer

Brian Lipson studied Theatre Design in London; designed for Lindsey Kemp and Ballet Rambert. In the 1970s and 80s he was key member of three important English experimental companies. He later acted regularly at National Theatre, Old Vic and Royal Court.

He moved to Melbourne in 1997 and acts often at Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse, Sydney Theatre Company, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare and with many independent companies including The Family, Hayloft, Eleventh Hour, Stuck Pigs Squealing and Chunky Move. He is also a director. His solo show *A Large Attendance in the Antechamber* which he wrote, designed and performed – toured widely and was acclaimed at festivals in Australia, UK and USA.

He has been nominated for 8 Green Room Awards and won 4. He received an Australia Council Fellowship in 2011. His new solo show *EDMUND. THE BEGINNING* premiered at Arts House last year and is soon to tour.

### **Gideon Obarzanek**

Deviser/Performer

In 2013 Gideon was a resident artist at the Sydney Theatre Company where he wrote and directed his first play *'I Want to Dance Better at Parties'*. He later co-wrote and directed a documentary screen version with Mathew Bate that won him the 2014 Sydney Film Festival Dendy Award. He recently created a new work for the Australian Ballet's fiftieth anniversary season as well as the Sydney Dance Company and co-wrote and directed *'Stuck in the Middle With You'*, the first Virtual Reality film commissioned by the Australian Centre of Moving Image. Gideon is a recipient of an Australian Creative Fellowship working with theatre, dance and documentary filmmakers to develop projects with simultaneous live and broadcast outcomes.

### **Lucy Guerin**

Director & Choreographer:

Born in Adelaide, Australia, Lucy Guerin graduated from the Centre for Performing Arts in 1982 before joining the companies of Russell Dumas (Dance Exchange) and Nanette Hassall (Danceworks). She moved to New York in 1989 for seven years where she danced with Tere O'Connor Dance, the Bebe Miller Company and Sara Rudner, and began to produce her first choreographic works. She returned to Australia in 1996 and worked as an independent artist until 2002 when she established Lucy Guerin Inc in Melbourne to support the development, creation and touring of contemporary dance works. Recent productions include *Conversation Piece* (2012), *Weather* (2012) and *Motion Picture* (2015). *The Dark Chorus*, a new Lucy Guerin Inc work, will premiere in Melbourne Festival 2016.

Guerin has toured her work extensively in Europe, Asia and North America and to most of Australia's major festivals and venues. She has been commissioned by several companies internationally, most recently, Lyon Opera Ballet (France), Skånes Dansteater (Sweden), The Young Vic (London) and Rambert (London).

Her awards include the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, two New York Dance and Performance Awards ('Bessies'), several Green Room Awards, a Helpmann Award and an Australian Dance Award.

### **Bindi Green**

Stage Manager

Bindi Green has extensive production and stage management experience across the live performance industry, with a strong focus on touring works nationally and internationally. When not on tour, she works within the Live Art sector, on community arts projects and in non-traditional performance environments. She especially enjoys working with artists who usher live performance on to new trajectories.

### **Bosco Shaw**

Lighting Design

Bosco Shaw works primarily as a Lighting and Set Designer. His interest is in work that involves bodies and movement, how light feeds and influences the performing space and collaborations that propose alternate light sources and means. He has worked for companies and festivals in Australia and around the world. He has recently worked on design projects for Dance North, Chunky Move, Woodford Folk Festival, Matthew Sleeth, Luke George and Lee Searle.

### **Wendy Lasica**

Producer

Wendy Lasica is a leading cultural producer with a master's degree in urban planning. She has established a niche practice that operates in the space where cities and culture connect.

Wendy produced the long-running *A Large Attendance in the Antechamber* with Brian Lipson (2000-2007), which won 2 Green Room Awards. In 2015 she produced *EDMUND. THE BEGINNING* with Brian Lipson that also won them a Green Room Award.

Recent strategic planning projects include a new Clunes Booktown Festival plan and development of a permanent cultural function for a new CBD mixed use building. She is a regular panel member and MC and has presented for Open House, Arts House's The Supper Club, MPavilion and Planning Institute of Australia.

## Thank You

**Angharad Wynne-Jones and Arts House,  
Sydney Theatre Company, Laurence Lipson,  
Zenek Obarzanek, Alexandra Obarzanek,  
Michele Smith, Lucy Guerin Inc, Samara Hersch  
and Rob Menzies.**

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## Arts House

Arts House is a program of the City of Melbourne and our home is North Melbourne Town Hall. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art providing a nexus for cultural expression and social connection in a city environment.

Arts House develops work that is contemporary, experimental and participatory.

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

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