

FORCED ENTERTAINMENT

Find us online: Visit www.forcedentertainment.com to learn more about the company, read articles and interviews, watch video clips and explore Forced Entertainment's past productions.

Make Friends: Make friends with us on Myspace and join our group on Facebook where you can find pictures, video and a place to chat.

Stay in touch: Be the first to find out about new projects and tour dates by joining our free mailing list, email news@forcedentertainment.com or join on the website at www.forcedentertainment.com/subscribe

Read Up: Visit Forced Entertainment's online bookshop where you can find books, texts and DVDs documenting the company's unique and remarkable body of work.

Dig Deeper: For more in-depth research, an archive collection of rehearsal and performance videos along with other documentation is held at the British Library Sound Archive. www.bl.ac.uk

BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council has been creating ties between people in the UK and other countries for 75 years. As a cultural relations agency, we harness the power of education, the arts and creativity, sport and science to build mutually beneficial relationships worldwide. Our projects reach over 112 million people a year in 110 countries and territories. We are committed to connecting the best in UK and Australian creativity and supporting work that is diverse, intelligent and ambitious.

Find out more at: www.britishcouncil.org.au

ARTS HOUSE

www.artshouse.com.au | artshouse@melbourne.vic.gov.au
03 9322 3719 | 521 Queensberry Street North Melbourne VIC 3051

Arts House develops, produces and presents dynamic cultural experiences, which enable people to make meaningful connections on a local, national and international level. Each year Arts House presents a curated program of contemporary art featuring performances, exhibitions, live art, installations and cultural events, which are programmed to inspire dynamic community engagement.

Australia is home to the oldest living culture on earth. Respect and engagement with this ancient culture and its contemporary lineage continues to make a unique contribution to creativity in this place and inspire our collective consciousness and understanding. The presenters acknowledge and respect the customs and traditions of Indigenous Australians and their special relationship with the land. The artists and organisers respectfully acknowledge that this program takes place on the land of the traditional owners of the Kulin Nation.

Arts House has made every effort to offer wheelchair and limited mobility access throughout the program. Please contact Arts House on 03 9322 3719 for further information.

Arts House is proudly
supported by:

innocent bystander
WINEMAKERS
HEALESVILLE, YARRA VALLEY

jasper.
HOTEL



Forced Entertainment (UK)

SPECTACULAR

Arts House, North Melbourne Town Hall
Thursday 6 – Saturday 8 August 2009

'Spectacular strips the flesh off theatre and gets right down to the bone.' - Time Out ★★★★★

'a decidedly different "good night out"' - The Times ★★★★★



post SHAMELESSLY GLITZY WORK

at Arts House 13 - 15 August
Dynamic theatre trio post bring you glitz,
glamour and politics.

'post write exceedingly well, act with verve and dance badly with great conviction.' RealTime



The Suitcase Royale THE BALLAD OF BACKBONE JOE

at Arts House 13 - 15 August

A dollar fight gone wrong, a classy Sheila with
a mind for revenge and a private detective hot
on her heels...

'The smoking hot hipster husbands of performance art.'
ThreeThousand.com.au

Tickets at www.artshouse.com.au or (03) 9639 0096

ARTS HOUSE

 CITY OF MELBOURNE

Arts House is a City of Melbourne contemporary arts initiative.

ARTS HOUSE





ABOUT FORCED ENTERTAINMENT

2009 marks Forced Entertainment's 25th anniversary. Since forming the company in 1984, the six core members - Robin Arthur, Tim Etchells, Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor - have sustained a unique artistic partnership for a quarter of a century, confirming time and again their position as trailblazers in contemporary theatre. The company's substantial canon of work reflects an interest in the mechanics of performance, the role of the audience and the machinations of contemporary urban life. The work – framed and focused by Artistic Director Tim Etchells - is distinctive and provocative, delighting in disrupting the conventions of theatre and the expectations of audiences. Forced Entertainment's trademark collaborative process – devising work as a group through improvisation, experimentation and debate – has made them pioneers of British avant-garde theatre and earned them an unparalleled international reputation.

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Conceived and devised by Forced Entertainment

Performers: Robin Arthur and Claire Marshall
Direction: Tim Etchells
Text: Tim Etchells, Robin Arthur and the company
Design: Richard Lowdon
Lighting Design: Nigel Edwards
Production: Ray Rennie and Francis Stevenson
General Manager: Eileen Evans
Administrator: Gareth James
Marketing Manager: Sarah Cockburn
Administrative Assistant: Natalie Simpson

Images: Hugo Glendinning

Spectacular is co-produced by BIT Teatergarasjen (Bergen), Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin), PACT Zollverein (Essen), Les Spectacles vivants – Centre Pompidou (Paris), Theatre Garonne (Toulouse) and Tramway (Glasgow).

75 minutes no interval

www.forcedentertainment.com

ABOUT SPECTACULAR

When the actor plays dead no one's fooled for a moment.

We've long been gripped by the strange game of playing dead; that particular absurd edge of theatre in which the performers are charged with approaching the one thing, which above all others perhaps, can't ever be convincingly represented. When we're at the theatre after all, once all the drama and exertions of the death scene are done, the actor is always still breathing as she lies there on the floor. Always still breathing, eyes closed and waiting patiently for the curtain call. No-one's fooled. No-one's taken in. Doesn't matter how much fake blood, how much yelling, how much sobbing, how much stillness. No one thinks this is real.

But at the same time there remains a strange charge to this game, a cultural and emotional electricity which crackles and sparks the air around the actor who lives-but-dies, or who lives but plays dead. The death scene. The appearance of the ghost. The appearance of death himself. As if the patent absurdity of these things – acknowledged, known by all – always contains nonetheless a flicker, shimmer, crack or opening to some other possibility. Like kids fooling with a Ouija board, intent on scaring themselves, we've been back around this again and again, always approaching from different angles, with different intensities, unable to let it be. We've been dying from the early shows like 'Let The Water...' with its glorious competition of tomato-ketchup movie deaths right through to the later works like 'Bloody Mess' with its blank diva-death at the centre, a scene which Cathy claims with comical bombast will "break something inside you forever". No-one's fooled. But still we come back – as a culture and as a group of artists - waiting till there's no-one around, drawing the curtains and starting to play dead again.

Spectacular, for its part, is two deaths sat side by side. One unexpectedly chatty and cheery, if somewhat philosophical, prone to distraction. The other agonised, exaggerated, abject and highly theatrical. The drama of these two together is something we were pulled to in rehearsals - a discovery that remained puzzling, upsetting, compelling in the months of devising. Each of these deaths – the theatrical emotional and the pantomime thoughtful - has its own comedy, and each its own seriousness, as if the performance wants us poised on a knife edge, balanced but unstable on the weird border of gravity and farce.

At the same time, right next to these comical, serious and unimaginable deaths, **Spectacular** concerns itself with another kind of absence. The stage is bare for the performance and much of what we're watching in its hour and fifteen minutes is, simply speaking, not there. Instead it's a performance which explores the possibility of language – of how words can work to summon events, describing things, and, in a certain way, making them happen. What's spoken in performance after all hovers, gains tangibility, and with the imaginative participation of an audience begins to appear.

Spectacular is in many ways a simple piece with its two deaths braided around each other, but a constant binary of emotions and thoughts which gets more complex the longer you stare at it, and which we hope creates something at the same time fragile, vivid and visceral.

Tim Etchells, Sheffield, 2008.

Spectacular had its world premiere at PACT Zollverein, a theatre in Essen, Germany. The company also spent their last two weeks of rehearsals at this theatre refining the material ready to present to an audience. Stefan Hilterhaus is the Artistic Director at PACT Zollverein. Having observed the project come together, we asked him to write us an essay for the **Spectacular** program. Here it is:

A short while ago, I came across an interview with an astronaut: 'The fundamental principles of perception, in fact of any action, are so completely turned upside down in outer space, that in spite of the many tasks there,' he said, 'weightlessness produces an unparalleled feeling of freedom.' Despite having a happy life, with a family waiting for him at home, he added, 'there were times up there in the freedom of space, where he wished that he would simply never have to return to earth.'

That I'm seized by a similar feeling of exhilarating freedom in the performances of Forced Entertainment may at first seem like a contradiction, since these performances so relentlessly take place down here in the everyday world of work, bodies and daily life. And yet this sense of freedom is there.

We live in a time in which the culture seems set on replicating the same set of dreams, emotions and lifestyles in each of us and is designed to hide differences, faults and contradictions. For this reason perhaps, it's liberating to see a handful of performers who want no more than to show themselves for what they are.

One topic, a few rules, a meagre set and props consisting mainly of found objects – these things leave the actors of Forced Entertainment very little to hide behind and scant room to manoeuvre. Nothing is controlled or hidden by design, instead life with all its contradictions comes into direct contact with the disaster of empty promises, and with illusions that are both a blessing and infinitely sad.

Sat in the theatre I am sharing this beautiful but unspectacular space with them. They share with me the questions that I either don't dare to ask or the ones to which I know no answers. They make big claims, tell tall tales, make great illusions, all of which they then immediately start to dismantle again before my very eyes. In this dark, concentrated room of the theatre, they create something that cannot quite be separated from real life, that doesn't ever try to be more than it is – an act of public pretending - and which somehow points us outwards, to those things that lie beyond. Under the surface of what I am watching, an unbelievably lively, funny, complex, exciting and liveable life reveals itself. I am right in the middle of it, floating almost. Perhaps that is what being in space felt like.

In each of Forced Entertainment's works the performers pull me subtly into a kind of open dialogue. I am in the audience but am also a co-performer, an accomplice and co-author in what happens. The way the actors merge the fictive and the autobiographical, mixing direct dialogue with rehearsed scenes, sucks away the limiting walls of theatrical space. Behind them, a corridor appears – a space that allows the audience room for the questions, doubts, helplessness and the courage needed to see the complexity of everyday life.

Reality bursts out into the space of theatre and as it does so subjects everything to renegotiation: the rules of the stage, the game, the roles, the boundaries between reality and representation and the relationship to the audience. Over and again watching this work, I discover the familiar and experience something like stability only to find it immediately undermined by humorous, heartrending and otherwise unexpected twists and turns.

This is how I want theatre to be. This opening up of space. To become an accomplice instead of being reduced to a consumer. With just a stage and a few props, Forced Entertainment reveal more about our relationship to the world and the great questions of our existence than an entire encyclopaedia could. Theatre can probably do no more. At least, not on earth.

Stefan Hilterhaus, Essen, 2008.

