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STATION HOUSE OPERA MIND OUT



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**ARTS
ADMIN.**

MIND OUT ABOUT THE SHOW



Being “out of your mind” is taken literally in Station House Opera’s latest performance work, *Mind Out*, exploring the impossible question of what it is like to be mindless.

Separating mind and body, performer and character, *Mind Out*’s performers are split in two. Each acts as the mind of another, giving simple instructions for action, formulating speech and expressing otherwise silent thoughts, while their own body responds to controls given by someone else. With constantly shifting relationships, minds and bodies become shared between two, three and even all of the performers.

Laced with a cruel humour as the performers are subjected to the whims and wickedness of each other’s control, *Mind Out* moves from a fragile state of cooperation to resistance, contradiction and all out anarchy.

Mind Out builds on Station House Opera’s fascination with shifting notions of identity explored in previous works including *Roadmetal*, *Sweetbread* and *Mare’s Nest*.

149 words

MIND OUT REVIEWS



This is postdramatic theatre meets Buster Keaton. Enjoy.

Time Out ****

It sounds more complicated than it looks, and mostly it looks hilarious. Especially when it takes all five of them to make a cup of tea and then drink it... But suddenly the jolly slapstick turns sinister. And, of course, no-one is responsible for the outcome of their orders... By [the end] hopefully, we have started thinking for ourselves and realising how inspired, how politically and socially astute this SHO performance is.

The Glasgow Herald ***

An elaborate, 70-minute theatrical game that pushes the notion of contradictory behaviour and cause-and-effect social manipulation to sometimes enjoyably ridiculous extremes.

The Times ***

Funny, spooky and slightly unsettling...A company that proves it can still be well ahead of the game.

The Guardian ***

The atmosphere is somewhere between slapstick comedy and horror... The characters seduce and repel each other through their intermediates, shifting roles and personalities at each other's whims... The fascination comes in seeing how the actors can get themselves out of the various scrapes they end up performing.

The Skinny ***

MIND OUT

BACKGROUND ON THE WORK

“Each performer can be both a mind and a body – the mind of one person’s body and the body of another person’s mind. When these functions happen together, the combinations of mind and body form into chains. A chain of conversation and behaviour that forms a closed loop creates the implication of self-consciousness.

Mind Out explores the social and emotional consequences of mindfulness and mindlessness. Human traits, such as the awareness that others are entities similar to oneself, a precondition of empathy, can be treated as a conscious process to be played out in performance. By separating mind from body, each can be objectified and weighed in the balance. The presence or absence of mind can be physically manipulated, giving the spectacle of a human with no mind, half a mind or even two minds.

“Is it possible to perform a body without a mind? Being mindlessly alive is like being a barnacle rooted to a rock; a performer may be placed in this position, but they may also be given the deviant fascination of regarding another performer as mindless. Thus empathy, and the lack of it, may become a physical condition of performance rather than a psychological trait of a character. This is the aim of the performance, to explore the objectification of emotional traits.

“The denial of the human being as an integrated physical/mental entity is a terrifying but very common occurrence. There are always extents to which we actually or imaginatively go to acknowledge our own and others’ existence as responsive human beings. From death or pain-defying carnival and magic acts, and the celebration of other’s beauty, power or talent, through rituals of religious self-mortification, sadomasochism, and cultural rehearsals for love and death, to acts of torture and warfare, all human life presents spectacles of pleasure or horror relying on a game of engagement of one’s own empathy. The very existence of another person is a challenge to one’s own empathy for that person.

“In some ways, by making the separation of mind and body its subject, Mind Out becomes about everything, and almost every aspect of human behaviour is included in its scope. The consequences of the misunderstandings and identity-confusion that are thrown up by the mind - body split are both tragic and comic in their universal application to human behaviour. The performance embraces both of these, confronting tragic themes which, by being denied any realist psychological mode, are seen as elements of the human comedy”

Julian Maynard Smith

MIND OUT BACKGROUND ON THE COMPANY



Founded in 1980, Station House Opera has developed into an internationally-renowned performance company with a unique physical and visual style. The work varies enormously in scale, appearance and location and uses spectacle to explore the intimate relationship between people and the environment they inhabit. Described as 'as visionary as it is stunningly visual', the company have created spectacular projects in a variety of locations all over the world, from New York's Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage to Dresden's historic Frauenkirche and Salisbury Cathedral. More recently their work has been uniquely created for more intimate spaces all over the world including the Orangerie in Dijon, an old electrical factory in Weimar and London's 19th century music hall at Hoxton Hall.

One of the most important performance groups anywhere. Station House Opera possess that rarest of all things, a unique vision articulated through a genuinely theatrical language.

Performance

Station House Opera use pleasure and anxiety simultaneously to keep the spectator somewhere between a real and imaginary world. Working within this complicated technology, they maintain the immediacy of a speculative performance style, in which anything or nothing might happen. Psychologically speaking, to watch Station House Opera is to sit on the edge of one's seat.

Artscribe

MIND OUT

MARKETING INFORMATION



Target Audiences

- Station House Opera existing core audience
- Audiences interested in or studying rule or structure based performance
- Venue audiences for work by other experimental / contemporary companies
- Audiences studying the company as part of theatre or performance courses
- Psychology students who may be interested in the issues raised by the work

Key Selling points

- Witty and darkly humourous
- High quality performances by ensemble company
- Simply structured and easily accessible
- Highly visual without heavy reliance on text
- Impact is in the quality and detail rather than showy sets or costumes
- Devised by Julian Maynard Smith, artistic director of renowned performance company Station House Opera, with the rest of the company

MIND OUT

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

MIND OUT

A fascinating experiment in performance

Visionary company Station House Opera returns to pure live performance with Mind Out, a complex game of human relations laced with a cruel humour, in which each performer is split in two.

Each one acts as the mind of another. They give instructions, direct speech and express otherwise silent thoughts. Meanwhile, their own body is controlled by someone else.

With constantly shifting relationships and with minds and bodies shared between two, three or even all five performers, it becomes increasingly difficult to discern just who is in charge. As the actions of one bend to the whim of another, Mind Out moves from a fragile harmony where performers co-operate and collaborate to resistance, contradiction and anarchy.

Continuing to explore the possibilities of theatre, Mind Out turns the focus back to performance after Julian Maynard Smith's recent adventures with video and internet technology. In Mind Out the company has created a structure that depicts unfolding and shifting states of mind, exposing the contradictions and complexities in human behaviour.

Mind Out's five performers are Zena Birch, Tom Bowtell, Susannah Hart, Helen Morse Palmer and Maynard Smith himself.

Notes to editors

1. Mind Out is an Artsadmin project developed at BAC
2. Julian Maynard Smith is the founder and artistic director of Station House Opera. He studied architecture and visual art at Middlesex University and has practised since 1978, producing solo and group performance work as well as sculpture and installation. Julian has conceived and directed (and regularly performed in) all of Station House Opera's projects since the company's formation in 1980.
3. www.stationhouseopera.com

ends

MIND OUT
TOUR DATES

8 & 9 October 2008	Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster
15 October 2008	The Showroom, Chichester
23 October 2008	Lakeside Theatre, Colchester
25 October 2008	Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff
28 October 2008	The Phoenix, Exeter
4 & 5 November 2008	Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry
13-29 November 2008	BAC, London
25 February 2009	Tramway, Glasgow <i>part of New Territories</i>
23-30 August 2009	C Venues, Edinburgh <i>part of British Council Showcase</i>