

THE VENUES

HOME

Tony Wilson Place M15 4FN
homemcr.org
0161 200 1500

Contact

Oxford Rd M15 6JA
contactmcr.com
0161 274 0600

Royal Exchange Theatre

St Ann's Square M2 7DH
royalexchange.co.uk
0161 833 9833

The Lowry

The Quays, Salford M50 3AZ
thelowry.com
0843 208 6000

Martin Harris Centre

Bridgeford St M13 9PL
martinharriscentre.manchester.ac.uk

The Flare Hub

No.70 Oxford St M1 5NH
flarefestival.com
0843 2080 500 (transaction fee applies)

To book tickets visit FLAREFESTIVAL.COM or contact the venues.

FLARE!



**FLARE INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL OF NEW THEATRE
4-8 JULY 2017**

\$11

TICKETS AND CONTACT DETAILS


To book tickets, visit FLAREFESTIVAL.COM or contact the venues (details on the back cover).

Festival pass: £64 (£50)

Double bills/Royal Exchange Theatre shows: £12 (£8)

Future Flares/The Flare Hub shows: £6 (£4)

 /flarefestival

 @flarefestival, #FLARE17

 flarefestival_MCR

 boxoffice@flarefestival.com

WELCOME TO FLARE17

The Flare International Festival of New Theatre 2017 is delighted to present 20 innovative theatre pieces by new artists, selected internationally, from 4-8 July at HOME, Contact, The Royal Exchange Theatre, The Lowry, Martin Harris Centre and The Flare Hub (No.70 Oxford St).

This is a festival for people who believe that 'trying something new' is what it's all about. From the scale of Grand Applause to the Future Flares shows by students and recent graduates, and everything in between, FLARE17 is made up of extraordinary theatre experiences waiting to be discovered.

It's not just about putting on ground-breaking international theatre, but bringing people together, encouraging dialogue and getting involved as well. So do join in the feedback sessions, the Flare Open Forum, and the workshops (and via Twitter, Instagram and Facebook too) to really get the most out of what FLARE17 has to offer (for details see p28).

And look out for the Flare Daily Paper, edited by freelance critic and writer Andrew Haydon, and created everyday by our team of writers. You're welcome to contribute too.

We look forward to welcoming you in person.

This brochure

Designed to be as much an artist catalogue as a theatre brochure, this aims to act as a guide to the festival, to profile the selected pieces and to share some of the insights of the selection process that led to the programme detailed here. We hope you enjoy it.



GESSNERALLEE
ZÜRICH



schweizer kulturstiftung
proschelvetia



HOME



Contact



THE MARTIN HARRIS CENTRE
FOR MUSIC AND DRAMA

Double Bill

20:00 Tuesday 4 July

20:00 Wednesday 5 July

(total duration 2h 15m, inc. interval)

HOME

£12 (£8) for two shows

THEN THERE WAS : LIGHT

ONE BOG (NL)

An award winning solo by Lisa Verbelen, in which a rolling score drives the increasingly musical contribution of a lone performer, as she negotiates the inevitable circularity of the world she's caught up in.

ONE is about all things: time, space, light, sound, organisms, objects, people, feelings and thoughts.

Enchantingly simple, this is a performance that reflects on movement and, because it's a solo, on loneliness – a choir piece for four voices, sung by one woman.

Lisa Verbelen graduated with a Masters in Music Theatre from the Royal Conservatoire of the Haag in 2014. She is part of award-winning new theatre collective **BOG**, with Anne Vanderbruggen, Judith de Joode and Benjamin Moen.



Double Bill

20:00 Tuesday 4 July

20:00 Wednesday 5 July

(total duration 2h 15m, inc. interval)

HOME

£12 (£8) for two shows

LEOPARD MURDERS K.U.R.S.K (CH)

The story of George Ebrecht – a radical politician, speech writer, Nazi SS officer, peace activist, and grandfather of Timo Krstin, the director of K.U.R.S.K.

Using the example of George Ebrecht, K.U.R.S.K set out on a search for clues about a seemingly new type of politician called the 'right wing populist', someone who dedicates their life to fighting the establishment and who is willing to use any political argument, whether left or right, to achieve their goals. **Leopard Murders** is the archeology of modern populism.

K.U.R.S.K is a Swiss theatre group consisting of Timo Krstin, Lukas Sander and Lilliane Koch. They have been invited to several major festivals and played in many of the big houses for German speaking theatre.



12:00+14:30 Wednesday 5 July
12:00+14:30 Thursday 6 July
12:00+14:30 Friday 7 July
12:00+14:30 Saturday 8 July
(duration 35m)
The Flare Hub
£6 (£4)

PARTY BEACHES (ES/BR)

PARTY is an immersive dance and audio show for 10 audience members at a time. Alluding to elements of our collective memory and popular culture, the piece creates a utopian simulation of a night out, one that functions as a detonator for hacking the senses of the spectator, blurring the limits between reality and representation.

"Manages to dynamite the limits between reality and representation and to make us conscious of a collective – and also individual – pulsation, like a great concert."

Maite Rodriguez, Norton Magazine

Beaches is the artistic collaboration between Iara Solano (Spain) and Daniela Perez (Brazil). **Beaches** explores ways of producing fissures in the conventional formats of theatre and dance, where movement is brought to life by the spectator's own body.

13:00 Wednesday 5 July
13:00 Thursday 6 July
(duration 40m)
The Flare Hub
£6 (£4)

BLIND CINEMA BRITT HATZIUS (BE)

In the darkness of a cinema space, the audience sits blindfolded. Behind each row of audience members is a row of children who, in hushed voices, describe a film only they can see. Accompanied by the soundtrack, the whispered descriptions are a fragile, fragmentary and courageous attempt by the children to make sense of what they see projected on the screen.

For these performances the children will come from St Brigid's RC Primary in Beswick, and Beaver Road Primary in Didsbury.

Britt Hatzius is an artist and researcher who works in photography, video, film and performance. Her work refers to or takes the format of the moving image, exploring ideas around language and interpretation.

Double Bill

20:00 Wednesday 5 July
(total duration 2h 15m, inc. interval)
Contact
£12 (£8) for two shows

GRAND APPLAUSE GUILLEM MONT DE PALOL & JORGE DUTOR (ES)

Welcome to **Grand Applause**, a performed exhibition, presented in the form of the opera Carmen. In the opera, Don José falls in love with Carmen who becomes infatuated with the bullfighter Escamillo. Don José's love quickly turns to violent jealousy. He tracks Carmen down and kills her.

On a stage that is wired for sound, Grand Applause offers a stirring soundtrack,

a live chorus (The Romulus Singers) and a choreography of artworks, by three artists: Norberto Llopis in the role of Carmen, Luis Urculo in the role of Don José and Bernhard Willhelm as the toreador Escamillo.

After their hit #losmicrófonos at FLARE15, irrepressible theatrical mavericks **Guillem Mont de Palol** and **Jorge Dutor** are back in the UK, in Manchester, but on a much bigger scale...



Double Bill

20:00 Wednesday 5 July
(total duration 2h 15m, inc. interval)
Contact
£12 (£8) for two shows

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST ENIS TURAN (DE/TR)

Let's talk about gender baby, let's talk about you and me... Go crazy and celebrate your dreams and your differences, through the body of a real live superstar. Inspired by the freak shows of the 19th century, this show twists and dissolves body norms and gender binaries.

Balanced on the line between irony and sincerity, Turan's **Beauty and the Beast** creates a queertopia unveiling the hollow and senseless constructs of normality.

Born and raised in Turkey, **Enis Turan** is a freelance performer and choreographer based in Germany. He studied aviation and aerospace engineering before studying contemporary dance at the University for Music and Dance Cologne and the Iceland Academy of the Arts.



FUTURE FLARES – Double Bill

17:00 Wednesday 5 July
(total duration 1h 10m, inc. interval)
Martin Harris Centre
£6 (£4) for two shows

A WORK OF ART DEAD PIG (UK)

'The next day another turn came, and so it continued always the same...'

A Work of ART is an image-based performance, a living breathing art work, trapped for eternity between process and product, exploring the vacant concept of originality. Employing a distinctive image-based/pictorial style that works with gradual progression and repetition, the piece aims to operate within the liminal space between art and theatre.

DEAD PIG is a four piece performance company formed on the Contemporary Theatre and Performance degree programme at Manchester Metropolitan University. They are interested in how the spectacle of visual art and performance can be provocative in relation to a number of taboo topics.



FUTURE FLARES – Double Bill

17:00 Wednesday 5 July
(total duration 1h 10m, inc. interval)
Martin Harris Centre
£6 (£4) for two shows

CIVILISATION EMMA GANNON (UK)

A solo performance delivering three different stories about 'us and them', about chemical reactions that happen in the body, about pigmentation defining your worth, about having the right type of blood...

Civilisation explores the world we live in, the people we pass everyday, the stories we hear on the news, and us as human beings.

Emma Gannon will be graduating soon with a first class degree in Theatre at the University of Chichester, and starts her MA in Theatre there in September. Moving between site-specific work, installation and text she uses the mode of delivery to challenge the audience about how we are where we are today.



FUTURE FLARES – Double Bill

17:00 Thursday 6 July
(total duration 1h 20m, inc. interval)
Martin Harris Centre
£6 (£4) for two shows

KATE & PIP TIN CAN PEOPLE (UK)

Katie & Pip celebrates the relationship between Katie, a 15 year old girl with type 1 diabetes, and 'Pip' her 5 year old border collie, trained by Katie to save her life on a daily basis. Investigating the pairing between humans and dogs, the performance explores compassion and companionship in the human social condition. Watch dogs be humans and humans be dogs as this chaotic and unpredictable event unfolds.

Tin Can People is an emerging artistic collective led by Charlotte Berry and Rob Gregson, and is based in Preston.

Katie & Pip is commissioned by Derelict, and made with dramaturgical support from Andy Smith. The project has been supported by Making Room & Lancaster Arts.



FUTURE FLARES – Double Bill

17:00 Thursday 6 July
(total duration 1h 20m, inc. interval)
Martin Harris Centre
£6 (£4) for two shows

BOYS WILL BE GIRLS AND GIRLS WILL BE BOYS KASK/MOLE WETHERELL (BE)

A couple of years ago we spent a week in an old hospital. There was a lot of dancing, some singing, a long catwalk. We laughed at models falling over, we danced badly to Swan Lake, we witnessed the birth of Christ... We had a great time, we had an excellent time, so we decided to do it again. This is what happened next...

Boys will be Girls and Girls will be Boys is a new performance piece drawing on an earlier project, by 7 students from the KASK School of Arts in Gent, Belgium, under the direction of Mole Wetherell, the Artistic Director of Reckless Sleepers.



Double Bill

20:00 Thursday 6 July

20:00 Friday 7 July

(total duration 2h 10m, inc. interval)

HOME

£12 (£8) for two shows

CASTLE ROCK MASSIVE OWL (UK)

A distortion of the film *Stand By Me*.

As flashing neon lights descend upon the tracks, a boxing gloved boy with a death wish comes head to head with a white suited locomotive and a deer in black patent stilettos.

Castle Rock is a new story inspired by three of the voiceless characters in Stephen King's novella *The Body* and its 1986 cult film adaptation, *Stand By Me*.

Expect distorted sound, movement and projection as Massive Owl contort the book's characters and twist the film's soundtrack into a reimagined story about loss and acceptance.

Welcome to Castle Rock...

Massive Owl are Jenny Duffy, Sam Powell and Danny Prosser. They are a collaborative performance company, based in Bristol.

Photo credit:
Paul Samuel White

Double Bill

20:00 Thursday 6 July

20:00 Friday 7 July

(total duration 2h 10m, inc. interval)

HOME

£12 (£8) for two shows

BAARDEMAN SIMON DE WINNE/TBALDUS (BE)

'When I'm dancing, I don't care a thing if the ugliness comes out or not, 'cause I'm dancing, it's me.'

Baardeman is a surprisingly touching and energetic exploration of how a body can move, and what it might say about the person moving. It is a performance research project by Belgian actor **Simon De Winne**, in which he questions the possibilities of his own movement, and the relationship between movement and identity.

Baardeman is made in conjunction with coach Louise Van den Eede, of theatre company Hof van Eede, who performed at FLARE15 with their acclaimed piece *'Where the world is going, that's where we are going.'*

Performance in the Great Hall
13:00 Friday 7 July
(duration 45m)
Royal Exchange Theatre
FREE

MOLAR **QUIM BIGAS BASSART (ES)**

Molar is a highly energetic interactive solo performance about 'happiness', and the way we move and are moved. Working with a range of images that appear and disappear, relating to happiness, 'special feeling' and 'being cool', Molar engages and entertains, whilst gently reflecting on the commercialisation of human emotion in Western society.

Much acclaimed as a performance for public spaces, and a favourite at festivals across Spain, the performance is presented for free in the Great Hall of the Royal Exchange Theatre in the centre of Manchester.

Quim Bigas Bassart, from Barcelona, is an artist working within the fields of choreography, performance arts, information and education. He combines performing for other people, with creating and performing in collaboration and on his own.

14:30 Friday 7 July
19:30 Friday 7 July
(duration 50m)
Royal Exchange Theatre
£12 (£8)

SPRACHSPEL **L'HOMMMM (MATS VAN** **HERREWEGHE AND** **GEERT BELPAEME) (BE)**

Sprachspiel (language game) is a mesmerising performance somewhere between theatre and dance, that has been performed widely in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

In a wordless exchange, Mats and Geert play a game with their hands, a game that becomes increasingly energetic, frenetic, exhausted. Some might see it as a response to Wittgenstein's ideas on language and meaning, but to the rest of us it's a fascinating and shifting game, one where the rules keep changing, and the tension builds until the ending becomes inevitable.

Sprachspiel is a performance on the line between art and philosophical experiment.

L'Hommmm is the collaboration between performing artists Geert Belpaeme and Mats Van Herreweghe. Their playful work tries to open up abstract choreography to a wide audience.

FUTURE FLARES

17:00 Friday 7 July
Martin Harris Centre
(duration 50m)
£6 (£4)

RISE TO VERTEX STITCH THEATRE (UK)

*"There are only two or three human stories,
and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely
as if they had never happened before."*

Rise to Vertex playfully explores the composition of the hero's journey, and how this repeating, archetypal narrative is traced by the heroes of myth, religion, modern pop culture and our everyday lives.

In **Rise to Vertex**, two performers take on the role of the hero with energy, charisma and unflinching dedication. Together they dress as the hero and share in victory, failure and sacrifice.

Stitch Theatre began in 2015 as a creative collaboration between Leeds based artists James Rowling and Martyna Kozanecka. Together they make experimental and uplifting theatre using a warm, low tech, DIY aesthetic.



Double Bill

20:00 Friday 7 July
(total duration 2h, inc. interval)
The Lowry
£12 (£8) for two shows

SOMEONE LOVES YOU DRIVE WITH CARE TOM CASSANI (UK)

Tom Cassani exposes the techniques of deception, and teaches how to spot it in action. Stripping back any physical means of trickery, he works closely with the audience to explore and expose deception and truth, and the fine line between the two.


Watch everyday action turn into the impossible. Explore moments in time that might have happened, that have never happened, and that will never happen.

Tom is a performance artist and liar. Trained in sleight of hand and prestidigitation, he uses deceit as an artistic platform to explore truth, honesty, authenticity and manipulation.

Based in London, he has collaborated with a range of artists including John Smith, Tim Spooner, Marisa Carnesky and David Hoyle.

Photo credit:
Manuel Vason





Double Bill
20:00 Friday 7 July
(total duration 2h, inc. interval)
The Lowry
£12 (£8) for two shows


**BREATHE (EVERYTHING IS
GOING TO BE OKAY)
ALICIA JANE TURNER (UK)**

A full body immersion of soaring strings and spiralling sound in a daringly vulnerable solo performance exploring the relationship between our bodies and minds. Blending visceral live music and the sounds of the body with intimate confessions, Breathe is an unflinchingly honest dissection of anxiety, fear and our survival instincts.

This performance was selected for the SPILL Festival of Performance 2016, and All The Right Notes at Camden People's Theatre 2016.

Alicia Jane Turner is a violinist, composer and performance artist in London working across live art, theatre, and contemporary classical music. She is a regular collaborator with theatre-maker Christopher Brett Bailey, scoring and performing the music for his performance projects.

Photo credit:
Guido Mencari



14:30 Saturday 8 July
19:30 Saturday 8 July
(duration 1h 10m, no interval)
Royal Exchange Theatre
£12 (£8)

**ACTRESSES ALWAYS LE
EL POLLO CAMPERO,
COMIDAS PARA LLEVAR
(ES)**

Two Spanish women have really tried to earn a living as actresses. They've taken the roles, lived the part, but now it's time to come clean. This is a charming, political and physical performance that walks us through the dreams and realities of two friends who've never stopped performing.

Mixing cabaret, dance, theatre and performance, this is a show that blurs the lines between autobiography and fiction, bringing us up close and personal with two people caught in the act of playing a role.

El Pollo Campero, Comidas Para Llevar (Country Chicken, Food To Take Away) is the collaboration between performers Gloria March Chulvi and Cris Celeda.

Double Bill

20:00 Saturday 8 July
(total duration 2h, inc. interval)
HOME
£12 (£8) for two shows

MOORE BACON! BOSSE PROVOOST AND KOBE CHIELENS/DE POLEN (BE)

An award-winning show where a live body floats in a dark space. It stretches, shrinks and bursts into pieces, only to re-appear afresh. **Moore Bacon!** plays with the spectator's eye, creating form, texture and colour in the imagination as much as the reality of the stage.

Whilst this disintegrating body inevitably speaks to us about death, there is a strength and joy, and playfulness, to be found in a pile of chunks trying to puzzle themselves back together.

Moore Bacon! was the debut performance of director Bosse Provoost and performer Kobe Chielens after they graduated in 2016. It won the IYMA Award and Het Debuut Award at ITs Festival and won the Jongtheaterprijs at Theater Aan Zee.

Double Bill

20:00 Saturday 8 July
(total duration 2h, inc. interval)
HOME
£12 (£8) for two shows

CHARLIE AND THE BUKOWSKIES NINETIES PRODUCTIONS (NL)

A fictitious tribute band play their songs (and scenes as if they where songs) based on the prose and poetry of the American misfit of the beat generation: Charles Bukowski.

Charlie and the Bukowskies is a performance that uses the form of a concert, a theatrical concert with electronic beats, a keytar and a cello. Two decades after the death of Charles Bukowski, four young performers pay an homage to the raw perspective of this dirty old man.

Nineties Productions is a theatre company based in Amsterdam, led by Anne Maike Mertens (director), Floor Houwink ten Cate (dramaturg) and Yannick Noomen (performer). Nineties' signature is the element of live music, written and played by the collective.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Flare is hugely grateful to the staff at all of the venues for their support and enthusiasm, and to our team of Flare Volunteers who keep the whole festival running so smoothly.

Flare is also indebted to a large number of international colleagues, artists, producers and directors who have helped to make contact with the chosen artists and many others who applied to be part of the festival. These include the following: Lars Kwakkenbos, Susanne Visser, Mole Wetherell, Dries Douibi, Res Bosshart, iara Solano, Sammy Metcalfe, Mikkel Hogsbro, Matthias Meppelink, Heiner Goebbels, Nynke Joustra, Tanya Beyeler, Teresa Brayshaw, Stefan Maenen, Kate Craddock, Tammy Dale, Kerstin Bueschges, Marten Flegel, Kathrin Vesper, Tamsin Drury, Tereza Havlickova, Josine Gilissen.

Huge thanks also to the Flare Advisory Board – Leanne Feeley, Annie Lloyd, Teresa Brayshaw and Kevin Egan – for all their ongoing guidance and expertise, to our collaborators St Brigid’s RC Primary, Beaver Road Primary and The Romulus Singers from Hale Barns, Andrew Fryer at Leeds Beckett University and to the Contemporary Theatre and Performance team, and all in the Department of Contemporary Arts, at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Flare is created and delivered by Producers Catt Belcher, Lisa Buckby, Louisa Claughton, Liam Gordon, Edwina McEachran, Ryan O’Shea, Artistic Director Neil Mackenzie, General Director Laura Broome, Audience Director Clare Simpson, Production Manager Chris Whitwood, Admin Assistant Megan Iredale, Student Network Manager Casey Shortt and Assistant Production Manager Cory Duffill.

FLARE17 gratefully acknowledges the core support of Arts Council England and Manchester Metropolitan University. The festival is also supported by Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) through the Programme for the Internationalisation of Spanish Culture (PICE), in the framework of the Mobility grants. Key additional supporters include Leeds Beckett University, Chichester University, University of Manchester, HOME, Contact, Royal Exchange Theatre and The Lowry.

ON CURATING FLARE17

Every iteration of Flare starts with a blank slate. At the point when initial plans are being drawn up, funding applications written, partnerships forged, we don’t know the artists that will be involved, we’ve never even heard of most of them, and indeed much of the work that we now know will feature did not yet exist. Flare’s focus on ‘emergent practice’ means we really do sit at the start of things, even if the moment of ‘emergence’ (depending on how you define it) can be spread over many years.

Looking at the programme as it now exists, we know that some of the artists selected have featured at Flare before. Massive Owl made their Flare debut at the first Flare International Festival of New Theatre on 2011. Beaches is led by iara Solano of Sleepwalk Collective, the very first company who applied to be part of the same Flare festival, and with their very first piece, which we invited back to open the festival in 2015. And Guillem Mont de Palol and Jorge Dutor brought the brilliant #osmicrófonos to the Royal Exchange Theatre in the last outing of the festival as well. But even these presented themselves as options during the normal selection process rather than being chalked in early, as events that we could confidently build the rest of the programme around.

Equally, some of the artists are further down that long road of ‘emerging’ than others, and it’s only their profile in this country that makes them seem like ‘new artists’. The divide between the UK and the rest of Europe, sadly destined to get wider, remains an obstacle preventing audiences in the UK encountering new versions of what a theatre event might consist of, versions that these artists and others have been creating elsewhere in Europe for sometime now. Still, context is everything, and ‘new to us’ makes them just as welcome in the Flare fold.

So we have to be confident that enough extraordinary new work will exist out there to make a festival, performances that we can confidently categorise as ‘ground-breaking’, even if we don’t know at the time what in practice that will mean.

The process of identifying the shows to be included in the festival therefore becomes one of defining new areas of theatrical innovation – new combinations of theatricality and ideas that are being investigated by new artists, and in ways that we believe haven’t been seen before. And not only does it have to be new, but it has to be good too. It has to successfully achieve its aims in ways that result in a truly rewarding experience for a theatre audience. It’s a fascinating process, which I’m going to try to open up here, and if there is some anxiety at the start of it all, it’s pretty much gone by the end.

The first question for us then is who is making waves, ploughing new furrows, changing the landscape? Who are the theatre artists with new things to say? Not from secure positions of visibility and established profile (if those things would help anyway), but from new places, new voices with new perspectives. Who is engaging with theatre as an art-form in new ways, re-affirming the boundless potential of theatre to be significant in the world, creating fresh new opportunities for people to be in a theatre space for a period of time, with ideas, with people, with materials, with reflections on being there, and being, and location, that amount to significant new theatrical experiences?

This does feel like a privileged position for us, and from which we are able to 'report back', to talk about what's coming, and determine how things may have moved on since we did it two years ago. Can we identify developments, shifts, patterns of adjustment? The idea of a linear progression may well be impossible to determine in such a short span of time, or is frankly a myth, but the world has moved on (hasn't it just) so perhaps there is some evidence of a discernable change in direction, in mind-set amongst those working within it, and responding to it with the making of new theatrical art.

We should acknowledge too that some of the contexts we were looking to fill, the theatre spaces available to us, have changed as well – for the first time we were looking for work for HOME, for The Lowry and even for our new Flare Hub (if anything would fit it), and that was bound to have an impact too.

We've been travelling to theatres and festivals and a range of different contexts in different countries. We've watch hundreds of videos, and talked to esteemed colleagues across Europe, and we've whittled the resulting list down to 20. Two years ago we went through this exercise, and ended up bringing to Manchester a range of theatre practices as extensive and exhilarating as anything we could have wished for. We hope we've done it again.

So what did we find this time? Well, to put it bluntly, we found philosophy - implicitly and explicitly - theatre pieces that were addressing complex and universal ideas. These were big ideas about being, and identity, and language and meaning, but ideas invoked through a very down-to-earth series of actions or objects or gestures. Most of these pieces seemed to work through a calm and reflective audience experience, one with a real eye for detail and which absolutely worked with the duration involved, with the impact of the minutes gone (and all they contained) on each present moment and the audience's experience of it. Not for these pieces the instant gratification of short term impact - these were theatre pieces that demanded a little to start with, but ended up paying back tenfold, by the end and afterwards.

We found an interest in art, in visual art particularly, and in what happens to theatre when the artists making it assume the right to draw parallels with the conventions and practices more associated with the

gallery. Jan Lauwers, Director of legendary Dutch performance company Needcompany said at a recent theatre festival in Copenhagen that '90% of people who work in theatre haven't heard of Michel Duchamp'. True or not, the implication that theatre has for too long existed as separate from art, from its history, ideas and practices, is one that appears to be being addressed by some of the work selected for FLARE17.

Alongside this we found an ongoing fascination with illusion. A staple of the theatrical encounter of course, but there was a discrete strand of work that we came across, and now have represented in the festival, that uses strategies not often found in theatre to re-engage us with the thrill of 'how did they do that?' and 'did that really happen, or did I just imagine it?' There's something about our involvement with illusion, and with the location and function of illusion in theatre, that makes it key to the theatrical experience, and ripe to be exposed and exploited in theatre that wants to use its own mechanics to talk about our wider experience of the world.

And our real physical experience of 'being there' kept coming up too. We know that theatre is a live and embodied encounter, whether we sit in rows in the dark or are invited into a more active or immersive experience, but there are many points on the scale when we balance the objective/intellectual with the subjective/sensory, and a surprising range of these were targeted in the work coming forward. To what extent can our bodily experience trigger our emotions or memories? Can it alter our perceptions of the reality of our situation? How might our intellectual discomfort with ideas be manifested in our physical experience? To what extent is our capacity to cope with the world routed through our bodies, and can an (embodied) theatre experience actually make us better?

And we found a careful engagement with the operation of communication, with how it works in theatre and elsewhere. If the basis of any communication – that both parties share a language, share an understanding of the contract involved and the presuppositions in play – is ultimately founded in trust, then what happens if this trust is misplaced? And what if the attempt to communicate is pushed beyond breaking point? Does the failure of communication lead to the failure of the event, or could there be a poignancy, and a sharing of human empathy, that acknowledges a different kind of bond between the speaker and the listener, one that is even more fundamental to the theatrical exchange?

There was talk of 'our times', perhaps inevitably, but possibly less than might have been expected. The historical roots of right wing populism, gender roles and identity, and the twisted logics of racism all featured, though blended with an engagement with theatre form, such that the theatricality of the event remained central to the practice rather than simply providing a context. And there was almost no direct reference to those particular issues that we can't avoid these days (world leaders, continental relations, sporadic acts of murder and destruction etc.). Perhaps the provision of information, and the space to discuss

such issues, is better provided by the technology of our age, or perhaps these artists making theatre feel less directly implicated than others, or perhaps they have yet to achieve the distance that might allow for the more open interpretative approaches, arguably suited to the form.

We could probably identify other areas as well, depending on what other parallels we choose to draw between the pieces we shortlisted, and ultimately selected, but for now these feel like the most dominant.

As you will hopefully witness, these areas are represented in incredibly diverse ways in the programme for FLARE17, so perhaps one thing we can say is that the outcomes of all these lines of artistic enquiry don't really share a form. Looking back on the hilarity of some of the experiences offered last time (brought to us particularly by Daan van Bendegem, Mont de Palol and Dutor, Figs in Wigs and Irreverent Sideshows), perhaps this year's selection demonstrates that the broad mood of the times has got just a little more sombre, or the artists concerned don't want to be making work that distracts us quite so much from the bigger challenges of the world and our existence in it.

Of course one could argue that all of these insights tell us more about what we were looking for in the first place than what we found, that they are more the result of some hidden criteria operating than an objective picture of what is out there. Equally they could be the result of criteria imposed on themselves by the artists applying, resulting from the sense that this was the 'kind of work' that Flare was looking for. But looking back at the programme for FLARE15, and the reflections published in the catalogue produced then, there is surprisingly little overlap. This suggests that if the work is defined by the festival, rather than vice versa, at least it allows for a breadth of practices, driven by the creative instincts of the makers, that will always be impossible to predetermine.

Ultimately, we are really proud of this year's programme, of the extraordinary audience experiences that are contained within, and the support it represents as a whole for the brilliant new theatre artists who have created it. So do engage with it as much as you can, and do let us know what you think.

Neil Mackenzie

Artistic Director of FLARE17

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

There are a range of opportunities to take part in the programme of workshops and discussions at FLARE17 throughout the week of the festival. All events take place at **The Flare Hub (No.70 Oxford St)**, and all events are **FREE**. Check out the flare website for latest updates and sign up at **The Flare Hub**, or by emailing participate@flarefestival.com.

DISCUSSIONS

Talk Back

A series of chaired feedback sessions where the audience and the artists get to reflect on and discuss the performances, mostly from the night before. **10:30 Thursday, Friday and Saturday (6-8 July)**.

The FLARE17 Open Forum

Your chance to hear and discuss a range of issues chosen in response to the performances being presented at the festival, in dialogue with the international artists, leading UK theatre artists and invited speakers. **14:30 Thursday (6 July)**.

WORKSHOPS

Wake up and tune in

A chance to spend quality time at the start of a busy festival day paying attention to your own sense of wellbeing with Feldenkrais practitioner, Teresa Brayshaw. **09:30-10:15 Wednesday – Saturday (5-8 July)**.

Artist workshops

Artists presenting performances at the festival, and others attending the festival, will lead a number of creative workshops giving an insight into their own creative practice and interests. Full details will be provided via the website, and social media, or you can email workshops@flarefestival.com.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY 4 JULY

- 19:00 Festival Opening HOME
20:00 DOUBLE BILL HOME £12 (£8)
ONE – BOG
Leopard Murders – K.U.R.S.K

WEDNESDAY 5 JULY

- 12:00 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
13:00 *Blind Cinema – Britt Hatzius* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
14:30 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
17:00 FUTURE FLARES Martin Harris Centre £6 (£4)
A Work of ART – Dead Pig
Civilisation – Emma Gannon
20:00 DOUBLE BILL Contact £12 (£8)
Grand Applause – Guillem Mont de Palol and Jorge Dutor
Beauty and the Beast – Enis Turan
20:00 DOUBLE BILL HOME £12 (£8)
ONE – BOG
Leopard Murders – K.U.R.S.K

THURSDAY 6 JULY

- 12:00 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
13:00 *Blind Cinema – Britt Hatzius* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
14:30 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
17:00 FUTURE FLARES Martin Harris Centre £6 (£4)
Boys will be Girls and Girls will be Boys – KASK/Mole Wetherell
Katie & Pip – Tin Can People

- 20:00 DOUBLE BILL HOME £12 (£8)
Castle Rock – Massive Owl
Bardeman – Simon de Winne Tiboldus

FRIDAY 7 JULY

- 12:00 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
13:00 *Molar – Quim Bigas Bassart* The Royal Exchange Theatre FREE
14:30 *Sprachspiel – L’Hommmm* The Royal Exchange Theatre £12 (£8)
14:30 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
17:00 FUTURE FLARES Martin Harris Centre £6 (£4)
Rise to Vertex – Stitch Theatre
19:30 *Sprachspiel – L’Hommmm* The Royal Exchange Theatre £12 (£8)
20:00 DOUBLE BILL The Lowry £12 (£8)
Someone Loves You Drive With Care – Tom Cassani
Breathe (Everything Is Going To Be Okay) – Alicia Jane Turner
20:00 DOUBLE BILL HOME £12 (£8)
Castle Rock – Massive Owl
Bardeman – Simon de Winne Tiboldus

SATURDAY 8 JULY

- 12:00 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
14:30 *Actresses Always Lie* – The Royal Exchange Theatre £12 (£8)
14:30 *PARTY – Beaches* The Flare Hub £6 (£4)
19:30 *Actresses Always Lie* – The Royal Exchange Theatre £12 (£8)
20:00 DOUBLE BILL HOME £12 (£8)
Moore Bacon! Bosse Provoost & Kobe Chielens/de polen
Charlie and the Bukowskies – Nineties Productions
22:00 *The FLARE17 Party*