



mixed media performance

“More and more I have understood how the personal is political and how important it is to listen to each other’s stories. The title ABOUT US emerged after the divisive outcome of the EU referendum, which seemed, in part, the result of a lack of story telling between different communities. As our dramaturg Ramsay Burt suggests - we wanted to choreograph hope”
Jacky Lansley

ABOUT US is a performance work built around personal life experiences shared by the performance artists - Vincent Ebrahim, Ingrid Mackinnon, Ursula Early, Esther Huss, Jreena Green, Fergus Early and Tim Taylor - experiences about home, homelessness, grief, joy, caring, the environment, cultural identity and gender. At the start of the development process in 2016 (Phase 1) each of the performing artists were invited by Jacky Lansley to bring a ‘story’ to the studio that was either joyful, distressing or mundane. These stories were then explored through a range of physical and vocal disciplines to create live performance material, some of which was then filmed in different locations by the cinematographer Roswitha Cheshier, while the oral telling of the stories was recorded by the project’s composer Sylvia Hallett to use as source material for diverse soundscapes. More recent R&D (Phase 2) explores how these personal stories connect to more global issues and imagines the experience of endangered species – such as the glorious elephant and giraffe – as a way to investigate what it is to be human beings who are responsible for the devastating climate and habitat changes that endanger ourselves and the other animals we share our planet with.

ABOUT US explores the extraordinary and the everyday; any audience can recognise their own gestures and feelings in the movement and visual vocabulary; the repetition of the story ingredients through film, soundscapes and live performance becomes celebratory, insightful and intriguing, as large and small events are framed and made special. Quite mischievously the work plays with multiple perspectives – near, far, live, film, inside, outside - and draws the audience into an intimate world which they are part of.

The work draws on disciplines and strategies from dance, performance art, theatre and live art, which reflects Lansley’s own interdisciplinary history. She has always worked with collaborators and performers who, like herself, are drawn to crossing boundaries into other art forms, in the quest to find artistic languages and forms that can explore important and sometimes difficult world stories.

Jacky Lansley (Choreographer/Director)

All through the R&D of ABOUT US I’ve been thinking about how what we’re doing related to the uncertain times we’re living through. Even before the Brexit vote, there’s been a sense that the complex interlocking systems we live in are perilously unstable, and that there are parallels between a need to find new alternative ways of doing things in the studio and in the wider world. It is about breaking out of the limitations of what is only possible. Are we perhaps choreographing hope when we research new ways of making connections that are interdisciplinary and interpersonal, and that are about not closing down borders and not fearing differences?

Ramsay Burt (Dramaturg)

Audience Responses -

“...So this performance brings voices, genders, age and politics of the personal and the universal in to a space that is held and lifted with love. This is the type of activism and protest we need in this time of unrest”

“I was particularly impressed by the integration of ages, without having to underline the case. They were a wonderful mix of performers who were there for their skills, not because they ticked any boxes”

“I loved the aesthetic – minimalistic and clean lines – there were lots of cultural references – pop culture – but they were all subsumed in this overall ‘minimalism’, which worked for me”

Reviews –

“Here are quirky, individualistic styles that hint at a lifetime of training, development and research in fluid backgrounds of dance and performance art”

Josephine Leask, DanceTabs

“In one sense, ABOUT US coalesces around this country’s ongoing political and social unrest and how individual circumstances feed into it”

Nicholas Minns, Writing About Dance

CREDITS

Choreographed and Directed by Jacky Lansley

Music/Sound Composition Sylvia Hallett

Cinematographer Roswitha Chesher

Dramaturg Ramsay Burt

Lighting/Technical Design Nao Nagai

Performers: Vincent Ebrahim, Ursula Early, Esther Huss, Ingrid and Max MacKinnon, Jreena Green, Fergus Early and Tim Taylor

Contributing Researchers: Lucy Tuck and Maria Ghoumrassi

Curated by Dance Research Studio

Producer Gwen Van Spijk

Marketing/PR Grace Nicol

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www.danceresearchstudio.com



Esther Huss performing in ABOUT US at Oxford House Theatre