



PERFORMANCE INSTALLATION

'ABOUT US' is a unique long-term research project conceived and directed by the artist Jacky Lansley.

'About Us' is characterised by interdisciplinary collaboration and powerful explorations of personal and political struggles that affect us all. Any audience can recognise their own gestures and feelings in the movement, sound and film vocabulary, as large and small experiences about grief, homelessness, gender, age and racial identity are framed and made special. The most recent research has taken the company into exploration of some endangered species – the giraffe, the elephant and African grey parrot – and reflects on the responsibility of human beings as caretakers of the planet.

[Click here to view trailer](https://vimeo.com/284188130)
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Following a series of critically well received performances in spring 2018, this evolving and cross-disciplinary performance work will be presented again in 2019.

In this next phase of development 'About Us' will be presented across different spaces and cultural contexts – a gallery, a theatre, a community centre, an outdoor space; its traverse arrangement plays with multiple perspectives – near, far, live, film, inside, outside – and draws the audience into an intimate world, which they are part of.

"About Us is a unique art work resonating with current times and issues; refined and meticulously created under the direction of Jacky Lansley who has vast experience of bringing cross disciplinary work alive."

Mary Prestidge, Bluecoat

WRAP AROUND ACTIVITIES

Workshops

A series of professional development interdisciplinary workshops reflecting key concerns of 'About Us' will be led by members of the company.

Workshops will take place at DRS - the company's base in London - and at the different host sites where 'About Us' will be presented. Participants will be invited to explore a range of experiences that are personal and political and have the opportunity to create autobiographical performance material that will be shared.

Stand-alone workshops can be offered (minimum 3 hours) or full day workshops (6 hours with a lunch break). Artists interested can be recommended by the host venues or can send a CV to DRS. The workshops offer interdisciplinary dancers, actors, performance and visual artists coming from a professional or arts degree background the opportunity to rethink their relationship to their practice, while accessing new processes and methodologies.



Choreography, the making of art that disappears, is not always valued in a cluttered world of products and objects – and yet it may be incredibly important to humanity

Post-Performance Talks

These will be chaired by director Jacky Lansley and dramaturg Ramsay Burt and will offer audiences an opportunity to ask questions and engage with the artists.

Building a Context

A series of theme based **Artist Residencies** will take place at DRS throughout 2019/20 which will give selected artists the opportunity to explore performance work which links to themes embedded in 'About Us'.

A **Symposium** exploring issues around art and political activism, will be held during the performance period of 'About Us' at one of the host venues. Further details about these activities will be available soon.

CREATIVE TEAM

Director/Choreographer

Jacky Lansley

Composer/Musician

Sylvia Hallett

Cinematographer

Roswitha Cheshier

Dramaturg

Ramsay Burt

Lighting Designer

Nao Nagai

Performers

Jacky Lansley, Ramsay Burt,
Ingrid Mackinnon,
Fergus Early, Jreena Green,
Ursula Early, Vincent Ebrahim,
Esther Huss and Tim Taylor



KEY INFORMATION

The Company:

- 4 performers
- 1 musician/MD
- 1 artistic director
- 1 stage manager
- The show also includes performers on film only

The Performance:

- Duration: 60 minutes
- Available from May 2019 onwards
- Suitable for 12+
- The project will be tailor made for each site and fees will be discussed with hosts as part of that process



TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Venue Requirements:

'About Us' can be adapted to different kinds of spaces, including art galleries, midscale theatres, ballrooms, studios and other public spaces with the necessary resources (including a wooden floor). It has been designed in a traverse arrangement, where the audience is sat in a single row around the action.

Capacity:

- Depends on the scale of the space:
Minimum 70

Get in:

- 2 full days (including the first performance day) are required for site-specific work
- 2 x venue technicians (1 LX/projection, 1 sound) to support get in and get out

LX requirements:

- Pre-rig would be preferred as the show is site specific
- Operating corner visible on the performance level
- See LX plan for further details



Sound/AV:

- House PA (Stereo) and mixer
- cables from laptop(mini Jack) to the mixer and other mic cables necessary
- 1 x handheld Radio mic on the stand
- 3 x vocal mics on the stands (SM58 or similar)
- 1 x mic on the stand (SM57 or similar) - recorder
- DI Box - Accordion
- 1 x Music stand

Projection:

- 2 x 16:9 screens arranged asymmetrically, rigged above head height on the each side of the space
- 2 x HDMI to the projector
- 2 monitors to play video loops of studio research and discussions; these will be set up in a foyer or alternative space

PRESS RESPONSES

"...This is utopian performance in which performers bathe both one another and their audience in well-being and gently instil a sense of hope for our collective futures...

Lansley collaborates not only with her multi-skilled group of dance artists but also interjects the audience into the show. We are always visible, the performers place hats on our heads and at one point direct us to change places with each other in order to "gain a new perspective." It works! Then we're taught a bit of choreography. After we've mastered some hand movements we wait for the visual cues, then we participate in the show. It's incredibly uplifting this feeling of doing and watching, like singing in a choir. In a final tableau the company assembles with accordion player and musical director, Sylvia Hallett, singing altogether and



demonstrating this communal strength...

... I walk away from About Us feeling calm and cheerful. It's reassuring to see older performers celebrated and dance histories cherished. It's a show that doesn't emphasise what you can't do but what you can. Rather than being over-stimulating or jarring it's kind and inclusive. And a lot more."

**Josephine Leask,
DanceTabs**

"...The singularity of the eight performers' experiences becomes the plurality of 'us' not in the sense of a self-regulating, enclosed group but as an open and imaginative relation of the individual to others."

**Nicholas Minns,
Writing About Dance**



PRESS INTERVIEWS

In a previous interview on About Us, you say you want to 'choreograph hope' – what does this mean?

"I recently published a book called *Choreographies: Tracing the Material of an Ephemeral Art Form*, an investigation of what choreography can be. For me 'choreography' can be very expansive and quite hard to pin down. When it comes to choreographing hope, that can mean many things. I think we need hope, which is not a sentimental need. *About Us* seems to enable audiences to *feel* and in my experience if you don't feel, everything becomes very repressed – and then you can't *think*. I really valued the opportunity to work with actors, who know how to emotionally inhabit, and I think I've been able to transfer that skill across to dance practitioners. Through something very distilled, like standing or walking, they're not closing off from emotion – they're revealing it. I work a lot with everyday movement and gesture, so hopefully the audiences recognise their own reality. At one moment in the project we actually teach the choreography to the audience, and then when they later see that moment on film, they all echo



it. So there's a wonderful, communal moment of audience participation in the piece, which is very simple but so effective. It's suddenly like a huge chorus. We are not ducking difficult questions – we do confront the audience with some very dark statistics – but I think through the multiple languages of the work it conveys hope. I think hope and being able to feel are very important factors in the work. "

Choreographing Hope: One Dance UK meets Jacky Lansley

"Performed in the round, the audience are actively involved in the piece and can even change seats in order to change perspective – one of the key points of the show. "I wanted this piece to not only appeal to dancers, but to those in theatre and beyond," says Jacky. "I want the audience to be inspired and energised after our performance and go away and think about their own stories."

Liverpool One