

FORCED ENTERTAINMENT

THE LAST ADVENTURES

EDUCATION INFORMATION PACK



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1. TEACHER'S NOTES AND YOUR GROUP'S VISIT TO THE THEATRE

This pack is designed to help prepare a college or university group for their visit to the theatre. We hope the information provided will enhance students' overall critical appreciation of the production and we look forward to welcoming you to the theatre.

The aims of this resource pack are:

- To provide some context to the work of Forced Entertainment, especially for those who may be encountering the work for the first time;
- To provide some background as to how this work in particular is placed in the company's repertoire;
- To introduce Forced Entertainment's artistic director, Tim Etchells, and this project's key collaborators;
- To provide signposts to further resources for those wishing to engage in deeper research.

You can support this through:

- Engaging students in a discussion or some preliminary research about the company, prior to their visit;
- Making students aware Forced Entertainment's work is very different from 'traditional theatre'; that it can be seen as challenging and dark as well as funny and moving;
- Ensuring in their visit that students are briefed to turn their mobile phones off and that quite a high level of concentration may be required throughout the show;
- Encouraging students to think about what they might ask in a post-show discussion.

If you would like further information on anything in this pack, or to ask any further questions, please contact Forced Entertainment's Marketing Manager Sam Stockdale (sam@forcedentertainment.com) and we will do our best to help.

A large print version of this pack can be made available – please contact sam@forcedentertainment.com

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2. ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

In *The Last Adventures* Forced Entertainment collaborate with Lebanese sound artist Tarek Atoui to create a compelling performance on an epic scale in a work that mixes text, movement and images accompanied by electronic sound. The onstage image is constantly moving and developing, we see the image itself and its construction; like a dressing-up box game organised by Hieronymus Bosch.

As with a lot of Forced Entertainment's work there is a rough, playful and unfinished feel to the aesthetic. The props and costumes are obviously home-made – drawing on the kind of costumes children might make for dressing up as well as referencing illusionistic scenery from 19th Century theatre spectacles. The scenes presented appear to be fragments of a story, all of them involving the large cast as a group – there are no central figures, instead the viewer has to pick out details from a landscape of events and images. We see a haunted forest, a sky of portentous clouds and a battle which starts as a game, but ends looking like the aftermath of a terrible war.

Forced Entertainment make an event that is full of contradictions. *The Last Adventures* is home made and evidently improvised in places but at the same time it is carefully structured and put together to create a dynamic emotional journey. It is comical, playful and at times ridiculous but at the same time it manages to be serious and affecting. Often it's hard to see or explain where and how these switches get made. The aesthetic is scrappy and home made but at the same time it's very beautiful. The performance has a feeling of something old and neglected (the 19th century theatre scenery, the dressing-up-box costumes, the references to storybooks) and at the same time something entirely contemporary, even futuristic with the electronic sound score, improvisation and the use of sampling and noise. Here and there recognisable characters surface from the chaos in strange juxtapositions, emerging onstage from the ruins of familiar stories, only to disappear in the very next moment.

For this project, working with a cast of twelve international performers, artistic director Tim Etchells leads Forced Entertainment into challenging new territory. With recorded soundtrack mixing electronics from Atoui and live instrumentation from special guest musician KK Null, *The Last Adventures* is an intoxicating experience mixing fairy tales, science fiction, children's picture books and epic myths.

The performance maps the shared interests of Etchells, Forced Entertainment and Atoui in the processes of sifting and mixing materials. So just as musicians sample sounds, Etchells and Forced Entertainment sample images and fragments of story or event. It's also held together by Forced Entertainment and Atoui's shared understanding of performance as being the live negotiation of a task, and their pleasure in the playful and subversive moment of performance itself. It's a performance about the act of trying to find something; a story, or something like one, about the act of summoning images, the present act of combining different things to find something lost, something beautiful, or something new, something that can only be made in the fragile crucible of the moment. Much of the action, like much of the sound, was improvised within established parameters, with the rehearsal and creative process devoted to creating structures, within which the performers can make live choices and decisions.

History and context:

Commissioned by Ruhrtriennale in 2013, for its world premiere *The Last Adventures* was performed in a large-scale industrial building in Gladbeck, Germany; subsequent tour dates have included presentations across Austria and Switzerland, where the show made the transition from this particular found space to theatre spaces.

Past Tour dates:

GERMANY World Premiere

Maschinenhalle Zweckel, Gladbeck

5 – 8 September 2013

Ruhrtriennale 2012 – 2014 International Festival of the Arts

This performance featured 17 performers and live music from Tarek Atoui

AUSTRIA

Tanzquartier Wien, Vienna
17 – 18 January 2014
Feat. live music from Tarek Atoui

SWITZERLAND

Gessnerallee Zürich
8 – 9 February 2014
Feat. live music from percussionist Uriel Barthélémi

GERMANY

Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt
4 – 6 March 2014
Feat. live music from trumpet player Mazen Kerbaj

**More about the UK premiere, presented at Warwick Arts Centre in association with Fierce Festival,
1 – 3 October 2014:**

The performers:

For Warwick Arts Centre, there are 12 performers – four of the core group of Forced Entertainment (Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden, Terry O'Connor), and a team of international guests – Gareth Brierley, Mark Etchells, Nicki Hobday, Leja Jurisic, Thomas Kasebacher, Teja Reba, Bruno Roubicek, John Rowley, and Kylie Walters.

The soundtrack:

The recorded soundtrack from Tarek Atoui consists of electronic noise, location recordings, instrument samples that tangle, lock together then fall apart – structured by Atoui's compositional algorithms. For this performance at Warwick Arts Centre, guest musician KK Null (one of the leading names in Japanese noise music) accompanied the work. A different guest musician has been invited to accompany the work in each location thus far.

For more upcoming and past tour dates see <http://www.forcedentertainment.com/project/the-last-adventures/>

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3. ABOUT THE COMPANY

Forced Entertainment are a group of six artists. Based in Sheffield, the work they make is presented all over the world.

Forced Entertainment started working together in 1984 and in the many projects created since that time they've tried to explore what theatre and performance can mean in contemporary life. In doing so the group have made lists, played games, spoken gibberish, stayed silent, made a mess, dressed up, stripped down, confessed to it all, performed magic tricks, told jokes, clowned around, played dead, got drunk, told stories and performed for six, twelve and even 24 hours at a stretch.

The work made is always a kind of conversation or negotiation. The group are interested in making performances that excite, frustrate, challenge, question and entertain; courting confusion as well as laughter.

It's seriously playful work and even after 30 years of working together they are still trying to answer questions about theatre and performance - about what those things might be and what kinds of dialogue they can open with contemporary audiences.

As well as performance works, the group have made gallery installations, site-specific pieces, books, photographic collaborations, videos and even a mischievous guided bus tour.

For more information about the company and how they work visit the **'About us'** section of www.forcedentertainment.com. You can also find a full index of all the projects in the **'Projects'** section.

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4. TIM ETHELLES

Tim Etchells (1962) is an artist and a writer based in Sheffield, UK. His work ranges from performance to video, photography, text projects, installation and fiction in a wide variety of contexts, notably as the leader of the world-renowned performance group Forced Entertainment and as an independent visual artist and writer of fiction. He has worked in collaboration with a range of visual artists, choreographers, and photographers including Meg Stuart, Boris Charmatz, Asta Groting, Wendy Houstoun, Elmgreen & Dragset, Philipp Gehmacher, Hugo Glendinning, Vlatka Horvat and many others. In 2014, Tim Etchells was Lisbon's Artist of the City: <http://www.artistanacidade.com/2014/en>. He is also presented a brand new neon work in Folkestone Triennial (30 Aug – 2 Nov) <http://www.folkestonetriennial.org.uk/artist/tim-etchells/>, as well as featuring in a major new exhibition for the Hayward Gallery, MIRRORCITY (Oct 14 – Jan 15) http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/sites/default/files/press_releases/mirrorcity_pressrelease070814.pdf. For more information see www.timetchells.com.

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5. TAREK ATOUI

Tarek Atoui was born in Lebanon in 1980 and moved to Paris in 1998 where he studied contemporary and electronic music at the French National Conservatory of Reims. He was co-artistic director of the STEIM Studios in Amsterdam in 2008, and released his first solo album in the Mort Aux Vaches series for the label Staalplaat (Amsterdam/Berlin).

Atoui is a sound artist who's known work in sound performance articulates, composition, physicality and engineering in complex and original ways. He specializes in creating computer tools for interdisciplinary art forms and education such as his pioneering youth workshop, Empty Cans that he presented in France, Holland, Lebanon, Egypt, and New York, as part of his Museum as Hub residency at the New Museum. His recent productions and performances took place at many contemporary art events festivals and exhibitions such as The Sharjah Biennial (UAE), The New Museum (New-York), La Maison Rouge (Paris), Darat Al Funun (Amman), the Mediacity Biennial (Seoul), Haus Der Kunst (Munich) and Documenta 2012. For more information see www.tarekatoui.com

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6. KK NULL (guest performer for the UK premiere).

KK NULL (real name: KAZUYUKI KISHINO) was born in Tokyo, Japan. After playing the guitar as his main instrument for nearly thirty years, KK has gradually moved towards a more electronic approach. Since the late 90's he concentrated his efforts on his solo & collaborative recordings, exploring the outer territories of electronica, creating intense clashing waves of noise, structured electro-acoustic ambience, broken down rhythmic, scattered pitch sculptures, and droning isolationist material which could be described "cosmic noise maximal/minimalism".

A composer and multi-instrumentalist, he is the mastermind behind the Japanese rock noise band ZENI GEVA and independent record label NUX ORGANISATION. KK has earned a reputation as one of the most influential cult artists in experimental music and has toured the world with his unique brand of electronic music since 1984, including Sonar (Barcelona, Spain); All Tomorrow's Parties (Camberwell, UK); Présences Électronique (Paris, France), and Supersonic Festival, (Birmingham, UK); and collaborating with Merzbow, Melt Banana and Steve Albini amongst many others. For more information see www.kknull.com

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7. INTERVIEW WITH TIM ETHELLES (TE) AND TAREK ATOUI (TA) Maschinenhalle Gladbeck, 20th of August, 2013 | Questions by Greta Granderath (GG)

GG: What were the first ideas for The Last Adventures? And how much were they already related to the collaboration and to Maschinenhalle Gladbeck where the world premiere is taking place?

TE: An initial starting point was something we've talked about in Forced Entertainment for a long time; which is the idea of drawing on events from fantastic or epic stories. We had in mind a wild mix of things; from journeys to the underworld or encounters between the living and the dead to ideas from fairy tales or science fiction – magical landscapes, objects that come to life or a war between humans and robots! Text wise I was thinking about collage, about jumping from genre to genre and visually I was thinking a lot about choruses; collecting images from amateur productions which showed pantomime choruses, where groups of school children were dressed as peasants or soldiers or skeletons or mermaids. Henry Darger's epic drawings and collages of battles and bizarre scenes with hundreds of characters were in the back of my mind too. In all of it we were drawn to the idea of the stage as a space for image making on a large scale – which the Maschinenhalle really gives scope for, and thinking about a chorus, a crowd, a mass of people rather than individuals.

In parallel to this, and arising from what I'd already experienced in Tarek's work when we met a few years ago, was an idea about fragments - about working not with a complete object but a set of objects (images, stories, sounds) that have been shattered or broken in different ways. That's something that within my work with Forced Entertainment and outside of it, I had been interested in for a long time. I suppose how one works with fragments and how one composes new things dramatically or narratively out of the ruins of existing things. It is a kind of process of recycling and construction and I guess I felt there was already a strong connection there to what I knew of Tarek's work.

TA: Well in my case, when Tim first contacted me about the project the description he gave was already very sonic; describing this very dense epic world and blending cultural and popular references. I imagined the stage as something that would be all the time crumbling and reforming, whilst having all these heterogeneous elements somehow embedded. What Tim wrote me echoed a lot what I was working on last year at the Documenta and in the Ruhrtriennale, with the instrument I created – The Metastable Circuit 1 – which makes sound collages in an autonomous way. I began to see the stage really as an instrument with the sound it produced and I started to think how might I use the sound of the stage to feed the instrument that I would build. During the process of course things changed and reality started to shape; so the direction things have taken is what Tim just described: it is really this aesthetic of tiny fragments coming together and building bigger sonic structures, I'm working to tell something from a flow of disruption or disruptivity which really starts to express something over duration. And then of course on top of this compositional structure you have to add the performative dimension; my performativity next to Forced Entertainment's performativity. This duality is also something very interesting for me to explore because I'm working a lot as a solo artist and the collective works that I have sometimes made have tended to be with musicians. So going back to performance through Forced Entertainment opened a new way also to explore that duality and dialogue. And it is nice because in the performance we are working on now the two worlds exist, the two approaches and no consensus or compromise was made to allow one to exist at the expense of the other.

GG: So maybe you could tell a bit more about the collaborative process in Gladbeck - in terms of how you develop the material together. How do you approach the relation between visibility and sound and what impact does improvisation have? Are you Tarek working a lot with found materials? How do you compose the soundscapes?

TA: Concretely the process is like this: We come to Gladbeck around 2 p.m. every day, have lunch, than we do a small rehearsal, than a run at night, we go to the bar, we meet in the bar and then in the morning we meet again in the hotel, in room 714, and then come back to this place...

(Laughing)

No seriously, the work process is really organic and natural and what I was also very surprised with is how Tim works from music; I start to know it now that whenever he's got music it opens up the imagination and

he is very sensitive to this in terms of flows and energy and the group works a lot from it too. A lot of time I feel that the music does a kind of conducting here and that is something I am really happy about.

TE: Forced Entertainment worked with sound and with soundtrack before of course, but this is the first time in a very long time that we set out to make a piece where we knew there'd be such a full sonic landscape, and with a significant live element too, in terms of Tarek's performance and that of other people he's invited to take part in the performances. The two questions for us were: How do we negotiate this kind of physical space here in Gladbeck, which is very different to the spaces we have performed in before? And what is possible for us as performers and makers inside a sonic landscape that's as rich as the work that Tarek is doing? That was both a huge opportunity and a challenge - we're so used to constructing intimate, very present relations to the audience and a full sound score makes that very hard; pushing you back somehow, into fiction, into some other world. Practically speaking we started to work by making some simple initial materials and some text experiments - gathering scenery, costumes and props and using them in different ways. We started to build up a vocabulary that we could bring to Gladbeck. So when we did the first big working session here with Tarek in May we brought a lot of stuff with us and the question was more or less what happens when we put all into the room and Tarek puts sound into the room - what is going to happen?

We seem to work really by trying things, by improvising, by putting one thing next to another and seeing what starts to happen and in a sense writing like that. So it's performer improvisation, it's music improvisation and it is always as well a compositional improvisation because I am running onto the stage or I am yelling "do this/do that/don't do that" and so on.

GG: But in both of your works improvisation is more than a vehicle or a tool to research or create a material - how would you describe the way both of you approach improvisation as a strategy or a quality of the performance itself?

TA: That's what I was going to say. Now following this principle of working with performances how do you fix things that happen in a performance? On the level of the music I'm fixing things or composing with things in that sense but at the same time always keeping in mind the performative dimension and the improvised dimension of them. So it's like fixing elements or the constraints for improvisation to happen - creating the frames or set of rules. And Tim is working in the same way. The instructions that are given are not there to fix things in a very rigid form but on the contrary they allow margins of freedom and decisions to be taken on the spot by the performers.

TE: We don't dare to walk onto the stage and say 'anything can happen!' We like to put a set of fixed points and frameworks in place. But within those parameters there is no desire to control or consolidate every moment - there's a freedom for the performers and for Tarek, to respond to each other, to follow instincts and to listen to each other. Keeping this level of fluidity and space for invention seems really important - finding ways to keep that alive in the work.

TA: For me really the quality of this work is about this capacity of collective playing and collective listening. So, for the show to function, it has to have this quality of not feeling overly written or feeling overly staged. It has to give the audience the impression that things are floating or falling into place.

TE: One of the things I talked about with colleagues in Forced Entertainment was that watching Tarek perform you almost get the sense that he is trying to summon sound from the air. It has to do with the way he's using motion and proximity sensors and to do with this very physical performance that he does - there's something almost shamanistic about it, searching for something in the noise, reassembling and then disassembling fragments. I think we like also to have in the performance this sense that meaning is bubbling and then falling into place and then evaporating - that's one of the most important things I would like the audience to get. What you see on-stage is that as people make improvisational moves some of them become something, whilst others just fall away and disappear. So there's a ratio of signal to noise - the image is emerging from detritus - and that puts the spectator in a very active position, as someone that has to pull things together, search through all the things that are shown...

It's interesting because I think since we've arrived here for rehearsals we became even messier! In the beginning the visual material was slightly precious, almost overly controlled. And I think what we have been struggling for is starting to take shape now - this wide stage, a lot of action and images, a lost things

happening in a dispersed visual field. It's a sketch, strong and untidy at the same time - you see strong lines and you see softer lines and somehow in the space between them you see the whole thing.

And I think the sound has a similar relation as that; things are emerging - that's what we do together, make this space where things are floating and bubbling and emerging.

GG: Tim, talking about The Last Adventures you once said that you are not interested first of all in telling stories but more in searching for stories or in creating pictures, situations or atmospheres suggesting that there could be some kind of story taking place. Can you tell a bit more about this potentiality, this pleasure of being ambiguous? The playful way the performers improvise with costumes and roles also recalls how children invent some imaginary world by trying things out for themselves or for a sort of audience.

TE: I think the desire is to make a space in which the audience has a lot of pleasurable work to do in imagining and making connections and making their own stories. There's a nice Peter Handke quotation, I don't remember it fully but the text talks about how the best way to tell someone a story is to have them tell you one. It's this idea I love, of creating a space where the audience has to join things together rather than being presented with a finished object. What are you going to do with that? I'm much more interested in that process of enlivening other people's imaginations and story-telling choices.

TA: It functions in the much same way regarding this aesthetic of collage and the use of many sounds. No individual layer takes control of all the rest in the sound they make. They are always bits and pieces talking everywhere, different strands one can hook-up to and find meaning in, whilst neglecting many others. But there are a multitude of meanings to give in moment and they give the possibility to create really a whole flow of directions and of relation to sound. The sound is not expressing one thing, it never is.

TE: I think also you know there is a desire in this work. I mean in a sense it is concerned with narrative but it's also about other ways of thinking, about energy and about time and about how we experience the duration of the performance. The story is one thing that is floating, but there are many other things happening in there that are just as important as the story.

GG: As you said The Last Adventures opens up new perspectives for both of you. Could you Tim contextualize the piece in relation to the wide range of performances Forced Entertainment created in the last years? How did you experience the collaboration of Forced Entertainment's team, which has been working together since 1984 for the first time with a larger group of performers coming from a wide range of artistic fields and cultural backgrounds?

TE: The core-group of Forced Entertainment have been working together for nearly 30 years and together we've been working a lot on these principles of improvisation and live-composition during rehearsals and during actual performances. It has been great for this project to be able to invite other people who have different experience and kinds of practice as performers, dancers and makers; to take part with us in this kind of experiment and investigation. There are some things about this project that are typical for the company, some of the interests that I touched on already. But the large scale of the group and the fact that there's so little spoken language in this piece, this is really new.

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8. FURTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

VIDEO

The Last Adventures in rehearsal at Gladbeck (September 2013)

<http://youtu.be/RXGfA4Kavi0>

Interview with Tim Etchells and Tarek Atoui in Gladbeck (Sept 2013)

<http://youtu.be/HaV4IRsdUOk>

#FE84to14

A series of special videos celebrating the group's 30th birthday made by long-term collaborator Hugo Glendinning

(2 – 5 mins in length)

<http://notebook.forcedentertainment.com/?cat=50>

The Last Adventures videos:

No. 2 | Choreography

No. 7 | The Collective

FORCED ENTERTAINMENT ONLINE www.forcedentertainment.com

Here you can find:

- An archive of all the company's projects, illustrated with stunning photographs by Hugo Glendinning, video interviews, programme notes, essays and other fragments.
- Full details of all touring activity, including links to online booking where available.
- Links to online resources including free downloadable packs and articles about the company.
- Chance to sign up to our free mailing list to keep you informed of all Forced Entertainment news.

ONLINE SHOP - www.forcedentertainment.com/shop

Peruse our virtual shelves to order books, DVDs and other resources including:

Performance DVDs and texts

High quality multi-camera performance documentation of most of Forced Entertainment's shows from the past 30 years and texts.

Forced Entertainment Complete Collection

The Forced Entertainment complete DVD collection brings together all 28 performance DVDs, saving you over £150! The collection now includes *Tomorrow's Parties*.

Making Performance

A 30-minute DVD exploring the company's working process.

Certain Fragments:

Contemporary Performance & Forced Entertainment - Tim Etchells

An extraordinary exploration of what lies at the heart of contemporary theatre. Written by Tim Etchells, his unique and provocative voice shifts from intimate anecdote to critical analysis and back again to investigate the processes of devising performance, the role of writing in an interdisciplinary theatre, and the influence of the city on contemporary art practice.

British Library Sound Archive

www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/drama

The Forced Entertainment Collection at the British Library Sound Archive contains never seen before rehearsal footage, a complete collection of our performance DVDs and texts alongside other contemporary performance documentation. Access is free of but you will need to make an appointment, please contact them on +44 (0)20 7412 7447 or email NSA-drama@bl.uk.

Our Notebook

<http://notebook.forcedentertainment.com/>

As part of our website we have a 'Notebook' section. A bit like a blog, it displays changing content – audio,

video, text and images - giving a glimpse behind the scenes of Forced Entertainment both in the rehearsal room and on tour.

Find us Online at:

Twitter @ForcedEnts #thelastadventures

www.facebook.com

#FE365 and #FE84to14

Two digital native projects - #FE365 and #FE84to14, which can be found via our notebook site at www.forcedentertainment.com. Specific elements of these projects that relate to **The Last Adventures** are detailed in this pack. Both of these projects are ways to discover some of the stories and histories behind the work in written and video format.

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9. CREDITS (UK PREMIERE)

Forced Entertainment & Tarek Atoui

THE LAST ADVENTURES

Presented by Warwick Arts Centre in association with Fierce Festival

Performers

Forced Entertainment

Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor.

Guest Performers

Gareth Brierley, Mark Etchells, Nicki Hobday, Leja Jurisic, Thomas Kasebacher, Teja Reba, Bruno Roubicek, John Rowley, Kylie Walters

Direction Tim Etchells

Sound score and composition Tarek Atoui

Live guest musician KK Null

Text Tim Etchells

Design Richard Lowdon

Lighting Design Nigel Edwards

Sound Daniel Teusner

Production Jim Harrison

Dramaturgical advice Adrian Heathfield

Choreographic advice Kate McIntosh

Thanks to Robin Arthur, Nada Gambier, Phil Hayes, Maria Jerez, Reena Kalsi, Kuselo Kamau, Nina Eva Lampic, Floor Van Leeuwen

Forced Entertainment

Artistic Team: Robin Arthur, Tim Etchells (Artistic Director), Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor.

Management Team:

Executive Director Eileen Evans **Marketing Manager** Sam Stockdale **Production Manager** Jim Harrison **Office Manager** Natalie Simpson **Project Assistant** Sophie Nurse

A production of Forced Entertainment and Ruhrtriennale – International Festival of the Arts. Co-Produced by Fierce Festival, Birmingham; Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt; Tanzquartier, Wien; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry.