

Disability Arts, Outsider Art, art, artists and art lovers, organisations and venues.

issue 18



The Unlimited Revue



Claire Cunningham's Guide Gods
photo: Colin Hearn-The Herald

Unlimited 2014
The Southbank Centre
September 2 - 7

Welcome

We've taken a break for Summer, but it's lovely to start the Autumn with a Festival! Following on from the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics Cultural Olympiad, the legacy - Unlimited 2014 hit the Southbank earlier this month! Read on for reviews on performances and exhibitions by disabled artists.

LUA also has news of an exciting Storytelling Project – 'Our Tales: Unveiled' which will start in the next few months. We will be running creative workshops led by Liz Porter and Penny Pepper, who will also perform their own work at an event in November. We will be sending information about the workshops and the performance very soon, but if you would like to get involved, please do email admin@linkuparts.org.uk to register your interest!

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OUR TALES: UNVEILED

Creative workshops and performance evening by Liz Porter and Penny Pepper.

LUA are very excited to be working towards our new Storytelling project 'Our Tales: Unveiled' which will take place at Salisbury Arts Centre. The project will start with an evening performance on Friday 28 November by disabled artists Liz Porter and Penny Pepper, who will each perform an extract from their one-woman shows. There will be a Q&A with the artists, and the evening will be followed by a series of Storytelling and poetry workshops in December.

Further information about how to get involved with the free weekend workshops will follow shortly, and there will be opportunities to find out more during Café LUA in November with an additional information afternoon, one Saturday in October.

In the meantime, if you would like to register your interest, please email admin@linkuparts.org.uk.

About the Artists.....

Liz Porter and 'Learning to See'

Liz Porter is a Performance Storyteller, Producer and Disability Adviser, based in Brighton. Her one-woman show 'Learning to See' directed by Mark C. Hewit with animated video sequences by Abbie Norris and Rachel Gadsden, explores her journey living with visual impairment.

Liz has recorded short films with her life story at the heart. Themes include: identity and acceptance/non-acceptance, peer pressure, equality, miscommunication and perceptions of disabled people and the whole idea of 'learning to see'. She plays with metaphors surrounding these themes.

Liz says "This piece of work is not just about metaphor but also about how you 'tell' the story." She hopes that people will be able to watch her story, then, through workshops tell their own.

Penny Pepper – ‘Lost in Spaces’

Penny Pepper has been a writer and activist within the disability arts movement for 20 years. She has written articles for DAO, Arts Disability Culture Magazine, Disability Now and Ouch! She is also the author of *Desires* (2003), a controversially unique collection of explicit fiction focusing on disabled people, relationships and sex.

Her one-woman show, ‘Lost in Spaces’ is part memoir and an exploration of identity and difference, Penny utilizes her long-kept journals, which date back to 1979.

Through memories and personal concerns, the piece links to the universal – from fighting Maggie Thatcher in the 80s and corresponding with Morrissey, to current battles with the government’s harsh austerity measures - pushing her into an examination of the human condition at a time of considerable personal and public turmoil.

WATCH THIS SPACE!!!

Artwork in this issue:

Front cover: by Gini – Photo Claire Cunningham’s Guide Gods by Colin Hearn – The Herold

Page 6: Diverse City: Touched

Page 7: Katherine Araniello: The Dinner Party

Page 9: Lea Cummings: ‘Cosmic fields of endless possibilities,’

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REVIEWS: UNLIMITED 2014

Unlimited Southbank Centre 2 – 7 September 2014

A week at Unlimited

Following the success of the first Unlimited in 2012, a weeklong festival celebrating the work of disabled artists with a mix of visual arts, theatre, dance, and music.

The much anticipated festival returns and opens with a screening of 'Does It Matter' five short films around war and disability in the Clore Ballroom. Each film offers a completely different perspective from Katherine Araniello as a matron lifting the morale of the injured at a wartime hospital, to Claire Cunningham assembling and disassembling a crutch like you would a gun, to Simon Mckoewn's animated disabled soldiers on the move, to Tony Heatons' reflection on war memorials and lastly a music video from Jez Colbourne in collaboration with Mind the Gap. In the talk afterwards we learnt that it explores his desire to be part of it because "learning-disabled people don't go to war." The films remind you how many ex servicemen came back injured and disabled, how that changed society as a whole and with all the centenary events going on it is important to remember that.

This was followed by the chaos and deadpan humour of Katherine Aranello's 'Dinner Party Revisited' - a live and digital performance in which she hosts a dinner party with the help of a PA, butler and sign language interpreter. The audience are introduced to the 'guests' (Katherine in many guises on screens), including a warbling opera singer, charity ball, petal pity. Each relatable character explores an aspect of a stereotypical view of disability. It also challenges issues around who is actually in control and is incredibly funny.

The subject of Claire Cunningham's 'City Gods' intrigued me because of my own experience of religion and disability. The new show uses dance, singing, interviews with religious leaders academics and deaf and disabled people represented through teacups on a quest to explore how the major world faiths view deafness and disability. The show gives you a lot to think about and I'm sure the process and discussions will continue.

Julie Mcnamara's 'Let me Stay' directed by Paulette Randall and designed by Libby Watson is a celebration of the life of Shirley McNamara who has Alzheimer's and explores the impact it has on relationships particularly between mother and daughter. Alzheimers was always going to be a tough subject to tackle but 'Let me Stay' is moving, uplifting and funny.

'Unlimited Unleashed' is two hours of marvellous cabaret from the Unlimited artists hosted by Liz Carr. It's the wonderful, evening of disability culture and humour for all.

'Falling in love with Frida' by Caroline Bowditch is a tender and engaging performance that explores the life, and legacy of Frida Kahlo. Caroline shares similarities with her own life and questions how we shape what we are remembered for and how much we really can control people's memories of us.

Unlimited provides artists with an opportunity that they wouldn't normally get, a stage for disability arts, and brings in a wider audience who might not normally get to see this kind of work. It also brings people together, long may it continue.

By Hayley Davies

Diverse City Youth Performance Company, 'Touched' 5 September 2014

Diverse City's Youth Performance Company, Remix Gold premiered their new circus and dance piece 'Touched' at the Unlimited Festival on the 5th of September underneath Hungerford bridge.

The piece, directed by Remix Gold's Artistic Director Claire Hodgson, was very well written by young emerging artist Dave Young. Dave also performed in the piece with 5 other performers from the company, some of whom are disabled. The young people really did work well together to tell an engaging story.



The piece explores Touch: a touch of a stranger that saves someone from the brink; a touch on the shoulder when you feel scared. A sudden touch that makes you blush. These young artists as the 'blurb' says, went "up in the air and performed dance routines to a soundtrack you will wish you could put together as a party playlist. Fingertips are for so much more than swiping a screen!"

I loved the music used in the piece, it intertwined well with the story and it was good because it was songs that I knew. You could really tell the cast were enjoying themselves all through the performance which is what I like to see!

As much as I liked a lot of it, I would have liked to have seen fewer dances on the floor and more aerial work. For me, I thought this restricted boundaries. However, I understand that the piece explores the genre of 'new circus' which as Claire Hodgson says, is "circus that is often theatrical, has dance in it and sometimes tells a story."

I loved the piece and I saw the performance twice and it was great both times. If I were to advise though, I would like to see more circus up in the air, and other circus formats explored for the next show!

By Paul Wilshaw

Our thanks to the team at Disability Arts Online for allowing us to reproduce the following (edited) reviews of the Unlimited Festival. Interviews with the performers, plus more reviews of the festival can be found on dao's website – visit www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk.

Katherine Araniello, The Dinner Party Revisited, 2 September 2014

Performance Video available on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wT7zZ9Rgi0>



Having interviewed Katherine on Disability Arts Online (Dao) a couple of months ago about her forthcoming performance, I was more than a little excited when Opening night of Unlimited 2014 finally arrived.

It's still, apparently, impossible to have a Disability Arts event without access issues – all that malarkey is a performance in itself. I'm glad to say it was All for One amongst the Wheelies though, as en-masse, we stormed the Purcell Room and took spaces! We had, after all, come to see our Queen of Crips Lady K! We don't come much more bendy than Araniello...

The hour had come and the host arrived on stage! Katherine, accompanied by three, in their official roles as Sign Language Interpreter, Waiter and PA. Proceedings began at the serving dresser, with Katherine turning to reveal Pippa the not-at-all-virtual Chihuahua contentedly placed on the arm of her `chair!

We were introduced to the 'guests' (Katherine in many guises, the first a warbling opera singer!) who were both activated and de-activated by sensors placed on the carpet. Each character typified some aspect of stereotypical views of disability, from the failed Paralympian who wanted to go to Dignitass, through to Charity Ball and Petal Pity.

However the Big D word was never overtly mentioned from what I recall. At Katherine's convenience, we tolerated their diatribes for a time and then moved on, relatively un-scathed...

Stereotypical humour was used to seemingly disempower, such as the glass of champagne being drunk by the PA before Katherine could turn her `chair quick enough to catch her at it. Yet the host had the 'last laugh' observing though not having actually witnessed the joke, "Well that wasn't really very amusing – was it?"!

Elements of slapstick played throughout, with the waiter drinking the glasses of champagne she pours for the guests – having sipped it myself, there was nothing virtual about that champagne - falling over and then Katherine not being able to stop her chair rolling off the stage. That marked a time where even though you know what you're watching isn't real, it feels very uncomfortable. And everything culminated in red wobbly jelly...

For me, the 'politics' of the piece revolved around roles and constant negotiation of who has control of whom. Sometimes the sensors worked for Katherine to activate the guests, by her `chair wheeling over them and sometimes, they didn't. Jeni Draper as `Terp' was told very firmly to "get back in her box".

Easy to forget that another live performance of the piece, complete with real Waiting Staff and virtual guests, was happening simultaneously at Arts Admin, and yet fascinating, during the moments when they were `beamed' in.

Somehow the piece seemed more scripted than I expected and as a Theatrerey Gal(!), I wanted more context as to who the host of this party was, and why that party was being hosted then and there, exactly; also how the guests, `staff' etc. had come to be invited.

The technology I felt, enabled and augmented Katherine's performance as a disabled artist amidst the cacophony of sound from the inane `conversation' of the virtual guests. And inquisitions such as "Were you born like that" asked incessantly, all your life, without invitation, really ARE inane. Such questions were spouted from the last guests, along-side manic laughter and I wondered if we as disabled performers ever really `escape' those questions from our audiences, whether posed so directly, or left un-voiced.

By Sophie Partridge

Lea Cummings: 'Cosmic fields of endless possibilities,' 2 - 7 September 2014

Glasgow-based artist and musician Lea Cummings' latest exhibition, is placed on the appropriately-named Spirit Level in the basement of the Royal Festival Hall.

Tucked behind a corner through the 'Tunnel of Love', Lea Cummings' exhibition hits you with a bright, loud, colourful energy. The works feel like a continuation and the perfect ending for the tunnel filled, as it is, with modern-day pop images.

'Cosmic Fields of Endless Possibilities' was, according to Cummings, produced in 'meditative state'. This means that "the drawings tap into the collective unconscious, where themes, motifs, patterns and symbols frequently found in ethnographic art produced by various disparate cultures combine. As such, they portray a spiritual reality that underlies and transcends the physical one and unites all living things."



The pictures were all done with pen on paper, yet I can indeed see elements that remind me of ethnographic art or embroidery – the intricate details that are part of every inch of each painting, the bright mixture of swirls of different colours.

'Edge of Chaos' is my favourite artwork of the exhibition, and its name speaks volumes. An abundance of leaf-shaped, snail shell-shaped, ice cream-shaped structures open up a magical land of rainbow striped rivers, lollipop suns and towers striped in all colours you could ever imagine. This painting seems magical and straight out of wonderland.

Cummings explains that "by working in this unconscious way I feel that I can tap into the universal energy field and express its forms and patterns. These drawings and the processes used to create them speak of an existence outside of the consumer capitalist culture of anxiety, planning and competition with its ideas of success and failure."

In the video, which accompanies the eight paintings, Cummings also states that no planning or sketches are part of his creative process. Instead, everything that goes into the artwork is right there, on the paper, and for Cummings, this is what gives the work its magic spark – it is not goal-driven and he can get totally lost in it, remove himself completely from his everyday concerns.

Personally, even though the pictures can make my eyes feel tired because of their exuberant energy, I also feel like I could stare at them forever and always discover new details and new surprising colour combinations that inspire. I love the way they make my mind wander – down the tunnel of love, straight into wonderland.

By Nina Muehlemann



Unlimited 2014: Unleashed 5 September 2014

"Gobble gobble, one of us! We accept you, gobble gobble!" various voices are whispering the iconic chant from the film 'Freaks', and they seem to come closer and closer, until they are behind us.

Various performers of Unlimited, amongst them compere Liz Carr, Garry Robson and Claire Cunningham, are coming through the audience until they finally get to the stage. The opening for 'Unlimited Unleashed' is fun, daring and a big celebration of crip culture.

The Clore Ballroom is busy, but Liz Carr and the other performers have no problem to grip everyone's attention. Garry Robson takes over and sings some cabaret-style 'low-down dirty cripple' songs, accompanied by Sally Clay on the piano. They are beautiful together and the songs are infused with humour, which is emphasized through Caroline Parker's brilliant signing. Overall, a great first act.

When the wicked Liz Carr returns on stage, she explains that while the performers are supposed to do something 'a bit different', mostly she has no idea what they are going to do – she is just as surprised by the acts as the audience is.

In many cases, the performances include music: Julie McNamara and Caroline Parker do a beautiful duet of Bette Midler's 'The Rose', Claire Cunningham and Sally Clay do piano ballads together and hilariously reveal that they might call themselves 'Blinky and the Lame'. Then there is a wonderful tribute to Kate Bush when she does a signing version of 'Wuthering Heights' that is so intense and over the top that it gives Bush's obsessed, witch-dance a run for its money.

A completely different tribute, namely to 80's popstar Olivia Newton John, comes from Caroline Bowditch, who, dressed up in sweat bands and shorts, asks us to join her routine to get 'Physical'. She has two assistants, played by Liz Carr and Katherine Araniello, and while they happily dress up in 80's workout gear, they do not want to join in and do the workout moves, out of fear that a social worker is in the audience and will take their benefits away. The whole number is fabulously camp and the most entertaining workout I have ever done.

Katherine Araniello and Jenna Finch, meanwhile, give a new spin to last year's sexist summer hit 'Blurred Lines' as the 'Feral Ladykillers',

when their performance to it suggests, with an eye-wink, that it is their sexuality that is wild and dangerous.

The two highlights of the evening come from Robert Softley Gale and the duo that is Touretteshero and Captain Hotknives. Robert Softley Gale is coming on stage in a fabulous pink sparkly dress, lying in front of us with his laptop, whose screen is projected for the audience.

Suddenly Charlene's gay anthem 'I've never been to me' is blasting out of the speakers, and drag queens appear in the screen. Softley Gale then projects his own face in front of the drag queens and begins lip-syncing to the song. He also applies mascara and lipstick to his face, and the end-result is rather erratic, but wonderfully charming. Every now and then he embeds funny one-liners into the song via text to speech software, such as "Will I poke out my eye with this mascara? Quite possibly!"

The whole performance is done with a lot of glee, joy and unbelievable charm, nerve and charisma. The performance shows how fun, magical and utterly celebratory it can be when queer culture and crip culture come together. By the end of his performance, Softley Gale is dragged off the stage by Julie McNamara under loud cheers and applause.

The evening ends in complete joyful chaos when Touretteshero and Captain Hotknives are taking over the stage. They call themselves the 'Bipolar Tourettes Alliance' and engage the audience in shambolic sing-alongs (every audience member has to make up their own words), an impossibly fast-paced game they call 'Tourette's I Spy', and play the songs with the most erratic and possibly dirtiest lyrics the Clore Ballroom has ever heard.

All this is accompanied by Touretteshero's joyful outcries of 'Biscuit!' and 'Hedgehog!', 'a sexy otter thinking about catnip' and something about Disney's Aladdin, too obscene to write here. Performance has rarely been so chaotic, or so unforgettable.

All in all, 'Unlimited Unleashed' was a wonderful celebration of disability arts, crip culture, crip humour and two hours of absolutely amazing cabaret. The only thing I would want to change about 'Unlimited Unleashed' is for it to happen more regularly. It's the perfect, surprising, chaotic, laughter-inducing night out.

By Nina Muehlemann

STOPGAP'S 'ARTIFICIAL THINGS'

LUA are pleased to be co-hosting a new dance performance by the renowned integrated Dance Company Stopgap. 'Artificial Things' comes to Salisbury Arts Centre on Wednesday 12 November. Below is information from Stopgap's publicity material:



About Stopgap

Stopgap Dance Company creates exhilarating dance productions of international standard, employing disabled and non-disabled artists who find innovative ways to collaborate. Stopgap value a pioneering spirit and are committed to making discoveries about integrating disabled and non-disabled people through dance.

The piece

'Artificial Things' is the debut work of the Artistic Director Lucy Bennett. Under her direction, Stopgap Dance Company has broken away from its previous repertoire model and becomes an integrated dance company that devises original works for international touring. This exciting step-change will continue to make Stopgap a unique and fascinating company. Lucy Bennett visualises dance through a cinematic spectrum. She puts emphasis on allowing the audience to observe the nuances of each dancer and become absorbed in the remarkable dynamics that their interactions create. The starting point of her devising process is the personal experiences that her dancers bring to the studio. These stories give Lucy's work originality and a human quality, making it appealing to audiences who want to see intriguing personalities on stage.

'Artificial Things' features dancers David Toole from DV8's award winning film Cost of Living, with Laura Jones, Chris Pavia, David Willdridge and Amy Butler. The theatre design was inspired by a series of strange and intense paintings by a Serbian artist Goran Djurović , re-imagined by Anna Jones from Curious Space. Chahine Yavrovan's stunning but disquieting lighting enhances the interplay between light and shadow, with strong highlights sitting next to deep colours. 'Artificial Things' is accompanied by unnerving and simmering scores by Christopher Benstead, Jim Pinchen and Andy Higgs. Yoshifumi Inao, former Artistic Director of Batsheva Dance Company, is the guest choreographer for the opening scene.

'Bold and disarming' - **Exeunt Magazine (for Artificial Things, 2014)**

To see a trailer: <http://youtu.be/wjFgvTsjRrI>

To book tickets: <http://www.salisburyartscentre.co.uk/whats-on/Event.aspx?EventID=1098>

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

If you fancy some Autumn networking, why not check out these conferences:

Creative Minds South West
Anchor Road, Bristol, BS1 5DB
Tuesday 13 October 2014, 10am – 5pm. £35

Creative Minds South West is the second Creative Minds Conference, the first one was in Brighton in March 2014.

This one day Conference in Bristol is planned and presented by a group of learning disabled artists, performers and film makers from 6 arts organisations: OpenStoryTellers, Artists First, Firebird Theatre, Misfits Theatre Company, Jumpcuts and Carousel. We will be talking about what we mean by quality in learning disability led art forms. We will be showing some performance, films and art during the day, as well as talking. It is accessible to all. To see previous events and more information visit

<http://www.creativemindsproject.org.uk/events/creative-minds-south-west/>.

Meet the Funder
The Corn Exchange, Devizes
Tuesday 18 November 2014, 9.30-4pm. £7.50

The Community Foundation for Wiltshire and invites you to a one-day conference for community and charity groups. Speakers include: Big Lottery, Lloyds Foundation, Comic Relief with workshops from Lloyds Foundation, Comic Relief, Localgiving.com
Supported by the Blagrove Trust, Wiltshire & Swindon Funding Network, Wiltshire Council and Develop.

For more information or to book online, visit

<http://theartsinwiltshire.wordpress.com/2014/09/12/funding-and-networking-meet-the-funder-conference-2/>

REMINDERS FOR YOUR DIARY:

Café LUA

October8th 2014

November12th 2014

Café LUA takes place every second Wednesday of the month (except August) at Salisbury Arts Centre from 14.00 to 16.00. We usually meet in the café area, but specific projects can mean we are in one of the work spaces, do ask at the Box Office if you are in any doubt.

Café LUA is a social get together for artists with disabilities – an informal, open space for inspiration and discussion. However you are involved with or interested in the arts, do come along and meet us, find out about us, and about Disability Arts. We'd love to meet you and hear more about your arts practice or interests. Each month, as well as open discussion and networking, we focus on a particular topic or issue.

Wednesday 8th October

Meet Gemma Okell, Salisbury Arts Centre's Director.

LUA and Salisbury Arts Centre warmly invite everyone interested in the arts to an informal presentation and discussion. This is an opportunity to find out more about the Art Centre's autumn programme and offer thoughts on what you would like to see and get involved with. From issues around access to what's on – come armed with a question, or just see what unfolds. We all very much look forward to meeting, and hearing from you.

Salisbury Arts Centre are very kindly offering any Café LUA members who attend the session £5 tickets to see the 8:00pm performance of 'Our Friends, The Enemy' in theatre. To book your ticket, call the BOX Office on 01722 321744

or visit <http://www.salisburyartscentre.co.uk/whats-on/Event.aspx?EventID=1095> to find out more.

Wednesday 12th November

Join us to find out more about our upcoming storytelling project 'Our Tales: Unveiled' taking place during November – December, featuring workshops and performances by Liz Porter and Penny Pepper. Places are limited so come along and book your free place for the workshops if you haven't already!

At the heart of LinkUpArts:



For more information about the career artists
in LUAN: linkupartistsnetwork@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER FORMATS

You can receive this Newsletter in print form,
it is available in bigger type and an audio cassette. You can also download it from
salisburyartscentre.co.uk -> Resident Companies ->LinkUpArts



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LinkUpArts and Salisbury Arts Centre work together for the benefit of both organisations. LUA advises and consults with Salisbury Arts Centre on its Disability Arts programming and helps to promote the events. Salisbury Arts Centre gives LUA its home and provides marketing and administrative support. LUA is a strategic creative partner in Salisbury Arts Centre's Creative Family.

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