

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

issue 40



Welcome

A POEM OFTEN QUOTED BY JOHN MERRICK

Tis true my form is something odd.
But blaming me is blaming God;
Could I create myself anew,
I would not fail in pleasing you.
If I could reach from pole to pole,
Or grasp the ocean with a span,
I would be measured by the soul,
The mind's the standard of the man.

(This poem was used by John Merrick in a pamphlet accompanying his freak show, and later when he wrote to thank people in their generosity in caring for him).

This issue reviews the critically acclaimed *The Elephant Man*, starring Jamie Beddard. We look towards UNLIMITED, an arts commissioning programme to be held at the Southbank Centre at the beginning of September. The public launch of the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive (NDACA), is reviewed by Disability Arts Online and Wiltshire Creative give us an outline of what's to be expected in *Lift Off!*

- Guest Editor Lorna Wilson

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Review: The Elephant Man

Our thanks to Disability Arts Online for allowing us to reproduce parts of this review by Deborah Caulfield.

"Sometimes I think my head is so big because it is so full of dreams."

John Merrick

In a collaboration between Bristol Old Vic, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and Diverse City, the theatre worked with Jamie Beddard who starred in this new production, directed by Lee Lyford, which played in Bristol from Tues 26 June – Sat 7 July.

First previewed in New York in 1979, Bernard Pomerance's Tony award-winning **The Elephant Man** tells a remarkable and sad story focusing on the life story of Joseph Merrick (1862-1890), after he embarked on a career as a professional exhibit on the traveling freak show circuit.

Presented through a series of snapshots unfolding chronologically, the play's twenty one scenes depict some of the key events in the last six years of Merrick's life.

The episodes are brief and impressionistic, using minimal scenery and props. Photographs of Merrick are displayed on banners. The whole show is captioned, which, as someone with (even) moderate hearing loss, means being able to access all the dialogue.



A solo cellist plays hauntingly throughout.

Photograph: The Cast, taken from The Times July 3rd 2018

The Elephant Man breaks new ground by casting disabled actor Jamie Beddard in the role of John Merrick. In an

interview with Beddard about the Bristol Old Vic production, he described Pomerance's play as resonating strongly with present times:

"There are loads of parallels between the experience of Joseph Merrick and the place of disabled people in society. Merrick shockingly gets cast out to the mob in the Elephant Man, and the current demonisation and disempowerment of disabled people bears much resemblance; albeit less viscerally."

Speaking on July 3rd 2018, Jamie also said: *"This is a really exciting opportunity to be working with drama school graduates and hopefully, by working with someone like me, it will normalise inclusion and exciting approaches to casting. Merrick is also a really iconic part for a disabled performer. In the past, the role of Joseph Merrick has been performed by non-disabled actors, which is really bizarre. It's time to reclaim The Elephant Man."*

The Elephant Man was part of Bristol Old Vic's Year of Change, examining change through a series of ground-breaking theatre productions and provocative city-wide events.

- By Deborah Caulfield

Cover Art: Photos of The Elephant Man © Alistair Campbell. Reproduced with permission of What's On Stage and The Bristol Old Vic.

https://www.whatsonstage.com/bristol-theatre/news/elephant-man-jamie-beddard-photos-first-look-old-vic_46794.html#&gid=1&pid=5

Launch of the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive (NDACA)

The National Disability Arts Collection and Archive (NDACA), a £1-million digital archive chronicling the history of disability arts in the UK, has launched to the public. Our thanks to Disability Arts Online for allowing us to reproduce this article.



NDACA is the first archive in the world to offer a major retrospective of disabled people's art and activism. The Disability Arts Movement – a fascinating story of disabled people forming an exciting disability culture – can now take its place within the diverse landscape of UK cultural heritage.

Photograph: Graeae rehearsal photo from the 1980s

The Archive and Collection preserves the legacy of disability arts, allowing future generations of

disabled people to celebrate the creative and political artefacts of disability. Researchers, heritage professionals and those interested in the UK's cultural identity will be able to share and study ephemera about disability arts and analyse how the Disability Arts Movement impacted the campaign for disabled people's civil rights

Delivered by Shape Arts and built with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as Arts Council England and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, www.the-ndaca.org is the home of a digital catalogue of 3,500 images, oral history film interviews, educational resources and animations, articles and much more.

As an open, free-to-use archive, www.the-ndaca.org is the central location to discover disability arts history. NDACA has digitised over 3,000 deposits to tell the heritage story of disability arts; this massive collection of disabled artists' work from 1968 to the present day covers every aspect of their creative and political journeys: extensive photographs, ephemera, theatre stills and t-shirt collections relating to the seminal moments in the struggle for disabled people's rights.



Photograph: Self Portrait by Nancy Willis (1983), pastel on Ingres paper. NDACA.

Stuart Hopley, Head of HLF London, comments:

“I am delighted that, thanks to National Lottery players, we’re supporting the first ever cultural archive of disability arts history. NDACA is a major milestone for disability heritage; stories of ordinary people who led extraordinary lives. Challenging and triumphant, we can now all learn about the contribution of the disabled community to the UK’s arts and political landscape.”

The digitisation of thousands of unique deposits will allow new audiences to comment on disability arts heritage. David Hevey, Shape Arts CEO and Project Director of NDACA, explained:

“This Archive tells a powerful heritage story about the Disability Arts Movement. I am proud to have led on a project that has reinterpreted the great art, culture and story of struggle produced by disabled people and their allies for so many decades.”

Jocelyn Dodd, Director of the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, says:

“RCMG are delighted that the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive is now publicly available. This vital resource offers opportunities to tackle negative attitudes to ‘difference’, a goal that lies at the heart of our research at RCMG. This resource will enable museums, galleries and researchers to access untold stories about disabled people’s creativity and the oppression they battled against, and will also empower new audiences to discover the ideas and themes of forty years of disability arts history.”

As well as the collection itself, **The NDACA website** introduces the artists and activists through a collection of films telling their life stories. In the resources section you can enjoy an overview of some of the central themes of the Disability Arts Movement by viewing short animations made with Disability History Month.

In a series of **15 Audio Described Essays: Pictures Painted in a Thousand Words**: the team at Disability Arts Online have given in-depth written and recorded context to a selection of key objects within the collection and archive.

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES:

Check out these opportunities in Salisbury and London:

Lift Off: Friday 24 – Monday 27 August 2018

Join us over the August Bank Holiday weekend in Salisbury for a four-day celebration of the arts across the city and help launch Wiltshire Creative's first season.

ITINERY:

PICNIC IN THE CLOSE

Kicking off the weekend with live music in The Cathedral Close.

Friday, from 7pm

FREE

FIREWORKS

Heralding the start of Lift Off!
and celebrating Wiltshire Creative.

Friday, 9.30pm, Salisbury Cathedral

FREE



SPLENDIFEROUS STORY EXPLOSION

Familiar fairytales performed in surprising and unfamiliar ways, in and around Salisbury Playhouse, performed by Wiltshire Creative community groups, including Stage 65 Youth Theatre, Jigsaw Youth Dance, Mind the Gap, Dance Six-0 and Zone Arts.

Saturday & Sunday, Salisbury Playhouse

FREE

ART QUEST

Solve the puzzles on this visual arts trail between the Arts Centre and Playhouse.

Saturday & Sunday

FREE

PUSH Talk: My Life is Only Miracles

Simon Gronowski recounts how his mother pushed him off a train bound for Auschwitz in 1943 in order to save his life.

Saturday, 11am, Salisbury Methodist Church. £10

PUSH

A performance of the opera by Howard Moody
Performed by Salisbury Festival Chorus and La Folia Orchestra

Saturday, 5pm & 8pm, St Thomas' Church, Salisbury, £20 (under 18s £10)
A La Folia production in association with Wiltshire Creative

WITHOUT WALLS

Free theatre and circus performances on the streets of Salisbury.
Sunday & Monday

FREE

FAMILY FIESTA

Plenty of craft activities for all the family to enjoy.
Saturday & Sunday, Salisbury Arts Centre

FREE

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Tangled Feet Theatre present an interactive theatre piece to mark the 100th anniversary of the armistice.
Sunday and Monday, Guildhall Square

FREE

LIFT OFF! ARCHIVE EXHIBITION

Celebrating the arts in Salisbury. Come and add your memories!
All weekend, Salisbury Arts Centre

FREE

MUSIC AT THE PLAYHOUSE AND ARTS CENTRE

Spend your Bank Holiday Monday afternoon enjoying live music and refreshments.
Monday, Salisbury Arts Centre & Salisbury Playhouse

FREE

More events to be announced!

Full programme of events will be available from the end of July.

UNLIMITED ...

Unlimited is an arts commissioning programme that enables new work by disabled artists to reach UK and international audiences. This year the Southbank Centre's Unlimited Festival and the Symposium leading up to it will generate International interest.

Unlimited: The Symposium

The Symposium is a disabled-led, two-day discussion event aimed at both a national and international audience across the cultural sector. It takes place Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 September 2018.

Tickets are now sold out for the Symposium, **Find out more about the live-stream and you can get involved online.**

The Symposium is the lead up to Southbank Centre's Unlimited Festival - Wednesday 5 until Sunday 9 September 2018.

Aims of the Symposium

Unlimited has three aims – to commission high quality art by extraordinary disabled artists, to embed disabled artists in the cultural sector and ultimately to transform the perception of disability.

Topics of Discussion

The topics that will be discussed have been chosen by Unlimited's audiences. Each topic in the Symposium's four main sessions – Art, Equality, Attitude and Future – was **voted for on Twitter:**

- Art: How can disabled artists change the 'mainstream' arts sector?
- Equality: Disability, intersectional identities and the arts
- Attitude: Why is it taking so long? Can we speed up change? Will we ever get there?
- Future: Does new technology enable or create more barriers?

Each session will begin with provocations from a diverse range of speakers (who will be announced over the coming months), followed by discussion and debate in chaired

breakout spaces and animated by artists-in-residence and other creative responses around the building.

The symposium is aimed at those in the cultural sector who want to engage with different perspectives and to plan for real change. Global audiences can view the provocations online and join the discussion on social media.

Keep updated

Sign up to the newsletter and follow **@weareunltd** **#UnltdSymposium** on Twitter for more updates on speakers and more detailed information.

Unlimited: The Festival



Photograph: Sitar master Baluji Shrivastav

Unlimited is back for 2018, once again shining a light on extraordinary work by disabled artists.

Born out of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Southbank Centre's *Unlimited* is a biennial festival with further Arts Council funding secured until 2020.

Featuring the British Para-Orchestra, writer and comedian Jackie Hagan, sitar master Baluji Shrivastav OBE and many more—dive into dance, performance, comedy, music and art that challenges perceptions and breaks down walls.



Photograph: The British Para-Orchestra

The festival has an abundance of free events, plus relaxed performances and BSL-integrated events, so there's even more reason to get involved.

At the heart of the festival is the *Unlimited* commissions programme delivered by Shape Arts and Artsadmin. Supporting established, emerging and international disabled artists across all artforms, this programme aims to embed work by disabled artists within the cultural sector, reach new audiences and shift perceptions. The programme is funded by Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, British Council and Spirit of 2012.



Photograph: The Unlimited House of Krip – Manchester Ball – Ariel Fung in Solo Category – Photo Credit: Fotocad

For more about the Festival and other Unlimited events, go to <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/unlimited>

At the heart of LinkUpArts:



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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