

Birds of Paradise Theatre Company



BIRDS OF
PARADISE
THEATRE
COMPANY

Annual Report 2015 - 2016

Organisational

Staffing

The staff team of Garry Robson, Robert Softley Gale and Shona Rattray had been leading the organisation since November 2013. In July of 2015 Shona left the company to pursue exciting freelance opportunities and so Garry and Robert became joint Artistic Directors and Chief Executive Officers.

Following a period of internal review, we advertised for a new Access & Finance Administrator. We were delighted to appoint Karen Forbes to this role in November 2015.

Rotation of Board Members

Our previous Chair, Liam Sinclair, resigned from our Board of Directors in July 2015 after giving nine great years of service to the company. Marianne Maxwell and Graham Main, two excellent co-chairs, oversaw the BOP Board through a transitional period whilst new members and a new chair are being recruited.

Long time treasurer Simon Hodgson remained on the board with Marianne and Graham.

Projects

Looking 4 Talent

Looking 4 Talent saw BOP travel across the country searching for emerging deaf and disabled talent, auditioning over 50 people. A number of those auditioned were then invited to a day-long audition workshop at Scottish Youth Theatre and subsequently six people were invited to take part in L4T Intensive, a two-week development process in October held with the support of Summerhall, Edinburgh.

We worked with this group on developing a new version of a seminal show in the history of disability art 'The Last Freakshow' by Mike Kenny. This was performed to an enthusiastic full house at Summerhall on Friday 16th October. Following on from this we have been able to identify three performers who we feel have the potential for a professional career. We were able to put them in touch with the Ramps on the Moon project in England and we're pleased to say Rhona Mackenzie obtained a role in a version of Gogol's The Government Inspector at the Birmingham Rep which then toured to major venues throughout England. We are currently supporting Rhona through a producers course with the China Plate Project. One of the other performers worked with us on the development of Fighting and Dancing.

Following the large amounts of learning disabled people who responded to our L4T outreach project, we have – alongside Lung Ha Theatre Company – been helping to establish the first acting course specifically for people with a learning disability at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. This course – Acting Skills for Adults with Learning Difficulties – began in January and will run throughout 2016 and 2017.

Be-BoP

We had a successful spring Be-BoP season, working with local disabled actor and workshop leader Joe Brown to run the sessions, supported by Michelle Montgomery Masters. During this season we retained our regular Ensemble members and expanded upon this group - some people who completed Looking 4 Talent were signposted into joining in with Be-Bop in the future. The Be-Bop season



finished with a small sharing which was streamed live via Periscope, gaining 85 hits! This session was filmed and is available on the website.

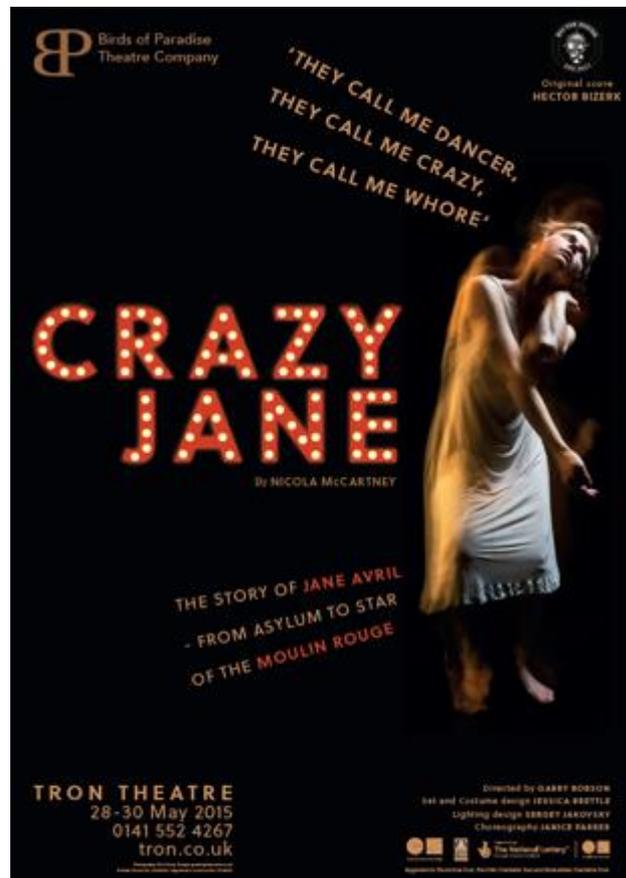
The autumn Be-BoP season was again led by Joe Brown, this time with the support of trainee Director Alyson Woodhouse. This Be-Bop season climaxed with the ensemble performing a series of audition sketches.

Crazy Jane: May - June 2015

Tron Theatre, Glasgow / The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen / Eden Court, Inverness / Dornie Village Hall, Kyle of Lochalsh / Summerhall, Edinburgh / Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy / Bonar Hall, Dundee

“She dances. She dances alone. Always alone. Always twisting away just out of reach – ever beyond your touch, beyond your embrace, beyond your gaze”

Crazy Jane is a spectacular theatre, dance event with an original razor sharp score by Scottish hip hop artists Hector Bizerk. It tells the story of Jane Avril and her extraordinary journey from the back streets and brothels of Paris via the asylum wards of the Salpêtrière Asylum and on to the palace of women, the Moulin Rouge.



“... a two-hour drama-cum-cabaret about that adds another beautiful and haunting strand to the current generation of great work by Scottish-based companies involving artists with disabilities.”

★★★★ The Scotsman

“...comical and gritty production that stays classy throughout.”

★★★★ The Public Reviews



Hector Bizerk have released the soundtrack to overwhelming critical acclaim including a nomination for Scottish Album of the Year.

Wendy Hoose: August 2015

Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh
Monday 17th – Sunday 30th August 2015

Laura and Jake just want sex. Late Friday night drunken sex. Nothing more. No strings attached. But getting your leg over is sometimes more difficult than you think. Starring James Young and Amy Conachan, Wendy Hoose is about two twenty year olds searching for love in all the wrong places!



★★★★★

The Scotsman

★★★★★

Edinburgh Guide

★★★★★

The Guardian

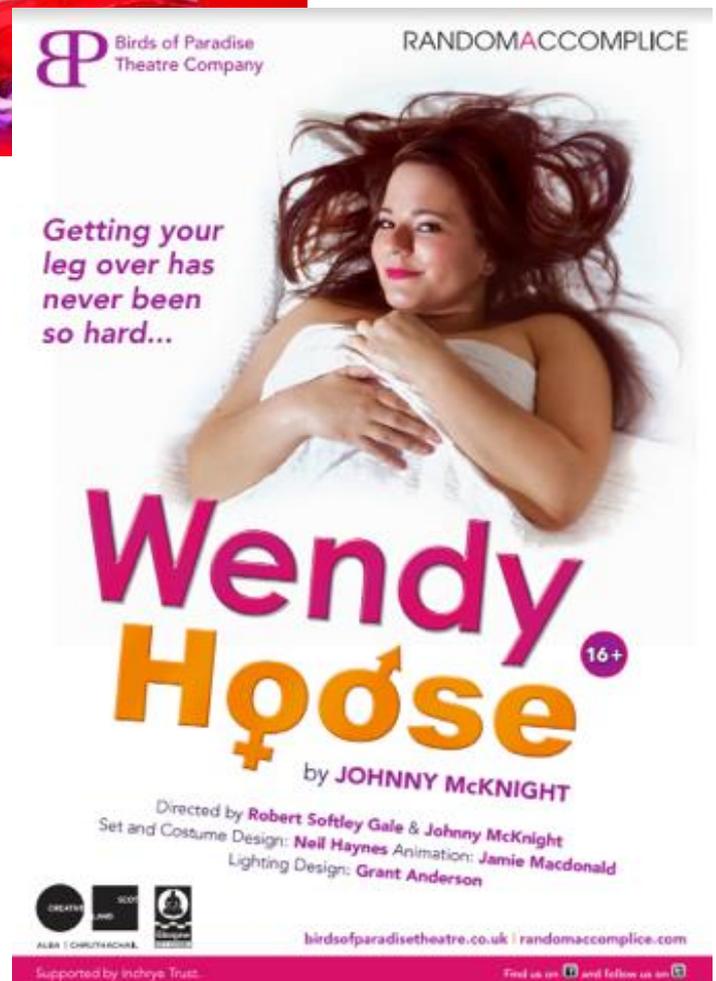
★★★★★

The Herald

After a very successful tour in 2014-2015, Wendy Hoose was accepted in to the Scottish Government's Made in Scotland programme, to present Wendy Hoose at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2015.

“The audio describer, brilliantly voiced completely deadpan by Random Accomplice's Artistic Director Julie Brown (a la Scarlett Johansson's conscience-ridden computer in Her) gets some juicy one-liners too—hilarious references to “lady gardens” in one scene, and amusing disgust at what she her career has become- “I went to drama school, you know!”

★★★★★ EXUENT



Purposeless Movements: February - March 2016

Tramway, Glasgow

Thu 25 – Sat 27 Feb 2016

Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

Wed 2 – Fri 4 Mar 2016

Eden Court, Inverness

Wed 16 Mar 2016

“What’s so great about purposeful movement? Half the fun in life is not knowing what’s coming next.”

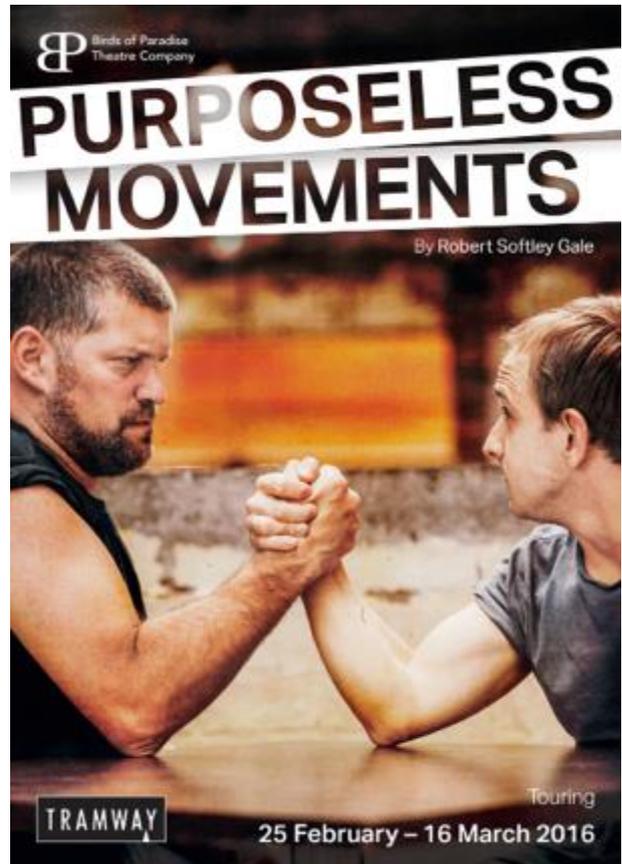
Purposeless Movements is a visually stunning new dance theatre piece that riffs on the stories of five guys with cerebral palsy, how it affects their lives, their gender, their masculinity and their movement

“...this is one brilliantly shrewd triumph of a show...”

★★★★★ **The Herald**

“real laugh-out-loud stuff...wit, charm and pathos...”

★★★★★ **The Scotsman**



“...a genuinely engaging, touching and amusing production...”

★★★★★ **Broadway Baby**

“Unflinching, inventive, and tender...”

★★★★★ **The Stage**



The Polio Monologues

We held a two-day development period in June in which performers Rachel Drazek and Joe Brown worked with Garry and choreographer Janice Parker to investigate creating a piece of verbatim theatre from interviews with polio survivors carried out by academic Sonali Shah. For this work Garry used the “recorded delivery” techniques pioneered by Aleky Blythe. Garry was shadowed by Disabled Trainee director Aly Mathews.

Following this development work a film was created which is available on our website and has been shown at various international academic events and we will be delivering a workshop at the Social Sciences fair in Glasgow in November.

Tomsk Project: March 2016

A groundbreaking project worked on jointly by BOP, Skomorokh Puppet Theatre Tomsk, Indigo Deaf Studio and "KultProject" (Moscow). This was the first time a D/deaf company had collaborated with a major Russian producing house and is part of our ongoing work in developing the social inclusion agenda in Russia. Garry went to Tomsk, Siberia in March 2016 to direct this new project. This was to be the first integrated production to be performed on a main stage in Russia and there was a lot of media and industry interest both in Russia and the U.K.

The show “The Last Show” written by Natasha Borenko and designed by Viktor Nonenko was performed in spoken Russian and Siberian Sign Language and played to a sold out main house during its first run.



The show has since become part of the Skomorokh Repertory programme and nominated for a Golden Mask Theatre Award, Russia’s equivalent of the BAFTAS.