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**NSDF HUB** // *Here and then • Unhaunted • Speaking our Language*

**FESTIVAL**

# NOISES OFF

**NEWSPAPER**

*DJ Baz's Year 6 Disco*

// *Disco Feels*

*Nofflets // On our mind*

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## With thanks to

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## Editorial

**Well. NSDF 2022 has unfurled its wings and taken flight. Somewhere along the way, before becoming airborne, I'm sure that it brushed its feathers across your shoulders as you asked yourself questions. What will this bring? What will I learn? How will I feel to be once again in a dim room with an audience of keen strangers? Who will I be when the lights go down? Who will I be?**

I'm sure that it brushed its feathers across your shoulders, because it touched mine too, as I asked myself endless things – festival dates, long in my calendar, fast approaching. Or rather, I attempted not to ask myself endless things by going to bed super late and getting up too early while vaguely committing to a habit of drinking morning coffees instead of tea just to feel like I'd sort of moved...somewhere. Shifted something. In a sluggish pandemic life that felt like it had forgotten that impermanence and change are meant to be the only constants in this world. What does this have to do with NSDF, you ask. Nothing really. I just reckon that if I'm here editing a newspaper you ought to know something about me. The person. That's the

only way I understand legitimising myself as a facilitator of the voices you'll read in this digital newspaper, voices far more important in this festival than mine.

There was another point to telling you that actually! We are still in a pandemic. I've been very aware of this fact. The first ever in person pandemic NSDF. It's A Badge. Not a great badge, but A Badge. A pandemic, I'm sure we can all agree, which has been a realm of exhausting uncertainty. Exhausting uncertainty which human beings react to and deal with, in diverse ways, together.

This first issue of *Noises Off* 2022 attempts to reconcile diverse ways. It attempts to remember the past while hoping for the future. It attempts to reconcile reviewing theatre with a spirit of generosity. It attempts to manage expectation and reality. It attempts to pose new questions from old answers. It attempts.

Being back at NSDF has been a shock to my introverted system. I count my mistakes. I try to learn from them. I stay up too late writing this editorial because I've got used to needing the quiet to be able to make sense (and barely at that!).

I hope you enjoy the contents of this first issue of your favourite festival paper. Our writers have done a wonderful job of throwing themselves in at the deep end, producing responsive and thought-provoking writing about the industry, the festival, the work and ultimately their subjective experiences. Which is what we're all in this theatre thing for, isn't it? In diverse ways.

As the festival soars onwards at speed (the end of day 2? already?) take time to consider its flight. We want to know what you think. How you feel. What you saw. What you heard. How was it when the lights went down? Who were you? What I'm saying is, come write for *Noises Off*, we'd be so pleased to have you. Bring your whole self.

Noff love,

**Naomi**

**Noises Off Editor**

*The conversation continues online [nsdf.org.uk/noises-off](https://nsdf.org.uk/noises-off)*

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# On emerging

Zoe Callow tackles the terminology of 'emerging' with Meg Perks, Joe Kent-Walters and Ali Pidsley



## I. I think it's just something that people have said to us.

Meg Perks and Joe Kent-Walters started their company, The Devil Wears Dada, in the first summer of the pandemic. Meg can't remember if their show, *Meg and Joe are Trying to Connect*, suffered two or three failed Arts Council bids in that time, but Joe won't forget in a hurry: "Two arts council, one local council", he cuts in.

I'm here to ask them what it means to be emerging, and Meg, like me, isn't sure. "I think it's just something that people have said to us. Maybe we're not fully established as a company yet, still finding our footing a bit."

It's uncanny to hear an almost identical answer from Ali Pidsley the next day. A founder of Barrel Organ, he now mentors new companies through NSDF and remembers the word being used about himself nearly ten years ago. "It's someone else telling you that you're at the beginning of a journey."

Emerging, then, isn't just about being in a process of growth and development. It's a word which is nearly always used by others to describe early career artists, and rarely used by artists to describe themselves on their own terms.

I'm going around in circles, wondering whether the word is just the inevitable product of our industry's hierarchies, or whether it plays a more active role in creating them.

## II. Battling gatekeepers.

That's what emerging means to Joe. Ironically, even the word itself is tangled up in this gatekeeping process: opening some doors while moving other opportunities out of reach.

Meg tells me about Open Source Arts, whose

free programme for emerging grassroots artists enabled them to livestream their performance after the paralysis of funding rejections. Being described as emerging can provide access to resources, and with it a sense of legitimisation.

But this legitimisation comes at a cost, Joe explains, when "certain theatres or organisations will be like, 'we won't programme you for our actual theatre because we've got all these things for emerging artists.'" The word becomes shorthand for a desire to support early career artists without taking the perceived risk of actually programming them.

I'm still going around in circles, but I'm beginning to think that this is the point. The language of emerging has something of the chicken and the egg in its relationship to the power dynamics of the cultural industries, coming both first and second, a product of hierarchies which goes on to sustain them.

Payment is always the final gate to be kept. While Meg and Joe have benefitted from free rehearsal space, they have relied on donations from audiences, family and friends to attempt to cover their running costs. To be 'emerging' reads as needing help, but not payment for work.

## III. This idea that out of nowhere you can just like... 'Boom! Yeah I'm a genius!'

Joe draws on his comedy work, telling me about the nominations for the Best Newcomer category for the Chortle awards. "I've seen people on that list, and they've been going for ten years." What does it mean for emerging to be an identity occupied by both a theatre company making their first show and a seasoned comedian?

"The industry wants to feel like they've tapped into some undiscovered talent", he suggests. And artists can play into this: "It can feel quite good to be like 'oh yeah I've



only been at it for X many years', and then people are like 'Oh woah! Cool!'"

It's frustrating that this irritatingly persistent faith in the concept of 'raw talent' obscures the work which goes into winning a comedy award or getting a show selected for NSDF. "It's not really genius, it's just hard work," says Meg.

## IV. Will I always be emerging?

It's impossible to escape the idea that my emerging – both the stage of my career and the label that comes with it – will be over soon. I'm swayed by Ali's suggestion, that "because of the way that our minds work or because of capitalism, when you think of a journey you think of the end result, you think of where it's a journey to."

Out of this comes a pressure to get the emerging over with, where both success and failure come at a cost. What happens if you are still emerging when you turn 26? Or if you feel you have progressed to a new stage and can't shed the label? I ask Meg and Joe what's next, and Joe can only answer my question with more of his own: "It fills me with a lot of anxiety, like how long are you emerging for?"

...

Although I've had an aversion to 'emerging' for a while now, writing this article has shown me that the real problem is how the word is used: the way it perpetuates existing hierarchies, reinforces the myth of the child prodigy and plays an active role in gatekeeping access to opportunities and payment.

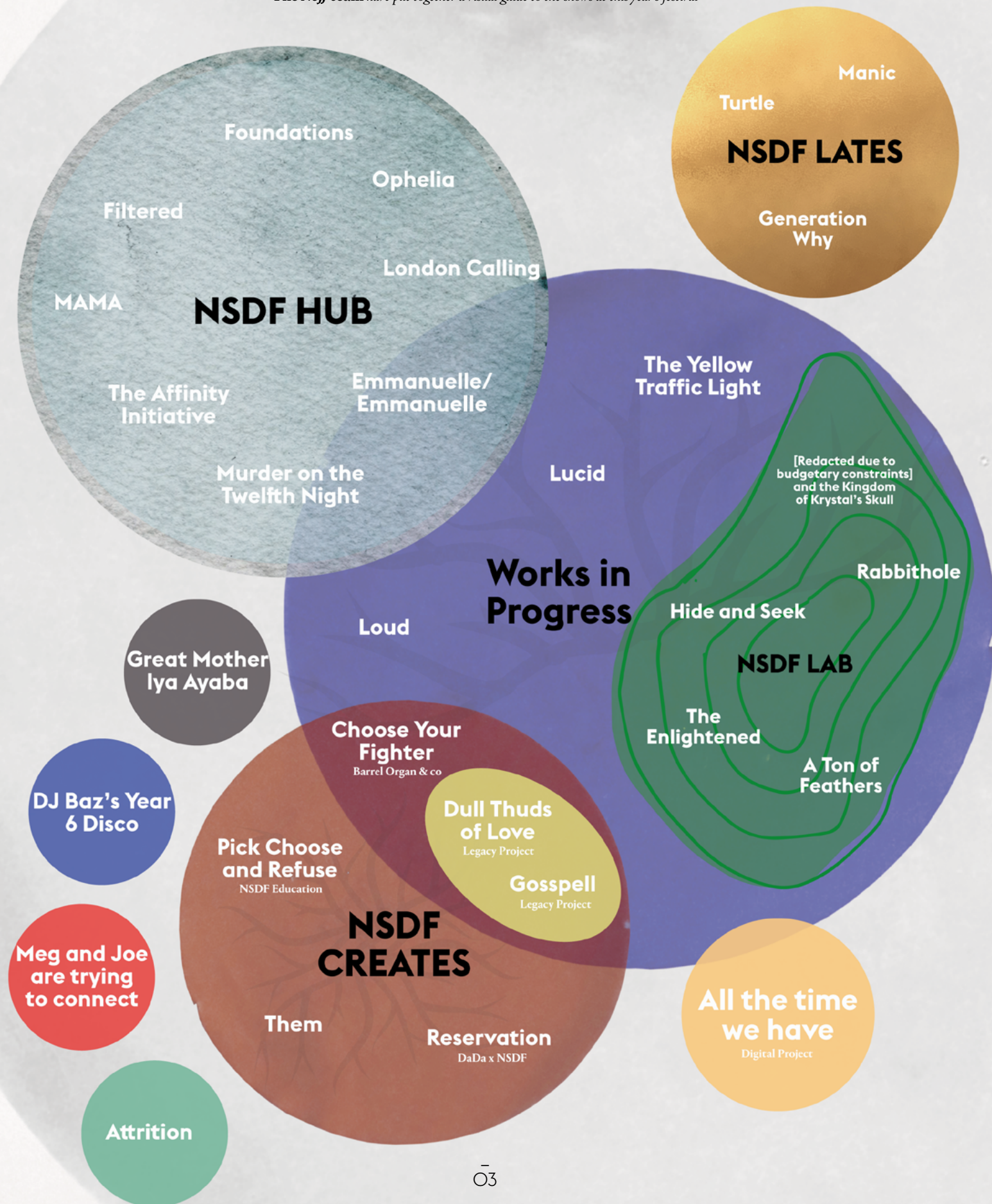
Replacing it with another word won't solve these problems, but acknowledging artists on their own terms might be a step in a good direction. This is what Meg wants: "Maybe instead of just saying the word emerging, you could just give a bit more background about the company, what we've done, who we are."





# Festival Map

The Noff team have put together a visual guide to the shows at this year's festival





# Allocated time

DIGITAL PROJECT

**Nathan Hardie** chats to **Brett Chapman** about *All The Time We Have*, being a filmmaker and making art for art's sake

For my first opportunity writing for *Noises Off*, I was tasked with interviewing Brett Chapman, a filmmaker based in Sheffield. Primarily, I'm a reviewer, so talking to an artist in advance of their new release was a nervy, but delightful, experience. Brett was more than happy to discuss his work and provide insight for the upcoming filmmaking project *All The Time We Have*, showcasing at NSDF '22.

Nathan Hardie: According to your showreel, you've worked as a journalist, writer, director, public relations agent, editor and associated artist with NSDF. How have you ended up in all of these different roles?

Brett Chapman: Originally, I wanted to be a forensic pathologist because of the show *Quincy M.E.*, but my science teacher talked me out of it. I knew I wanted to be a filmmaker since acquiring my parents' video camera and making documentaries of my mates' parties. I was persuaded into journalism before working at an advertising agency, learning the administrative side but feeling uncreative. So, after travelling for a year vlogging each day, I bought a studio in Sheffield and began my freelance film career working with James Phillips, 'CEO of NSDF'.

N: How did you find being a filmmaker during the pandemic?

B: For the first time ever, it reset my work-rest balance. The pandemic forced me to stop and think 'Wow, I can just not do something today', allowing some space to pore over unfinished work and reflect. However, I did collaborate with several companies to produce something part film, part live theatre, but also encompassing online audience participation due to social distancing. It's quite exciting to work as a team and make something new, outside of my comfort zone.

N: You're challenging yourself again at the upcoming NSDF festival with *All The Time We Have*?

B: I've tasked myself and a core group (around seven to ten people) with creating a short film from scratch over six days of the festival, screening it on the final day. The title, *All The Time We Have*, has been left purposely vague for them to come up with a theme and script in the first half, then shoot and edit it in the second half.

N: How do you feel about attempting such a feat?

B: It is one of the most exciting approaches to filmmaking. It can potentially be quite daunting but I feel very supported by NSDF for letting us do this project. We share the passion that people should experience working on screen as well as stage, gaining lots of transferable skills. It's also why we're inviting any other festival goers to get involved, as well as providing us a helping hand. There's no weighty expectation on us, we're making art for art's sake, and it's what this career is supposed to be.

N: Is this what you're looking to accomplish with your project?

B: Essentially, I'm looking to create an environment for people to be comfortable and have fun. Sure, there will be moments where we will be stressed out but hopefully that won't dampen our excitement. These young creatives are driving the entire project, some of them for the first time, so I want us to be proud of what we achieve.

The idea of creating a new film with an assortment of young people over six days is an extreme experiment, making *All The Time We Have* wholly unique, no matter the final product. How will they collaborate efficiently and without friction? Which locations and limited resources will they be able to make use of? And most importantly, what's it going to be about? I'm looking forward to what they create, but I am also very excited for the one minute behind-the-scenes documentary that will surely accompany it.

\*Festival Director James Phillips



# Disco Feels

THEATRE

**Beth Bowden** is transported back in time – and feels entirely present – in DJ Bazzar's Year 6 Disco

**I'll be honest...if you give me a glow stick in a performance, I'm immediately sold.**

Within **seconds**, I'm waving that luminescent bad boy like an 11-year-old at my first Ed Sheeran concert.

Which is extremely fitting considering the name of this performance is *DJ BAZ'S Year 6 Disco*.

There's confetti. There's glow sticks. **WE DO THE MACARENA**. Onstage, DJ Bazzar, is spinning the decks, and very enthusiastically bopping his head to the beat. It's like a nostalgia-fuelled-fever-dream, with all the ingredients of an awkward, pre-pubescent, school-hall disco. Who you fancied, what you wore, the questionably bad dance moves...

I don't think I ever expected to be transported back to my Year 6 Disco, and it takes a moment for the audience to settle into the party mood. But eventually, and

supported with a banging early-noughties soundtrack, I'm feeling the vibe.

Tempted though I am to reminisce about my time in 2010 (spoiler: it involves neon leg warmers), filtering through the **GOOD TIMES** (curated intensely by Jack Sutherland) is a poignant reflection on the limitless possibilities of youth: of endless dreams, of stretching potential, of pathways unfulfilled and filled.

Each episode gives us a glimpse into the crossroads of Bazzar's life – a collection of moments (bad and good) that make up a life, that carve out his future. Although the games and glow sticks are fun – it is *this* reflection, on the intersection between the choices of our past and future, that makes *DJ BAZ'S Year 6 Disco* an intriguing watch.



# Here and Then

HUB ONLINE

**Nathan Hardie** finds an unexpected reflection in the unscheduled screening of *Beneath The Surface*

**There's a bittersweet irony that, after travelling from Bristol to experience theatre for the first time in ages, I was treated to NSDF's first ever cinema screening. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Big Creative Academy were unable to perform *Pick Choose and Refuse* so I was shown one of their previous works: *Beneath The Surface*.**

Set during the pandemic, the short film was portrayed via online multimedia websites such as Zoom, Snapchat and YouTube. Based around online lessons prior to a coursework deadline, our five main characters try to maintain balance between studying and interacting with the outside world whilst trapped at home.

They try to reach out to each other for homework assistance via video calls, but there's an underlying struggle unique to each

person. Loneliness, neglect and abuse linger in the background of make-up tutorials and live-streaming. Simple actions of folding clothes or misspelt texts amplify struggles, embracing nuanced storytelling.

Their insecurities and ways of coping presented me with feelings that were all too familiar. Although I was in a new location looking forward to something different, it made me reflect on where I've come from. Contemplations that go further back than the pandemic, back to my A-Levels as well – the stress for success. Sharing their working class background meant I was hypersensitive to the struggles presented, but fortunately never encountered to the same extent. It shows that no matter how far you may go or progress, you can't run away from those issues at home.



**Taiwo Ava Oyebola** curates a playlist of DJ Bazzar's Bangerz

Open the Spotify app and scan this code to listen





# Unhaunted

HUB ONLINE

Despite hating digital theatre, **Zoe Callow** is won over by the authenticity of *Move Fast and Break Things*

**I'm not seeing a play tonight. Pick, Choose and Refuse is cancelled, we are told, and there will be something else.**



I try not to be disappointed by the promise of a screening of two digital works from the NSDF Hub. I want to be generous, but after two years of pandemic-enforced digital theatre, I've given up all pretence of enjoying it.

I hate digital theatre because it always seems to be defined by the absence of liveness. My experience of it is a haunted one, the absent presence of the live performance hovering in the background, asking what I could have had instead, if only I'd been in a better place at a better time.

So it's a surprise to find myself, afterwards, raving about Freight Theatre's *Move Fast and Break Things*. The opening monologue sets the context for a story about a Google

employee's disappearance from the internet, combining theatre's capacity for meta self-awareness with film's disorientating shifts in angle and camera range. It's unsettling, exceptionally well-paced, and for the first time ever in my experience, completely unhaunted.

It's the next morning, and I'm still unpicking how and why. I'm coming to the conclusion that *Move Fast* escaped the absence of liveness by owning it's not quite theatre, not quite film identity. Rather than attempting to use one medium as a blunt instrument to record another, it held them both in the same space to create something unique and whole in its own right, greater than the sum of its medium parts.



# Speaking Our Language

HUB ONLINE

Catherine Turner reviews the multifaceted, multilayered *Emmanuelle/Emmanuelle*

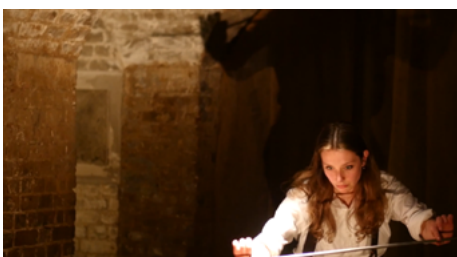
***Emmanuelle/Emmanuelle* plays with the past and the present in its non-linear, episodic narrative. It translates the childhood memoirs of Emmanuelle Guattari and the diverse writings of her father Felix Guattari into a meditative, multimedia duet on temporality, memory and loss.**

There is a power *per se* in Emmanuelle's intensely lyrical prose, which is acutely appreciated and realised by all involved in the show. But the words are intriguingly pre-recorded, always spoken through the speakers; and this distance, an especial elusiveness, juxtaposes – and yet, somewhat ironically, also *fits* – with the tangible immediacy of the two performers before us, their grounded physicality and intimacy.

For a show that so focuses on entangled and overlapping realities, and incorporates so many different materials and mediums of performance, it is remarkable how well

everything seems to not just fit together, but also feed into each other. The overhead projector, for example, is first used to cast delicate shadows when Emmanuelle talks of her childhood 'in the world of the river' (like a cut-out fairy-tale book); and it is then finally used to show a feedback reel of various snippets of the performance, which cycles back to the idea of bringing the past into the present.

*Emmanuelle/Emmanuelle* is ambitious, impressive and expressive. Truthfully, there are moments when I feel like it speaks a language that I am not all that familiar with, let alone fluent in; but even in those moments, it is still always able to communicate with and move me. Later, when I return to those moments, I often find that they make a lot more sense than I may have initially thought.



## On our mind

*Verbatim: What are we doing? Why are we reviewing? What's on our minds?*

**"I'd say it's pretty crucial...I think that people are working within their means and so with not enough funding, that's going to have an effect on what you produce so if I know that someone had, for example, six days to do a short film, then that's going to factor into my review."**

"Reviews are for the audience as either recommendations or [for] someone to see if their views align with yours and to another extent the artist themselves, to say this is what I enjoyed, maybe this is what can be improved."

"So, my primary focus is on storytelling. A show is good if it tells a good story, not just from a linear perspective, but also thematically and [in the] underlying ideas. I think that if you are not telling me something, then what did you produce and why?"

"A mixture of both, actually. I think that as a critic I should be open minded, I should be coming into every show being willing to be told a new story in different ways and if I'm already coming in with preconceived notions then I'm really not going to give a good enough review. However, with each review I write, it comes from how I personally relate to the show as well as how they do it. In a sense, it's one of the most important things because if I relate to it then I'm going to enjoy it more. However, I can't let that be the be all and end all of why, otherwise it'll just be 'I didn't like this', just because it doesn't match me."

"I think it then comes into the difference of maybe appreciating and enjoying? So, I've appreciated a lot of great work that I didn't necessarily enjoy and I've enjoyed a lot of fine work that, you know, I could understand why someone wouldn't appreciate."

"Even if you don't necessarily vibe with the piece – maybe vibe's the wrong word – there's always something from a dramaturgical perspective or a theatrical perspective or a human perspective that I think you can learn. If I don't have a strong opinion... maybe I'm just a really opinionated person. But yeah, if I come out and don't have an initial instinct I think it's something that just needs to settle, for me. It's something that I need to have a conversation about, because often I do have feelings. They just take a bit longer to form. Or it's something that somebody else might feel very strongly about which is interesting because then I can learn from them."

"No, I do, I always think about – it's funny, I always think about the creative team or the actor or whoever, whoever's been involved in the process, reading what I've written. As a theatremaker I've had my own pieces of work critiqued and I know how that feels. Particularly, to be bashed in quite a cruel way I don't think serves anybody so it's something that always plays on my mind and I definitely do consider... it's important to critique, right? But it's important to do it in the right way."

***At NSDF 2020 we asked participants in our criticism workshop to describe how they imagine criticism in a perfect future.***

"Representative"

"Funded"

"Inclusive, creative and constructive"

"Accessible"

"Diverse"

"Holistic, encompassing directing, writing, design, acting"

"Multimedia"

"Open, respectful, honest"

"Template-less, innovative in form"

***We're not in that future yet.***





# technician impossible

**Every issue, we will set the Technical Team a new task. They have 24 hours to complete the mission, should they choose to accept it.**

We're loving being back at Curve (and in-person), in our mini Noffice next to the Curve cafe. We have a small problem: people keep mistaking us for a box office.

We're not in a Shakespeare play, and don't really feel like the whole mistaken identity thing is working for us.

Your first task, should you choose to accept it, is to make a sign for the Noffice so big and so bold that no one can miss it.

*Noises Off* is the voice of NSDF. Published each day of the festival on the NSDF website and newsletter, it's a newspaper of reviews, opinions, and other bits and pieces that are less conveniently categorisable. Over the week, *Noises Off* interrogates, celebrates and shines a light on what's happening: in shows, backstage, during discussions, workshops and in wider conversations.

It's the voice of the festival to everyone who isn't here, and it's your newspaper. Everyone's experience of the festival has a place in *Noises Off*. Saw a show you loved (or hated) so much

that you made a playlist in response to it? Want to draw a comic book strip to review a show? Got screenshots of a group chat responding to one of the daily discussions? We're here to publish your ideas. We encourage varied and experimental forms of writing and reviewing – and you don't need to have written before.

Tweet us your thoughts and ideas @noffmag, submit your writing by email to [noff@nsdf.org.uk](mailto:noff@nsdf.org.uk), or visit us for a friendly chat in the Noffice Curve cafe.

**Thursday 14 April**  
15:30 - 17:00

Get involved with the *Noises Off* handmade magazine, handmade from scratch! Cutting, sticking, glueing, drawing, writing. A creative way to sum up your festival week on paper. All festgoers welcome.

**NOFF mornings**

Every day (except Wednesday) 9:30 - 10:30

A relaxed way to start the day. Come to the Curve café and chat to other festgoers about the shows you've seen or any articles you want to write.

**THE ZINE**

“-There are a lot of noises in here”  
“-We should turn those Noises Off”