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FESTIVAL

NOISES OFF

NEWSPAPER

Nofflets // **Apologies, Gen Z**

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With thanks to
Ellie Fitz-Gerald
Lizzie Melbourne
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Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Editorial

How are you doing? Are you ok? I mean, I know you're tired but exactly how tired are you? Scale of one to ten? Scale of "see you in the bar til midnight", to "...scale of one to what?"

The first weekend of NSDF was a period of adjustment. The editorial team – Bea whose beautiful photographs adorn these pages, Emma whose critical eye is indispensable and Florence whose design makes *Noises Off* what it is – were reflecting on a collective sluggishness we were feeling, within our team, and around us.

When NSDF was digital, it felt like a sprawling expanse. An unending digital realm, impossible to glimpse all at once. We were welcoming an escape, but it was an escape that we could easily switch off. Get up and walk away from your laptop, and the festival disappears. Being in person is a different beast entirely. We've done it before. But somehow it all feels brand new.

And you know what, it's fine. *Noises Off* was a creaky ship that needed the cobwebs clearing and the walls repainting after a long unattended

absence. Thankfully we have the wonderful tech team to help us with a physical manifestation of our new *Noises Off* for their first Technician Impossible. We've come alive as a newspaper. We have a sign!

Being a digital-only publication is not new for us now, but being one at an in person festival has brought us some interesting challenges. Will people read it? We wondered. Will people find it? We thought. What is a mailchimp and how do we do one? Evidently we're still working that one out.

We know that NSDF is in full swing because the conversations are buzzy. In one of our *Noises Off* morning discussions (open to everyone to join, 9:30 - 10:30 every day in the Noffice, Curve cafe, we have a sign!), we got onto the topic of boards of trustees. We wondered what hierarchy can ever do for art. If art is business. If business is justified in influencing, restricting or enabling art. Where else but at NSDF is that an engrossing topic for a Monday morning?

This second issue of *Noises Off* feels like a progression of sorts. Fuelled by the start of daily discussions and workshop attendance, and the sheer amount of thought-provoking

and innovative work that's been shown already, the writers have found a rhythm. There's some wonderful writing and thinking in this issue.

Nathan Dunn (page 2) flies the flag of stand-up as part of NSDF, and Taiwo Ava Oyebola asks us to consider artistic wellbeing, and to come together to dream a better and healthier artistic future (page 3). We have responses to works in progress *Dull Thuds of Love* and *The Enlightened*, stand-up comedy shows *Generation Why* and *Turtle*, and a review of the devised show *Them*. It feels like the conversation is just getting started and we can't wait for what the next days will bring.

Noff love,
Naomi
Noises Off Editor

The conversation continues online nsdf.org.uk/noises-off

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Upstanding

Stand-up is theatre, says **Nathan Dunn**, it was about time for NSDF to embrace stand-up comedy

By name this is a 'drama' festival – but in typical NSDF fashion, definitions are loose. We often see definitions as unimportant, and ambitions exceed them. There is a history of diverse projects here at NSDF. Over the last five years I've been in attendance we've seen dance-based work, movement pieces, techno-clown-verbatim, a carbon-neutral show powered entirely by a bike on stage, immersive promenade queer thrillers with Drag – the list goes on. We've even seen 'stand-up tragedy'.

But not stand-up comedy. Stand-up has been felt – in the shows that adopt its tropes for certain segments of work, or works like Pub Corner Poets' *Sad Little Man* from 2017, in a tragic but powerful interpretation of the format. But stand-up in its purest, rawest form has been absent here for many years. Why? It's just as alive – just as electric, emotive, evocative, engaging and entertaining – as the other live art forms I mentioned. It is theatre.

But different. And that is everything that NSDF represents, which is why it's certainly found its place here. The chorus of laughter and joy heard across the Curve tell you this. Performing at the festival this year are two shows cut from the comedic cloth. Dian Cathal is bringing his humorous assessment of a generation flying at breakneck speed through unprocessed modern horrors in his

piece *Generation Why*. On opening night I spoke to performer/stand-up comic Bróccán Tyzack-Carlin, who certainly demonstrated a theatrical sensibility and understanding with his work *Turtle*. After quizzing him about how he felt being a stand-up comedy show in this festival he quipped "I don't know if there's been one before...I almost didn't apply because I thought 'it's not straight-up theatre'".

It made me question whether stand-up comedy is the bastard child of the performing arts, devoid of 'real' substance, neglected and full of 'basic' and 'indulgently surface-level' comics all called 'Russell'. I think, 'is it because it's often dominated by white cis-het men?' Then I remember the theatre industry shares similar concerns. I think, is it because it is a form of live entertainment more popular among the working-class, and being a working-class product makes it harder to break through the glass ceiling of the arts?' Then I remember the theatre industry has its own uncomfortable relationship with class and work that engages with it, and would rather keep it under the ceiling where it can be seen but not heard.

I realise that stand-up and theatre are similar. They are from the same family of live performance. They both depend upon a relationship with an audience. They share some of the same problems and are working to fix them. They have a symbiotic

relationship in the way they impact our culture and our lives, encouraging us to look at the little things and the big things. Stand-up just teaches us to have a laugh along the way.

I see two live art forms that exist to make a difference in some way. I see two live art forms that reflect the world we live in, the people we are, and the future we want to build for ourselves and those who follow us into it. I see two live art forms. Just like I have seen a dozen different live art forms in the past five years here.

Stand-up comedy is the class clown of live performance. It's the kid at the back of the class with a pen up their nose and a half-chewed rubber in their hand. The loud, disruptive, amusing and unconventionally intelligent pupil. The one that even at their most disruptive, the teacher can't help but to share a wry smile.

It belongs here.



Artistic Wellbeing: Collective Dreamwork

Taiwo Ava Oyebola investigates artistic wellbeing and invites us to start a collective revolution

What is artistic wellbeing?

The paragon of the tortured artist lives supreme in the collective imagination of artists. It feels like a reality when in fact it is just a myth, an illusion. The idea that you can only access great work from a place of lack, sadness and despair is false at best, and toxic at worst. With artistic wellbeing, we can instead choose to empower ourselves – by accessing art and creativity from a place of joy, play and pleasure.

I don't know about you guys but that sounds pretty amazing to me!! So how do we go about doing that? Well I am still figuring that out myself, so I definitely don't have all of the answers. Being an artist can feel quite insular and I think it is more radical to pull ideas from the collective imagination of all us at NSDF, so that we can not only support ourselves, but each other.

Inspired by Charlie Josephine's amazing workshop on 'Artistic Wellbeing', here is a google doc link where you can share your visioning, intentions, ideas etc. of what might be important for your artistic wellbeing and later in the week I'll put together a piece with all of your suggestions for us to go away with and feel more in charge of our artistic path.

Contribute to the collective dream
Share your thoughts:



What does artistic wellbeing mean to you?
What are your personal intentions?
What are your professional intentions?
Recommendations for further reading/thinking/listening on this topic?

Reviewing A Show That's Called Turtle

STAND-UP

Nathan Hardie is inspired by the stand-up show Turtle, and responds in kind

Described as an intersection of poetry and comedy, I was inspired to review Bróccán Tyzack-Carlin's *Turtle* as a poem. I've used one of his favoured formats, the Limerick, but he broaches several different verses in abstract ways. A personal piece covering the last couple of years of pandemic life as well as his Northern heritage, Bróccán's *Turtle* encompasses a wide range of topics I hope to have done justice here:

The late night opening is tough,
But Bróccán bested the rough,
He covered every base,
A smile on his face,
And with a manner off the cuff.

Passion for his home Hartlepool,
He thought that Andy Capp was cool,
Love for his short stature,
Coupled with hate for Thatcher,
Points which I agree upon all.

Bróccán captures his viewers well,
Conversing with his clientele,
There were no details spared,
Even his journal shared,
So plenty of stories to tell.

Several lighting changes required,
Relying on the staff that were hired,
New shows can bring hitches
Still left me in stitches,
And gave me joy despite being quite tired.

So much thrown at the wall,
Some jokes were bound to fall,
This good hour of stand-up live
Can become a tight forty five,
But this critique is small.

Puns fired with scattergun approach,
Quite a few that I'll poach,
A down-to-earth nature
Resulted in laughs that were major,
It's worth watching Bróccán break poetry
and stand-up structure alike.



A Breath With Them

THEATRE

Zoe Callow finds herself impressed and moved by Them

There's five minutes to go, and six chairs onstage. I hope it means there will be six (six!) performers. In the wake of a monologue heavy pandemic I've forgotten the thrill of ensemble storytelling, and *Take a Breath* demonstrate this at its best.

Their care for each other and the history of Fanny Eaton, a Jamaican-born woman who grew up in Shoreditch, is summed up in their rapid-fire performance of still images which echo paintings of Black historical figures. I have the sense of watching an orchestral arrangement.

Them brings Fanny's multifaceted existence as a servant, mother, pre-Raphaelite model into dialogue with the cast's own stories of migration and growing up in East London. There is an organic cross-pollination between the two narratives, with each speaking naturally to the other. Movement creates a bridge between the two worlds. As the group perform a repetitive physical sequence suggestive of manual labour, I feel both sadness at the way it constricts their energy, and respect for the effort they put in spite of

this constriction.

In an hour, Fanny Eaton's story spans 87 years from birth to death. Within this constraint, *Take a Breath* carefully balances their contemporary context with the broad-brush strokes and minute detail of history, but at times I feel that Fanny's voice isn't as strong as it could be, and that her scenes are cut off just as we are beginning to hear it. It's never a bad thing to be left wanting more, and this minor complaint would be easily solved with the investment of the time, development and future programming that the show so clearly deserves.



Remember / Experience

STAND-UP

Zoe Callow reflects on the moments and memories of Generation Why

Who here is a millennial? There are a few cheers in response to Dian Cathal's opening question, and some uncertain murmurs too. I'm Gen Z, I wonder if this is why I find myself on the fringes of our journey through the collective, unprocessed trauma of the millennial generation. But as every punchline draws a new dividing line in the room, between those who remember and those who don't, I can't help feeling that the concept of the collective is decidedly wobbly.

It's inevitable, I suppose, that not everyone will connect with every trauma-related anecdote. My biggest laugh comes at Dian's memory of a 90s TV show in which a group of children were given responsibility for solving climate change. The strength of this is the time he takes to tell the story in more detail, letting me in on the joke despite having never watched the show.

In most cases Dian moves a little too quickly to provide this context, and I'm caught up in the sensation of attempting to remember something I've never actually experienced. I don't mind, weirdly, because there's a compelling vulnerability in his willingness to acknowledge these moments of disconnection. *Generation Why* seems to be a series of attempts to find something that holds our audience together. My experience of continually finding and losing common ground doesn't create anything stable enough to look like collectivity, but this process does form its own connections, fleeting, in the breaths between each trial and error.

Meeting in the middle

STAND-UP

A genZer (Emma Rogerson) and a cusp millennial (Naomi Obeng) see a stand-up show about our doom - a Generation Why response

There's something about those 90s cartoons
saturday mornings, bowl of cornflakes, sat on the sofa
They're so specific

The aesthetic

it's that animation,
that shoddy, awkward animation
that makes familiar a mark in time.
the end of something, the beginning of something...
The multicultural gang in baggy trousers and backwards baseball caps
(they're American, of course)

Some kind of comfort though

I've not thought about them in a while

A WHILE

A long while

I grew up on them

Saturday morning cartoons painting visions of worlds that didn't exist
and never would, but somehow fed to us as something real

that will never be lived again

but i know i like to think about them

worse?

i don't know

sometimes

these moments lost to history

lost in a little life

a silly little time line

Representation, actually, but also just fantastical invention

i wonder what they will hold dear

We spoke about Tamagochis at lunch

whether they will crave and cherish nostalgia

Before we went to *Generation Why*

Those traces linger

the way we do

whether we've made a world they want to remember

You can't talk about Tamagochis in the playground without someone
mentioning how theirs died

the way we -

hmm.

That's just what happens. Things die. Dian's right. We learnt to expect
the death of our digital pets like we were training for something

and so we grew

I never watched *Captain Planet* as a child

This made me laugh though

up and out

Because from the description we just know

sometimes looking back

We know

and sometimes not

Generation Why feels like it's a show about just knowing

Dinner Etiquette for Elegant Ladies to Follow to Avoid Committing the Original Sin

WORK-IN-PROGRESS

Beth Bowden responds to *Dull Thuds Of Love*, one of the festival's work in progress shows

Don't Talk with Your Mouth Full

don't eat

Place your Napkin on Your Lap

don't eat from the tree

Hold Your Fork in Your Left Hand and Your

Knife in the Right

don't eat from the TREE

Don't Put Your Elbows on the Table

don't eat the forbidden fruit

Avoid Slouching

Eve

Chew with Your Mouth Closed

don't eat from the tree Eve

Always Ask to be Excused from the Table

resist the temptation

Eve

Eve

DON'T EAT THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Or how about? Dinner Etiquette for
Rebellious Women who want to burn the
whole place down:

Eat the Forbidden Fruit, with Your Mouth
Wide Open

With Your **Bare** Hands

Your Polite Napkin **Ripped to Shreds**

Elbows Proudly on the Table

As **Open** Rebellion

Teeth bared

Talking

Screaming

'Bite the apple Eve – even when you're not
hungry'.

Setting up a connection

NSDF LAB

Nathan Hardie explores the relationship between spectator and show in the work-in-progress sharing of *The Enlightened*

To describe *The Enlightened* and fully encompass everything is a tough task that even the creators struggled with.

Provided by an audience member during the Q & A, the most accurate logline so far is 'Multimedia True Crime podcast on stage', yet I feel this doesn't give a production involving online audience participation and live Zoom calls to India enough gravitas.

Director Liam Rees planned to be even more ambitious – his original idea of running simultaneous productions rendered unfeasible for several reasons. Time differences, curfews, unstable internet connections and authoritarian interference, it's miraculous that any piece can survive these obstacles, without mentioning that they had to switch apps from Discord to WhatsApp the day prior to performance.



It's the interaction with the audience that becomes *The Enlightened*'s biggest strength. Covering cults and culture, fascism and fetishism, there's a lot of new information that felt very overwhelming. However, sending links and key quotes via a communal group chat kept me onboard and informed. It also turned individual spectators into a group of conspiracy theorists, questioning what really happened to a disillusioned, young white male who had disappeared in India.

Through a WhatsApp poll, several audience members voted for a government cover-up to be the true reason, even one voted for a murder case. With such an experimental piece, I can't even be sure if these results swayed the direction of the story.



Apologies, Gen Z

Dian Cathal takes us behind the scenes of *Generation Why*, sharing one of his poems which inspired the show

Apologies, Gen Z

You are everything we couldn't be.

At your age, we froze while the world
collapsed.
Gen Z doesn't freeze, you react

We cried when what was promised to us
disappeared without a trace
You were smart enough to realize they were
lies in the first place

We own an apology to Gen Z
We didn't do enough, we didn't want to see

We knew we had to fight, but we didn't know
how
But neither did you and look at you now

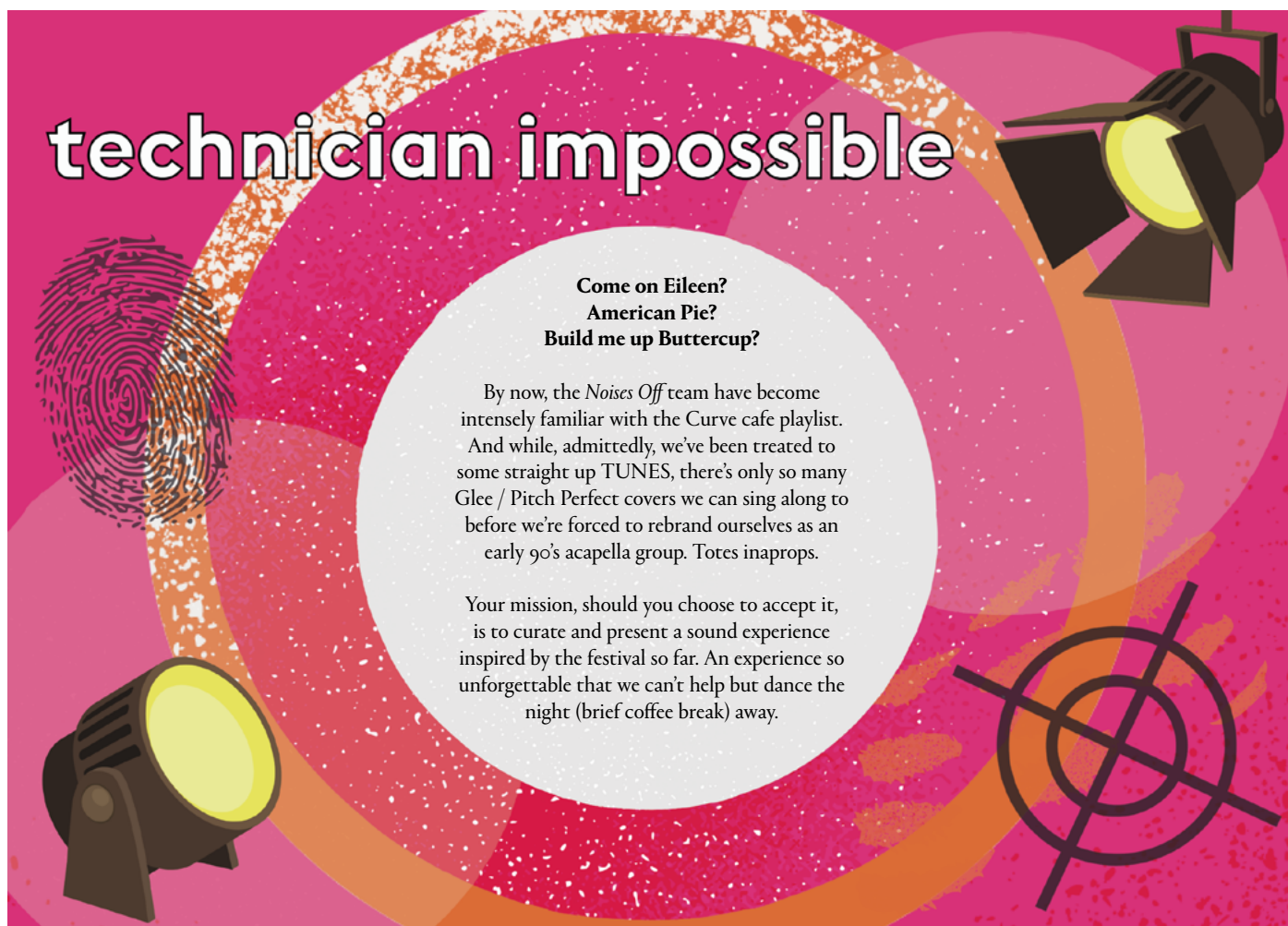
We're sorry we hesitated, didn't start the ball
rolling
And we know that our apology isn't
consoling

Still, we own an apology to Gen Z
We've failed you till now, but that's not who
we want to be

When you march for your lives, you march
for ours too
We promise to fight by your side if you want
us to

You're as scared as we were, the difference is
you pushed through
You did what we couldn't. Thank you





Tea Chat

I reckon it's the triangle ones. I mean look at how much tea is in there.
The tea's quite coarse as well.
Compared to your regular square.
I think if that actually broke I would ask for my money back.

It's a shame they didn't have chips with the soup
Because then we could have dipped the chips in the soup
Potatoes in a potato soup

Gluten free pasta and meatballs (or straight up red sauce for veggies)
A nondescript tomato situation.
Straight up!

I mean, I'm not gonna email Gok Wan
Fair enough



Upcoming *Noff* events

THE ZINE

Thursday 14 April
15:30 - 17:00

Get involved with the Noises Off handmade magazine, created 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.



We have a sign!