

COMPANY OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

METIS (www.metisarts.co.uk), a Cambridge-based performing arts organisation led by Zoë Svendsen, has developed a national and international reputation in recent years for projects that use extensive research to explore innovative forms of connecting with audiences. METIS has developed a method of working to keep the relationship with the audience at the heart of the process – sharing research at all stages. As a pioneer in the development of ‘play’ dramaturgy, participatory theatre and live digital interactivity, METIS has been invited to talk about and present our work nationally and internationally, in Amsterdam, Berlin, Hamburg, Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Gui Yang, New York, Austin/Texas, Switzerland, Romania, and Helsinki. Our work is widely studied on university programmes from Hong Kong to Central Saint Martins, London.

METIS is a not-for-profit organisation, working with established producing partners to deliver each project over several years. Finances are overseen by director Hilary Seaward, an accountant with many years of experience of working with charities. METIS has a strong track record of securing funding for large scale productions and tours from a wide variety of partners and funders (see end of document). Awards include: Artsadmin Green Commission 2018; Future Scenarios Culture and Climate Change Artistic Residency Award (3 artists selected from 271 applications); the inaugural Tipping Point Award for 3rd Ring Out; A Samuel Beckett Development Award; nomination (one of 18 shortlisted from 341 entries) for the prestigious Berlin Theatertreffen Play/Project Award; nomination for a Total Theatre Award for innovation and experimentation.

PROJECTS

WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE MAY BE (2017-)

WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE MAY BE explores economic structures ‘beyond’ capitalism, based on research undertaken by Zoë through her artistic ‘networked’ Future Scenarios residency with the Cultures of Climate Change Project, supported by The Ashden Trust, Jerwood Charitable Foundation and the Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures. From January to July 2017, Zoë interviewed numerous economists, geographers and architects across the UK, asking each of them: What is the best alternative economic structure to combat climate change? These conversations took place in public, as part of METIS’s commitment to ‘research in public’, where rather than interviewing experts behind closed doors, we share the very process of undertaking artistic research for our projects with the wider public. All aspects of the artistic research were reported in a regular blog post – see

<http://www.cultureandclimatechange.co.uk/projects/#scenarios-sixteen>. With between 30 and 55 attendees for each

‘research-in-public’ event, the process has built a following of audiences highly engaged with the question of how to live in the future. The discoveries made through this artistic R&D process, exploring the past and future of capitalism, have strongly informed METIS’ new performance installation, *WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE MAY BE*, which will be presented at the Barbican (Pit Theatre) 5-9 September 2018. It will be accompanied by 20-30 expert talks on alternative economic structures, and the implications for the future.

ACTIVE ECONOMIC CITIZENSHIP

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

WORLD FACTORY (2013-2017)

World Factory weaves together stories of people connected by the global textile industry. Featuring stunning video and a powerful score, World Factory is a thought-provoking investigation of fast fashion.

At the heart of the performance is a scenario-based card game in which the audience in small teams, play managers running a clothing factory. A 'dealer' (performer) deals cards to four teams, the stories unfolding to a backdrop of video imagery and an increasingly sinister power-dynamic with the dealer's facilitation of the game. Each 'factory' team an experience specific to their chosen path through the game which has multiple routes and outcomes, linking questions of ethics, fashion, environmental impacts, working conditions, migration and globalisation. Casino-style, the audience trades in workers and money—a game in which the audience ultimately decides what it means to win. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQKlo5n3okU> for video extracts.



World Factory was researched with many partners, experts, and stages of public-facing research and development through talks, residencies, and workshops. METIS had a shirt manufactured in a factory in Shanghai, filming the process, and interviewing the workers. This immersion in the real world of production and consumption, by taking part in it, produced a shirt which has become an art-object in its own right. When a smartphone is placed over barcodes on the shirt, a bespoke app triggers a digital story revealing the real world hidden behind its seams. The shirt is available for sale online, and forms the tangible core of an extensive schools digital engagement programme.



The final theatre production received extensive press coverage and rapturous reviews, with an immensely popular sell-out run at the New Wolsey Theatre and the Young Vic, London (where it was extended by a week). World Factory toured the UK in 2016 and is being performed at

the Fabrications Festival in Lancashire in a former textile mill in September 2017. METIS has been invited to present multiple workshops and residencies based on the ideas, including with the MA in Material Futures at Central Saint Martins.

Nick Hern Books is publishing the 'card game' as a theatrical 'choose-your-own-adventure' book in September 2017, enabling the project to have a new creative life beyond its theatrical incarnation.

Press and audience reviews

'One of the guiltiest pleasures going' **Matt Trueman, What's On Stage**

'This lively and ambitious show amuses, involves and unnerves. [...] How neatly World Factory makes us complicit in the process of exploitation before pulling us back to see a bigger picture that ain't so pretty.' **Dominic Maxwell, The Times**

'The sophistication of the experience and the dynamics of the game make the production much more than a piece of interactive participatory theatre.' **The British Theatre Guide**

'World Factory brings the murky economic realities of the globalised textile industry uncomfortably close to home. This clever and entertaining show is smart, mischievous and genuinely thought-provoking.' **Sarah Hemmings, The Financial Times**

'...This is a show that tests the relationship between our competitive impulses and other factors. How far will ethical



and environmental considerations impinge on commercial ones? Wrestling with this question, against the clock, makes for a richly absorbing experience.' Henry Hitchings, *Evening Standard*

'This is where World Factory shines as a piece of theatre. The traditional boundaries between audience and subject matter are smashed: we are implicated in the web of the show.' *Culture Whisper*

Wooah. Spent an afternoon seeing #WorldFactory at @youngvictheatre - totally unlike any theatre I've seen before! @sarahforty

Guys you need to check out WorldFactory at @youngvictheatre it is an inspiring, refreshing and utterly ingenious piece. Stunning, Five Star. @NickJThommo

Enjoyed the amazing participatory #WorldFactory @youngvictheatre, challenging, thought-provoking and #arts at its very best! @Marc_Bush

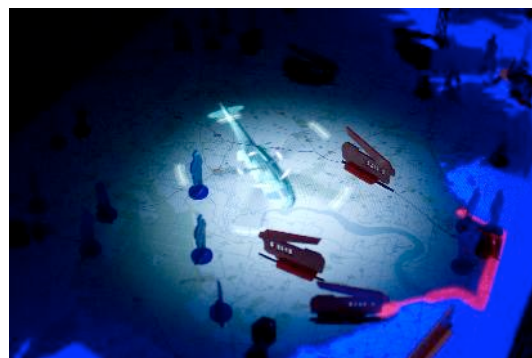
3RD RING OUT (2008-2011)



3rd Ring Out was a provocative, engrossing, multi-media, multi-dimensional scenario-building performance and installation which used the mode of an emergency-planning scenario to ask serious ethical questions, splicing recognisable images of the UK with projections of possibility. In two shipping containers kitted out like smart secret emergency planning cells, audiences voted to decide how to respond to a developing scenario of a human and environmental crisis induced by climate change. Fundamentally the performance asked audiences 'How do we want to live?'. For video extracts see: <http://www.3dringout.com/about/project>

The performance toured the UK in May-July 2010, travelling to Norwich, Cambridge, Ipswich, Newcastle and London. In 2011 METIS staged a new iteration of the project at the Watford Imagine Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The project has had a further longterm reach, in the arts sector and the sustainability sector, and beyond. METIS has presented the research in the context of sustainability policy development including Suffolk Coast Futures, and Cambridge University Centre for Science and Policy), Royal Geographic Society. The project was presented at APAP2013, a New York annual conference for theatre producers, as an example of best practice for European projects addressing climate change. The British Council invited METIS to share the findings of the project with artists and producers in Berlin, and to travel in 2010 and in 2011 to Beijing and Shanghai to discuss the project with artists, producers and environmental NGOs and journalists.

With its wide-reaching artistic and social engagement: 3rd Ring Out was selected by the University of Cambridge as a demonstration of social impact:



'Svendsen's 3rd Ring Out: Rehearsing the Future enhanced public understanding of and engagement with one of the most important social issues of our times through novel modes of performance and communication both live and online. This practice-as-research performance project had significant impact on a broad range of audience-participants, including policy-makers, local authorities, climate change communicators, other artists working in the field of art and climate change, children of school age and the general public. The impact to date includes altering perceptions of both art and climate change, and of the relationship between them.' Professor Stefan Collini, *University of Cambridge*

The website (www.3dringout.com), captured audience voting patterns, and continues to offer climate change information, and an archive of the installation .. Visitors to the 3rd Ring Out website peaked at 700 per day in June 2010, remains live and continues to be used.

Press and audience reviews

An intelligent audience-led thriller.... An intelligently employed multi-media interactive element makes this something of an audience-led thriller with ideological revelations becoming as dramatic as the floods and heatwaves outside, The List (Edinburgh festival newspaper & online)

Using game mechanics to educate and urge action is gaining huge traction this year across a variety of sectors, and 3rd Ring Out is testimony to its effectiveness. The high production values make it an exciting and deeply immersive experience, and we come out of it emotionally invested in its cause. Fest (Edinburgh festival magazine)

5 stars! Smart. Inventive. Fun... GO! Andrew Nairne, via twitter

Brilliantly conceived. I couldn't recommend this highly enough – it was thought provoking and serious. If you've gorged yourself with stand up, then try this. It was the best thing at the Fringe. Audience member via www.edfringe.com (2011)

This performance gave excellent insight into our future and caused the audience to dwell, and even act on, the thoughts it provoked. This performance has the power to change cultures' ways of thinking... intelligent, engaging and thought provoking. Audience member, Watford, via audience questionnaire (2011)



THE COMPETITION (2013-4)



Two competitors compete in a never-ending series of rounds of an invented game – governed by a complex digital machine that registers and displays the winning hits, as well as recording and replaying the event from four camera and six microphone positions. The project was created by Simon Daw and Zoë Svendsen, with sound artist Matthias Kispert, and dancers Sita Ostheimer and Chris Evans (both Hofesh Schechter Company). Originally inspired by the physical and mental tensions of fencing, the digital and physical apparatus that allow the competition to run itself, takes it beyond any individual sport to thinking about the

relationship between the body and the machine – and how what we do in life is so often determined by rules, spoken and unspoken. The Competition was presented at Shoreditch Townhall, January 2013 and Bow Open Studios August 2014; see <http://www.the-competition.co.uk>

Audience responses:

'It's a fantastically powerful work – visually exciting environment with a stunning soundscape'

'the sounds of performers breathing under a microscope, like I'd been immersed in the rhythms of competition – aggression then retreating repeatedly'

'I like the intensity of the space. It is relentless which brings a level of anxiety and inhuman anticipation'

'the interesting relation between the machinic apparatus, 'athleticism' and the neoclassical space. It made me think about 'competition' as a governing value'

DIFFERENCE ENGINE (2012)

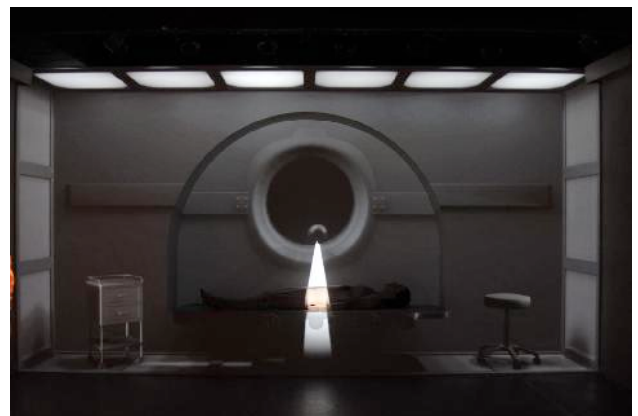
The Difference Engine was an interdisciplinary performance, creating a richly-layered imaginative environment accompanied by an especially commissioned score from Dario Palermo, recorded by Arditti Quartet, using interactive technology as a storytelling tool. It was co-commissioned by London's Gate Theatre and Dance Umbrella 2011, with support from Cambridge Junction and Dance Digital.

Audience/press responses:

'Fantastic collaboration of different media.'

'Excellent, brilliant integration of dance, video and music generating strong emotions in audience. Dancers were superb.'

'I loved it... beautiful and strange and surprising – absorbing, will be thinking about it for some time... Thank you.'



DISCOMBOBULATOR (2009-10)



Discombobulator was a fantastical solo, set against evolving projections of a neglected Venetian façade. The dance triggered live electronic composition and computer-generated imagery, exploring the ultimately insurmountable separation between the physical presence of the body and the imaginative possibilities of virtual reality. *Discombobulator* was a collaboration between Ben Duke, Will Duke, Dario Palermo and Zoë Svendsen, and was created at an ENPARTS residency for the 2009 Venice Biennale Contemporary Music Festival, and was shown at Dance Umbrella in the Purcell Room, Royal Festival Hall, in 2010.

'This clever collaboration reveals the potential of interdisciplinary arts to create an experience greater than the sum of its parts...A magical performance that's both eerie and entertaining' (Dance.com)

FOUR MEN AND A POKER GAME (2008)



Performed at Northern Stage and the Tron, Glasgow, Brecht's wry and sinister story became an immersive performance set to live piano in a cabaret-style atmosphere, with an especially-commissioned score composed and played by renowned Scottish contemporary classical composer, David Paul Jones. Just as the 2008 financial crash unfolded, this extraordinary tale of losing by winning provided a powerful political parable for the hubris of financial gamblers worldwide. The production was originally developed in residency with Grid Iron and Cove Park, before being further developed and supported by The National Theatre Studio and Northern Stage, Newcastle, with support from Awards for All for an extensive public engagement programme exploring issues around gambling.

'A memorably atmospheric piece of theatre, timely, unsettling, cold and true'. Joyce McMillan, Scotsman

LIMA: LONDON (2007)

LIMA:LONDON was an international investigative 'laboratory' on globalisation and the metropolis. A collaboration between the interdisciplinary theatre group [LOT Performance](#), Peru, and METIS, it brought together a network of artists to respond to the themes through performance, influenced by LOT's distinctive style. The project involved residencies in Lima and Ipswich, and was supported by the [The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich](#), and performed at Bentwaters Airbase, Suffolk, 2007.



Partners and Funders of METIS research and development, productions and tours include:

the National Theatre Studio / Arts Council England / Culture and Climate Change and Stories of Climate Change projects / Artsadmin 2 Degrees Festival / Cockayne Foundation / Cambridge Cambridge Humanities Research Grant / ESRC Impact Acceleration Account funds / Cambridge Festival of Ideas / Cambridge Junction / Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts Brighton / HOME Manchester / Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin / Sino-British Fellowship Trust / New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich / Young Vic / Company of Angels / Free Word / Centre For Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA) / CSV Media Clubhouse, Ipswich / Birkbeck Centre for Contemporary Theatre / CRASSH / Judith E Wilson Fund / English Faculty (University of Cambridge) / BICC (the British Inter-University Chinese Centre funded by the AHRC) / Ideas Tap / Artists Projects Earth / Dance Umbrella / Awards for All / The Gate Theatre / Northern Stage / The Tron / Venice Biennale Music Festival