

FORCED ENTERTAINMENT 40 YEARS

40 Years of Tearing
Up the Rulebook

LONDON SEASON PROGRAMME

10 OCT – 23 NOV 2024

Southbank Centre, The Place
and Battersea Arts Centre



WELCOME

Welcome to this season of work put together in celebration of Forced Entertainment's 40th anniversary. Our thanks to all the venues in London for making this special season happen, to the venues on tour for helping us celebrate 40 years, and to audiences, existing and first-timers, for helping us tear up the rule book.

Forced Entertainment is a multi-award-winning, globally renowned, Sheffield-based ensemble which grows in creative collaboration with other artists, influencing the ecology and experience of theatre in England and beyond.

The longstanding group, skilled staff and strong board, create and deliver high quality performance and participatory projects locally, nationally, internationally, and over digital platforms.

At the heart of Forced Entertainment is a group of six artists; Tim Etchells (Artistic Director), Robin Arthur, Richard Lowdon (Designer), Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden, Terry O'Connor collaborating to make original theatre and performances together since 1984.

Our work creates a space for people to rethink the world, their place and potential in it. Through performances and other projects, we explore the possibilities of playful, complex, and provocative art, its power to ask questions, and to connect people.



Scan the QR code for more information and booking or visit our website below

forcedentertainment.com/fe40

10-11 OCT **SIGNAL TO NOISE**

Forced Entertainment

Queen Elizabeth Hall,
Southbank Centre

12-13 OCT **GO ON LIKE THIS**

Tim Etchells and Tony Buck

Purcell Room at
Queen Elizabeth Hall,
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31 OCT - 2 NOV **SHOWN AND TOLD**

Tim Etchells and Meg Stuart

The Place

5-16 NOV **L'ADDITION**

Tim Etchells and Bert & Nasi

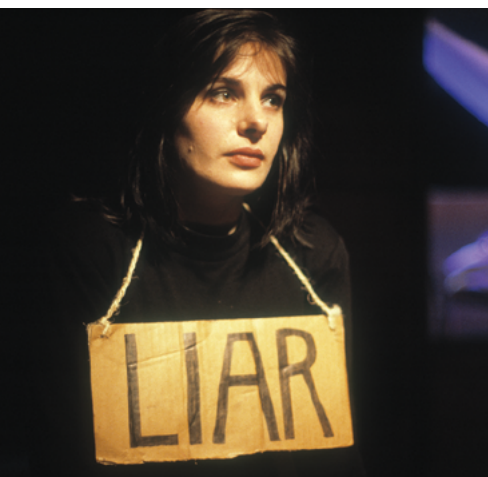
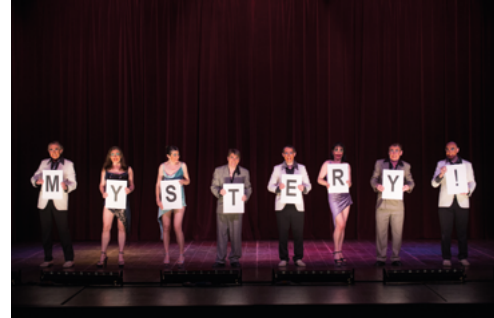
Battersea Arts Centre

19-23 NOV **IF ALL ELSE FAILS**

Forced Entertainment

Battersea Arts Centre

ANOTHER THEATRE



Sheffield, 1984. Founder members of the group – Robin Arthur, Deborah Chadbourn, Huw Chadbourn, Tim Etchells, Richard Lowdon, Cathy Naden and Susie Williams – were later joined by Terry O'Connor and Claire Marshall. The three years after the group's formation took Huw and Susie away to their own projects and the subsequent decades brought a steady flow of other collaborators, performers and artists, joining us for one, several or many, many pieces, including Hugo Glendinning, Nigel Edwards, John Avery, Sue Marshall, Tim Hall, Phil Hayes, John Rowley, Jerry Killick, Nicki Hobday, Seke Chimutengwende, Tyrone Huggins and Ocean Hester Stefan Chillingworth.

40 years is 40 years of being at sea together in the studio. The strange logic of group-work and collectivity, shared artistic, political and life endeavours.

But 40 years is more than some necessarily partial listing of names. 40 years is 40 years working resolutely against the tide in British theatre, sticking out for collective ownership, collective authorship, group work. A different politics of creation and of living, working and thinking together.

It's a commitment to specific ways of working in theatre and performance, and at the same time a commitment to a particular understanding of what meaning in this space might be. 40 years committed not to the literary theatre, but instead to a theatre that ascribes meaning to the event itself and to the deep and complex organisation of music, action, text, bodies, presences, energies, temporalities. It is 40 years insisting that form and content are deeply intertwined, that form is content. 40 years insisting that the moment of performance – the fragile dynamism of relation through the slippery passage of time – is the necessary beating heart of the form. 40 years trying to map contemporary experience through the investigative instrument of the rehearsal room. 40 years of trying to make theatre performances that reach out, touch, confuse and entangle the spectator.

It's 40 years also of searching for our own ways of organising, 40 years in which the management, administration and other structures of the group have been finding their own forms, learning, building, often starting from scratch, working towards ethical and politically sustainable ways of working together, of treating employees, and of working with other organisations. It's 40 years that was never only about the art, but about the art in a context we were attempting to build.

40 years in search of a theatre that is somehow unresolvable, irreconcilable – where you can't say from the outset what it's about and where, even at the end, such aboutness as there might be retains a form of tension, mystery or contradiction. 40 years believing that what you make together, in the room, in the deep dive of the process is richer than what any individual would make alone. 40 years believing that the strength of thing you do in performance comes from the tensions it attempts to contain, the impulses and counter-impulses it accommodates, the different energies and intuitions negotiated by doing, the fact of the work as a product of diverse intentions rather than single authorial intent.

It is 40 years of yells, silences and juxtapositions. 40 years of laughter turning to unease and 40 years of unease turning once again to laughter. 40 years of temporary answers to the questions what can theatre be at this moment, what kind of relation to audience can it have, what kind of relation to meaning can it have? 40 years of audiences. 40 years of conversations after shows. 40 years of whispers, walkouts and applause. 40 years of stretching, slowing and speeding-up time. 40 years of playfulness. 40 years of stuckness. 40 years of Sheffield. 40 years of travel. 40 years of dialogue and 40 years of searching. 40 years of moments onstage and off where things cohere and crystallise only to evaporate. 40 years of trying to make a space in which another theatre might exist. 40 years pushing, pulling, inviting, enticing audiences into a different space – the theatre, yes, but a different one. 40 years of another theatre. And more to come.

Tim Etchells

Artistic Director
Forced Entertainment
October 2024

PROJECTS & COLLABORATIONS: A NOTE ON THE LONDON SEASON

An ambivalence about theatrical presence, and a desire to think about it in new ways has long roots in Forced Entertainment's work.

Often, we've been putting too much theatre in theatre, overloading the form so that it threatens to break or break open. Other times we've been busy putting too little theatre in theatre, doubling down on deadpan as a way to make intimate contact with those watching. Over the years, in pursuit of these goals we've minimised and stripped things back at some moments only to maximise theatricality at later opportunities, creating a toolkit of absurd costumes, exaggerated performance, vocal distortion and manipulation, animal masks, wigs, cardboard signs and other devices to question and at the same time inject new life into theatre. The stage, very often, is a ruin... and in the ruins something new is being assembled.

Signal to Noise arrives to mark the 40th year of Forced Entertainment's long collaboration. As is often the case with the group and its work, the new piece has been made through our collective process of improvisation and discussion and is both a leap into surprising territory, and at the same time, a project with deep connections to existing strands of our practice.

A central new device introduced in the piece is that it uses lip-syncing on stage, demanding that the performers match their bodies and energies to those of pre-recorded voices created, in this case, using AI text-to-speech software. Questions about AI are very much in the air, especially about our unsettling relation to voices that are not human, whose emotions and cadences, though based on samples of real speech, are nonetheless awkward and algorithmic. At the same time the piece marks our passage into the perilous era of the Deep Fake, where human social and political space is being flooded with generated images, sounds, perspectives and opinions, and where our ability to tell fabrication from substance, sense from nonsense, is under increasing pressure.





describe and change the times we are living in, connecting to audiences in dynamic and surprising ways.

Alongside the focused ongoing work with the core group of Forced Entertainment, a significant joy in the last 40 years, has come from the exchanges with other artists that arise both in and alongside it. This Autumn there are traces of some of these, exploring shared ground and mutual interests, as well as celebrating the way that collaborations serve to open our thinking and practice in new ways.

In London we present *L'Addition*, created with the brilliant duo Bert & Nasi, my duet *Shown and Told*, with the acclaimed choreographer and dancer Meg Stuart, and a new collaboration in the form of an improvised text-and-music performance *Go On Like This*, made between myself and the legendary percussionist Tony Buck, founder member of The Necks.

The other Forced Entertainment piece presented this Autumn in London – *If All Else Fails* (2023) – is a parallel investigation of the connections between performers, the texts they speak and the roles they inhabit. It begins with two performers engaged in a task – playful and cryptic at the same time – of repeating a mutating series of phrases, part language-lesson, part indoctrination slogan mantra, part absurd quiz or intelligence test. As the phrases shift through their performance, the two figures onstage change their relationships to the text, to each other and to the public. As in *Signal to Noise*, the singular dramatic device of *If All Else Fails* produces a myriad possibilities for meaning as sparks fly and implications multiply. At times the performers seem distant from the phrases they speak, whilst at other moments the two are urgently and vividly connected. The texts, much like those in *Signal to Noise*, are found objects – fragments under investigation, materials that the performers engage with in order to understand, own, question and remake them.

We're here, and yet not quite here. Humans caught in layers of second-hand language, stories, images, using the bits and pieces we have found, salvaged, borrowed or been touched by, to make, re-make, orientate, question and transform ourselves and our relation to each other and to spectators. This stands somehow as a description of *Signal to Noise* and the other projects named here, but in a strange way it might also serve to frame Forced Entertainment's broader long-term project, the search for a theatre that can



The earliest of these projects began from a dialogue between my work with improvised spoken language and Meg Stuart's investigations as an improvising dancer, whilst the most recent work, with percussionist Tony Buck, explores our shared interest in repetition and duration, especially in the way that things in performance change, decay and transform over time. What also links us as collaborators, is an interest in blurring lines between different artistic energies and impulses, especially the way that contributions to improvisations circulate – voice and percussion or voice and

dance – merging with or erasing, replacing or influencing each other. Speaking, as these works with Tony and Meg both underscore, is always somehow a form of music and always, at the same time, a bodily act bound up with physicality and with breath, a form of moving or dance. We speak, breathe, sing, move, and all of these are entangled.



The other project on view in London this Autumn, is a piece I created with performance-makers Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas, who in 2019 were awarded the Forced Entertainment Huw Chadbourn Award which we set up to help support younger performance makers. The two work together under the name Bert & Nasi and are based between UK and France. Our work *L'Addition* began as a commission for Festival D'Avignon.

Joining this collaboration Bert & Nasi put their extraordinary performance skills and sharp improvisational instincts to good use. The work took off from simple generic or stock comic situations I proposed, in which a restaurant waiter and a customer

get caught in a recurring crisis. As well as *L'Addition's* use of repetition, which neatly intersects with Bert & Nasi's conceptual slapstick, the project marked a return to a longstanding ambition of mine, to create complex work using materials that are, to all appearances, light or even throwaway. Recycling the waiter-customer encounter in the piece becomes a way of transforming it, mining what looks like a straightforward comical scene until it becomes a broader and wilder index of anxieties and playful status differences.

The presentation of these works created in collaboration with others, in parallel with works that arise from Forced Entertainment's core team, serves as a reminder that even our close-knit, permanent-ensemble-based practice does not in any sense exist in a vacuum. The group's work has long drawn strength from the new perspectives of its collaborators, most recently including Graeme Miller, Seke Chimutengwende, Tyrone Huggins and Nicki Hobday, as well as from ongoing dialogue and exchanges with a wide range of other makers in the fields of contemporary performance, dance and music. This dialogic approach, a sense of back and forth with other artists engaged with related questions, has always been a part of the work, even as we've pursued our own quite particular obsessions and practice.

We hope you enjoy the performances.

Tim Etchells
Artistic Director
Forced Entertainment
October 2024





SIGNAL TO NOISE

Forced Entertainment

10-11 OCT

Queen Elizabeth Hall,
Southbank Centre

There seems to be a problem, a problem with the connection...

An upbeat spectacle which is slowly breaking apart, *Signal to Noise* summons a delirious late-night churn of fragments – dances, rehearsals, altercations, scenery changes and unexpected weather reports. All voices are enlisted to perform the text – their unreal chatter and patter mixing interior monologues, unfinished jokes and off-topic interviews. It all sounds right, more or less human, more or less real. What could go wrong?

The six performers lip-sync all the voices, sometimes carefully, sometimes with unhelpful abandon, bringing life to these disembodied, never-bodied speakers. In the process they summon a strange and compelling world where the question of what's human and what's not, what's real life and what's just pretending is never far away.

Conceived and devised by the company

Director Tim Etchells

Devised and performed by

Robin Arthur, Seke Chimutengwende,
Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall,
Cathy Naden and Terry O'Connor

Dramaturgy Tyrone Huggins

Design Richard Lowdon

Music and Sound Design Tim Etchells

Lighting Design Nigel Edwards

Production Management Jim Harrison

Producer Eileen Evans



GO ON LIKE THIS

Tim Etchells and Tony Buck

12-13 OCT

Purcell Room at
Queen Elizabeth Hall,
Southbank Centre

An improvised performance encounter between artist and writer, Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment) and the legendary percussionist Tony Buck, founder-member of the Australian trio The Necks.

The two artists share strong fascinations with the possibilities of both free improvisation and intensive repetition – Buck in the realm of mutating percussive elements and Etchells in the realm of looping language fragments. *Go On Like This* brings them together for an evening of loops and cacophonies blurring the lines between language as sense and language as pure sound, creating something on the border zone between their two practices.

Following studies and early experience in Australia, Tony Buck spent time in Japan where he formed "Peril" with Otomo Yoshihide and Kato Hideki before relocating to Europe in the mid-nineties. He has been involved in a highly diverse array of projects but is probably best known around the world as a member of the trio The Necks. He has also played, toured or recorded with Jon Rose, Otomo Yoshihide, John Zorn, T. Cora, Phil Minton, Haino, Even Parker, The Machine for Making Sense, Lee Ranaldo, Ne Zhdall, The EX, Clifford Jordan, Ground Zero and many others. His current projects include "Spill" with Magda Mayas and New York based trio "Glacial" with David Watson and Lee Ranaldo as well as continuing work in improvised performance settings.

Improvised performance

Text/Voice Tim Etchells

Percussion Tony Buck

Photography Sebastian Weise,
c/o Ebensperger



SHOWN AND TOLD

Meg Stuart and Tim Etchells

31 OCT – 2 NOV

The Place

A dynamic but fragile performance collage built from studio improvisation, balancing fixed material and possibilities for free-play.

Arising from an exchange between choreographer and dancer Meg Stuart and writer and performance maker Tim Etchells – Artistic Director of Forced Entertainment – it exposes the very different practice and sensibilities of these two artists, exploring the relationship between movement, image and performing bodies. Working with vivid and surprising images, some of them physical, some of them linguistic, the two performers develop a conversation that is tough, touching and comical by turns.

Meg Stuart, born in New Orleans, is a choreographer, director and dancer who lives and works in Berlin and Brussels. With her company Damaged Goods, founded in 1994, she has created over thirty productions, moving freely between the genres of dance, theatre and visual arts. Her work is driven by a sense for experiment and artistic cross-pollination, challenging the limits of the body and expanding our perception of reality. She uses fictions and shifting narrative layers to expose the scripts that are written not only on our bodies, but also on the spaces and landscapes that we move in. She has received several awards in recognition of her oeuvre, among which are the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Biennale di Venezia in 2018, and a Bessie Award in 2008, as well as the Deutscher Tanzpreis (2018), the Grand Prix de la Danse de Montréal (2014) and the Konrad-Wolf-Preis, awarded by the Akademie der Kunst in 2012.

Created and performed by
Tim Etchells and Meg Stuart

Light design Gilles Roosen
Costumes Annabel Heyse
Production Damaged Goods
Photography Eva Würdinger



L'ADDITION

Tim Etchells and Bert & Nasi

5–16 NOV

Battersea Arts Centre

L'Addition is a collaboration between Tim Etchells and Bert & Nasi.

Two performers armed with (or trapped in) a single scene – a customer orders a drink from a waiter. And then things go awry. Played again and again, the events of this stock-situation roll repeatedly with nonstop dialogue or absolute silence and the scene starts spinning out of control. Nightmarish spiral or grotesque farce? Roles and relationships of power flip back and forth, to the point that we no longer know who's the target and who's the aggressor, who's serving and who's being served.

Bert & Nasi are a contemporary performance duo that met in 2015 and have since created an entire repertoire of shows in the midst of a period of national and international austerity. Their work, in turn, is stripped back and minimalist, whilst dealing with complex ideas and emotions. Their shows lie somewhere between performance, dance and theatre but if you had to pin them down on it, they'd probably say it's theatre. Together they have performed their shows on the international stages of PuSh Festival (Canada), Festival de Otoño (Spain), Sarajevo Mess (Bosnia), Adelaide International Festival (Australia), InTeatro (Italy), Festival D'Avignon (France) as well as MiTsp (Brazil).

A Tim Etchells and Bert & Nasi production

Director Tim Etchells
Text Tim Etchells with Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas
Devised and performed by
Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas
Lighting Design Alex Fernandes
Composer & Sound Design Graeme Miller
Produced by Forced Entertainment

Original production by
Festival d'Avignon in 2023.

Photography Christophe Raynaud de Lage



IF ALL ELSE FAILS

Forced Entertainment

19–23 NOV

Battersea Arts Centre

Two performers engage in an absurd test that seems to shift and change as they work their way through it.

Fragments of a language lesson. Questions from a personality quiz. Slogans from some future society. The performers laugh, hesitate, ask for more time. The test continues. As the clock ticks it's not even certain if the subjects of the test are the audience or the performers.

Comical and tangled *If All Else Fails* is a new collaboration between Sheffield's Forced Entertainment and dancer/maker/choreographer Seke Chimutengwende. Performed by Chimutengwende and Cathy Naden, one of the founder members of the group, the piece is an interrogatory dialogue of speech and movement, questions and answers.

Conceived and devised by the company

Director Tim Etchells

Devised and performed by

Seke Chimutengwende & Cathy Naden

With input from Robin Arthur,

Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall and

Terry O'Connor

Dramaturgy Tyrone Huggins

Lighting Design Jim Harrison

Music and Sound Design Tim Etchells

supported by John Avery

Production Management

Jim Harrison

Producer Eileen Evans

THINGS THAT GO THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN FALLING

The work of Forced Entertainment

Things That Go through Your Mind When Falling is the definitive book about Forced Entertainment's remarkable oeuvre: a sumptuous and compelling anthology of previously unseen images by photographer Hugo Glendinning, collecting interview reflections from the group and documentary materials alongside original texts and critical essays which make a forceful intervention in the discourse on contemporary performance.

Buy it from our website for a special 40th Birthday discounted price.

Edited by Adrian Heathfield

Photography by Hugo Glendinning

Performance texts by Tim Etchells and Forced Entertainment

With contributions from Robin Arthur, Sara Jane Bailes, Augusto Corrieri, Tim Etchells, Matthew Goulish, Adrian Heathfield, Joy Kristin Kalu, Joe Kelleher, Richard Lowdon, Claire MacDonald, Claire Marshall, Rabih Mroué, Cathy Naden, Terry O'Connor, Giulia Palladini, Flora Pitrolo, Séverine Ruset, and Theron Schmidt.

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FORCED ENTERTAINMENT

Artistic team

Robin Arthur, Tim Etchells (Artistic Director), Richard Lowdon (Designer), Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden, Terry O'Connor. Associate Artist: Tyrone Huggins

Management team

Deb Chadbourn and Eileen Evans, Co-Executive Director; Jim Harrison, Touring Producer and Production Manager; Jessica Matthews, Participation Producer

Board of Trustees

Frances Babbage, Inga Hirst, Reena Kalsi, Daniel Kok, David Micklem (Chair), Tim Norwood, Tom Payne, Lauren Nicole Whitter

Regular Collaborators

John Avery (Sound), Seke Chimutengwende (Performer), Nigel Edwards (Lighting Design), Hugo Glendinning (Photography and Video), Alex Fernandes (Technical), Nicki Hobday (Performer), Jerry Killick (Performer)

Participation programmes

If you enjoy and value the work of Forced Entertainment, please consider making a donation to support Space To Play, our participation programme, which opens up creative opportunities for disadvantaged young people, and supports and mentors emerging artists, using the ways of working and thinking that come from our practice.

forcedentertainment.com

All photography unless otherwise stated: Hugo Glendinning

Presented by

**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**

BAC⁵⁰

THE PLACE

Audience Survey

Thank you for coming to see the show. We would love to hear your thoughts about the event and find out a bit more about you. Please use the QR code to complete a short Audience Survey.



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