

Programme

The Chairs

By Eugene Ionesco
Translation by Martin Crimp
Produced by Extant

Spring tour 2016

HARLOW PLAYHOUSE
Sun 3 April

MAC BIRMINGHAM
Tue 12 & Wed 13 April

THE LOWRY, SALFORD QUAYS
Fri 15 & Sat 16 April

STRATFORD CIRCUS, LONDON
Thur 28 & Fri 29 April

Please leave your feedback about *The Chairs* on our website:
www.extant.org.uk/chairs/evaluation

Note from the Director, Maria Oshodi

I feel absurdism is one of the natural theatrical 'ports of call' for visually impaired performers. Our casting of blind actors in *The Chairs* lends itself to the absurdist's belief that theatre is an intersection between reality and an artificial representation. So our exploration of what is visible and what is not in this classic text, demanding the utmost physical engagement, has led us to a true forum where we can apply Extant's years of research with visually impaired actors into more authentic performance practices on stage.

An additional idea I brought was to integrate access for visually impaired audiences as the shared aesthetic audio interior space of the two main characters. I believe that this not only acts as an extension of the visual geography created on stage, but also supports Ionesco's desire to make the non-visible appear through language. In the same way that features of invisible characters are brought to life for everyone through Ionesco's dialogue, so does the integrated description bring the physical performance to life for our audience who might not be able to see these aspects.

I would like to thank the highly dedicated, imaginative and creative team who have worked on this production, contributing their great enthusiasm and ideas both thematically and practically, to make the experience one of true ensemble collaboration!

About the set design, by Andrea Carr

Ionesco set *The Chairs* in an unspecified future, hinting at global catastrophe and a breakdown of civilisation. We chose to make a feature of this, setting the piece within a corroding research station, with rising water levels representing a threat from the outside. A fragmenting, obsolete interior slides towards entropy and brings together old and new, fantasy and reality, reflecting the elderly couple's internal state. Particular attention has been paid to textures for the flooring and developing sounds to distinguish different areas. The play gives a glimpse of the real problems now facing us, from global warming to over-reliance on technology. To lessen our contribution to the bleak future suggested by the play, our set has been constructed from recycled materials.

About Extant

Extant is Britain's only professional performing arts company of visually impaired people. Extant's mission is to promote the arts and culture of the visually impaired

community through a programme of research and development, touring and productions, and participation and training for both adults and young people.

Our patrons: Juliet Stevenson CBE and Clive Merrison

Join our mailing list to find out about future tours, training and participation opportunities by:
emailing info@extant.org.uk
calling 020 7820 3737
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You can also find us on:
Facebook at /ExtantCompany
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Cast

Old Woman Heather Gilmore

Old Man Tim Gebbels

The Orator & Assistant Stage Manager Alex Donaghy

Creative and Production Team

Director Maria Oshodi

Assistant Director Julie Osman

Set and Costume Design Andrea Carr

Sound Design and AD Development Thor McIntyre-Burnie

Composer Peter Boshier

Lighting Design Steve Lowe

Production Manager Stacey Choudhury-Potter

Technical Stage Manager Anna Matthews

Stage Manager Beatrice Galloway

Sound Technician Louise Gregory

Movement Coach Aidan Treays

Access Support Anna Van de Poorten

Executive Director Tabitha Allum

Participation Programme Manager Jodie Stus

Out Reach Manager Louise Dickson

Administration Joanna Lally

Assistant Producer Turtle Key Arts

Film and Production Primo Digital Video Productions

Photography Lily Owen

Braille Andrew Hodgson

Press and Marketing Turtle Key Arts

Publicity Design Topright Design

Website timjukesdesign.com

Biographies

Heather Gilmore has a long association with Extant including 2012's *Sheer*. She has acted with Clean Break theatre, The Sadista Sisters and HardCorps.

Tim Gebbels has been acting professionally for over fifteen years. TV credits include: Torch Wood and The Bill. In Theatre he has worked for Oxfordshire Touring Theatre and Graeae as well as Extant on several previous occasions.

Maria Oshodi's first play, *The S Bend*, was produced by Royal Court Theatre's Young

Writers Festival and later by Cockpit Theatre. Other works include *Blood, Sweat and Fears*, *From Choices to Chocolate* and *Here Comes a Candle*; the screenplay *Mug* for Channel 4; *Hound* for Graeae and scripts for multimedia experiences. She founded Extant in 1997 and has been Artistic Director since then.

Julie Osman is joint artistic director of Freathy Tippett, a movement / music theatre collective. Direction credits include *City Girls* for Jermyn Street Theatre, *Eros and Psyche* for Arcola Theatre/Grimeborn Opera Festival.

Andrea Carr designed the set for Extant's *Resistance*, and costumes for *Sheer* and *ZombieyeZ in Zagreb*. Previous theatre design includes Hull Truck Theatre Company, Ra-Ra Zoo, Bureau of Silly Ideas.

Steve Lowe has designed lighting for theatre, music and opera productions for OperaUpClose, Bloomsbury Theatre, Riverside Studios and ICA among others. He is joint artistic director of the Freathy Tippett.

Thor McIntyre-Burnie is an award winning Artist & Sound Designer, he has a passion for transforming sites & conventions; working across theatre, dance and visual arts, here his focus is on transforming the art of Audio Description.

Martin Crimp (English translation) was born in 1956 and began writing for theatre in the 1980s. Plays include *In the Republic of Happiness* (2012), *Play House* (2012), *The City* (2008), *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), *Cruel and Tender* (2004 - for director Luc Bondy), *Face to the Wall* (2002), *The Country* (2000), *Attempts On Her Life* (1997), *The Treatment* (1993), *Getting Attention* (1992), *No One Sees the Video* (1991), *Play with Repeats* (1989), *Dealing with Clair* (1988), and *Definitely the Bahamas* (1987). His work is translated into many languages and produced all over the world.

Translations include *Gross und Klein* (2012), *Rhinoceros* (2007), *The False Servant* (2004), *The Triumph of Love* (1999), *The Maids* (1999), *Roberto Zucco* (1997), a new version of *The Seagull* (2006) for National Theatre, a contemporary adaptation of *The Misanthrope* (1996). He has written two opera texts for George Benjamin: *Into the Little Hill* and *Written on Skin*.

This translation of *The Chairs* was first produced by Theatre de Complicite and the English Stage Company at the Theatre Royal Bath on 22 October 1997. First performance at the Royal Court Theatre on 19 November 1997.

Extant would like to thank the following:

Jem Moorshead, John Harris, Tim Williams and Nigel from Scenery Salvage, Furkan Choudhury, Gideon Non-Stop and David Degreef-Mounier.

Our supporters and partners:

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