

Chapter 1

I • D Φ • X – The Company

The company and its background

The company I • D Φ • X (Idée Fixe) is a performing arts company which draws from a collaboration of like-minded artists possessing a range of different backgrounds to create performances where sound, movement, image and drama are imaginatively conjoined using relevant technologies. Each work we make is based on a theme from daily life: a day in anyone's life, the rooms of a block of flats, the fun and perils of travel. Objects (sound, visual) from everyday life are combined in an experimental performance context. This is done to make works particularly tangible and user-friendly. Stage designs not only act as décor, but also as sound installations triggered by movement in entertaining and challenging performances. One of the company's key aims is to set an example and facilitate active participation in art-making on as wide a scale as possible. It stands for an artistic process based on working with people, not at or on them.⁹ This process is founded on developing devising as a working practice where individuals all contribute to and can be identified in collaborative creative work. The company encourages and facilitates a range of community-based activities all of which are custom made for each host taking into account group and individual needs. It seeks convergence between the arts and amongst professional and community arts contexts.

The background The origin of the company is that of two paths, namely those of this booklet's two authors, the artistic director (Landy) and the choreographic director (Jamieson).

Leigh Landy has spent the better part of twenty years acquiring experience within experimental areas of contemporary music during which time he has written dozens of publications concerning the why's and wherefore's of contemporary music's marginalisation.¹⁰ Two of his subjects have been the visualisation and spatialisation of live contemporary music. Another has been his rejection of the art

music method of preparing a piece to be interpreted by anonymous others.

Evelyn Jamieson has an overlapping, yet complementary background, having been a professional dancer, educator and choreographer throughout her career. As a dance animateur in the 1980s one of her main activities was that of creating a bridge between community and professional dance. Her facilitative approach has become part and parcel of her choreographic signature.

Sharing a preference for working in cross-arts contexts, in 1995 the creation of *Idée Fixe* was the obvious next step for both.

Translating ideas into practice Independent of context, the company always begins a project with a theme. The process of creation, whether it leads towards a performance outcome or not, includes discovering participants' strengths and important shared interests and abilities. Ideas are discussed and material is created by all, workshopping ideas in an interactive group situation. Through evaluation within the group and triangulation with people from outside whenever relevant, feedback is generated concerning how well a work is being communicated and how well it is succeeding. These are crucial building blocks in terms of creating a (temporary) community involved in group creation.

If we are to look at collaboration in its purest sense, then dance and music – the two main art forms in our work – should seek a balance in value/weighting in terms of ideas shared, appreciation and how this affects the final performance. Even if the music or the dance is created first, it is the way in which the work is shared and understood by all parties that gives the product a sense of heightened ownership by its artists as well as its potential audience. As a matter of fact, it is our belief that when music and dance are made in this manner each aspect is made to strengthen the other. That is, the choreography (or music) is lifted by the sound (or movement); the product is greater than the sum of the two parts.

In a shared process the level of experimentation can be quite intense and can enrich the organically emerging structure of a devised work. The notion of 'going beyond' (for participant and/or spectator) is part

of the process, yet works hand in hand with dance and music skills development.

Our approach demands generosity on behalf of its devisors: it enables artists to appreciate the work of others and be able to evaluate in a constructive manner. With this in mind, the ‘why’ element within the art-making process is crucial as members of a group try to appreciate, understand and react to ideas other members suggest. Nothing in particular is taken for granted. Everything deserves, and in fact needs sharing. Thus, anyone and everyone can own that which has been constructed involving cross-fertilisation of understanding and interest.¹¹

The vision behind our community work We avoid at all costs one-off residencies without an included training programme. This ambitious goal is quite difficult to achieve as the community arts world seems to run, to a large extent, on one-off projects. To combat the tendency, we attempt to find partners (organisations, venues) with whom we can collaborate on a fairly regular basis in terms of projects, training schemes or other relevant programmes and are slowly but surely demonstrating success in this endeavour.

For and with whom? Whom do we work with artistically and for whom do we make our art? From the start of every project, we know with whom we will be working both in terms of individuals and what holds a given group together (which can differ enormously from project to project). This influences or even determines the audience of the work. It is our view that having a reasonably strong notion of whom one would like to share one’s work with influences what the work becomes. In this way one can establish the collective experience in the working group early on as well as pretty much imagine what is collectively known within the potential public. Making art that contains something new works best based on the participants’ and public spectators’ knowledge of what is new and from whence it departs. Innovative practice can best be achieved when the ‘for and with whom’ of art-making is consciously taken into consideration.

Let’s look at an example, that is where the community for a particular production is to be a local one in the first instance. Working with artists without local knowledge is not necessarily the best means to achieving a result where the known is being heightened and perhaps

questioned. Working with and for local people in the first instance seems to be a fairly healthy recipe in this case.

With this in mind, what we believe is that participants in a given arts activity should have some common ground. We also believe that when this is the case, the work should embrace that in some way and the artistic result, when it is to be shared, should be with those who have that same common ground before presenting it, if at all, to a more general public. *Idée Fixe*'s approach allows us to treat a slightly different type of angle than those found in traditional regional contexts, namely that of elements of our daily life. When we take these themes into a number of contexts with the intention of creating art work, we must first look into participants' experiences with regard to the chosen theme in order to establish the common ground of the group in question and then attempt to establish which group or groups would most likely be able to best appreciate and understand the results of this devised work. In some cases, that group may be very small indeed. In others, it could be virtually anyone.

How Idée Fixe works

A number of tools in *Idée Fixe*'s toolbox will be introduced and illustrated in the following paragraphs. They do not dictate what we do or how we do it; that is, we do not allow the tool to lead what we do. Instead, we use our tools whenever they prove useful to us. This is the advantage of working within a flexible framework. What does develop is a dynamic house style offering a range of common elements whilst allowing a great deal of space to amuse, surprise, entertain and challenge participants and viewers alike.

The role of the theme from everyday life

In introducing the company, there is one aspect of our approach that possibly stands out above all others, namely that we choose to work with a tangible theme from everyday life. Given the indescribable excitement that abstract and other forms of art have created in this century, why, then, do we choose something so banal? The response to this question is perhaps an odd one, namely that any approach to art is in fact possible within the 'shell' of the everyday theme. At the same time, anyone and everyone can relate to the general thrust – if

not specific detail – of a creative work as we all have individual and shared experiences related to a given tangible theme.

The theme of the project to be presented in the next chapter is: games/competition/strategy. In the United Kingdom, one of the most discussed subjects of recent years has been the new and highly successful National Lottery. Of course football has not lost interest and children still enjoy games. This implies that all participants actively involved or alternatively appreciating a performance have an experience base which may be ‘touched’ by the work at any given moment. Therefore, a notion such as strategy can be reflected literally by taking a sport as the theme within a performance. Alternatively, strategy could be represented in a more abstract manner as has been the case in Debussy’s/Nijinsky’s “Jeux” (French for games) and Stravinsky/Balanchine’s “Agon” (Greek for competition).

The theme has more impact than just offering something very important to hold on to in the preparation, performance and appreciation of work. It also facilitates the use – and even abuse – of objects associated with that theme. This remark deserves some contextualisation. One of the great things about the contemporary arts is that they have witnessed various forms of emancipation parallel to socio-cultural forms, e.g., emancipation of gender, race, ability, sexuality in our contemporary culture. In music, the sound replaced the note as its unit value with the growth of *musique concrète* and electronic music in the late 40s and early 50s. Similarly, new dance styles emerged rebelling against the traditional classical aesthetic. A new genre was born with the work of Martha Graham and her contemporaries. In the rebellious 1960s contemporary dance moved even further in the sense that any movement could be used within a dance context. The proof of success here can be found in the fact that even in popular forms of music and dance, any sound and any movement can be used, although not necessarily on as radical a scale as in some experimental forms of music and dance. The sampler, a must for any pop group these days, inputs and stores, allows the manipulation of, and retrieves sounds for live performance contexts. Consequently, we are able to use objects from daily life and play them in a manner similar to traditional musicians playing traditional instruments. Through the use of modern technology, dancers can trigger sounds through their movements either physically touching

everyday objects or, alternatively, simply moving through an everyday space.

Take, for example, a scene in our earlier work “(Y)our House” – the title implies a residence that is ours *and* one that is yours – for three performers, a settee and a wired coffee table. The first part of the scene takes place with a man and a woman reading their respective tabloid newspapers on a settee. Their movement could hardly be compared with ballet. The sounds they produce are solely from their ‘playing’ their tabloids. As the discourse between the two passes from very amicable to one of slight alienation to one of great physicality, a butler interrupts presenting the couple with two cups of tea. After placing these cups carefully on the amplified and very strange sound-producing coffee table, the cups are stirred which arouses the sense that something odd is taking place aurally, as the stirring is much too loud. After various toasts, sips and thrown cups take place, the trio decide to dance on the table. At this point a mass of sounds are triggered by a comical *ménage à trois* on a coffee table. In this way daily objects are used and abused and a scene from daily life becomes surrealistic on more than one occasion. This exemplifies the breadth of possibility based on the ordinary, something known to all.¹²

We are of the belief that without a tangible theme, we would run the obvious risk of not connecting with our potential public, which would support the unfortunate view held by many that the contemporary arts are an acquired taste. By offering something very real to hold on to, along with anything else artistically that is user-friendly, we are making an overt attempt to share and communicate with publics representing a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. In community contexts, we are able to focus on shared values, which is an excellent way to celebrate common experience.

Even in site specific contexts, an area we very much enjoy, the tangible theme is our central tool. The theme may be the site itself, anything that is associated with the site, or even one that is not necessarily directly linked to the site but allows for the site to be celebrated nevertheless.

Content

This word represents the micro-level of our work, that is, the material and related small-scale elements from which we build our pieces. The macro-level, which may represent just a minute's worth of performance, is presented below under the header of architecture.

Sound and movement material One of the great challenges of making contemporary art is that our potential material is, well, anything. This freedom, the availability of an infinite amount of potential material, is simultaneously a strength and a source of enormous problems. Let's investigate this by looking briefly at musicians about fifty years ago who were interested in involving sound in their work. They were confronted with an enormous increase of potential source material, but were they prepared for this emancipation? For example, are the traditional song or classical forms relevant when using the sound of birds, of pots and pans, of electronically generated sounds? Can you make a sonata with bird song as its first theme and cocktail mixers as the source of the second? (Answer: yes, but only a good musician could make a successful piece in this manner. The relatively unknown "Electronic Sonata" by Lejaren Hiller exemplifies this.)

We have the opportunity to involve and combine the very well known with the totally unknown in our new works, allowing for instant identification and challenge to the viewer. The artists' challenge is to find new and appropriate ways to select and employ this diverse material in their work.

A special case/1: Found objects Found objects (originally taken from the French *objets trouvés*) infers the use of an object known to a public from daily life within an artistic context. Marcel Duchamp shocked the world early in the century by placing a fictitiously signed urinal on exhibit as a work of art.¹³ An idea like this is much less shocking at the other end of the century. In fact, the use of objects from daily life in art became standard during the era of pop art in the 1960s and 1970s.

Idée Fixe uses a great number of found objects as it allows for identification and often for surprise when the object is used/manipulated/performed in an unusual context or unusual manner. This has to do with another great artistic invention of the first half of

the century, Surrealism (described later in this chapter); it also allows new forms of sound and movement to take place within a context of the known, positively influencing access.

The found object is but one type of content we employ. It is important as it represents a link between life and art given the thematic approach to our projects. Our example above with the settee, newspaper and amplified table clearly illustrates this notion. In another case, which is relevant for another reason, kitchen objects were used. The interest here is that actions created in this context were amusing and artistically satisfying to all, but to the separate music and dance communities, the huge chopping knife employed truly cut ‘both ways’. In a section of “(Y)our House”, this one entitled “The Rite of Spring Onions” (a k a “Le sacre du rouleau de printemps”), a very unusual take-off on Stravinsky and Nijinsky’s “The Rite of Spring”/“Le sacre du printemps” took place. A musician reduced Stravinsky’s work to some three and a half minutes including all major motifs of the work. The second ‘musical’ role was played by a performer using an electric knife initially to chop an assortment of vegetables – including spring onions – each time the f-sharp was not played by the musician. That is, that important note was replaced by the action and sound of chopping vegetables with an electric knife. During the famous rhythmic passage in which a single chord is repeated at length emphasising syncopation, the dancers reconstructed the original Nijinsky choreography whilst the cook/musician chopped away with a large chopping knife sending carrots and spring onions all over the stage amplifying the syncopations. Here, the activities were very here and now; at the same time there was an entertaining, yet unusual homage to the great music and ballet collaboration that represents one of the revolutions of early twentieth century art. As the performance project involved portraits in a number of rooms of different flats in a single building, a kitchen scene at the end of the day was appropriate. The combination of the Stravinsky score in “Reader’s Digest” form with the movement from the original choreography and the found kitchen objects offered something(s) for everyone.

A special case/2: Recycling What is more here and now than recycling? But what has recycling to do with the arts? The point of recycling in our work is to allow access through previous knowledge.

This idea is by no means new. Composers, choreographers and other artists have often either quoted their predecessors or contemporaries (with the occasional case of plagiarism) or even themselves. Schubert wasn't afraid to reuse a good theme!

The example of the reduced Stravinsky work is a case of recycling, be it one where the knowledge to be recycled was not universal. Another example concerns a scene in the "Lottopus" series that appeared with great success. It was also much appreciated by viewers in "(Y)our House". In the earlier version two people are playing draughts. In fact, the game is played by a repair man and the woman of the house who seem to have more in mind than that particular game. Each time a draughts piece was moved, a sound evolved. During double or triple jumps, two or three sounds were generated. This took place in one of the rooms of one of the flats in the building. For "Lottopus", where four performers were involved in essentially the same scene, it has to do with our theme of games people play. Thus recycling is taking place by re-using part of our own devised work. To our faithful viewers, seeing the draughts game in another context is one form of recycling; however, there is also a second level of recycling taking place. John Cage and Marcel Duchamp played a game of chess in front of a public as part of Cage's "Variations" series. In that well-known (but viewed by very few) example of mid-twentieth century experimentalism, each of the 64 squares was wired to a sound. Suffice to say that the piece evolved very slowly due to the nature of the game. Our draughts game moves quickly in the temporal sense as well as the fact that the "movers" don't necessarily sit still all the time.

Recycling goes hand in hand with found objects in many situations and lifts the known to the not quite known by taking its known status and shifting it very slightly within its artistic context. We call this the '*1% tilt*' in terms of newness. It is like looking at yourself in a slightly distorted mirror and registering surprise at what you see. Many examples in this text and on the video represent an application of the 1% tilt.

We are certain that readers can envision very imaginative forms of recycling that fit into their own approach to making art. That is the wonder of its flexibility

A special case/3: Surrealism There are too few artists today who openly thank the pioneers who created Surrealism. Their vision of placing known objects into surrealist contexts contributed to one of the most invigorating foundations for contemporary art-making available today. The potential relevancy of a surrealist approach to our work is enormous. Most examples above, including the table and draughts board as musical instruments represent Surrealism within a late twentieth century technology context.

A special case/4: The 'What?! factor' How many readers have attended arts events where one or two (or more) moments during the event caused your inner voice to scream "What?!"? This is a reaction of surprise and of discovery or even of your experience being challenged. The Germans have a lovely expression for this, *Das Aha Erlebnis* (the 'aha' experience). There are two views about the presence of the 'What?! factor' in performance: a) they are trivial tools to divert one's attention from the 'true work', b) they are perhaps the most exciting part of a work as they represent the most memorable moments thereof. Classical music fans will probably know the punch line of Haydn's "Farewell Symphony" better than its major themes.

The moment the electric knife is used in "The Rite of Spring Onions", there are a good many spectators' inner voices shouting "What?!". The number of people who have come back to us and laughed whilst telling us about what we did is substantial. The 'What?! factor' goes hand in hand with all of our other special cases. The moment two members of the cast of "(Y)our House", after dismantling the piping of two WC sinks¹⁴, start using these pipes as wind and percussion instruments is a clear example of found objects, recycling (objects), Surrealism, the 'What?! factor' and our next subject, humour.

If we go back to our two views one might state: if you are able to remember but one moment of a performance, it was probably worth attending. This is contentious and trivialises a good deal of work around that single impact of the 'aha' moment. It also puts repeated viewing into question as the impact of the 'aha' moment is not one that is sustainable at the same intensity. (One thinks of the 'old days' when we impatiently awaited the moment when the scratch in our overplayed records was to arrive and whether that would cause our favourite music to skip.) With this in mind the 'What?! factor' should

be used as a tool to be integrated with other dynamic tools to help people gain access to a work and illustrate how powerful art can be. It is not to be overused, nor underestimated.

A special case/5: Humour A through-line so far in our description of material is humour. We are not a comedy company as such, but are of the firm belief that the often-used categories of popular vs. serious art have influenced the latter too much in operating within a framework overemphasising the importance of being earnest. People love to laugh and, whether they believe it or not, do not mind being challenged. We feel that there is space for humour in our work. If all of our work were to be funny, we would inevitably trivialise some of the music and dance we and all we work with have to offer. This does not imply that humour trivialises. It does imply that humour as a centrepiece can trivialise. Our goal is to avoid purely serious art projects. There are more than enough currently on offer. On the other hand, we must not overreact and create totally ‘unserious’ art.

The ‘something new factor’ Throughout the centuries devising applied in cross-arts contexts has demonstrated fairly conservative roots. ‘Conservative’ is used here in its sense of preserving or celebrating traditions. By working with and carefully evolving the known, such practices have existed for centuries in societies around the globe as they have represented an aspect of daily life which held groups together as well as questioning, amusing and entertaining them.

If we are to recycle this practice in contemporary contexts, how can artists be expected to be innovative? The question may appear trickier than it is. Let us look at this important issue in the following way. Most art traditionally has been deemed to be special when it embraced known practices and added something special to the known. This might have been accomplished simply through the addition of a verse to a known folk tune or the ironic performance of a piece that is normally performed in an earnest manner in theatre. It might also have been manifested by a performer’s virtuosic interpretation of a known work. This addition of something else (new) in art has traditionally been one of its driving forces. In this century it has even become more common that radical departures be embraced.

It is our belief that the ‘something new factor’ in art, as long as it is tangible, is one that people can embrace, create and share. When

change takes place for change's sake, people easily become alienated. If alienation is the goal of an arts manifestation, that is well and good. If not, perhaps sharing the 'something else' element might make art-making (more) stimulating. If we can accept this idea, then the notion of finding room for the new, be it large or small, is necessary within a devised art context. Obviously the '1% tilt' is one way amongst many of achieving this.

In any *Idée Fixe* context newness can extend as far as the participants are able to and want to take it bearing in mind that under normal circumstances their viewers must be able to place that newness into a known frame of reference. This difference in extent is evident in the two residencies discussed in the following chapter. In one case, a small step in our terms was a leap for some of the participants; in the other, we found ourselves slowing down some of the students from taking their work on the theme beyond any recognition. Finding the extent of discovery that is possible within a given arts context and creating the ideal balance between the known and unknown is one of the most exciting aspects of art-making today.

Architecture

In a sense talking about what one might use in terms of material in an *Idée Fixe* project is easier than discussing how things all fit together. Rigid processes, such as those known in minimalist and repetitive art forms, do not represent obvious approaches for us. In such cases formalisation tends to reign above the flexibility we need to be able to focus on people's individual talents. In our flexible framework in Appendix 1 there is an implicit assumption that there will be a constant interplay between content and structure.

Structure and form Anyone who has studied art is aware of the importance of architecture in any art work. *Idée Fixe* creates a structure organically during the creation of a work. This may seem dangerous, but the organic order of things is based on clear structure. For example, think of patterns on leaves and of rivers. These resemble each other. We tend to avoid historically determined forms (e.g., binary, tertiary, rondo, etc.). There may be grounds to make a (section of a) work based on a form, but this must never get in the way of the devising process. Instead notions such as layering, combining,

repeating and varying are focused upon in terms of architectural building blocks.

Relating material to structure In the short history of the company, the original procedure of finding a mutually agreeable theme and then writing a very general storyboard was found to be taking things too far, leaving too little decision making to the artists involved in any given project. This notion has been replaced by finding a theme and then finding sub-themes relating to the broader theme from which choices can be made. These may be said to act as puzzle pieces which in turn need to be assembled. This is a particularly rewarding process as all involved then have equal participation in terms of finding and developing both material and structure.

Clearly any structure that simply represents a linear chain of ideas, one without any form of repetition or variation, is doomed to fail, as it does not make a particularly interesting architecture in the arts. Something(s) must reappear from time to time offering points of reference. Furthermore, as one progresses through the devising process, dynamic (e.g., density and speed of activity, loudness) and contrast need to be taken into account. Architectural building blocks must be kept in mind from the early stages of devising onwards. Normally, material will be used and re-used to assist in the creation of a structure; unique material being placed strategically around material that appears in one form or other more than once. This works both at the structural level of a single section of a piece as well as of an entire work. In terms of our relating material to structure one tool has proven extremely useful, improvisation.

Improvisation

Our notion of improvisation is one that is always based on a fixed framework. One can improvise around a role, a theme, using a found object, a set of movements, etc. The further one works within an improvisational framework, at least in our case, the more fixed that framework becomes. In short, improvisation is not only a tool in terms of ordering content, it is also very useful in terms of structural development and of performance.

An example: we improvised with two newspapers, as the two company members did in “(Y)our House”. No one had any idea what

we were going to do with the newspapers other than use them as an instrument and a stimulus for movement material. In this case there were many degrees of freedom available to the people working individually as well as when two company members worked together in preparing this section of the piece. The more they improvised with the newspapers, the more clear it became which types of sound manipulation and related movement were not only artistically interesting, but also easily combined, repeated and varied. By the time we reached performance with this scene, there were still certain degrees of freedom, uncertainty factors if you prefer, available to the performers. The length, general flow of things and basic material were fixed allowing for ownership and, at the same time, spontaneity within that little area of freedom left over for both performers. Structure and material were generated from a single improvisation scheme. This brings us to the view that we prefer not to tie down our work too much, demonstrating how flexible a fixed work can be. There is still room for discovery, spontaneity and even human error which can often be a great addition to a piece!

Narrative as form?

Idée Fixe's approach acknowledges the success of dance theatre's use of what might be called thematic or non-linear narrative exemplifying how a traditionally abstract art form(s) has allowed a taste for the quotidian to support new, often accessible, creative work. Every scene in every Idée Fixe work is episodic and can be translated into one or more points on an axis ranging from the literal to the abstract. The two points that have been left untouched are the two extremes.

Balance between art media

Which art form takes the lead in a cross-arts devising context? Can various elements of a cross-arts work be devised simultaneously? How do artists from various disciplines find a common vocabulary with which they can best work together?

These questions form a challenging balancing act yet are crucial for the success of any cross-arts collaboration. Flexibility is associated with an acute desire to learn and to share. The question of dissimilar vocabulary usage in different art forms is easily dealt with as

empirical evidence demonstrates: the more people work together, the clearer the technical vocabulary's relevance from either (any) side. Nothing should ever be taken for granted in terms of word usage. Words like form, style, narrative can mean very different things to different people, whether they are professional artists or anyone in any community. What does not work within the world of the workshop is the vocabulary bias of a single art form. The more we are willing to understand the work of our colleagues – without necessarily becoming a specialist in the other art form ourselves – the better the collaborative experience will be. Inevitably a common vocabulary will arise in a successful devising context.

Similarly, the flexibility one should possess to be able to find the best ways towards vocabulary acquisition reflects the type of flexibility needed to determine which art form (if any) leads at a given moment in a devising context. Aggressive one-sidedness leads to one-sided results.

Is there, then, a best formula for finding the ideal balance between various art media? There is none, for better or worse. Trial and error is the best we can offer. Parallel and joint workshops and having people from art form A participate and eventually acquire skills in aspects of art form B and vice versa can be most useful. For example, musicians can take part in dance warm-ups where choreographic material is tried out and dancers can participate in and discuss devising sound materials with musicians to see whether ideas are translatable and, when they are, whether they are translating well. This better understanding of others' techniques and vocabulary is a means to an end, that is, the ability to discuss the why of our work in an informed and mutually respectable manner.

Developing skills

Inherent to any of *Idée Fixe*'s work, all involved are expected to have their boundaries pushed as it were. The 'something new factor' is our means towards that end. But what does this mean in terms of skills development? Now that the various company contexts have been introduced, this question can be properly addressed. Besides social skills or 'life skills' that can be developed in any successful collaborative arts context, there are arts-specific skills that need to be

introduced and developed to some degree led by an experienced company member. These skills include a) physical development: such as co-ordination, control, alignment, flexibility, extension, balance, rhythm, movement memory, b) vocal development: pitch, timbre, breath control, rhythm, diction, and c) instrumental development employing techniques from b) and to a lesser extent a).

We have not abandoned the traditional dance practice of holding a warm-up and a class before embarking on any group-devised work. Skills needed for the day's session – in so far as they can be previously determined – or skills that need further developing given recent work can be integrated into these classes alongside basic skills training for the novice to the advanced participant. Many of these skills then are refocused upon during choreographic sessions.

Similarly musicians need to be warmed up, taking many of them away from their chairs and music stands, before getting into compositional development. This may involve rhythmic and/or movement material, becoming more sophisticated and focused towards that which is being devised as time goes on. Physical and aural awareness form part of music skills development.

Furthermore, skills development involves tackling our vocabulary questions alongside the problems that may arise for those unused to working in a cross-arts context. These are not usually dealt with in a traditional classroom setting, but instead, taken up as part of a more focused activity.

Leadership

Inherent to such sessions and to all our work in general is clear leadership. Whether in a company only context or in the community, company members are there to lead and facilitate the work. Even in the most collective circumstances, someone must have the final vote. Similarly, someone must take on the role to ensure that our flexible framework is being constructively used. If this is not the case, less satisfying results would be achieved during a given project, or respect may be lost by those who are not being continually challenged by our work. Leaders are *agents provocateurs*, adding spice, as it were, to any creative endeavour.

We believe in a leadership of the gentle touch. For if we were to be more authoritarian in company circumstances, our devising approach, and in particular our goal of heightened ownership, would run the risk of collapsing.

Dramaturgy

Asking why How many readers who have studied art-making in one form or another have been asked by teachers what a piece represented and how it was put together? Probably most would answer in the affirmative. How many of the same readers have been asked why one has chosen to do something particular in the same work? Possibly few could answer in the affirmative this time. Yet this sense of inquiry, of not taking things for granted, and a focus on increasing awareness are at the heart of a good deal of art. So, why, then, is this not more often discussed?

The answer to this question is largely dependent on the difficulty of expressing motivation, context, intention, and in the case of the non-representational arts – including dance and music – what is to be communicated. Nevertheless, the avoidance of such discussions is partially due to the lack of tradition in the late twentieth century of focusing on this very essential aspect of our art-making.

You may ask: “Do we truly need to know the intention of the artist?”. Clearly a case can be made for the notion that the recipient of art is the most important person within the artistic experience, not the creator or interpreter of the work. Nevertheless, we believe that artists’ making information available to allow for a debate to take place concerning whether their intention is in fact being communicated is a very logical thing to do. It also offers the public something to hold on to which they can decide to ignore it if they so choose.

Dramaturgy Part of the notion of dramaturgy is contextualising an artistic representation in terms of one or more aspects of today’s or yesteryear’s world, be it in a very specific or perhaps general manner. In contrast, art work where the ‘how it is put together’ is more easily articulated than the ‘why it is made’ can often seem formalised or removed from anything tangible. We do not believe this removal has done the contemporary arts much good. This in no way is a criticism

of, for example, abstract art which is very much a reflection of the fragmentation of our life styles.

Devising art collectively implies a group's dealing with the issues associated with the why of art-making from the start. In consequence, linkage with everyday life is assured. In this way thinking artists can communicate what they are doing in word and deed through their dramaturgy and performance!

To summarise: we believe that the 'why' needs to be asked. The lack of discussion of the issues related to the why of our art-making, at least outside of drama, has aided in art's being separated from society throughout recent years. In the case presented above, separation has less to do with art as a consumer product than with difficulties in terms of access.¹⁵

Company members are playing the role of the dramaturg, not someone outside of the company. We should all be aware of our own dramaturgy and even participate in our own research within the professional company or in any community context. For example, if we were to choose a relatively non-literal approach to part of a work on a certain theme, how would we facilitate the full integration of this segment into a work? The theme plays a role here, but the group's understanding of the dramaturgy of the work will lead to the solution. We must therefore ensure that those things we are attempting to communicate and those aspects we hope to offer as a guide to appreciation are adequately present. Here, again, views from outsiders throughout the devising process are essential as they assist in a particular group's not taking a detour that may, in fact, be a *cul de sac*. There are occasions when we want a section of a piece portrayed by one or more performers to be perfectly clear in terms of intention. However, outside viewers have occasionally been unable to grasp that intention. In such cases this has led to discussions on how to ensure clarity where this was not the case. Lack of clarity may have to do with assumptions performers make of viewers' experience or the fact that what has developed within the group through repeated rehearsal is not perceived during a first viewing.

This is the operational side of things. What is much more interesting concerning dramaturgy is its ability to relate to the politics of our daily lives. The politics of everyday life can have just as much bite as (or

may even include) international or global political issues. They represent ‘bugs’ in the system we all share, particularly when working in defined communities. In these cases, one of the things to hold on to are those areas of our daily life that can be placed in question and treated in terms of the generation of material.

Take, for example, one of the recurring elements in our work, “Bon voyage?”, the notion of having to wait while travelling. There is nothing more disturbing, given that most of us have very cluttered, stressed lifestyles, than waiting for a delayed train, standing in a half kilometre line for a charter flight, waiting for awful food in overcrowded public cafés and waiting in hot and cold tasteless waiting rooms when all you want to do is travel from point A to point B. Everyone has experienced at least part of this, many quite often. How can we, then, visualise the frustration of waiting? That was the challenge for part of this piece on travel. Our result was to exaggerate and to make surreal some aspects of this waiting through sound and movement. It all appeared quite funny, but in fact represented weak points in our society. Most people didn’t laugh at the humorous moments of the piece as the identification with the problem was more prominent than the immediacy of how we portrayed it.

Why we did it this way fits into many aspects already raised in this chapter. The something to hold on to in all those scenes was the fact that when travelling, we have to wait too often and that puts us into uncomfortable, sometimes awkward, sometimes rewarding situations. This narrative did not prevent our experimenting with the sounds of waiting rooms and finding contortions around waiting room chairs that easily could be categorised as a music composition and choreography. We were able to work completely within our parameters whilst dealing with commerce’s mockery of offering the stressed consumer stress-less travel. Furthermore, all of this takes place using the company’s collection of ‘tools’, employing each individual’s strengths and emphasising aspects of their personalities.¹⁶

Applications of technology

We use technology where it serves our purpose, not the other way around. We endeavour, although we do not always succeed, in integrating technology in our work in such a way that people are not

attempting to decode how we do things and miss our art work. We call this ‘perceiving the recipe, not the work’. We are therefore sound and movement hunters, not only musicians and dancers. Technology may be useful for the sound and/or movement we are looking for, particularly interactive technology where movement influences sound. Allowing technology to create some of our sounds or visual material in real time during performance can occasionally provide us with that small degree of freedom to react to slightly changed circumstances. In such cases the technology’s improvisation is defined to be as tight or as fixed as our own.

So far our technology base has ranged from low-tech to advanced systems. No one has complained about our use of low-tech equipment or recycling old icons such as the electric knife. It was absolutely right for the purpose. Particularly in our community work, it would be counterproductive to arrive with all sorts of exciting, expensive equipment that the people we are working with could not use in the foreseeable future. This offers a temporary buzz and a long-term effect of frustration. Behind the scenes, more sophisticated equipment has been employed for sound design and mixing, but for live performance it never exceeded a client’s level of equipment.

Site specific pieces

One of our favourite activities is to make works, or versions of our thematic projects, at and for a specific site. This, as every other aspect of our work, is nothing new. What makes site specific work so gratifying is that it is a catalyst to create an ‘instant community’ in the sense that all present normally know at least something about the site itself. We have made many site specific single arts or intermedia works throughout the years and always enjoy making such works due to an interest in the discovery and the use of specific spaces. This type of work has become even more enjoyable in the context of the company’s particular cross-arts devising approach.

To illustrate our concept we will look briefly at our 1996 work, “Fish Design”, made for the Hooked Festival run by Dancehouse East, part of a larger international Sea Shanty Festival (although not under the auspices of the company). In this case, the Victoria Pier in Hull was our venue, the pier that was used for the ferry that formerly crossed

the River Humber. It is now replaced by the Humber Bridge. Andrew Lloyd Webber would need to spend a fortune for such a fabulous set.

Focusing on the notions of travel as in the later piece, “Bon voyage?”, the impatience of waiting which we also later recycled, the physicality of the site and the fact that the fishing industry in Hull is in decline, we made a dance-based work which included texts read through a megaphone, a site specific instrument, that discussed the pier’s history, Hull’s history and fictional tourist shops selling anything and everything one could imagine in a fish design.

Each performer offered ideas and material to the work and contributed to finding ways of creating a structure that worked for all. Although in this case the sound element was perhaps less important than the movement (the types of text created were within the realms of text-sound poetry and performance art), its structuring vastly influenced and were influenced by the movement material. The main thing was that everyone had a great time making and performing the work.

“Fish Design” was performed twice. The first performance was in fact our run-through with hundreds of people on the pier for the festival’s tall ships procession and a couple of promenading singing groups. They were totally taken by the performance and reacted with enthusiasm and spontaneity throughout. The second performance was the festival performance that ended up having the dance take place on a ‘stage’. It obviously unfortunately attracted a smaller, more serious public that demonstrated greater restraint at laughing at things that were clearly funny. It is a shame that such performances are taken so seriously.

It has often been said that too much work goes into such an ephemeral event. We are not so bothered by this. Ideally performances can be repeated; and how many times do most performers get to repeat their works in the contemporary arts anyway? Our society is still very much involved in what the French critic Maurice Fleuret called “The Kleenex Era” (use once and throw away) as far as these contemporary arts are concerned. However, documentation of sound and image offer the work a permanence. More importantly, the excitement of such events is the strength of their ephemerality leaving a trace sometimes greater than that of work performed in traditional venues. Beware,

these venues can also be treated as specific sites as will be made clear in the next chapter.

Our work in the community

Context

Idée Fixe's view is that there is no difference in approach between what the company itself creates and what takes place with non-company members. What differs in any two contexts is based on what those involved have to offer and how that influences the devising process.

Our main objective is to create and contribute to participative arts contexts employing our devising approach and applying our own key elements. The objects chosen from daily life obviously differ enormously with different groups. For example, a selection by a youth group may include icons of youth culture who would perhaps partially overlap (or not) with that of a group of adults from various cultural backgrounds, which might again overlap with that of a group of people with particular disabilities. As we work with groups as diverse as those mentioned here, we apply flexibility to discover ways of facilitating choice and employment of appropriate material for those with whom we work. This not only concerns flexibility, but also introduces the concept of the opportunity for all involved in a given project to learn from each other. During any project we will all be learning, both company members and the members of the community with whom we are working.

Many of our residencies, courses and training sessions are host-driven. They are based on a local request and not necessarily chosen from a set menu of what we offer. We look for long-term partnerships where we can build up expertise locally during our stay so that work can be carried on once our project period has ended. Again local desires and needs are often the 'driver' of what takes place with our partners.

Given the fact that community work is an integral part of the company's portfolio, what is the first step towards facilitation? We create circumstances whilst taking our project colleagues, their abilities, shared values and experience into account and facilitating them wherever relevant.

Creating circumstances In some experimental art of the 1950s and 1960s, this notion implied finding new ways to notate protocols for art-making to interpreters. For example, in music, John Cage, Morton Feldman and others added alternatives to the traditional five-line staff score including prose and graphic scores as innovative, more open representations for a composition. They indeed created circumstances; however, interpretations of these alternative scores most often sounded like other contemporary art works, at least in the early years. Performances were self-referential.

The key difference between the above example and our practice is that the alternative score was created to create circumstances for anyone, at least theoretically. In contrast, our approach is dialogic in nature. We must learn how best to create circumstances for and with each group with which we work. Created circumstances can thus be applied constructively given the shared experience base of the community group involved. This has to do with the notion of the common ground of any working group, including ‘learned’ ones. If, by some chance we were confronted with a group that seemed to have been randomly constituted, we would have to find some common ground before embarking on a project, as our entire approach assumes this. One consequence of this approach is that we are then better able to look towards an ideal public for the work, one which shares the same common ground.

Once this is established, we enter our devising approach leading, animating and participating with the group in the creation of an evolving work which offers all involved a chance to contribute their creativity and, where relevant (which is most of the time), performance abilities. Our role is to facilitate the finding and developing of these outlets that everyone possesses whilst coordinating the flow of the process. The more all participants feel a part of the creative and all the decision processes, the greater the ownership of whatever they are making.¹⁷ *Idée Fixe* works are thus made and signed by all involved.

Questions like: Which leads – structure or material?, How flexible can any part of the work be for any individual?, What is the balance between sound and movement and which of these two leads at any given moment?, How much ‘going beyond’ (in the sense that we are

interested in the experimental) is appropriate at any given point given the abilities of the working group? are all discovered in their own time as the company is there to guide, rather than conduct the process.

Greater participation and new audiences Our work involving greater participation and new audiences is influenced by British community arts amateurs who provide workshops, courses as well as performances and also work in partnership with a variety of organisations. Audiences are encouraged through the networks of the community groups themselves. These amateurs are, we believe, the most important facilitators in increasing arts awareness nationally.¹⁸

Idée Fixe attempts to facilitate through its own nature of collaboration, developing cross-arts expertise whilst increasing understanding along with relevant skills. Let's investigate this by looking at one of the types of groups the company works with most often, youth.¹⁹ The rationale behind this is quite simple. In general taste is developed early on in life. The earlier the diversity of arts is introduced to young people, the more able they will be to decide which of the arts they might enjoy and participate in as they grow older. Ideally this takes place with the very young; however, we are not of the belief that all is lost if children of four to six have not had the opportunity to be introduced to the wealth of arts in this dynamic manner. According to the Arts Council of England, "youth" refers to people up to the age of thirty. Clearly facilitating the development of a new taste at the higher edge of that scale is more difficult than with twelve year olds. However, experience demonstrates that through the use of our thematic approach combined with the use of objects from daily life, the challenge is not all that daunting.

Furthermore, young people are often not bothered by the threshold problem barring access to their participation. In contrast, they allow their imagination more freedom than many older people. Their maturity acts like a hand-brake as far as imagination and spontaneity are concerned. In fact, as youths have not yet specialised in a single art form, they feel quite at home in a cross-arts environment.

If young people can be attracted to try out our type of art-making, they may entertain the traditional 'child and the bathtub' experience. Some may not want to get into the bath when told they are to do so; once in, they don't want to get out. Ideally, a taste of this type of creativity

leads to the desire to make art in this way (or any other for that matter) more often. Once making art is acceptable to young people, along with the skills development introduced above, two positive results should evolve: a) this message is passed on to peers, families and friends who might just like to enter the tub as well, and b) depending on how successful this experience and future ones are, the notion of art truly becoming part of their lives, beyond consumption of artistic artefacts, becomes more probable. Again, if you accept the premise that art-making might be better integrated into our daily lives, if schools are having difficulty in achieving what is being described here, someone else should be helping them.

Workshops and residencies

We can subdivide our work in the community, at least in terms of workshops and residencies, into two categories: a) work created on the project theme independently from company work. In this case, if results are shared, they are normally shared alongside the company's performance; b) work created which is integrated into a company/community performance. These will be elaborated on below.

Workshops with shared outcomes We attempt to share our wares with those made in community contexts whenever possible, be it within or alongside a company performance. One could query whether the difference of level may have a negative effect on participants and viewers. We believe that in either case the difference in level of experience does not have to turn people off with less experience. Instead, the company's work is offered to demonstrate how a same theme can be developed, possibly independently, once experience has been gained. We also attempt to share our passion and enjoyment of our work in performance and in other informal contexts.

Depending on the host organisation, the decision concerning sharing an outcome may not be in our hands in the first instance. Some organisations prefer the goal-oriented process to the one that says, 'Let's see how far we get with the time we have and then decide whether *we* want to share the work'. Others allow us (the company members involved in a workshop), but more importantly, all involved

in the workshop, to take the decision at an appropriate time. Again, flexibility serves as our best model leading to the least stress.

The types of group we work with vary widely and the way we work with these groups, in consequence, varies equally widely. Two examples will provide some reference concerning how we adjust to local needs. As part of the “(Y)our House” project, two extended workshops took place leading to shared outcomes, one with sixth form students (16 and 17 year olds) with a music specialisation and one with an integrated dance company. (Here “integrated” means the able and disabled people.) In the first case, the students all knew each other within the learning context of their college. In the second case, the group involved, Nomads Integrated Dance Company, had existed for a number of years. In both cases, the groups were well acquainted with each other. However, the sixth formers, a large group of about twenty performers, had never undertaken a similar project. Although the group was studying music, we decided to involve some movement as well. In the case of the Nomads, we were seen to act as guest choreographers/facilitators and musicians. The performers were to work solely in a dance capacity.

Clearly setting up a workshop for students who are specialising in the area of music is totally different from that of the dance company which had already established its own ways of working. Still, the devising approach served as a great way of becoming acquainted with the participants, finding out about their tastes and abilities, and developing the work in general. It was interesting to note that the amount of desire demonstrated by the music students to be told what to do was greater than the dancers who apparently had been asked to suggest material for their own work in the past. This illustrates how imposed art-making seems to be the foundation of most of our education, even in the late 1990s. As this does not represent the majority of art-making world-wide, there seems to be a fallacy in the education system, not the students. The adolescents had some difficulty in loosening up and allowing their imaginations to flow (with exceptions, of course). Working within the relaxed environment of knowing each other served as a catalyst enabling them to develop their own material as time proceeded. We wish we had brought cameras to take pictures of their families’ faces when they performed the work which involved home-made costumes with utensils from the

kitchen attached to their clothing, a massive choreography for musicians and chairs (a percussion piece?) and material demonstrating individuals' particular talents. The result was performed as part of the prestigious Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival on the same day as the company performance. The visible delight of the musicians during the performance demonstrated how they owned what they were doing. It would be wonderful to return to the individuals in a number of years and see how this experience influenced their further development; it would be equally interesting to see how their college continues such activities, as a member of staff followed the entire workshop.

Nomads performed during the same performance as the company at South Hill Park Arts Centre and were thrilled with the wonderful response from the public that combined a general ('learned') public with their own audience, developed throughout the years. They later took the piece into other venues. To demonstrate that the learning curve goes both ways, we were pleased to see how Nomads operated, as it is highly exceptional to find a successful ongoing integrated company of any type. We learned a great deal during this workshop and gained knowledge that can be applied in a number of contexts gained through this exciting experience. We all hope that we can work together again in the future.

Workshops without shared (if any) outcomes There are many reasons to hold workshops that do not look towards achieving shareable outcomes. Some workshops may be therapeutic in nature and would be potentially harmed if put into the context of public performance. The work, in itself, is exactly the same as above, as it is influenced by the requests of the hosts integrated with the approach we offer. The key difference is that the social and creative experience of the moment is more important than any given product. Depending on the group we are working with, emphasis may be given to communication skills or to (for example) sound creation through the manipulation of sound-making instruments. Particularly in certain disability contexts, creating potentially stressful sharing opportunities outside of the working group itself can have an extremely negative influence. If there is an outcome, which can be shared as such within the working group, this is cause for a sense of achievement without any pressure

attached. This need not only be remedial, but also an incentive for further exploration in our area.

Obviously partnerships with groups of people with particular needs are important. We do not claim to have specialist expertise other than that involving facilitation in creativity.

We have devoted fewer words to *Idée Fixe* workshops without shared outcomes. Still, our work in this area is possibly the most rewarding and of at least equal importance to any other work in which we are involved.

A word concerning long-term residencies Not only are long-term residencies enjoyable as a number of activities can take place at the same venue simultaneously and throughout a number of years, they are also crucial in terms of our view that our work cannot succeed unless we work within contexts offering continuity. Pop songs do not become hits because everyone hears them once and decides to buy them immediately. One tends to become interested through repeated listening, although there are a number of other reasons to decide to purchase a recording. Similarly, offering a good performance perhaps combined with the successful outcome of a workshop is fine; however, returning year after year with a similar type of event raises local expectations as more people become aware of the ingredients related to performances, workshops, short courses and training opportunities that can take place within those residencies.

Britain has very few companies in permanent residence in the contemporary arts. Other countries, for example France and Germany, have been more successful in this sense. Yet it would be useful to have a home or more than one home to offer this type of continuity. Having a home does not mean that participating in outside residencies and performances must end. It does offer a regional community something to look forward to and be proud of, which is missing in general in today's contemporary arts. More importantly, it would allow for a much more substantial outreach to take place from one base where a company's equipment and administration can be housed as well as some of the workshops, if the host has the appropriate spaces. Again, this builds up a greater interest group, greater participation and the call for more of this type of activity to take place. The revolution never takes place everywhere at once; it always has to

start somewhere. However most companies end by being nomads, offering their good message temporarily as they stop off and share their goods wherever they can. This is the infrastructure of art-making in the 1990s as it has been for decades. It is truly a shame that art has been so dissociated from society in general and local society in particular to such a large extent throughout the century. Long-term residencies offer the ideal antidote to this sorry state of affairs.

Short courses

There are two reasons for offering short courses: they are very useful as tasters for people who might like to get involved in any facet of our type of work from participation to facilitation; they also aid in the professional development of people already involved in one aspect of our work, who would like to broaden their horizons.

Our current list of short courses ranges from: “Dance and Music Collaborations” to “Music (or dance) Technology” to “Devising: an Exciting Form of Dance (or music) Composition” to “Music (or dance) and Disability”. There are courses aimed at particular groups. There are also short courses with more enticing titles including “Sounds Great: Have fun whilst composing with sounds” and “Making an Exciting Performing Arts Work on a Shoestring Budget”. However, as alluded to above, we gladly put together short courses within our expertise based on the desires or needs of a host organisation.

In some cases, these courses are organised within an educational structure, for example, continuing vocational education or in-service training for teachers. In others, anyone representing a variety of backgrounds can come. Sometimes, as part of a residency, we offer short courses to different types of groups.

For example, as part of our two-year residency at South Hill Park Arts Centre,²⁰ we offered an evening session for carers of people with substantial learning disabilities associated with the visionary music and disability organisation housed at the arts centre called The Ark. Many told us that if they had known the types of work we were offering beforehand, they possibly would not have come. However they were pleased they had not been informed as the session was particularly rewarding; none of them had ever had the occasion to

experience our approach moulded around their own working situations. We improvised with movement and sound material, involving simple materials, illustrating the ability to obtain a great deal of sound and movement from a very common object from daily life. Although the newspapers that they used would not be a material to use with their clients, the parallel with other material was made clear through the exercises and contextual information we offered.

In this way, we can work within a wide range of contexts supporting professional development within our area or simply stimulating interest. The length and depth of short courses are of course decisions that are made in collaboration with our hosts. External circumstances sometimes affect how much can be offered within a short course. This can vary from one two-hour session to week-long intensive courses.

Training

This word may refer to professional development for company members.²¹ The subject here, however, is specifically our training programme. We tend to concentrate most training on amateurs involved in professional development as well as young or not highly experienced artists. One area of particular interest to the company concerns the empowerment of the local community. Part of the schemes with which we are involved looks into training people to work in their own communities, based on local concerns and needs. This allows us to feel confident that a residency is not followed by a void. It has to be said that the world of community arts has suffered due to inadequate infrastructure, similar to so many other aspects of our society. The will is there, but the way is not clear. The result is that community artists are often exposed to the one-off problem so often referred to above. ‘Tasters’ are ideal where there is an infrastructure for continuation. Without that infrastructure, all the one-off can lead to is a good experience perhaps followed by frustration. In this respect, special training sessions, or incorporating training within a residency, a short course or workshop is a great way forward, as it theoretically allows for follow-through within contexts known to the company.

Offering opportunities to young artists is another form of training. This can take place at the level of involvement in workshops

accompanied by specialist training up to full participation in one of the company's projects. Choosing one or more young artists from the region where a residency takes place is a second manner, which allows for follow-through to take place after the company's residency has ended. Obviously we would love to be in residence at one or more venues for longer periods than the typical two to three year project period, but again the current national infrastructure does not make such partnerships easy.

Opening up our devising work to the public: open rehearsals, workshops and the like, accompanied by specialist meetings evaluating what has been seen, forms an example of small-scale training which also represents part of our programme.

Furthermore, we are often involved in consultancies that allow us to share ideas with organisations evolving similar interests. Although this is not training as such, it is worthy of mention here for people who have not considered communicating their ideas and knowledge and sharing their interests in this way.

As idealists, we need as many people trained in our area as we can, allowing for a greater number of people to be introduced to and become involved with our type of work. Training forms a major part of the broad programmes facilitating our ideal.

So this is what we do

This is how *Idée Fixe* approaches things and how the company's work reflects its vision. It is hopefully clear that we are in no way attempting to sell the uniqueness of our approach.

Even our site specific pieces are inspired by traditional practices where certain celebrations took place at various sites, such as a field, a seaside or a village centre. The material is contemporary, the ritual now feels out of place, but the basic principle is centuries old. By working in such ways in such venues alongside the community groups with whom we collaborate we intend to illustrate how art can and should be a part of life; this is our ideal.

So we are indeed dealing with new forms of old practices in the hope that the old will help shape and, more importantly, illustrate the vitality of the new. We have demonstrated how the 'something new

factor' can range from the minute to the substantial depending on circumstances as well as how the unknown is being presented within or alongside the known.

Our intention is to mould pieces for specific locales with (and based on) the experience and talents of all involved. In the future we will see our house style (and probably our devising approach as well) evolve, avoiding stagnation whilst retaining a solid foundation.

How do we intend to grow and develop in the future? *Idée Fixe* could grow significantly with a team of like-minded community animateurs working throughout the year, using the current theme as a tool. Alternatively, we may simply continue working on specific projects and partnerships.

What is more important to us is that others start their own work along similar lines, which by definition will lead to their developing their own dynamic house styles based on who is working together and what types of circumstances are being created. The more who become involved, the sooner that we can demonstrate what this approach to art can represent in a number of communities. In consequence, we are looking forward to its greater integration into an ever-changing world.