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For 2020, the 44th year of London's annual festival of contemporary visual theatre, 10 overseas companies join 8 British groups, including 4 LIMF co-commissioned productions: *This Time*, a tender take on relationships and ageing from aerial theatre company **Ockham's Razor**; *Romancing the Apocalypse* from multi award winning dance duo **Thick & Tight**; *Dead Good*, a funny and poignant story of dying from full mask theatre company **Vamos Theatre**; and the story of one of showbiz's long overlooked partnerships, *The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel* performed by **Told by an Idiot** at new festival venue, the iconic Wilton's Music Hall.

Belgium's dance-theatre company **Peeping Tom** and the movie/theatre/dance ensemble **Kiss & Cry Collective** return with new shows, there's exquisite puppetry from New York, France, and by London's String Theatre on its unique Puppet Theatre Barge, and the Barbican Cinema will screen a triple-bill of remarkable silent movie classics with live jazz accompaniment. Workshops for 2020 include an exclusive course taught by faculty members from the École Jacques Lecoq, Paris, and a residential course celebrating 30 years of the David Glass Ensemble.

Ockham's Razor's thrilling new show *This Time* opens LIMF 2020 at Shoreditch Town Hall, the first in a terrific, festival line-up of unusual circus-theatre. With a cast ranging in age from 13 to 60, and performed with unique aerial equipment specially created for the piece, *This Time* explores time and transformation and the ups and downs of family relationships, and shows how we are strong in different ways at different times of life. Suspended high above or swinging perilously close to ground, **Ockham's Razor's** artists amaze with new takes on trapeze and cradle routines in this visual theatre drama first seen at the 2019 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

At Wilton's Music Hall **Told by an Idiot** present the London premiere of LIMF co-commission *The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel*. In 1910 the unknown Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel set sail for New York as part of Fred Karno's famous music hall troupe. On this journey, Charlie and Stan shared a cabin and then spent two years together touring North America, with Stan as Charlie's understudy. Stan returned home, later finding success with his soulmate Oliver Hardy. Charlie developed his Little Tramp character and within five years became one of the most famous figures in the world. Stan talked about Charlie all his life. In Charlie Chaplin's highly detailed autobiography Stan Laurel is never mentioned. Playing fast and loose with the facts, and with an original piano score composed by Mercury Award Nominee Zoe Rahman played live each night, *The Strange Tale of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel* is

an hilarious and deeply moving homage to two men who changed the world of comedy forever. **Please note: The events in this play are fictional. This play is certainly not endorsed by the estates of Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel, or anyone else for that matter!**

At the Barbican Theatre **Kiss & Cry Collective** from Belgium return with the London premiere of *Cold Blood* bringing together intricate hand choreography, tiny props, live cinema and a witty script to riff on the last thoughts of seven people soon to be deceased. Set to music by Ravel, David Bowie and Janis Joplin among others, husband and wife creative team, film-maker Jaco Van Dormael (*Toto The Hero*, *The Eighth Day*) and dancer Michèle Anne De Mey – who co-directed *Kiss & Cry* at the Barbican in 2017 – are joined by writer Thomas Gunzig to create this magical piece of theatre.

Also at the Barbican Theatre, Olivier Award-winning Belgian group **Peeping Tom** follows productions of *Mother (Moeder)* and *Father (Vader)* with the final part of its family-themed trilogy, *Child (Kind)*. Developed from impressions of childhood shared by the whole company including co-directors Gabriela Carrizo and Franck Chartier, the last instalment comes out of their fascination with the human psyche and the construction of identity. In *Child* every action is driven by how children see the world. Between dance and physical theatre, **Peeping Tom's** shows abound with unsettling imagery and phenomenal choreography that sometimes defies logic. The *Child* of the title is played by mezzo-soprano Eurudike De Beul.

The Pit hosts the UK premiere of an extraordinary and heart-breaking puppet play; *Chimpanzee*, written and created by Brooklyn based actor and puppeteer **Nick Lehane**. In this production based on true events, bleak reality bleeds to vivid memory as an aging, isolated chimpanzee pieces together fragments of memories from her childhood in a human family. *Chimpanzee* is based on the stranger than fiction stories of chimpanzees raised as children in human homes in a series of cross-fostering experiments in the US. When these animals matured, or when funding dried up, some went on to live as test subjects in a biomedical facility. Three highly skilled puppeteers invest feeling, expression and delicately nuanced movement to the beautifully crafted character of this poignant non-verbal production. Supported by the Jim Henson Foundation and Cheryl Henson.

Australian artist **Fleur Elise Noble** has spent seven years creating the universe of *ROOMAN*, a rich tapestry of puppetry, projection, moving animation, dance, music and sound effects. *ROOMAN* is the story of romance, fantasy and the pursuit of happiness. A girl meets a kangaroo man in her dreams and falls in love. Only when she's asleep, when this figure beckons her into wild nights on the town and romance under the stars, can this young woman find relief from the surroundings of her monotonous, monochrome existence. Her obsession leads her into the darkest depths of the human psyche. Soon she must make a choice: to give in, or wake up and get living.

The LIMF programme at Jacksons Lane offers a mix of mask, puppet theatre and circus. **Compagnie HMG** from France present the UK premiere of *3D*, which refers to a specially created new piece of circus equipment, the '3D'. Constructed like a giant archer's longbow, the curved wooden board and metallic 'string' rocks, rolls and pivots in three dimensions at the will of its daring rider, Jonathan Guichard, producing an ever-changing musical soundscape which plays with space, form and physical virtuosity. Acrobat/wire-walker Jonathan Guichard has worked with LIMF favourites MPTA and CIE111. For *3D* he is joined by Etienne Manceau, founder of the group Sacekripa, who brought the sell-out *Vu* to the festival in 2018.

La Pendue, a company formed in 2003 by puppeteer Estelle Charlier and musician Romuald Collinet, presents the UK premiere of *Tria Fata*. Life and death play out in this cabaret as an old

woman faces the end of her life. Her time has come, the moment to be decided by the 'Tria Fata', the Three Fates who spin the thread of life, who measure it out and who decide when it will be cut. But the old woman can postpone the inevitable by offering the Fates an account of her life. The snapshot she presents, a swirling kaleidoscope of imagery, illusions and fire, proves almost hallucinatory. Charlier and Collinet are graduates of France's national puppetry school at Charleville-Mézières.

Because a raven's chicks leave the nest even before they can fly, the expression 'raven mother' has for centuries been synonymous with uncaring or bad motherhood. In *Raven, Still Hungry* from Germany present the London premiere of their 2019 Edinburgh 'Fringe First' winner. Three female circus artist/mothers emerge from their own nests to reveal some uncomfortable thoughts about child-rearing asking 'Is there a raven inside of me?' Fresh, truthful, poignant, laced with humorous insight and told through personal experience and world-class aerial and acrobatic skills, *Raven* shines a spotlight on dilemmas faced by every working mother. Performed by Lena Ries, Romy Seibt and Anke van Engelshoven and written in collaboration with director and performance artist, Bryony Kimmings.

Opposable Thumb is a new company formed by Dik Downey after 20 years as co-director of Pickled Image. For LIMF they present the London premiere of *Coulrophobia* (fear of clowns), 80 minutes of brilliant slapstick, mime, puppetry, existential angst, big shoes and disappointing nudity. Our heroes are Dik & Adam, two clowns in search of freedom from a bewildering cardboard world. With enough subversive humour to please the most hardened cynic, *Coulrophobia* glides seamlessly from sinister to touching, from ridiculous to outright hilarious. *Coulrophobia* was made in 2014 at Nordland Visual Theatre, Norway, and has featured at many of Europe's leading clown and puppetry festivals. Director John Nicholson co-founded Peepolykus and has written and adapted many stage comedy hits including *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Massive Tragedy of Madame Bovary*.

Dead Good is a LIMF co-commission from the UK's full-mask maestros **Vamos Theatre**. Bob and Bernard have only two things in common: they're both dying... and they're not going down without a fight. So, with a bottle of Bollinger and the keys to Bernard's Bentley in hand, they decide to hit the road, and take on one final, death-defying adventure. But when time starts to run out, can Bob and Bernard accept the inevitable? Can their growing friendship make the difference? And by seeing the end in sight, can they truly value living? Created in collaboration with palliative care patients and specialists, it's a witty, wordless theatre show about the ultimate shared experience.

From **the Puppet Theatre Barge**, its unique home on a converted Thames lighter, **String Theatre** presents Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*. After a harsh beginning of child labour in an unforgiving adult world, a little chimney sweep's suffering ends when he is transformed into a water baby. As he plunges into an underwater realm of fish, caterpillars and caddisflies we are drawn into his adventures in the colourful depths, swept along with his dreams and new freedom. With specially commissioned music, beautiful, long-string marionettes and ghostly shadows, this gorgeous new production inspired by Charles Kingsley's famous novel explores themes of loss, friendship and transformation.

Following their success at LIMF19, **Thick & Tight's** Daniel Hay-Gordon and Eleanor Perry return to Sadler's Wells' Lilian Baylis Studio with the London premiere of *Romancing the Apocalypse*, a programme of brand-new works combining dance, mime, queer culture and outsider art.

Apparitions of infamous and remarkable characters from contemporary history take shape throughout the evening; Derek Jarman and Marcel Proust, Winston Churchill, Marlene Dietrich, Andy Warhol and a two-headed Barbara Cartland. **Thick & Tight** are joined by artists from Corali Dance Company (leaders in dance by artists with a learning disability) and three soloists; Harry Alexander (Michael Clark Company), Vidya Patel (BBC Young Dancer South Asian Finalist 2015) and Edd Arnold (BalletBoyz, Russell Maliphant). Design by Tim Spooner.

At The Peacock, **Galactik Ensemble** from France present the UK premiere of *Optraken*. Unstable ground disappears underfoot, walls wobble, ceilings collapse, dangers come from every side. Forget elegant tumbling and spangly tights – this wonderfully inventive and original piece of physical theatre is a battle in which every movement matters for survival as five fantastic acrobats pit themselves against a hostile environment. It's spectacular, impressive, unpredictable and enormous fun. All graduates of France's famous national circus school at Rosny sous Bois, **Galactik Ensemble's** members have also worked with star, French, contemporary circus creators Aurélien Bory, Mathurin Bolze and Yoann Bourgeois.

Edinburgh Comedy Award nominee, New Zealander **Trygve Wakenshaw** is back at Soho Theatre with the UK premiere of *Only Bones v1.4*. Rubber-limbed, oozing with whimsy, dripping with charm, master of the risqué and magnificently mad, **Trygve Wakenshaw** takes on the challenge to create micro-physical comedy productions set by fellow New Zealander, Thomas Monckton, creator of the original *Only Bones (v1.0)*, described by The Times at LIMF17 as '*spare but not slight...painfully hilarious*'. In this new minimalist extravaganza he raises a finger, as well as most other limbs, to the rule books and the people that write them. Trained at the Gaulier School in Paris, Wakenshaw's previous, award-winning solo shows, and duo with Barnie Duncan, have been popular sell-outs at LIMF and around the world.

At Southbank Centre's Purcell Room **The PappyShow** (UK) present *BOYS*, a celebration of male tenderness, silliness, vulnerability and community performed by a cast of young men. Unscripted, and each story uniquely told in every performance, *BOYS* is a joyful, electric, occasionally raw but always tender piece that hopes to unravel preconceptions and uncover the endless possibilities that can make up a man. In their stories, brought alive by impressive physical performances, *BOYS* offers a window to share their experiences, their hopes, families and globe-spanning heritage. Formed in 2013 by director, Kane Husbands, The PappyShow is a physical theatre ensemble producing some of the most exciting new work in London. *BOYS* was the winner of the Origins Outstanding Work Award at London's VAULT Festival.

Also at Southbank Centre, **Joli Vyann's** new show *Anima*, its third production for LIMF, portrays the delicate connection between two people and takes us on a journey from the cradle to the grave, through an intimate look at the simple yet constant act of breathing. We all breathe from the moment we are born to the moment we die, it's a universal shared experience. How does breath affect our emotions? Our physicality? Our very being? The two performers and a live Taiko drummer push themselves to the limits of their physicality - using dance, circus, voice and wind instruments - their breath literally becomes the soundscape for the performance - in a unique blend of dance and acrobatics. Founded in 2012, **Joli Vyann** is a South West England dance-circus company directed by Olivia Quayle and Jan Patzke.

Described as 'one of the most innovative jugglers worldwide', **Wes Peden** was last seen in London as guest star in Gandini Juggling's *Spring* at Sadler's Wells for LIMF 2019. He returns, this time to Southbank Centre's Purcell Room, with his new solo show, *Zebra*, whose aesthetic has been described as that of a futuristic chandelier with a sense of humour. Creating never before seen

sequences of evolving shapes and constellations with incredible new throws and catches, he transforms his props into mesmerising waves of movement and gives astonishing new life to vinyl records. Wes has performed around the world from Olympic stadiums in Tokyo to Broadway theatres in NYC and glacier museums in Iceland - he was also a part of *Water on Mars*, a sell-out sensation at the 2016 Edinburgh Fringe. His energetic, playful and complex style has won awards from the International Juggling Association and Cirque de Demain.

Visit mimelondon.com to explore the festival's history stretching back over four decades, for interviews, reviews and latest news.

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Booking opening dates are staggered throughout mid-October:

Mon 7 Oct: Jacksons Lane, Soho Theatre, Southbank Centre, Puppet Theatre Barge

Tue 8 Oct: Barbican Cinema

Thu 10 Oct: Shoreditch Town Hall, Wilton's Music Hall

Fri 11 Oct: Barbican Theatre & The Pit

Mon 14 Oct: Sadler's Wells' Lilian Baylis Studio & The Peacock

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