

HIDDEN
SPIRE 2015



BEFORE
THE TEMPEST

PROGRAMME

£1

17 - 19 SEPTEMBER 2015
THE OLD FIRE STATION, OXFORD

HIDDEN SPIRE 2015



Welcome to our third Hidden Spire production.

Above the Old Fire Station is a tower which is hard to spot from the outside. We call it the Hidden Spire of Oxford and beneath it is a building packed with extraordinary creative people facing huge challenges and/or making great art for the public to enjoy. Through this project our two charities come together to show what can be achieved by professional artists working with homeless people to make exciting theatre.



Thanks to the support of our funders we have been able to work on this production for over a year, bringing together a creative team of 56 homeless people and 29 professional artists as an ensemble to devise, write, design, build, rehearse and perform the show.

This year, we also have an exhibition in our gallery by artist Nicola Armitage introducing some of the process behind the making of the show, so do call in before or after the performance.

All of this is an extraordinary achievement made possible by the commitment of Crisis clients (some of whom have been involved throughout) and the creative team led by Lizzy McBain (director), Renata Allen (writer) with Rachel Barbaresi and Emma Reynard (visual artists). It is also a great tribute to the collaboration between our two charities and the vision, shared by our staff, volunteers and supporters, which sees the potential in everyone and the importance of art and culture in all of our lives.

We are really proud of what we've achieved since opening in November 2011 and equally excited about what more we can do with the support of you, our audience. So thank you for joining us for the show. We hope you enjoy it and please tell us what you think by completing one of the forms available in the foyer or going to www.hiddenpire.co.uk to follow our blog.

Jeremy Spafford, Director, Arts at the Old Fire Station & Kate Cocker, Director, Crisis Skylight Oxford

This production is dedicated to the memory of Paul Milner, who gave a great deal to the writing and devising of this show and who died tragically before he could be part of the performance.

BEFORE THE TEMPEST

THE STORY AND CHARACTERS

A rich aristocrat, Prospero, and his very young daughter, Miranda, have been washed up on a remote island where they have lived now for twelve long years. Theirs is a very bare existence and they would be all alone if it were not for a strange creature they found on the island when they first arrived called Caliban. As the play begins, however, Caliban is in disgrace and is locked up as a punishment for being violent. He howls for his freedom.

Also confined and imprisoned on the island is a spirit called Ariel. It was Caliban's mother, Sycorax, who trapped Ariel in a tree just before she died. Ariel can only be released by the magic staff Sycorax used to cast her spell. Ever since Prospero arrived on the island and discovered Ariel, he has been trying to find this staff but has had no luck. Prospero has many books about the Magic Arts which he studies to find a way to undo the spell, but he has not succeeded in finding a way to release Ariel who is desperate to be free.

At the beginning of our play all the main characters are stuck and frustrated. Even Miranda is feeling like a prisoner. She has grown up on the island and become a young woman. She now longs to explore the world and meet other people. Every day she sees shipstantalizingly close on the horizon and she wishes one would come and rescue them.

Miranda's only friends are a flock of birds. Although she can't understand them, they understand every word she says and try to comfort and amuse her. Prospero also tries to entertain Miranda by casting the birds as human characters in stories that he tells. The birds aren't always so keen to be transformed in this manner but the way Prospero can bring his stories to life is one of his cleverest magic tricks.

Prospero's magic, however, would be truly spectacular if he could only release Ariel and harness the spirit's power along with his own. Only then would there be a way to free everyone and find a way back home.

CREATING BEFORE THE TEMPEST



We started with three words:
Transforming the Ordinary.

Our journey began with a residency at OFS in August 2014, writing and making art and exploring what these words could mean to us. We told stories about places; places that meant a lot to us, our own space in the wilderness, tales of the sea, adventures in arctic landscapes, and dreams of our perfect land. We gathered all sorts of materials, made dens, wrapped beautiful glass bottles with very fine thread, created projection slides with filaments of fabric

and dripped ink, and model landscapes filled with surreal objects.

It wasn't long before we settled on the idea of creating a prequel for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Shakespeare's play opens with a monumental storm conjured by Prospero in order to seek revenge and instigate change on the island, but what led to this pivotal moment? So much of this had been left to be explored, and it is this that has provided us with a rich opportunity for storytelling. So much of our work had been about creating a habitat for ourselves and exploring our hopes and dreams for the future through exploring things - both physical objects and abstract ideas - and this is what Miranda and Prospero are doing in our tale. They are both searching for their place in the world, but from very different perspectives; as a father looks back on the disappointments in his life trying to resolve them in his own mind somehow and protecting his daughter from what he had experienced. She yearns to go out, explore and seek it all for herself.

As with most devising processes, we asked questions. How do you protect a child from all the bad things out there in the world? Should you even try to? How can you prepare them for what they will encounter as they head off to explore for themselves? What would a perfect world look like and is this something we should strive for? Is it better to be realistic or idealistic? As you would expect, we have no conclusive answers and just as with our colourful variety of birds, everyone has their own take on these questions.

There are so many threads to *Hidden Spire*; from the writing and art workshops in the summer residency, to devising workshops with actors and design sessions with visual arts in the spring, to building the set and chorus rehearsals in the summer, and our final rehearsal period this September. We have worked with 56 Crisis clients and 29 professional artists. Some have dipped their toe in and others have seen the project along its whole course. Whether we have worked with someone for a few hours or several months, everyone's contribution has been instrumental in bringing together what you see today; from the individual characters of our chorus of birds, to the artwork you see hanging on Prospero's tree. It is the many different voices woven



together that make the fabric of this piece and it is this enriching process which continues to challenge and reward all of us who work on the project.

I hope you enjoy it!

Lizzy McBain, Creative Director

WRITING BEFORE THE TEMPEST

The idea for a prequel to *The Tempest* emerged after a week of creative writing with eight Crisis clients last summer. From all the stories, poems and drama scripts that were written in that week I looked for threads that could be drawn into a narrative. The writers created an array of characters - some isolated in stark landscapes, others visited by vivid dream sequences, many haunted by their pasts, others joyfully present in comic fairy tales. The environment that came up over and over again was the sea. A theme that intrigued us all was magic. One of the writers was especially keen to include elements of *Commedia dell'arte*. How could we draw all this together?

Then it struck me. The story of *The Tempest* seemed to have everything we wanted but Shakespeare had already written it. Never mind. I hatched a cunning plan and went away and wrote a synopsis of what might have happened on the island during the 24 hours prior to the first scene of the play.

Ten weeks of further writing and devising workshops followed and these sessions allowed us to hone in on the characters, find a way to express the comic troupe of *commedia* birds that we decided also inhabited the island and play with stories that Prospero and Miranda might tell to each other to pass the time. Working alongside the director and professional actors, new Crisis clients contributed to these workshops. With some of the original writers I then tried to weave all the ideas we had into a first draft of our play.

The final draft has been influenced by further devising and designing sessions with yet more new clients along with lots of new ideas from the professional production team. I have lost count now of how many people have been involved in developing this script and I'm still waiting to find out who our final cast will be. Once that is known, there will, no doubt, be more changes and adjustments but I'm not complaining. This *Hidden Spire* process has always been fascinating and highly enjoyable. I just hope the show is too.

Renata Allen, playwright





CREDITS



Miranda - Abi Hood

Prospero - Steve Dineen

Magnificent Frigate Bird - Martin Blackwell

Parrot - Les Walker

Pigeon / Caliban - Shaun O'Neill

Magpie - Rob Jones

Bird of Paradise / Ariel / Caliban - Tanner Efinger

Musicians – Matt Winkworth, Mikey Kirkpatrick

Writer – Renata Allen

Director – Lizzy McBain

Design – Rachel Barbaresi and Emma Reynard

Lighting Design – Josh Tomalin

Costume Design – Suzie Burlton

Composer – Matt Winkworth

Movement Director – Emma Webb with Miranda Laurence

Co-writers, devisers, designers and set-builders

Ada M

Adrian B

Angella Dare

Annette H
Christopher Bussell
Codi Tuppence
Daniel S
David C
Dennis D
Elisabeth C
Ellie Forrest
Elliot V
Emma Mayoux-Andrews
Gareth K
Georgina Williams
Gwinyayi N
Heather K
Jaime Woodham
James Brown
James T
Jazim Kadir
Joanna B
Joanna H
Joe R
Justin G
Karen W
Katherine O
Les Walker
Liam K
Marianne B
Mark Jackson
Martin Blackwell
Matthew M
Newlin D
Nigel S
Patrick S
Paul Milner
Peter Mayall
Rebecca V
Richard B
Robert Jones





Rosemary Cisneros
Sarah M
Shaun O'Neill
Shayan O
Simon Geoghan
Stephen Brooke
Stephen C
Suzie Krishan
Tashinga M
Teresa W
Tessa Jack
William D
Wolfie H
And four others

Light and Sound – Josh Tomalin

Lighting operator - Ophélie Lebrasseur

Wardrobe – Suzie Burlton with Codi Tuppence

Set construction - Diane Prayle and Richard Rose

Company/Stage Manager - Jude Thorp with Mark Jackson

Stills Photography - Rachel Barbaresi, Josh Tomalin (www.tomalinlightworks.com),
James Sutton (www.jamessuttonphotography.co.uk)

Film - Liam Martin, Sam King

Gallery Exhibition Artist – Nicola Armitage

Exhibition second camera – Danny Macgregor-Gill

Exhibition sound – Yannick Josse

Exhibition curation and installation – Sarah Mossop, Jack Eden, Paul Withers



Front of House
Amy Beddow
Cheryl Briggs
Adrian Chant
Megan Dawkins
Ellie Forrest
Alice Fox
Grace Khoo
Adam Leslie
Tricia McKenna
Rowan Padmore
Veronica Shannon



For Arts at the Old Fire Station

Director – Jeremy Spafford

Deputy Director – Becca Vallins

Marketing – Alex Coke and Harriet Peacock

Administration and Finance – Andrea Walters and Becs Morris



For Crisis

Director – Kate Cocker

Arts Coordinator – Helen Jukes

Art Tutor – Lucy Proctor

Progression Support – Chris Skerrett and the Crisis Progression Team

The Crisis Reception Team

DESIGNING BEFORE THE TEMPEST



The role of the visual arts and set design is unusual in Hidden Spire 2015. Rather than following the writing and devising of the play (which is usually how it works), it was at the heart of developing the ideas and themes.

In our workshops last year, we began with the theme 'transforming the ordinary'. This was the experimental bit: we focused on the process of creation, rather than working towards specific outcomes. Crisis clients joined us to explore visual possibilities using ordinary household and found materials.



The resulting outcomes were experimental and varied, from sinister 'dalek'-like characters to intricate abstract constructions. Renata Allen, our script writer, selected starting points from these works for her writing group. She chose to respond to the barren landscapes that were emerging through our work with projections, made using hand-made slides with fragments of found materials, dust, fibres, oil and inks.

Fast forward eight months and we have a script to work with and the job of designing a stage set for Before the Tempest. We also have a bank of rich visual language to refer back to and harness within the set, as well as many fantastic ideas exchanged within

our group of clients and the wider creative team. Sifting through these possibilities to find solutions that work both practically and visually has been part of our challenge as set designers on this project.

We knew from the first that we were not going to do beaked bird costumes, so the challenge was to convey the personality of each character while still keeping those crucial feathery details. In



workshops, we explored the inner lives of various birds, from seagull to woodpeckers, and experimented with different ways of forming the distinctive silhouette of wings and tails in clothes. Facts about their behaviour and habitat fed into the expression of each distinct personality, so that the line between bird and human is blurred – more so now that they are brought to life by the cast.

Our design juxtaposes aged and weathered materials with re-purposed items and boating paraphernalia: things which have washed up on the island. At the centre is the tree in which Ariel is trapped, and which also serves as the library that Prospero creates for himself. Each part of the set has evolved through the thoughtful and committed team of Crisis clients who have worked with us. We are grateful for the enthusiasm they brought to this project, and to the many others who have helped us realise the set.

Rachel Barbaresi, Suzie Burlton & Emma Reynard, artists

HIDDEN SPIRE: THE EXHIBITION

In the Gallery until 26 September. Open 11 am - 6pm. Free.



The Hidden Spire exhibition, curated by artist Nicola Armitage, documents the processes that have taken place in the creation of *Before the Tempest*.

The exhibition is designed to take the audience behind the scenes exploring the elements and ideas that have developed into constructing the final theatre production - including work created by the design team.

'From documenting the workshops, I have been inspired by the range of creative processes involved; from the initial sketches and discussions through to movement, expression,

light and sound workshops, costume and set design. I have witnessed the ideas generated throughout this time change, develop and gather momentum towards final production.'

– Nicola Armitage, Hidden Spire exhibition artist.

The film draws together all the artistic processes involved and links them with the themes of the play; the island, the storm, sorcery, the colourful flock of birds, hopeful Miranda, protective Prospero - and not forgetting the temptation of Caliban.





We are an arts centre offering great art to the public in our theatre, gallery, shop and studios and support for artists to help them make and showcase their work. We also help to build the confidence and skills of homeless people. We offer a public space within which all sections of the community, including those facing multiple disadvantage, can meet, learn, create and change. www.oldfirestation.org.uk



We are the national charity for single homeless people. We are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life changing services and campaigning for change. Crisis Skylight Oxford is an education, training and employment centre. We provide practical and creative workshops and formal learning in a supportive and inspiring environment, helping homeless people to restore their well-being, build their basic skills, gain qualifications and raise their aspirations. We also offer a motivational employment service, a housing service, a café training scheme and personalised support to address each person's needs. Our aim is to help people leave homelessness behind for good, whatever their situation. www.crisis.org.uk

HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

By bringing homeless people, artists and the public into the same spaces, we can have a deeper impact together than we could separately. Although we bring different contributions, together we aim to help end homelessness in Oxford, support excellence and participation in arts and culture and be a real place of change. We do this simply by sharing space but we also create projects, such as Hidden Spire, to have a greater impact. You may want to look at two other examples in our foyer:

CHANGE – the mirrored installation climbing three floors created by Barbara Besi and Reynard with people living in hostels

FLOW – the light sculpture near the entrance created by Retallick and Branson based on work with people sleeping rough

In addition, Crisis clients volunteer with Arts at the Old Fire Station on a regular basis as ushers and we provide a training scheme offering an opportunity to learn transferable skills through the arts such as customer service, stewarding, retail and administration.



Art in Crisis will open a window on artists at work in Crisis Skylight studios across the UK. A series of public events from 4 – 21 September will reveal how art offers a way to move forward with positivity and purpose, allowing us to find our place in the world.



Saturdays 3, 10 & 17 October, 12.30pm

Distractingly Female

A comedy of manners set in our contemporary world, written by *Before the Tempest* playwright Renata Allen. A couple want to raise their twin children as complete equals, but as they grow up, differences grow too... **Free: Pay what you can.**



Thursday 5 November, 7.30pm

He Had Hairy Hands

The year is 1974, the sleepy town is Hemlock-Under-Lye and when werewolf attacks threaten teatime, there's only one person you can call. An award-winning, critically acclaimed comedy from Kill The Beast. **£12, £10.**



20 November - 23 December, Tuesday - Sunday, 11 am - 6pm

Christmas Making Space

A Christmassy craft exhibition in the gallery, featuring some of our favourite designer/makers. Don't miss the workshops: create festive decorations, stocking fillers and more.

Exhibition: free. Workshops: from £5.



Thursday 17 & Friday 18 December, 7.30pm

(+ 2.30pm show on Sat)

The Flint Street Nativity

When Missiz Horrock's class of seven-year-olds put on their nativity play, the world won't know what hit it! A subversive festive comedy for grown-ups from the writer of *Calendar Girls*, performed by BMH Productions. **£12, £10.**

Tickets from www.ticketsoxford.com or 01865 305305

Wednesday 14 to Saturday 24 October

The Tempest

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Phelim McDermott



A magical and mischievous evening of Shakespearean wit and wonder that is sure to delight and astonish.

OP are teaming up with **Northern Stage** and **Improbable** to create this spine-tinglingly creative take on **Shakespeare's** tale of love, revenge and forgiveness.

Directed by theatre maverick **Phelim McDermott**, it's a real treat for the ears, eyes and mind.

Improbable – one of the brilliant faces of British theatre.

Observer

Tickets £ 11.50 to £27

OP
OXFORD
PLAYHOUSE

01865 305305
www.oxfordplayhouse.com

**HIDDEN
SPIRE 2015**

The arts are for everyone. Everyone has potential.



We would like to say a big thank you to all the team who have brought this production together – especially our volunteers.

Special thanks are due to our main funders:



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



We are also grateful to the following for help in kind or with donations:

Coventry University

Ruskin College

Highfield plc

The Smile team at Infineum UK

The University of Oxford Community Fund



SUPPORT US

The Old Fire Station opened in November 2011 and houses two very different charities working together in a unique and extraordinary way. If you would like to support the work we do together then please give generously. All donations made this evening will be divided equally between the two charities. Please use the envelope provided to make a donation and don't forget to Gift Aid it!

Many thanks.

And if you'd like to know more about what we do, please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.



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