



The Wild  
the Beautiful  
& the Damned

*Staging the Rover at Hampton Court Palace*



# Chair

## *Letter from the*

This is my last letter as IMTAL Chair. I became a board member in 2006, and Chair in 2009, but it is now time for me to move on, hand over the reigns to the strong board now in place, and focus on developing my own business, Harvest Heritage Arts and Media ([www.harvestfilms.co.uk](http://www.harvestfilms.co.uk)). Since 2006, the use of theatre, drama and performance in museums and heritage sites has become much more commonplace. There is certainly greater academic attention being paid to it. However, as I reflect on the successes of the last few years, I feel increasingly concerned for the future.

Whereas in 2006, Live Interpretation seemed to be achieving the status of a professional practice, requiring professional expertise to achieve publicly acceptable levels of quality, it seems that it is now being relegated to an optional activity that many organisations are reluctant to pay for. The growth of re-enactment groups, Big Society volunteerism, and funders' emphasis on 'community participation' activities, are all having an impact on Live Interpretation in particular. It seems that 'getting into costume' is increasingly regarded as an activity for engaging volunteers, youths, the retired, or the unemployed. The quality of the experience being provided for the visiting public seems to be of secondary importance. IMTAL's professional interpreters will have to work doubly hard to prove their distinctiveness, effectiveness, expertise and value in this landscape.

In the same period, Museum Theatre has really benefitted from the growth of site specific and participatory theatre, the artistic approaches of

companies such as Wildworks, and the increasing public appetite for outdoor performances, be it Shakespeare in a castle or vintage parties in muddy festival fields. However, the livelihoods of those who do this work for a living is under threat again. ACE, which took over the functions of the MLA, is increasingly funding the administrators of 'scratch' and 'developing artists' schemes; HLF monies are being directed towards the training and management of volunteers. It is generally agreed that funding for culture is going to decline over the next two years, exacerbated by swingeing cuts to Local Authority and Education spending. Overall, IMTAL members may find themselves having to be much more entrepreneurial if they wish to survive the forthcoming economic winter.

But I do not wish my last letter to be filled with doom and gloom. IMTAL members are fantastically creative and resilient, and many exciting new projects are underway.

Following the success of his Mythogeography project, Phil Smith is launching a 'counter-tourism' initiative. He wants to help people transform the way that they experience heritage sites by disseminating tactics for visits that anyone can perform. He has published a handy guide to this pleasure-led way of visiting historic sites. The details of this – Counter-Tourism: The Pocketbook – are here:

<http://www.triarchypress.com/pages/Counter-Tourism-Pocketbook.htm>. Information about the broader counter-tourism initiative is here: [www.countertourism.net](http://www.countertourism.net)

In Phil's absence, and with his

pocketbook in my hand, I will be subjecting some conference tourism to some countering in Sweden. I hope that you will join me for this and rest of the fabulous programme of events, presentations, workshops and discussions, and for my last AGM.

Within this edition of Insights there is also much to celebrate. We are welcoming a new editor, Lindsey Holmes, who I hope you will keep supplied with news and articles. Emily Capstick will remain on the board, but I am sure you will join me in thanking Emily for the fantastic job she has done producing so many interesting editions on IMTAL Insights over the last few years. Thank you Emily!

Inside this edition we have our own equivalent of an Olympic gold medal winner in 'All The Kings Fools', a brave and ambitious project that has been followed and supported by IMTAL since it was a mere twinkle in Peet Cooper's eye. We also welcome news from former board member, Verity Walker, current board members Chris Gidlow and Stephen Howe, and from our new friends leading the pan-European Labyrinth Project. If you want inspiration, read the article about Viking photography, and as a parting gift, you can cut-out-and-keep Emily Capstick's Top Ten Tips.

Thank you to all IMTAL members for your support over the years. I will remain a member and look forward to meeting you at IMTAL events in the future. Team IMTAL is all the stronger for your participation, and I am sure the organisation will not only survive but thrive, whatever challenges present themselves in the years to come.

Anna Farthing

# 2012 conference and AGM

24 – 26th September 2012



By the time you read this the IMTAL-Europe 2012 conference and AGM will nearly be upon us and it looks set to be a unique and exciting event! Open ARCH (a European Union-funded project on open-air archaeological museums) and IMTAL-Europe have joined forces to offer this unique conference event in southern Sweden. If you have not yet booked your place, there is still time! Please see IMTAL-Europe's conference page for full details on how to book.

The 2012 IMTAL-Europe conference will take place in Fotevikens, at a reconstructed Viking village alongside a museum and educational centre. It will coincide with a larger project meeting on the management of open-air archaeological museums, involving EXARC and the EU-funded project Open ARCH. Please see the websites listed or IMTAL-Europe's conference page for more details about these organisations.

The over-arching conference theme will be...

The challenges of interpreting and engaging public interest in open air museums and archaeological/historic sites

The linked themes across the two main days will be...

How can performance contribute to and extend the work of such museums and sites? (IMTAL focus)

This includes 1st and 3rd person interpretation, theatre presentations & events and drama workshops

If you have questions please contact one of the following: Björn M Buttler Jakobsen [bmj@foteviken.se](mailto:bmj@foteviken.se) +46 707620612 or Tony Jackson [tony.jackson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:tony.jackson@manchester.ac.uk).

Useful websites:

IMTAL-Europe: [www.imtal-europe.org](http://www.imtal-europe.org)

Open Arch: [www.openarch.eu](http://www.openarch.eu)

EXARC: [www.exarc.eu](http://www.exarc.eu)

Fotevikens Viking Museum:

[www.fotevikensmuseum.se/](http://www.fotevikensmuseum.se/)

[engelsk/index\\_e.htm](http://engelsk/index_e.htm) Swedish

Heritage/ Svenskt Kulturarv: [www.svensktkulturarv.se](http://www.svensktkulturarv.se)

NOOAM; Scandinavian Network for Archeological Open Air Museums: [www.nooam.se](http://www.nooam.se).

# Hello

It's hard to know the best way to introduce myself to such a group as ITMAL. Should I have small sign detailing my provenience, membership number and when I was first collected by the group? Or should I stage a small prologue to my performance as editor of the newsletter? Perhaps a bit of both would be most appropriate!



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I think a suitable way to start would be to thank the hard work of my predecessor Emily Capstick, who will continue to have a strong presence in future additions and our chair Anna Farthing who has worked so hard on our behalf.

Although I could be adequately described by the term "A Jack of all Trades" my first love is costume and I am never happier than when I am making outfits for performances, education sessions for display in museums and heritage sites. It follows that I was excited by the wonderful photos of the costumes in Rover (page 8)

I have also developed performances myself and I have often found myself having to test my acting skills, so it seems only fair to share with you a picture of me "in role" (although I am always much happier behind the stage!)

My world continues to cross over between teaching, museums and performance and being a member of IMTAL has helped me define what I do within the wider context of what is happening in the field of museum theatre, which is way I am so looking forward to working on the newsletter

I promise to try to control my costume-centric view of the world, but in editing this, my first issue I have been again reminded of costumes role in what we do, be it learning to raid villages without tripping over ones shoes (page 6) or keeping ones moustache under control and attached to ones face (page 12)

I, like Emily, will continue to be open to ideas on how we can improve your newsletter and keep it interesting and relevant, so please do get in touch, I am always happy to discuss ideas for future articles and will be at the conference if anyone wants to say hi!



# Into the Labyrinth

*Alison Ramsay reviews the "labyrinthine" theatre method at a workshop held at The Manchester Museum, and discovers new uses for taxidermy.*

After fifteen years of teaching Drama and Theatre Studies at a large secondary school in Bolton, I am about to embark on my second year of studying part-time for an MA in Applied Theatre at Manchester University. In April of this year I was lucky enough to take part in an introductory course for an intriguing participatory theatre method called Labyrinthine. The course took place at The Manchester Museum and involved a broad range of practitioners, each with an interest in theatre and performance as a method of communication and education in cultural organisations.

The Labyrinthine Project developed through partnerships between educational and cultural institutions based throughout Europe. Our guides through the labyrinth were Yavor Kostov, a freelance actor and director based in Bulgaria. Bistra Choleva-Laleva, a professional actress and president of partner agency BIVEDA Association, Actor and trainer Adrian Ciglenean and former journalist Lucien Branea, both based in Romania and

Dr. Daniela Dumbraveanu, Associate Professor of Human and Economic Geography at the University of Bucharest.

The project aims to promote the potential for museums and other cultural/heritage sites to create a participatory visitor experience based on the principles of Labyrinth Theatre. Labyrinth Theatre is an interactive, site specific performance practice in which audience members embark on a journey through the 'labyrinth' that effectively enables an alternative way of experiencing a given space. Sensory Labyrinth, developed by Theatr Cynefin of Wales from the work of Columbian theatre director Enrique Vargas and to which Labyrinthine owes a more specific debt, develops the method by playing more particularly with ideas of threshold and disorientation, personal meetings and sensory stimulation. In Sensory Labyrinth the individual is challenged to step outside their comfort zone by accepting to be blindfolded on their journey. They meet and are guided by unseen characters and become subject to a variety of non-

visual sensory experiences. Based on the premise that human beings have a natural affinity to create stories, this induced creativity encourages the participant to make sense of the experience by developing it into a narrative of their own. In so doing learning and knowledge become not about facts and externally imposed ideas and values, but a matter of personal engagement and subjective choice.

Arriving at the museum reception on the first morning of the course I knew little of this, and it would be true to say that I was somewhat apprehensive as to what I might be letting myself in for. I was promptly directed to the education room that was to be our base for day one. Determined not to look like one of the many stuffed animals lined up on the shelves around the room, more of which later, I enthusiastically set about engaging my fellow attendees in conversation as we busied ourselves with coffee and tea. It soon became clear that they also had little idea about what Labyrinthine actually entailed.

What followed were three days





1. Working with the space, stuffed animals come in useful
2. Ideas are shared and developed with the group
3. Trust and the sensory experience are key while blindfolded in the labyrinth

characterised by much creative endeavour, collaboration, healthy debate and, needless to say, laughter and fun. The numerous games and exercises, many of which will be familiar to those working in the performing arts, helped dissolve inhibitions, develop trust and engage the senses. This made a significant contribution to the creation of our own labyrinth, performed on the final afternoon and traversed by unwitting museum employees and other invited guests.

To begin to understand the theory behind Labyrinthine, Yavor informed us that we must first experience a labyrinth for ourselves. For this purpose the team created a mini labyrinth in the room adjacent to the one we had been using that first morning. Travelling through this labyrinth brought into focus a number of issues central to the process. Paramount was the question of trust. As I was being blindfolded at the start of my journey, I found myself having to consciously decide to trust my guides to keep me safe. Having made this decision I was more able to relax and found that I had a very strong sense of being taken care of, which for me was the most profound aspect of the whole experience. Coaxed forward, sometimes physically and sometimes through the use of simple sounds or soft music, I encountered a number of unseen characters. One murmured words in a foreign tongue, placed her head briefly in my open palms and presented me with a gift of grain. Another embraced me before placing what felt like a light, flowing garment around my shoulders. While I understood that these acts had been experienced by the individual before me, and would be enacted for the individual that followed, each felt very personal to me. I began to

understand more fully the central idea of Labyrinthine; namely to create an interaction with a space, object or situation a matter of personal perception and intuition.

The following day we briefly discussed our reactions to travelling through the labyrinth and it was evident that most group members identified with the highly personal nature of the experience. But there were some reservations with regards to the practicalities of the method within the context of an actual museum or heritage site. Yavor acknowledged this concern and pointed to the challenge of creating a fully realised Labyrinthine experience when time and space are at a premium.

Undeterred we set about creating a labyrinth of our own. It was to be situated in the rooms already mentioned, as well as the short corridor connecting them, the museum cafeteria and the street outside the museum itself. The cafeteria would serve as the all-important holding room and site of 'threshold introduction', whereby the participant would be removed from the realities of everyday life and prepared for the adventure to come.

As might be expected the combination of many creative wills and a fast approaching deadline meant working relationships at times got a little heated. We were helped by Adrian's suggestion that we start with a simple narrative to help structure the experience. The story would involve the participant being sent on a quest for a lost amulet; different sections of the labyrinth would represent different stages of the quest. Another key decision was to split into sub groups with responsibility for creating a specific sensory experience in each of the rooms and areas.

In an atmosphere of what might only

be described as creative chaos, our labyrinth took shape. I was in the group responsible for the final section, which just happened to be the room inhabited by the stuffed animals mentioned earlier. These formed the centrepiece of our experience. The participant, blindfolded for some twenty minutes and senses heightened, would arrive at their final destination to be visually arrested by a menagerie of woodland creatures quizzically staring back at them. It was my role to take charge of the participant as they arrived into our section. I would carefully lead them into the room, encourage them to sit on a chair, before slowly removing the blindfold. In carrying out this role I was struck by how much responsibility I felt towards each individual. In the same way that I had felt looked after on my journey through the labyrinth, I wanted to ensure others felt the same.

All in all about ten people passed through our labyrinth in a performance which lasted nearly two hours. Most participants responded as expected, patiently allowing themselves to be led and open to the experiences they encountered. One participant did ask not to be blindfolded. Another took on the role of 'awkward customer', constantly questioning what they were asked to do. As Yavor pointed out later, this is not unusual and it illustrated how practitioners undertaking such participatory work must be prepared for all eventualities. As an actor in the labyrinth it was notable how subtle changes crept into my performance. These were sometimes in response to an individual participant but sometimes seemed to be a natural occurrence born out of numerous

repeating a set pattern of behaviour over a short space of time. What was also significant was how tiring the whole thing was. Patience

and endurance would appear to be prerequisite for the Labyrinthine actor.

The course concluded with feedback from our victims. Although there were differing views, most stated they had felt safe and cared for on their journey. Many said how interesting they had found it, a view I wholeheartedly share!

*'To understand the theory behind the labyrinthine, you must experience a labyrinth for yourselves'*



# Flaming Monks, Wild Viking's, Baskets of Herring & the Coastguards Tale.

*Alex McNeill shares the story behind his captivating pictures taken for display in the redeveloped lookout tower on Holy Island, Lincisfarne*

"We want you to recreate the Viking Raid of 793 on Lindisfarne Island Alex.

Lots of menace, sweat, fire, terror, but don't show any actual violence! Did we mention we really like fire?"

Strangely, John said he could think of only one photographer he knew that would be comfortable taking this on.

"No problem" By now, I was used to these sorts of briefs from John, the Creative Director at CDA. We have over the past few years developed a style

of interpretation for display boards and exhibition using re-enactment.

"Just one more thing Alex, we want to involve the local residents and include them in the creative process and in the production of the images."

The Lookout Project was commissioned by the Lindisfarne Community Development Trust working with Natural England with the aim of transforming an old lookout tower on Holy Island. The lookout tower was built over 70 years ago. A

second building is being purpose built as a viewing area and education point, this will overlook Rocket Field, which attracts large numbers of wildfowl to the flooded fields.

There were to be several photographers and illustrators involved in the interpretation. The islanders recording their own stories and experiences of Lindisfarne past and present which including their relationship with the landscape and wildlife of the island. I had four main

panels to fill, for the gallery in the lookout tower, entitled the Monks and St Cuthbert; the Viking Raid; herring fishing in the 1800's; and the use of the lookout tower by the coastguard in the 1950's.

It all happened very quickly. Within two weeks, we were on the island with a timetable and local volunteers for the shoots.

The first shoot was the Vikings. We got everyone into costume in the school and then headed out to the location in the dunes. Everyone took to the costumes very well, which I had managed to amass from my re-enactment colleagues. I called in for help another professional Viking, Simon, known as Cathbad; who came along to put these raw Vikings through some basic training and to give them some motivation. Out in the dunes we talked about their characters and some of the original sources we had. These included items such as the Lindisfarne Stone and the Lewis chessmen, plus text and images from manuscripts.

The first exercise was a beach charge and shield wall. With everyone in kit and fired up, they made an over-enthusiastic charge at the camera. But being unused to the Viking shoes and equipment, I managed to get some very amusing images of what can only be described as a Viking pile up, as the warriors fell over their own feet. Great enthusiasm, but for safety's sake we decided to continue in slow motion. Remarkably, this resulted in more concentrated facial expressions. In particular, one of the islanders, Neil, managed to produce a stunning representation of the berserker from the Lewis chess set!

With the beach landing a success, the Vikings spent some time creeping through the dunes, with me taking images as we went into the setting sun. In a safe area of the dunes, with appropriate precautions, we lit torches. It was time for the raid – they were ready for menace and terror!

The final picture is a montage of the best characterizations from our evening in the dunes. Only two images from this will be used in the exhibition. The feedback received in the pub afterwards suggested everyone had thoroughly enjoyed their brief Viking experience.

In contrast, the next image was the death of St Cuthbert. This was shot the following evening. The islanders who were keen to be involved in



the creation of this image, were members of the various churches on the island. Due to the volunteers' other commitments, the characters, represented within this image, had to be shot separately and then montaged into the main photograph. This main photograph was taken on the hill looking out to St Cuthbert's Isle. It was from this hill that news of St Cuthbert's death was relayed by flaming torches from the Farne Islands via Lindisfarne to the mainland. The image recreates an illustration in a manuscript by Bede of this event.

These islanders took great care in their interpretation and in contrast to the Vikings, it was a very studied and contemplative image. The shot worked well, with St Cuthbert's Isle lit by the setting sun.

The only hiccup on this shoot, was as we arrived in costume at the beach at St Cuthbert's Isle and started to light the torches. We were met by a figure, running up the beach and waving his arms shouting 'Stop, stop!' It turned out to be the BBC filming for Neil Oliver's new series on the Vikings! He thought that we were about to parade into his time-lapse filming of the tide rising around St Cuthbert's Isle – a shot he had been working on for the past three hours. Fortunately, we were

staying on the hill and would not spoil his shot. We then exchanged our shooting schedules for the rest of the week, to avoid any future problems.

The tides were always a problem on the island and getting people onto the island at the right time for each of the shots was tricky. For example the last shot 'Waiting for the herring boat' involved children from a school on the mainland, which meant negotiating a suitable time to shoot to coincide with low tide. As it was my last shoot on the island, I had to get it completed before the causeway closed again for high tide. The models arrived from school and were then fantastically styled by one of the islanders. They got to the beach and with perfect light and we got just the right expressions. But by the end of this shoot, I realized I was already knee deep in water and I had to make a nervous dash for the causeway and make it off the island just in time. It was a fantastic end to a remarkable week on Lindisfarne.

The exhibition is planned to be fully installed by the end of September 2012.

Alex McNeill  
www.alexmcneill.co.uk  
www.visitingvikings.co.uk

1. The lookout tower on Holy Island.

Lindisfarne

2. Vikings preparing to attack

3. A raid in full swing, with real fire!



Words: Chris Gidlow

# The Wild the Beautiful & the Damned

*Staging the Rover at Hampton Court Palace*



Chris – the room full of dildos, can we leave them out during the day?’

Just one of the typical questions from Artluxe, the company behind the production of Aphra Behn's Restoration Comedy, *The Rover*. The production, like the exhibition 'The Wild, the Beautiful and the Damned' it was supporting, was billed as containing explicit and adult themes, suitable for 16 year olds and above.

The exhibition features the two series of paintings known as the Windsor Beauties and the Hampton Court Beauties, as well as portraits of Charles II and his mistresses.

These were the circles in which Aphra Behn moved. The first woman to earn her living as a playwright, her works explored the new found freedoms and attendant risks the Restoration world unlocked for the ambitious women. *The Rover* fitted perfectly with the subject of the exhibition.

Director Amy Hodge cut the script to an hour and a half, eliminating a couple of characters and refocusing on the areas most covered by the exhibition. Especially the sexual ones.

The designer, takis, became familiar with the site, designing costumes and installations to complement the palace and its art. There were five months of preproduction, but we had only a tiny window of opportunity between other events in which to fit the whole production. Most of the cast and crew only started work at the beginning of June for delivery in July, with just seven performance days. This tight schedule brought to the fore the different worlds of theatre and site.

The whole infrastructure of the palace worked effortlessly, for visitors coming during the day. After hours, everything was like pulling teeth. I felt that every interaction with the palace was designed to reveal with amusement how little I knew about the operation of the site.

On the other hand, the actors had no conception of the constraints of working at the palace. Rooms filled with priceless art, alarmed against fire, solvents and movement and monitored by our conservation and collections care team on terms agreed with the Royal Collection were fair game. 'Are you saying I can't just reach through the barrier and plug a tiny lamp in here?'

Artluxe hired actors for the



principle parts. They also employed specialist dancers for various scenes. Our resident live interpreters, Past Pleasures Ltd, provided improvisational characters, who helped with scene setting and atmosphere. Oxford Brookes University contributed the ensemble cast, who kept the promenade flowing, moving the audience away from fights and towards set pieces. A decision by Past Pleasures to contribute some of its more experienced interpreters to the mix paid off greatly, by increasing the age range of the cast.

The play grew organically, as we tried technical, logistic and artistic solutions. This precluded the definitive list the palace required until the two dress rehearsals. On site rehearsals became a major issue of friction. I was keen that the cast rehearse during the day, so that visitors could see some scenes as tasters. Unfortunately, the

first scene Artluxe decided to act out was an extended rape scene, full of explicit language, in a space through which people could not pass until the scene had finished. This did not go down well with our visitors. Rehearsals after hours then. But that kicked in the whole infrastructure of out of hours work, making them just as expensive as actual productions.

At every turn expectations from each side came as a surprise to the other. We had different ideas of the meaning of tech and dress rehearsals, for instance. And would people expect to walk up and buy a ticket on the door?

Nerves and tempers frayed. I had to put my work at the other palaces on hold to spend 2 weeks exclusively on the *Rover*. I was very lucky to secure the voluntary work of Ania Crowther,

1. Courtesan Angelica (Nadia Cameron-Blakey) brandishes an 'unbecoming instrument of death' at the *Rover*

2. Moretta (Clare Perkins) prepares Angelica for the big scene

a PhD student lecturing on the Rover, which made the logistics manageable. But at every turn new problems arose. Like when our functions manager took a group of VIPS to see their meeting room and found it strewn with unwrapped condoms, (props for the play) and the afore mentioned giant gold dildos. An easy mistake, as both groups were using blue rooms above Tudor archways on Clock Court. Just not the same one.

Meanwhile, how to get an audience? We advertised through our website, event leaflets and on-site posters but it was clear that these would not impact on the new audiences we needed to attract. An advert in Time Out and listings in the local press raised the profile. I also employed a theatrical publicist, to put the word out and contact potential reviewers. We also worked with Audience Club, which provides free audiences made up of their members, when we needed a critical mass to make the promenade aspects of the production work.

The watershed came with the staff preview. This was primarily an opportunity to run the show 'live' looking at the logistics of moving crowds through the often cramped spaces and positioning them round the major set pieces. I 'warned' everyone that the production was an 'adult' one, with sexual themes, and suddenly everyone was queuing up for tickets. Staff whose interest was piqued by the comings and goings, those who wanted to see something new, couples keen for a night out. An undeniable buzz developed around the production. Suddenly doors were being opened and ways smoothed. This was going to be a success and everyone wanted a part of it.

(The show)

We set the scene at the main gate, handing out programmes and replica Charles II groats. Ania would lean across and whisper to each group that they were 'Beautiful' or 'Damned'. Beautiful people would join together as would the damned, leading to banter and icebreaking. Suddenly intriguingly dressed 'warders' whisked away the beautiful for the opening scenes of the play. Minutes later the damned were also shepherded off, to meet Wilmore, the Rover of the title. The division, necessary as the rooms were too small for the whole audience, also served to build a sense of other things going on, only glimpsed or heard. In fact



both groups saw most of the same action, just in different orders, but were unaware of this.

So we the damned come accross a raucous Carnevale going on somewhere in the palace (to the Beautiful, who have arrived first) and we feel the need to join in. We rush out into Fountain Court, an Italianate piazza surrounded by colonnaded walks. Characters in masks and fantastic costumes assail us. There are fortune tellers, quacks, an obscene Punch and Judy man, a game whose intention seems to be to squeeze a young girl. There is music and dancing, with swathes of ribbons festooning columns maypole fashion. The noise resolves itself into a bawdy song, resounding around the whole piazza, as the action arranges itself in the centre. We overhear couples arranging to meet after the Carnevale is over. We are summoned to a 'Sale of Beauty'. Revellers, hidden behind their masks, offer to show us a secret way to the sale, for money. We discover there is a darker world of vice behind the bawdy face of the piazza. We encounter characters plotting on the staircases, the darkened communications gallery where the alternating gold plinths seem to be giant penises. A woman writhes on the floor of an oratory, mumbling prayers while scrawling indecent images on scraps of paper. A naked sailor dons his costume,

someone is having a bath, can we peek? We overhear a sensuous dinner in the shaded recesses of a dining room, a lesson on the use of dildos. And suddenly we are in a huge hall, where dancers are displayed on lighted plinths, the sailor, a school girl, a living doll and a muscular transvestite. We can buy them, it seems. The main attraction, announced by her overpowering pimp, Moretta, is 'Angelica, the most beautiful woman in the world', back on the market after the death of her former gallant, the Old General. Bidding starts at 1000 crowns. None of us have got that kind of money, so Wilmore the Rover decides to steal Angelica's advertising picture 'to enjoy in the privacy of his own room'. Don Pedro and Don Antonio (the only one who can actually afford to buy Angelica, but is betrothed to Pedro's sister Florinda), come to blows in a most spectacular scene. There is a sword fight, choreographed to take place in a roped off area of the sale. Just as we get comfortable, the fight breaks out of its confines, swords give way to fists and kicks as the fighters career around the audience, slamming into walls and furniture. There are plenty of laughs, but we are uneasily aware that we have bought into a world from which there is no way back.

We are in a labyrinth of rooms, some

*The finale of the Rover at Hampton Court Palace*

familiar, possibly, some new, where assignations are played out, until we are drawn to a great bedroom, hung with weaponry, where Moretta, slips Angelica out of her masque costume into something more comfortable. This scene of choreographed beauty entrances us and we are startled, guilty, when Moretta seems to notice we are watching. In fact it is Wilmore, who has sidled into the room with us. He has come to return the picture, an opportunity to woo (to dupe?) Angelica with talk of love. Angelica orders Moretta to 'withdraw' in a betrayal of their plans and partnership, and invites Wilmore onto the bed. Sex, in this world, is a sinuous, weightless dance, in which the wafting silks of their costumes, buoyant hair and extravagant wigs toss like foam on the waves, the almost unnoticed background music becomes a rhythmic, tantric beat. Where this could, if interpreted literally, have made us look away uneasily, in its stylised choreography it becomes so mesmerising we can't stop looking at. There is even spontaneous applause as Angelica finally collapses back sated. Wilmore leaves with a passing quip. He has other appointments to keep.

The next sequence is called 'the Descent'. Are these the same rooms or different ones? The lights are awry, the music modern and discordant. Are these people we have met earlier? The praying girl is being abused, Don Antonio invites us to a private party, where the schoolgirl, blindfolded, dances for us. There is an orgy of blow-up dolls, although there seem to be some real people writhing under them, the living doll is drugged out and oblivious on the floor of a sumptuous bedroom. The figure of Wilmore seems to be present in every room, sharing the dark pleasures. We are going down into the depths, where Pedro, shorn of mask and wig, is crazily declaiming poetry, writing on the floor like a wounded beast. The delightful possibilities hinted at the carnevale have shown their dark consequences. It is night now and we are in a rubbish strewn ally, lit by two sodium lights. Most of us, walking for an hour or more, are happy to collapse on the bin bags or on the floor. Haggard figures of the revellers stagger zombie like in an eerie dance, men pursuing women, women striving forwards unaware. It suddenly disperses when Florinda realises she is not alone in this dark ally. Accident

(as she thinks) or design (as some of us are aware) have thrown her at the mercy of the unrestrained Rover. He will not take no for an answer and begins to rape her. Her cries bring her lover Belleville to the rescue in a bitter joyless resolution. Angelica then emerges from the shadows and, confronted by evidence of Wilmore's treachery, pulls a weapon on him. Life and death hang in balance. Don Antonio arrives to relieve her of 'this unbecoming instrument of death' but she declines his offer to kill Wilmore as she leaves with the man who has bought her. But wait! There is still the youngest sister, Helena, destined to become a nun but with a burning desire 'not to die a maid'. She is revealed as the young page, stripping off her man's attire. She leads Wilmore in an awkward fumbling version of the balletic bed scene, this time leaving Wilmore on the floor as she stalks off. The silence is pieced by a haunting voice singing Rochester's poem to the Italian innovation, Signor Dildo. Soon all the women of the cast are gathered in the centre, singing this catchy refrain. They hold their final position but before the audience has time to clap we are thrown back to reality. Staff emerge saying the palace is closing, time to move on, run for the train. The side wall opens and we discover we have actually been in a ground floor orangery leading onto a beautiful garden, and it is still daylight. We are delightedly disorientated by the discovery. There is definite buzz as visitors share their experience, all the way to the train and back into London.

The audience response and the reviews were unanimously favourable. Even where fine points of the production (the 'Zombie dance' or cutting an entire character) were queried, everyone thought the Palace had been superbly showcased by the production and its design and that the atmospheric experience was incredible. Attitude Magazine online had reservations on the pace and continuity of the play, but thought it 'certainly enhances a tour of the palace and one feels privileged to wander around after hours. Bravo to the company and historic royal palaces for experimenting with ways to offer a multi-sensory experience and open the building to new and diverse audiences.'

'Erotic, exotic and esoteric – five stars.'

'Wonderful setting, great performances different from anything I have seen before! X rated but

excellent! Five stars'

'Again, again! I want to go again! Five stars.'

'The great treat of this play is not the words spoken or indeed the general and genial bonking that goes on. It is the surroundings that count and every episode is equally exquisite. An event one should rush to experience. It is only on for a week. 5 stars' (Remote Goat).

In audience questionnaires we were told by everyone that the experience 'Exceeded expectations on all levels'.

So, was it worth it? We had 771 audience members attend the performances, with one show selling out its 150 capacity and the others averaging 110, with the numbers picking up on word of mouth. Were they new audiences? Most questionnaires returned came from people who had already visited, and half were aware of the Wild, the Beautiful and the Damned exhibition it was designed to support. Anecdotally it did seem that the audiences were more diverse than our regular visitors.

To put those numbers in perspective, the May Bank Holiday event I dropped

to pay for the play would have had 2000 visitors a day, 6000 over its full run. We had just put on a cheaper event which had seen 17,000 visitors in a single day. These were held during regular visitor hours, with none of the out of hours costs the Rover incurred. And our play tickets were only £3 more than palace entry tickets. Restricted by the capacity of the spaces, it was impossible to make the event pay its way without charging £60/head. Putting on a play of this scale was a full time job, and we had had to reinvent ourselves as a theatre to accommodate it. Our own resources were not sufficient for the necessary production time. In future, I would advise buying an already nearly finished production, from a company with its own infrastructure already in place, rather than trying to construct something like this from scratch.

I'd hate to come to the conclusion that Museums and Theatre are should never mix, but they are sufficiently different worlds that their symbiosis needs very careful managing when embarking on a joint project of this nature.

*Are these the same rooms? Or different ones? Are these the people we met earlier?*

You want me to research, understand and develop a presentation (Accessible to a family audience but initially to be performed to an international symposium of physicists!) on the particle physics work of Ernest Rutherford? Ha ha! Ask me one on sport!

Like a scene from Billy Liar I imagined my retort whilst meekly saying "OK, how long have I got?"

Nuclear physics as was understood in the early part of the 20th century.

I didn't even study physics at school - or science. Well not much anyway.

So what exactly is the great man famous for? Well to the uninitiated, his work was responsible for what we now understand as the structure of the atom. He discovered Alpha and Beta rays, supporting the theory of radio active decay. He, together with Fredric Soddy, discovered the half-life of radio-active isotopes. Huh? His experiments were so cutting edge, he had to create his own apparatus to carry them out.

Einstein once described Rutherford as "A second Newton". Under his guidance, John Cockcroft and Ernest Walton achieved atomic decay or 'split the atom' as it was somewhat inaccurately termed, using entirely artificial means, proving for the first time Einstein's formula of ( $E=mc^2$ ). And that's just for starters. The legacy of his work affected cancer treatments, Nuclear weapons and Nuclear energy. His achievements lead to Britain's involvement With CERN, the building of the Large Hadron Collider and it's examination of the very origins of the universe. So, like I said, ha ha!

But like most things in life, their perceived difficulty and inaccessibility is just that. Perceived. It's a bit like those magic eye pictures. You know the ones? If you stare long enough at a carefully constructed complex, random image, they will eventually reveal a totally unexpected 3D picture.

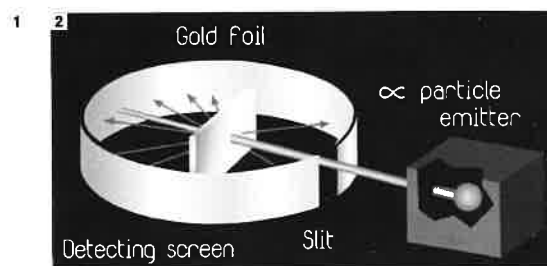
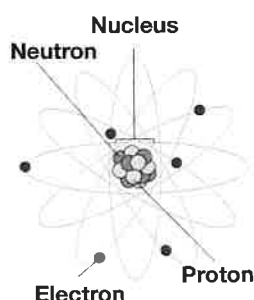
So it was basic Nuclear physics. Oh yes, I now realised that what I had to understand was fairly basic stuff. And that's what I had to convey to a wide range of people in an entertaining and interesting way. Avoiding a lecture or indeed an episode of playschool.

Looking the part wasn't too much of a problem.

1. Elements of an atom  
2. Alpha particles being fired at a sheet of Gold foil  
3. Stephen Howe as Ernest Rutherford  
4. A hula-hoop full of Physicists  
MOSL/Chris Foster Photography

# Ernest Rutherford, particle physics, a symposium of physicists and a runaway moustache

*is all just another day's work at the Museum of science and industry for Stephen Howe*



The fabulous Ludmilla at the Royal Exchange costume hire dept provided a superb three piece suit of the period. Together with wing collar shirt and tie it only left the moustache. I don't know how many of you have ever had to wear a false moustache but I find them a source of constant paranoia. I found an excellent one online which looks very realistic and which only fell off once. (I think I got away with it).

After some initial investigating I decided that Rutherford's 'Gold foil experiment' was to be the hub of the presentation. This was the thing which gave rise to his atomic structure. If you see this experiment reproduced with modern equipment as I have, you will undoubtedly be completely underwhelmed. A box with a display racking up numbers at a great rate of knots. But what's happening inside is quite spectacular.

The idea that all matter is made up of tiny indestructible particles – atoms – is not a new one. Ancient Greek and Indian philosophers believed this to be the case, (The word means indivisible) but they had no way of proving it. John Dalton, the Quaker chemist, was the first to turn this idea into a science by identifying the atoms of different elements by calculating their weight. He proposed that no two elements have atoms of the same weight. Brilliant, but no one knew what an atom looked like.

Rutherford had worked as a research student under the eminent professor J.J. Thompson. Thompson proposed that an atom looked like a plum pudding. (The job of a theoretical physicist is to make something up and then try to prove it.)

The plums represent negatively charged electrons floating in a positively charged soup or pudding.

Rutherford decided to test this theory.

He devised a way of firing his recently discovered Alpha particles at a thin sheet of Gold foil – just a few hundred atoms thick – to see what happened. He expected the particles to fly straight through the atoms of the gold foil. Mostly they did but once in a while (About one in 20,000) a particle was deflected and occasionally bounced back the way it came. From this result Rutherford deduced that there must be something very dense at the heart of an atom, the nucleus! This has to be one of the greatest discoveries of all time.

Now how do you put that across to an audience? Well of course you get someone to be the particle emitter by throwing foam balls at a coconut shy (Actually a baseball practice stand) inside a ring of people catching the balls and so noting their deflection when they occasionally hit the coconut. Lots of laughs and the idea is clear. The tough part was to explain what was at the heart of that process, which is nuclear decay producing Alpha particles...

For thousands of years, people have experimented with alchemy. The mysterious and slightly dubious practice of trying to change one element into another. Most popularly lead into gold. Nonsense of course – or is it?

Certain elements are naturally unstable. Elements like Uranium or Polonium naturally emit radiation.

An atom is made up of a nucleus, which is itself made up of two particles, Neutrons and Protons. The nucleus is pretty much all of the matter making up the atom. There are a varying number of electrons flying round or orbiting the nucleus.

If you try to put magnets together with the same poles facing each other they will repel each other. The protons in a nucleus are all positively charged and naturally repel each other, but are normally bound together by a powerful force – the nuclear force. With radioactive elements, the nuclear force, is not enough to hold these particles together and particles escape or are emitted from the nucleus. This is known as decay or radiation. The number of protons in the nucleus decides what element the atom belongs to, so if protons are lost in decay the atoms transmute into a different element. Uranium for example will finally stop decaying when it has become lead. Alchemy! – Happening quite naturally.

One of the types of particle emitted is the Alpha particle.

Now that takes a fair amount of thinking about – well it does if you are me anyway, but ask an ever increasing number of people to stand in the same hula hoop and eventually they start to fall out. They begin to repel each other from their personal space. Great fun – especially when people have to hang on to each other to try and stay in the hoop.

There is much more to explain, I hope this

article illustrates how what seems to be a very complex subject can be broken down and made into an easily understandable and enjoyable experience.

The symposium of physicists was a great audience. Their level of knowledge far exceeded mine of course so it was great fun and funny trying to keep their participation on my level. That brought a whole level of humour to the show which I never anticipated.

I used the show as part of a Rutherford day at Manchester University. Three schools spent the day with various lecturers and watching 'Rutherford'. After some initial reticence on the part of the notoriously difficult to involve teenagers, they were participating in my 'physical physics' with great gusto.

I and fellow colleagues at MOSI have filmed a version of the show which can be found on YouTube as 'Rutherford, giant of science' if you've a mind to find out more.

*'Ask an ever-increasing number of physicists to stand in the same hula-hoop and they will eventually start to fall out'*





A decade ago, IMTAL-Europe Director Verity Walker, who runs the long-established heritage consultancy Interpretation ([www.interpretation.com](http://www.interpretation.com)) upped sticks and moved from posh and pricey Marlow in Buckinghamshire to the wilds of the Black Isle, just north of Inverness. Ten years down the line, she reflects on the move north.

When I look back on my life in the South, I naturally tend to focus on the negatives that I have left behind. The insane mothers driving 4X4's with bullbars to the school gate. The crowds. Motorway tailbacks to reach any decent area of coastline. Real High Street shops being replaced with chi-chi boutiques.

There are however things I do miss. Anyone's memories of ten years ago tend to blur at the edges but my involvement with IMTAL-Europe is still pin-sharp. I have missed the friends I made through IMTAL badly (all those who haven't had a free holiday here, that is!). I really enjoyed running all the training events.

I remember helping to organise an extraordinary conference in London just weeks after 9/11, uncertain whether anyone would turn up – but almost everyone somehow did (in fact only one American, as I recall, pulled out, and one of his own colleagues was so disgusted by this that he came instead!). The conference was influenced by 9/11 and we witnessed an extraordinary attempt by Time Travellers to interpret the events by giving those caught up in the attacks, including the terrorists themselves, a voice through drama.

I also had enormous fun working on one (of many!) British Waterways (BW) projects which we called Harry's Cut (Harry was my father), about a 1950s boating family having to make tough choices, developing the concept alongside Andrew Ashmore (another former Director) and his team. It's still in demand, apparently, all these years later.

It was BW which took me north initially. A contract opportunity came up with the Caledonian Canal and I took it, initially for the summer, but then a change of family circumstances made it look much more appealing in the longer term. So my two daughters are now growing up with the same Highland roots and accents as I have, and can walk to school or the shops or explore the nearby beach without any of the southern paranoia about safety. The younger is nine, the elder

is heading for the scary gap year, and afterwards a qualification and career in drama, she hopes.

Workwise, at first I tried to keep in contact with all the great IMTAL activities but being this far north makes travel difficult. There are some live interpretation activities in the area – notably at Culloden, with its fine team of interpreters led by Katey Boal, and we have some exceptional small touring theatre companies coming to local halls. But instead of live interpretation, I found myself getting involved in the broader field of interpretive planning. Very often I recommended some form of live interpretation as part of a plan, but I wouldn't get involved in the real thing – and that I do miss.

I have done some live interpretation training – the strangest being for a

Stories ([www.scotlandstories.com](http://www.scotlandstories.com)) which enables people's voices to be heard far beyond their often distant NTS properties, encouraging people to make the journey to see the real thing. I remember intensive debate within IMTAL-Europe ten years ago about whether this kind of activity on line was a risky substitute for real interaction.

I thought then that it was, but living here, with great distances creating serious access issues, I can see that in these circumstances, I was wrong.

I am therefore getting to know the strange world of apps, RSS feeds, MP3/MP4 files and GPS. Although the technology is fast-changing and a little frightening, once you plunge in it becomes more friendly and useful than you might think. Anything which makes accessing stories about the world in

# The call of the North

*Verity Walker reflects on the challenges and treats the move north had in store for her*

group of archaeologists visiting the Crannog Centre! – but, shock horror, I seem to be much more heavily involved in digital media than previously. Having been a vehement defender of using real people over using video in the past, this is somewhat poacher-turned-gamekeeper. As technology becomes cleverer however I can see its uses in complementing real-people interpretation.

Interpretation has grown and we are now, thankfully, doing more implementation work than planning. It is not uncommon to have a team of 6 working with me on projects. We are currently working on an RSPB bird hide project for Udale Bay which will use QR codes to access audio recordings made by local children, talking about the 'top 20' birds they can see there. I'm lucky to have two ex-BBC associates on call.

The National Trust for Scotland commissioned us to develop an on-line storytelling site called Scotland's

more personal ways than shoving some great concrete-rooted panel in every layby has to be a good thing, especially in an area as beautiful as this.

I am one of the lucky ones, I realise – with experience and a good network of contracts, I am usually very busy. I worry about the number of 'heritage interpretation' graduates which the University of the Highlands and Islands, among others, are now producing. These youngsters are hoping to enter what is a very competitive world, often as consultants themselves, without much practical experience of working in the heritage industry, and it's tough out there!

I do wish all delegates attending the exciting conference in Sweden the very best – I had hoped to join you this time, but a family event prevents it I am afraid – and hope to see you again at a future conference. What about Scotland next time, perhaps jointly with GEM Scotland?

Meanwhile, I'm just going to stretch my legs and go and watch the dolphins!

# All the King's Fools at Hampton Court Palace

Words: Chris Gidlow

For those who have been following our story in *Insight*, we are pleased to announce that this project won the Museums + Heritage 10th annual award for an Educational initiative.

At its heart, the project was a site-specific piece of theatre. We recreated the court of Henry VIII at Hampton Court Palace. The roles of 'natural fools' were taken by actors with learning difficulties, who devised their own particular storyline and character as part of the wider story of a day at Henry VIII's court.

Historically, fools had an important role at court, lightening the king's mood and often acting as his confidants. While some were ordinary entertainers, known as 'artificial fools', others were 'naturals', whom today we would call performers with learning difficulties. A male and a female fool are included in a painting of Henry VIII with his family on display at

the palace.

Four days of public performances were followed by two days of formal education sessions to mainstream and SEN schools. A full trial was carried out in February 2011. The same programme was then repeated, but with greater integration into the daily visitor offer and further outreach, followed by Education sessions and two seminars, one for academics,

1. The acceptance

speech

2. The team with

their much-deserved

award

the other for heritage professionals to discuss its wider implications in October.

Our objectives were to explore the lives of 'natural fools' at Henry VIII's court by supporting actors with learning difficulties and to research, write and perform a piece of site-specific, immersive and participatory theatre at Hampton Court Palace. We wanted to gain further knowledge and understanding of the value of performers with learning difficulties in Tudor times and to challenge present day perceptions. This we hoped would broaden the public's understanding of the Tudor court and help them to make connections with the present day. Finally, our project would put actors with learning difficulties at the centre of the process to interpret historical material from innovative and under-represented perspectives.

All the Misfits Theatre Company and their mentor, Peet 'the Fool' Cooper were on hand to receive the award, as well as representatives from Historic Royal Palaces and Past Pleasures Ltd. We were very popular winners among the assembled great and the good. Sue Perkins, who presented the award, came and chatted to all the actors individually afterwards, which was really appreciated.

Our next goal is to integrate the actors with learning difficulties fully into our large-scale recreations of the Tudor Court, and to spread this best practice to other sites.



# 10 point guide Creating an authentic character



*Emily Capstick tells you all you need to know in the first of our cut out and keep guides*

Whether we are portraying a known person from history (such as a landowner or reformer) or a fictional individual who had a particular role (such as a housekeeper or Roman soldier), we are offering visitors the chance to meet someone. This someone is a person. If the person they encounter is used to convey only facts however then it could be argued that there is no life in the live interpretation. A mannequin doesn't live just because it has

human form or wears a costume. An interactive display doesn't live because a voice comes out of it. A sign doesn't live because it draws attention to a particular exhibit.

I am conscious that the following list is a kind of summary of what makes us human. I am not suggesting that you need to decide answers to all of these questions but some additional depth can add a disproportionate amount to any style of performance or visitor experience.

Nor am I suggesting that you share all your answers with your visitors; they will spring to mind as they relate to the conversation or activity that you, in role, are involved with.

Finally, enjoy getting to know the person you will portray! It will certainly make it more enjoyable for you to be them.

(There are an unlimited number of questions that relate to each of the points - I've just written a few to get you started.)

## 1 Past

What is their most treasured memory? Their earliest memory? Who were their ancestors and do they know this? Is there a family resemblance?

## 2 Possessions

Everyone owns something, covets something or is saving for something. Who gave them that object and what would they give to someone else? What would they say and hope the other person will say?

## 3 Opinions

Of their job, politics, people (employer or employee, relatives, celebrities)

## 4 Relationships

How do they manage these and other people's perceptions of them? (Relationships are always more than one-way)

## 5 Dreams

Their hopes for the future, joy from the past

## 6 Nightmares

Their fears, doubts, anxieties and regrets

## 7 Responsibilities

How did they acquire these? How do they view them?

## 8 Problems

Both the petty and significant

## 9 Consequences

What does all of the above mean?

## 10 Future

They have one...  
in the next hour or evening, day, month, year.

This isn't meant to undermine historical accuracy, which is essential. There are always opportunities for us to empathise and interpret facts without

jeopardising historical accuracy. Finding these opportunities and responding to them will encourage visitors to do the same. We can be

inspired by the achievements or ideas of people from the past but we can also relate to them as human beings.

🐦 @Emcreates