

The Paper Birds present
**Winner of a FRINGE FIRST AWARD
and FRINGE REVIEW AWARD 2008**

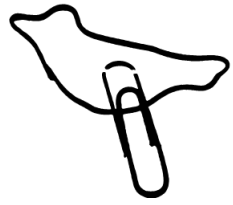


IN A THOUSAND PIECES

Ice-creams, suitcases, floorboards and buttons tell the physically and visually moving tale of a young Eastern European girl and her journey to England.



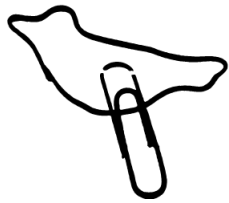
Student Resource Pack



The Paper Birds

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The Paper Birds

Synopsis

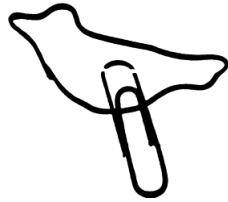
'In a Thousand Pieces' tells the story of a girl and her journey to Britain. She seeks opportunity; and a better life than that offered to her in her Eastern European homeland.

The unnamed girl's journey is charted across bus routes, train tracks and plane rides, before she touches down in London, England. Within minutes of meeting her contact at the airport, a horrific un-provoked rape attack is carried out. Her shock and confusion at the situation is marred by the depth of abuse to follow; as she is catapulted into an unrelenting cycle of rape and abuse.

'In a Thousand Pieces' charts just one character's demise into the sex industry through no choice of her own. The repeated rape that is inflicted on the girls who are victims of sex trafficking is depicted; and the desperation of their unheard voices is present throughout. The three female performers share the role of 'the girl' and pass the focus, work in unison and all individually represent the same girl all at the same time.

Interspersed between the narrative elements of the show are interludes revealing the opinions and influence of the performers and the British public. The performance style flicks between fourth wall and direct address. The performers are equipped to comment and explain on both the current action on stage and also the process and developmental rehearsals in preparation for the show.





The Paper Birds

Cast & Creative Team

2017 Revival



Georgie Coles

Georgie graduated from Rose Bruford College in 2014 with a First Class Honours Degree in American Theatre Arts. She has been working with The Paper Birds since then as a facilitator and performing in *Mobile* (2016). Georgie has also worked with Shady Dolls Theatre Company & Olive Tree Theatre Company.



Josie Dale-Jones

Josie founded and runs ThisEgg Theatre Company where she co-creates shows with a variety of collaborators. Since graduating from the UEA's BA Drama course in July 2015, she has worked with Gecko, the TEAM, Hoipolloi and NIE. Josie has - and continues to - train at École Philippe Gaulier (Paris).



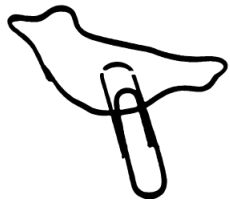
Shona Cowie

Shona graduated from Central School of Speech and Drama in 2010 with a degree in Drama, Applied Theatre & Education; before training at Jacques Lecoq in Paris in Theatre & Movement, where she founded company Theatre Senza. Shona has worked internationally as an arts educator and storyteller and is now based in Glasgow.

Directed by: Kylie Perry & Jemma McDonnell
Composer & Sound Design: Shane Durrant
Lighting Design: Kylie Perry
Managed & Produced by: Kylie Perry
Technical consultant: The Media Workshop
Set Build: Olly Link

Original 2008 Production

Cast: Jemma McDonnell, Elle Moreton, Kylie Perry
Composer & Sound Design: Shane Durrant
Director: Jemma McDonnell
Producer: Elle Moreton
Lighting Design: Vince Field
Set & Costume Design: Ellen Dowell
Set Build: University of Leeds



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Process & Development

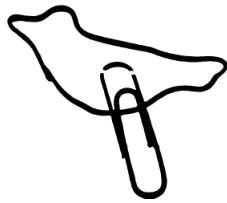
Research

We began our research via charities, internet sites, films and documentaries. As a social and current issue, the horrors of sex trafficking had emerged in recent years and we were aware of the news coverage on our screens. We looked to both fact and fiction. Internet searches provided ample 'case studies'. The typical story we uncovered became a standard model; young girls in Eastern European countries being tempted to try out a better life with more opportunity.

This model became a repetitious encounter. Having arrived in England, girls would be locked in a room and forced into repeated rape. The issues surrounding their situation revolved around missing passports—passports that were handed over naively or passports stolen and swiped away; the notion of money and the debt acquired by the girls—the girls working to pay off a debt that traffickers insist they owe; and above all else, the threat of violence if the girls disobeyed orders or tried to escape. There was threat of harm to not just themselves but their families and their reputations back home.



We defined the sex industry as a capitalist construct concerned predominantly with trade. Buying and selling were high on our list of avenues to explore and workshop. In particular, we were interested in the issue of value—the value of new girls being higher than those who are deemed 'used'.



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We picked out one of the internet case studies that we had found. We charted her story—from its beginning at home, her export to Britain, her struggle and imprisonment in several major UK cities, and finally her escape. We calculated the number of days she had spent in each city, and estimated how many clients she would have seen each day based on all the accounts we had gathered. During an estimated six-month period in the UK, we calculated an equation that amounted to 1,500 total rapes. In comparison with typical prices paid for new girls just arrived in Britain, this figure was around the same. Thus, our 'rape calculation' at the close of the play is based on true details, and additionally it shocked us to work out the worth of each rape she had encountered—£1 per rape. Crucially, as is common in many of the case studies, after her escape from her original captors, she stayed in Britain and carried on working the same job—only this time under her own terms.

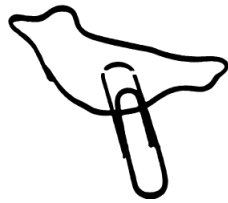


Devising & Rehearsal

The show was developed over a 8-week period in 2008. The original cast co-wrote and developed the piece in Leeds, West Yorkshire, funded by Arts Council England.

After our extensive research and development period that saw us visiting Poland to sample the culture and also the theatrical styles created there, we locked ourselves away in the studio to begin a process of workshops and rehearsal that would inevitably become the final version of *In a Thousand Pieces*.

Our devising processes are often characterised by four separate stages. The first is the research phase that occurs before we even go into the studio—this is carried out at our desks, reading, watching and talking about our findings. The second is the initial workshop stage, where each cast member



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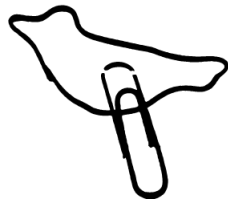
creates a workshop to deliver to the others. The form of the workshops experiments with the issues we are interested in relating to the subject matter, areas that we consider crucial to the key concepts. At this early stage we focused on areas such as buying and selling, journeys and suitcases, and movement to depict the act of rape.

It is crucial for the company and in particular, director Jemma McDonnell, to have some 'space' in between stages. When we re-convene to continue the devising process it allows us to judge the previous work with fresh eyes. We continue devising via improvisation and short exercises created in order to produce material. We employed techniques we had sampled in Poland with the company we had worked with, Song of the Goat Theatre. These centred around 'invisible/imaginary forces' and became imperative to our repetitious rape scenes.

At certain points during the process we present the work in a 'scratch' performance. This allows us to show the material to an audience to gauge their response. Often after the discussion and Q & A that follows, the company amend the material with relation to issues identified by the audience. In the process for *In a Thousand Pieces*, we discarded the first 20 minutes of the play after the original showcase at Leeds Met. Studio Theatre and re-worked the material.



The show premiered at Camden People's Theatre in June 2008 as part of the Sprint Theatre Festival, and a re-worked version of the show appeared at the National Association of Youth Theatres Festival in July 2008. In August 2008, the show ran at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where it received a Fringe First Award, and was shortlisted for The Stage's 'Best Ensemble' Award, the Amnesty International Award for 'Freedom of Expression', and Total Theatre's Award for 'Best Young Company'.



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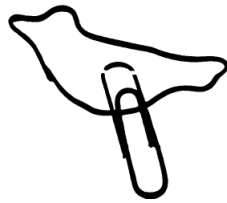
Verbatim & Political Theatre

In recent years, The Paper Birds have been creating new plays that are given the label 'verbatim' and 'political'. Verbatim Theatre traditionally sees the playwright interviewing people that are connected to the topic or stimulus of the play and uses their testimony to construct the piece. In this way the theatre artist seeks to achieve a degree of authority and honesty unattained with fictitious characters.

A verbatim style of theatre uses the real words from interviewees to construct the play. Champion Decent, Australian playwright and author of the verbatim theatre play *Embers*, said it is "not written in a traditional sense... but is... conceived, collected and collated". This is also true of the way The Paper Birds creates new work – by speaking to people, hearing their stories and creating a collage of their words upon the stage. At The Paper Birds we aim to give voice to the voiceless, and with '*In a Thousand Pieces*' this was the first time we began to use this type of methodology whilst making the work.



Political Theatre is a genre of performance that is constantly redefining itself and changing according to evolving culture and society. In the history of theatre, there is a long tradition of performances addressing issues of current events and central to society itself, encouraging consciousness and social change. In Ancient Greece, the political satire performed by the comic poets at the theatres had considerable influence on public opinion in the Athenian democracy. Those earlier Western dramas, arising out of the polis, or democratic city-state of Greek society, were performed in amphitheatres, central arenas used for theatrical performances, religious ceremonies and political gatherings; these dramas had a ritualistic and social significance



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that enhanced the relevance of the political issues being examined. In later centuries, political theatre has sometimes taken a different form. Sometimes associated with cabaret and folk theatre, it has offered itself as a theatre 'of, by, and for the people'. In this guise, political theatre has developed within the civil societies under oppressive governments as a means of actual underground communication and the spreading of critical thought.

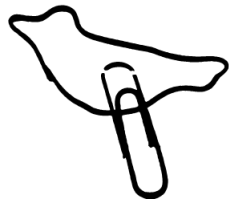
In the 1980's there was a wave of political theatre that emerged as a reaction to the government and social change that Britain was experiencing. Companies such as 7:84 and Monstrous Regiment, playwrights such as Edward Bond, David Hare and Caryl Churchill were redefining what political theatre was and could be. In the 1990's a new wave of 'in your face' playwrights emerged, playwrights such as Mark Ravenhill and Sarah Kane. All of these artists affected the evolution of The Paper Birds as we began to define our own identity. We understood that as theatre makers we were elevated into a position of power; that we could affect social change with the message of our shows and the areas of discussion we could instigate within our audiences. We want to make our audiences think, to raise questions and conversations long after they have left the auditorium and ultimately to share the stories on stage of those not able to speak loud enough to have their voices heard within society.

Watch here:

Politics in Theatre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCyvfScSuBE>

Verbatim Theatre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ui3k1wT2yeM>





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Themes, Motifs, Technique

The 'Other'

The central theme arising throughout *'In a Thousand Pieces'* is that of the Eastern European girl as 'the other' to both the performers, the audience, and the British public that were interviewed during the devising process. The idea that the horror of sex trafficking is occurring to these women is softened by a distancing effect brought with the idea that it's not one of 'our' girls. The performers set up the notion that they tried to identify with this type of woman; *"We thought she might have taken dance classes, begrudgingly. But not the kind of dance we know and not to the kind of music we recognise. We wanted to copy, to understand, but it wasn't easy, it didn't come... naturally to us."* We see a visual of the company's research—a YouTube video of a Ukrainian traditional dance in an attempt to understand this other culture.

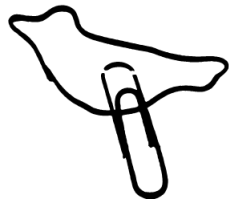
But we are left feeling distanced from her still, even at the end as she tries to communicate her pain via a low guttural groaning sound. Her cries go unnoticed and the onlookers simply throw a copy of the Yellow Pages at her as if that might have some answers.

Britain's place in the World

Interlinking with notions of the Eastern European woman as Other is the theme centring around Britain; it's opinions of other countries, it's knowledge and understanding of Eastern Europe, and perceptions of Britain of foreign nationals before they first came to the UK.

At the start of the play the cast read from cue-cards verbatim text about what foreign people thought about Britain. It sets up the idea that *"Britain is perceived as very high in Europe"*.

Later a voiceover depicts real interviews with British people about their opinions and knowledge of other European countries; France-baguettes, onions round neck, Eiffel tower; Germany-sausages, lederhosen, the war; the scene breaks down when the voiceover can't articulate anything for Romania. Coupled with a projection of many people trying to draw a map of Europe, the idea that British people are ignorant of other cultures and resort to stereotyping people from Europe is introduced.



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The visual motifs that recur throughout the piece serve as both narrative and aesthetic elements.

Ice-creams

The idea behind the use of ice-cream was first introduced from a real-life case study that was found in the research period; a girl was duped into moving to the UK to take up a summer job selling ice-creams. We decided to incorporate it as a symbol of hope and opportunity for the character as she embarks on her journey to England—it represents her dreams of the future, of starting a new life and having a whole world of new adventures ahead of her.

At the start of the play she eats an ice-cream hurriedly with excitement. Here, it also represents innocence, naivety and her new found independence moving away from home and leaving behind her parents.

Later an ice-cream appears and instead of eating it she holds it until it starts to drip through her fingers. When the ice-cream gets knocked out of her hands to the floor it symbolises that all her hopes and dreams have been dashed, and in desperation, she begins to lick it from the floor.

Suitcases

The use of suitcases is centred around the idea of travel and migration. They serve as multi-functional props that can become seats, lap trays, automatic doors, tables, car seats etc.

Buttons

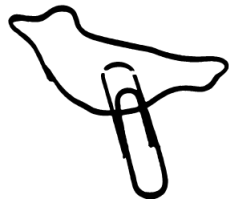
The idea behind using buttons in the narrative is linked to trying to find a 'currency' that represents her worth, as well as trying to visualise the amount of times she is raped and the depth of the abuse she suffers.

Early in the play we are told *"that she kept a wet wipe from the aeroplane as a keepsake, a memento. She likes to remember where she's been and what she's done."*

When she is raped immediately after whilst holding a button that has fallen off the perpetrator's coat, the strand that she now begins to collect buttons begins.

We see her place the first button into a tin. Later after the second rape scene we see each of the girls place another button into the tin.

At the end of the play Shona gets out the tin once more and begins to tip out the buttons at the crescendo of Georgie's sum as though each of the buttons represents the 1,500 rapes she has suffered.



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Chorus/Ensemble

The 3 performers move frequently as one, in sync. They are fluid and flock across the stage. They are dressed identically and this style of movement is to set up the notion that they are the same character; that they represent an 'everywoman' that is typical of all the case studies that were researched.

Direct Address

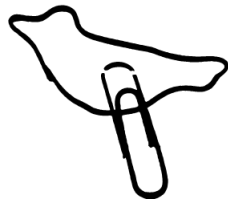
The performers are able to break the fourth wall and speak directly to the audience. This is an alienation effect used to distance the audience from the narrative. Lending from the techniques of Brecht, The Paper Birds use this style frequently in their work. In 'In a Thousand Pieces' this is used to great effect when Josie is peaking directly to the audience before being knocked off her feet and immediately placed within the narrative of the rape scene. It also allows the cast to comment on how the play was constructed, and relay their own assumptions and opinions about the themes arising.

Movement

The use of movement in the play is crucial to the depiction of rape. Without a perpetrator on the stage much reliance is placed on the idea of an 'invisible force'. The origin of this style of work came from The Paper Birds' experience working with Song of The Goat Theatre in Poland— a company who's life work explores this structured and intense physical training. We try and use our physicality to explore narrative that is difficult to vocalise and wherever possible, resort to using movement to drive a scene rather than text.

Technical

The use of lighting, AV projector and the technician placed on stage in clear sight of the audience is also an alienation effect utilised to frame the action and allude to the fact that we are in a theatre. In line with Brecht's ideas of the social purpose of theatre; of reminding our audience that the issues you see here are real and are happening in our society now; the technical elements are not hidden from sight. Instead they are there to remind us that what we are seeing is a construct.



The Paper Birds

Review

the **guardian**

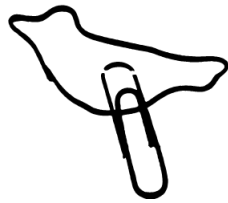
THURSDAY 7 AUGUST 2008

REVIEW BY MADDY COSTA

A young woman arrives at a London airport with a new jacket, a £10 note, a small suitcase and a passport. Before she's quite aware what is happening, her passport is missing and she's in a car. England, she thought, would be green, like a picture book, polite, a "high moral society". She is raped in the car, and raped another five times at her new home. Over the next few weeks she is moved from London to Leicester, then Manchester, then Plymouth, being raped five, eight, 10 times a day. Before too many weeks have passed, she has been raped 1,500 times. Bearing in mind £1,500 was paid for her, that's £1 per rape.

There are horrifying statistics behind this show by the Paper Birds, a young, all-female theatre company based in Leeds. And, as the performers admit, the stats all but erase the personalities of the women behind them. "It was as if these women didn't exist," they confess mournfully. The company seem equally aware of the impossibility of dealing adequately with sex slavery in a piece of devised physical theatre that is as concerned with beauty as it is violence and squalor. Every so often, you wonder whether the show isn't too aesthetically pleasing: the clothes the trio wear are so pretty, the music played on stage by Shane Durrant is so romantic. But then the women hurl themselves to the floor in a simulation of being raped, and watching them turns your stomach.

The story is incomplete – we never learn, for instance, where the women come from, or how they were cheated into the sex trade. But how could it be otherwise? And there is something very clever about the way scenes are repeated and fractured: it gives a stronger impression of the reality of these women's lives than a straightforward story could. In a Thousand Pieces is a show full of questions, anger, horror and sadness – and glimpses of beauty that are as troubling as they are a relief.



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About The Paper Birds

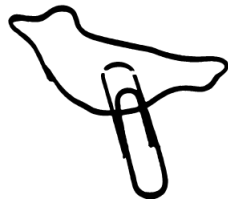
How did you form the company?

We met and formed at university, we studied BA Theatre Acting at Bretton Hall and as undergrads worked together during our 3rd year. The show that we made as part of our 'Small Cast' Module was a devised piece based on the life and works of Sylvia Plath. We entered it into the National Student Drama Festival and were delighted to be programmed, so we re-mounted the show and took it to Scarborough. Here we got our first taste of taking a show on the road to new audiences. We were hooked. And when we were approached by playwright Willy Russell who asked what our plans were next for the production, we took his advice to take it to the Edinburgh Fringe. Our debut at the Pleasance Courtyard was in 2003. We played to small audiences and only collected a couple of reviews. Upon returning from our first Fringe experience, we evaluated the situation. We had just graduated from university, we had made a show that had already gone further than we had imagined, and now we wanted to do it all again.

We moved to Leeds. We applied for business start-up loans, we attended Business Link seminars, we opened a bank account. We were awarded a grant to buy a computer and began a course in bookkeeping. We slowly but surely got to grips with what being a 'company' meant; we needed to officially register and draw up a constitution for our company – the Memorandum and Articles of Association document we are still governed by today. We signed that document on 14 February 2005 and were registered at Companies House as a social enterprise limited by guarantee. We appointed a Board of Directors to govern over us and to attend quarterly meetings. We made another show. We began running workshops in schools. We started our careers as full time performer/facilitators. We shared one computer and booked slots to use it throughout the day. In 2005 we applied for our first Arts Council grant to tour our second production 'In a Month of Fallen Sundays'. It toured to 7 local Yorkshire venues, and marked the start of a hugely successful touring career to follow.



Kylie Perry & Jemma McDonnell in Thirsty (2011)



The Paper Birds

How did the devising process for your early shows differ to how you make work now?

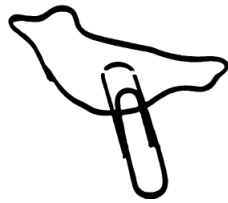
During our first few years as a company our devising processes were very different to our current way of making work. But then so was the work we made; we rarely broke the fourth wall, we prioritised style over content and gaining an emotional response from audiences over an intellectual one. After 2008's 'In a Thousand Pieces' which explored human trafficking, everything for us changed; the methodology, the form, the content. The political subject matter of the show challenged us to reconsider the way we made work and what we were trying to achieve. This was the first process that saw us utilising the words verbatim of others. We had asked people to contribute to questionnaires before, but we had never lifted other peoples' words directly and placed them on the stage.

'In a Thousand Pieces' was different in that we went out on to the street and asked strangers about their ideas and opinions, we actively sought out members of our local community to comment on the topic of human trafficking that we were exploring. The weight and merit that these viewpoints gave to the production was undeniably part of what gave the production its authenticity. The show was awarded a Fringe First from the Scotsman, and subsequently embarked on the largest tour we had mounted to date; a 20 date tour across England, a 2 week run at Soho Theatre and dates in Germany, Czech Republic and Netherlands.

The methodology we had employed was an approach we wanted to re-visit. Now, at the start of all our devising processes we embark on a concentrated period of research and development. We set up meetings with different social groups; we ask people to submit their words to us online via blogs and surveys; we seek out particular people depending on what the topic we are exploring is; we go to them, or they come to us. We want to layer our pieces with this authenticity. Once we had begun to make verbatim theatre, the process and methodology behind it became part of our regular approach.



Kylie Perry, Shane Durrant & Jemma McDonnell in Broke (2014)



The Paper Birds

What are your aims as a company?

Our artistic policy states: 'The Paper Birds strive to create and share devised work that is important; work that is culturally, socially and politically observational and conversationally urgent.' And it is this statement that underpins all of our work – we want to make work that is about something, we don't make work for the sake of making work. We want to evoke discussion and create debate. Naturally, we have found that the topics we want to raise into discussion have a political slant, whether that be about ageing (On the One Hand, 2013), booze Britain (Thirsty, 2011), human trafficking (In a Thousand Pieces, 2008) or debt and poverty (Broke, 2014). We aim to make people whose voices wouldn't ordinarily be heard on our stages speak loudly and clearly. We understand that we harbour a powerful tool as theatre artists, and that we can use our voice for the greater good.

In regards to practitioners, who influences you and whose techniques do you draw upon most?

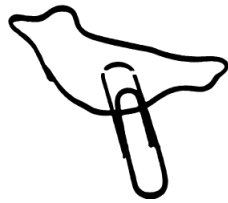
As students we explored the techniques of Pina Bausch, Robert Wilson, The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, DV8, Caryl Churchill, Complicite. When we began to make our own work, lots of these styles and fragments of these other artists' work naturally found its way into the ideas and work we were shaping of our own. We still admire and borrow from the techniques and style of lots of those other practitioners now. We often reference other artists work whilst in the rehearsal room.

It has also been said that we make work that reflects a contemporary take on the conventions of Bertolt Brecht's theatre. It is true that we also make political work, and there are many further shared features; an 'introduction' to the show, explaining what the audience is going to see; 'alienation' effects, for us that means playing with acting and non-acting, dipping in and out of character, direct address; non-naturalism. So many of the common traits within our work now can be linked back to their origin within Brecht's work.

Nowadays, some of the contemporary artists that we generally seek out would include Belgian company Ontroerend Goed, Lone Twin, Gecko, Bryony Kimmings and Chris Thorpe.



Grace Savage in Blind (2014)



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How do you pick the topics you explore in your shows?

As a company we are reactionary – we respond to the issues we see cropping up in the press and within our communities. We also try to stay true to our aim of ‘giving voice to the voiceless’, and through this aim, we are often led to the issues we want to explore. We keep our eyes open and assess the world around us, we want to make work that matters and that usually has a link to us personally. As artists, our voice and opinion is important within the work, and therefore we often choose something that affects us in some way. For example, we made *On the One Hand*, a show about ageing, at a time in our lives when we were entering our thirties and reassessing what age means; what achievements we were supposed to have made by this milestone; and also what was expected of us as women at certain points in our lives. Or we began to think about debt in the making of *Broke* because it was an actual issue that was affecting us in the here and now. Often with a topic like debt, we begin to think about the issue in micro form, in the personal and local fashion, and then widen that magnifying glass and apply the same scrutiny to the wider world – to Britain as a whole.



Kylie Perry in Mobile (2016)

How do you approach the verbatim content within your work?

We respect and try to honour the people we have met and the stories they have shared. Whilst we often begin our devising process by meeting and interviewing people, we do not always label our show as verbatim if the show/ story/ character/ script is only ‘based’ on such interviews. An example of this being ‘*On the One Hand*’ which has verbatim content, but we felt it was misleading to sell the show as verbatim when many of the characters and speeches were an amalgamation of people we had met. When we do use and label our work as verbatim we collect this material in a variety of ways. In the past we have set up anonymous surveys online, used a phone for people to leave voicemails, met and interviewed people in groups and individually. Depending on the format of the interview we will stage the words/ people in different ways. We want the audience to be aware of the editing process that the verbatim has undergone, that we have crafted the performance; that we have selected and chosen and edited the words that you hear. We use alienation techniques to remind our audience of this, we break the fourth wall, we play ourselves on stage, we dip in and out of character or we can stop the action and comment on what the character is doing. We do this because we believe it makes the verbatim even more powerful, we believe that being reminded of the fact that what you are seeing are real issues happening now in your community is what gives verbatim theatre its power and voice.