



THE HEARING TRUMPET

WORK-IN-PROGRESS

The play is based on the book, **The Hearing Trumpet**, written by the famous British surrealist artist, Leonora Carrington. Capturing the strange and magical spirit of the book, the audience follow Marian Letherby - the 92-year-old heroine - into a series of bizarre and fabulous worlds, just like Alice falling down her rabbit hole.



It starts when Marian, who is very deaf, gets given a peculiar Hearing Trumpet by an old friend. Through it she overhears her family planning to put her into a care home. She has no worth it seems - for them, she's only a nuisance. Marian believes there's nothing she can do; after all, she's 92...

The care home is a bizarre looking place, run by a fearsome couple, hellbent on saving the old ladies' souls (and making a small fortune in the process!). However, after Marian befriends the other eccentric residents, some of whom are much older than herself, she discovers there is more to this strange, old building than first meets the eye.

Her new friends become comrades - together they expose religious charlatanism, a murder and finally, discover a portal to the underworld... The story grows evermore surreal and epic when a strange winged beast breaks out of the care home tower and the world as we know it starts to crumble...



The patriarchy is destroyed but will Marian and her friends survive? And what does survival look like in this strange new world?



Dirty Market's **The Hearing Trumpet** has already been through a period of R&D in partnership with The Albany, Deptford and Ovalhouse Theatre. We have spoken to these work-in-progress audiences, asked them to fill in feedback forms and used their responses to help shape the development of the piece. Together we have made some exciting choices: the show features a three-piece jazz band, there are masks, puppets and animation to make sure the theatrical experience is like stepping inside one of Carrington's stunning surrealist paintings.



We are putting the audience at the centre of the action, accompanying the protagonist through a series of immersive locations. As the story develops the audience become more and more invested and involved in the plight of their 92-year-old companion. It's a funny, surreal and provocative journey, exploring notions of self-worth, finding your individual voice and the power of collective action.

Review from Ovalhouse Work-in-Progress

"The show is littered with ideas, many of which really manage to capture the imagination. The one I personally found the most affecting involved two people washing and clothing a loose bundle of twigs representing an elderly, infirm relative. It is a wonderfully absurd and rather amusing piece of simple puppetry, and the perfect example of how something so silly can actually contain profound emotional depth – through the laughter I felt pangs of sorrow, pity and even guilt at seeing this image of a broken old women handled with callous neglect, an image that will stay with me for a long while." - **Stephen St. Clement**



Audience Feedback from Ovalhouse Work-in-Progress

Something you remembered	Something you enjoyed or loved	Something you would like to see developed or changed
The wooden mom	The stillness of the painting - after winking	You are on the right track! Looking forward to the 'finished' one! Good Luck.
The dead body; smell of the dead body; man being sick; rat poison in the fudge	The fact that we are part of the story / action. Also, feeling engaged through the stimulation of the senses.	More interaction with smells and sounds.
Morning exercises in unison; the ear trumpet; jauntily figure; underscoring of the scenes; potatoes	Bathing of mother; image of the dead body; all the music; relationships between the residents; voyeuristic nature of audience configuration with curtains etc...	More about the story in the tower; riddles integrated more; more interaction with video
Masks - young spirit in an old body; cloth - loved the use; use of space - keeps engagement; made me think about what would happen to me when i'm old (for the first time in my life)	I love the choice of music - took me right to the place or country that person was from; absolutely loved the cleaning of the stick mother	When we walked around the back to hear the story of the abbess - i couldn't hear clearly to lost the story. Might be a stupid thought, but I would like to see the play taking part outside (either garden or forest) - just seems very suitable
The ending - adrift; the washing of sticks; witchcraft; the monster made of cardboard	The obscurity; the not-fitting-together; old age central; eccentricity; the end of all things - we are at the end of the world!	Space; spacial atmosphere; lighting; could this piece be played in an existing environment - so atmosphere is already in the space - an institution? A hospital?
The giant puppet of Sephira; twigs as body - so real; beautiful singing	Georgina Sykes' make-up / voice characterisation and comedy spot	voice over with 'nun' felt too long - too obviously a device to change the first space. I'm not sure i really understood the source of enmity between the 'inmates'. The references to the war really illuminated one character and similar set ups would have been good for all of them.
music	Character of Mrs. Sykes; Combination of funny and disturbing	amazing staging / imagery; interesting senario and characters; but I had trouble following it as a plot - or maybe it was surreal and I was not meant to follow?



<p>white monster at the end; winking nun; sweets</p>	<p>bathing the sticks; the curtains coming up and down; the fact that we as the audience were 'a person'; song about cats and kids; the character monologues in the 'house'; use of sound - esp. at the beginning when we were all in the dark. Loved idea of US being trapped in tower...</p>	<p>i think the end could be clearer - seems to open up a lot and a lot of ideas - environment stuff comes very quickly - then big monster! I think this is the 'message' - so maybe lace it in a bit more. I think bit with winking nun at the back could have been clearer - a lot being said on the sound track to take in.</p>
<p>The radio reports on the mysterious, trumpet-like sounds heard across the country - huddled in the dark - straining to hear them... The Joan Rivers stand-up; snap of the twig; self-remembering.</p>	<p>The living portrait (with its rich black drapes) of the abbess. Somehow the dynamic poses behind the frame as her quest unfolded. The machinations of the inmates / residents - the antagonistic Natacha and the 'Movements'.</p>	<p>The secret pageants instigated by the abbess - may we not participate? The relations of each element to all the others - make it easier to connect ideas beyond the immediate apprehension of the present moment. More from the cult.</p>
<p>Oh what joy! I love the twig washing; Georgina's eyebrows and attire and the looking round over the shoulder when we first see her. The winking nun and her incredible story. The vomiting death.</p>	<p>The whole performance was glorious. The old lady who conspired with the poisoner. The hateful eating of potatoes. The nun's removal of her veil and revealing of her true character. The mention of gorging on Turkish delights and disgusting sexual activities.</p>	<p>I didn't understand the end - who was the white figure? Was it us who were dying?</p>
<p>winking nun; music and the musicians; Carmella; the ear horn</p>	<p>Red eyebrows - Sex maniac! Carmella and the song about cats; the writing; winking nun - and her story; moving through the set</p>	<p>It only occurred to me after that we were in the old people's home. The conversation about the war I couldn't quite hear or see as both were seated. The tower wasn't very clear.</p>
<p>The woman in the portrait; the song at the beginning about cats; the red haired woman; the set with the curtains on all sides; the masks</p>	<p>The cat song; the music and songs</p>	<p>The ending (3rd riddle) more clear would be good.</p>
<p>The lace curtains</p>	<p>I like we had to move around; the relationship of the characters</p>	<p>The relationships could have developed more; more from the narrator ; get actual seats - back is hurting.</p>
<p>Cat song</p>	<p>Intrigued by timing of Video Dr and live actors - loved this. Carmella was very strong; like the space; musicians and Georgina Sykes.</p>	<p>Didn't enjoy stick washing; story of christianity not developed; too much text - get lost - more actions; lacked emotional content - too many themes.</p>



Turning around and seeing the 'painting' of the nun - really creepy and I liked it. Also all the food interaction was great.	The first scene with the family washing the twigs: I thought it was very evocative and almost painfully sad - I loved it!	I wasn't so keen on the puppetry of the tower and the giant head near the end.
The big yellow sleeping bag suit	The music	I like it
The twig old lady was very fragile and delicate and beautiful. Made me wanna cry. Is that all we become? Bits of old, drying wood. Sad and depressing and actually the truth. I loved the intimacy of this section.	The cult and its weaving in throughout the piece. The videoed cult leader was great. Red eyebrows was as funny as fuck. Loved the staging / shifting around the space to look / engage.	Winking nun scripted piece about Mary Magdalene - felt too long and I lost focus on story as movement was more engaging. More movement? Less words. Generally, throughout - less script, more physical.
eating biscuit; the lady who ate potatoes	the character with red eyebrows; the washing of the old lady	i didn't like that my focus was being pulled in different directions. Why did you use masks?
I loved the whole play. Well done!	Music and lyrics were great!	Wait with speech until people have turned around on their seats.
The good mimics which seemed very professional, and the 91 years old lady. It was a pleasure. The whole team made a fantastic performance.	The set up of the scenery was very funky and different, especially the way we were seated was very creative.	the seats were a bit uncomfortable.
I wanted to leave but couldn't figure out how to get out.	The musicians were good.	Some actors not audible. Try working with height / elevation as at times not all of the audience can see actors.
Masks positioned on the side of heads.	The playing space shifting around the audience. Song of children, over 70's and Cats. Its a really rich environment with really interesting ideas and a quirky / idiosyncratic atmosphere - well done!	I feel that the show is trying to say or cover too much. The theme of liberty - reclaiming it, even late in life is strong but gets muddled towards the end - the abbess - the tower - the pole war - lost me. Who are we identifying with as the audience? Do we want to celebrate with the women who broke free? If so, more could be made of this. More heart and less head - hope this makes sense!
The woman in the painting.	The scene change.	The ending.
The relaxing music! The audience participation.	Moving around. The way the set changed directions. The live music.	It is helpful to have the surrealist bit, but then to have the surrealist bit explained. Maybe by the Red-haired narrator? He could pop in and out a bit more. I didn't understand the ending.



	Carmella; the fortune cookies; the story of the Abbess of Santa Barbara; the music	
White curtains that felt like clouds; first song; Carmella being my colourful friend	music; interactiveness; different nursing home characters; fun interactions between characters.	Sense of claustrophobia - I didn't enjoy being in the middle. Transitions more fluid between scenes. Building scenes so there are less disjointed fragments and are instead, more substantial - almost too many clunky elements.
The masks; the spiritual 'guru' on TV screen; the warmness of the space; relationships between performers and audience and even between members of the audience ; the costumes; the set; and yeah! the music.	I honestly loved everything I remember, all of it. I stepped in this surreal world, full go music, poetry, wisdom, beauty, and the unexpected...	I think you guys know better regarding what should be kept as it is or developed. That's what makes it so captivating, probably is reflecting your own ideas, without external influence.
Fabulous puppet and masks. Amazing, fun, mysterious, interactive. Actors were fun and dynamic.	The love of cats (though I don't think they can be trusted!) The use of the space, being enclosed in the netting and things happening all around. Loved seeing the video, sound and lights being operated.	I really enjoyed it, but had mostly no idea what was going on... though assumed that was half the point.
The nun bit - I so wanted to hear but couldn't quite make it out.	Close-ups; biographies of the residents of the home. OH! And the bit where you talked about objectification of elderly people with the sticks was awesome.	I think some more information in the programme would be good. I've read the book so could follow most of it but my partner got confused. I really, really am happy that you're doing something with the wonderful Leonora Carrington - so all my love and best wishes!
The Guru on film and accompanying music - loved him!	The twiggy old woman being bathed, really inventive, loved the quiet; the masks and accents	The monologue with the nun, too long and couldn't hear, so didn't understand, though nice physicality.
Potatoes; amazing Rivers-esque stand-up; washing mother; winking nun	Washing mother; the cat song; the music generally; something very watchable about the company, visually a great mix of individuals.	What happened to mother's finger?



lots - hard to focus on one particular thing; there was lots I likes; the coldness and sense of the world tipping	I really liked the fact that we went on a surreal journey that was surprising and unexpected. I liked the characters and the fact that they were old yet not old.	I would like to see the musicians used more. I lost track listening to the painting / madonna when we were standing around the back. I liked the fact that we were drawn into the story more and more. I like the sticks and sideways masks.
masks; dead Maud; potatoes. I was very aware of the space- by the end; great use of music.	Loved the relationships; the French lady - very playful; monologues in the beginning - getting to know the characters; 'Joan of Arc!' TV screen when ladies talked up to him from ladder.	Ending - I didn't understand. I did understand the section when we stood behind picture - but I switched off - really surreal and I couldn't see.
the Madonna	the French Lady	the birth of the child
not knowing what is happening... or what's coming next.	The potatoes - how weird!	Quite a lot was not clear, sort of part of the fun though! More interaction with the audience.
The interplay between the women during the stand-up routine.	The setting - quite unsettling at first but it worked. Loved the music.	Not keen on the videos.
When they bathed the sticks; the old lady talking about 7 year olds, 70year olds and cats.	The music; the outfit; the narration; the imagination. I laughed a lot and loved it.	The end with the cold weather should be narrated or developed slightly more - not sure, I felt there was something missing.
The nun in the picture.	The soothing voiceover and storytelling and the stick geriatric!	The mysterious Doctor could be developed more. Bigger screen, more overarching - booming maybe - a deeper darker threat maybe.
About the ages to trust - under 7 and over 70 and cats. Original!	The creativity; the performance; the way you interact with the public. I felt comfortable at any time. I enjoyed the plot.	Nothing in special.
Characters in the institution - could go further, more abstract / mad to echo set and puppetry.	Music - weave it in more! Interactions with TV / audiovisuals - more!	The masks and puppetry (white sheet form) at the end are very encouraging but felt could be utilised more. Especially in the middle section - why are they not lit / pointed to / interacted with more.
The tower at the end; the lady in the painting; very good start to bring us into focus with the image made of twigs.	Drinking port! Costumes; interactions; the energy of the lady speaking French.	I'd like to see the characters story a bit more in depth. I want to get to know these crazy women and the institute Directors. Maybe you can make it a bit more spectacular and surreal?



<p>The mother being a bunch of sticks; the dead body on the sheet; the masks and costumes; the use of instruments and music; the use of TV and video recording as a character.</p>	<p>The characters; the simplicity of the plot - richness of the episodes. Individual stories of the characters.</p>	<p>I'd love to see more of the individual stories of the character. It would be lovely to see the movement and the recording of the nun. More episodic stories.</p>
<p>Nun in a picture; giant puppet head; stick mother; well spoken TV cultist; poetic musical trio.</p>	<p>Loved the magic created at moments with wild music or movement: captivating. Loved some of the characters particularly cult / institution leader, the mission lady and the nun.</p>	<p>Accents are not a substitute for character. The narrative / story got lost for me much of the time. I found moments captivating without knowing why - these were also my best moments!</p>
<p>The TV bits; the cat song.</p>	<p>The old woman in black spazzing out backstage. The Joan Rivers women. The French Lady.</p>	<p>What happened to the old women / pile of sticks at the start - could have followed her journey through the institution. What was the whole sheets thing at the end?</p>
<p>Cat song; Daz powder poison; the smell of old lady; the abbess in the frame.</p>	<p>Moving from stage to stage - the abbess, turning slowly. The riddles and giant puppet. The fortune cookies. Character on the TV screen and music that accompanied. Lace. Stuffing potatoes in mouth. Arctic yellow snow suit.</p>	<p>Sitting on stools - I couldn't see the first scene . Clearer role of the audience - are we the old lady?</p>
<p>The scary virgin Mary; white old lady curtains; not knowing where you are for a second before it sets in.</p>	<p>Being in on everything! The cat song. Being given stuff! Feeling like a kid at a scary sleepover at the end. Comradeship. Not knowing where to look next. The juxtaposition of granny elements(cats, lace curtains, violet pastels) and ethereal awesomeness (music, madonna, etc...) The realisation of the setting seeping in naturally. Stand-up comedian.</p>	<p>I'd like to see a little bit more of 'stick mum' (awesome).</p>
<p>Gently gently down the rabbit hole they tumbled. Toy piano; ear trumpet. It all ends with death, "jump into the broth - you chose to come down here."</p>	<p>An old lady made of sticks. Being part of it. The use of film, music and space that felt organic and not just put in because its cool. It all made sense even if you felt like it didn't. The hunger strike was where we fully chose our side and became part of it.</p>	<p>I felt that the fortune cookie wasn't going to be good news and it was delicious.</p>



<p>The song about people you could trust; the screen apparitions.</p>	<p>There is so much potential here: fantastic mix of video, music and V.O. but the overall impression is very much a work-in-progress. I would love to see you using the 4 sided stage by having actors placed in different locations and echoing each other.</p>	<p>The scene at the back about the painting - much better to have the person explaining the painting as it comes to life.</p>
<p>The colours generally and the masks. Remember the different accents and the mood of the piece.</p>	<p>Absolutely loved the movement throughout in terms of immersive and the actors moving. Really enjoyed the nun character's slow movement - it captured me so much.</p>	<p>I feel like some of the recorded text playing is not that clear and I kind of didn't follow the story to well.</p>
<p>The seating and lace netting; the tower and the white sheet.</p>	<p>The painting person and the TV man</p>	<p>More use of the Sound trumpet.</p>
<p>The mother wash; the broken finger; the workers; the lives; the conspiracy; the nun; the end</p>	<p>I love the act around work. I found it very touching and sadly true. I almost cried at the sight of the children washing (and breaking) their mother.</p>	<p>I couldn't hear well and I personally found that the accents were too strong when that were acted - to the point that I couldn't understand them. I couldn't hear the story of the nun.</p>
<p>The winking nun - very disturbing in a mesmerising way, very captivating. The character was able to take me to a place I've never been before as an audience member.</p>	<p>I really enjoyed the character of Georgina Sykes.</p>	<p>I would love to see more of Mrs Horton's character.</p>
<p>The speech about cats and children</p>	<p>The music and the interactive surrounding</p>	<p>The ending was rather abstract and I feel there wasn't quite enough explanation of the apocalypse / apparition.</p>
<p>American woman brilliant characterisation</p>	<p>music accompaniment</p>	<p>At times difficult to hear / understand the dialogue. Especially when we went behind the screen.</p>
<p>Amazing puppet</p>	<p>The craziness; live music; really nice lighting - minimal was good</p>	<p>The vocal playback when behind the set (the nun bit) could have been louder - hard to hear over music. What was with the sticks at the beginning?</p>
<p>The big puppet at the end; the little puppet being washed, hilarious - the snap; the lady singing; the opening silence with the trumpet and then talking when we listened into it.</p>	<p>I like the lady sticking potatoes into her mouth. I loved the mix of TV and old world. The tower with the blanket of snow. The masks on the sides of the head, clever.</p>	<p>I didn't like the painting, nor did my friend! I couldn't hear, or connect with the voiceover, too much going on so I tuned it all out. Liked going behind the curtain though! I liked the music - more of that I think.</p>



<p>The masks on the character's faces. The white tower at the end. The white poison coming out of Maud's mouth.</p>	<p>The dancing Spanish woman. The strange state initiated by the voices coming from nowhere, the starts, the tower changing into a monster - very powerful and efficient - Dreamlike.</p>	<p>Extend the surreal transitions... In general very good work, really enjoyed the atmosphere, the intensions behind every actions and also the theme was very interesting and appealing for younger generations.</p>
<p>Serfira - the puppet was the voice throughout! Therefore when the puppet appeared before us at the end, I felt as if I knew it, it was one of us rather than an alien.</p>	<p>The gender-bending; the stage (in conjunction to audience's position initially).</p>	<p>Develop: The AV of the man in the TV (the housemaster / keeper) + add more stillness to the dancing man in the portrait.</p>
<p>Textures of props / scenery / costumes. Scene with the mom as twigs really stood out.</p>	<p>The performances all stood out as entertaining and enjoyable. Also liked the clever uses of props and staging. In general, I felt very engaged and moved by the piece.</p>	<p>Was not sure about the use of the character on video interacting with live performers. I felt it influenced the pacing for the actors on stage in a way that hindered their performance.</p>
<p>Entering into such a theatrical world; the winking nun</p>	<p>The bathing of the old lady who is made of branches; the masks tell a second story.</p>	<p>The main story plot line - the conflict could be more developed.</p>
<p>The first thing that pops into my mind is the mother made of twigs, I found it really funny! The bathing and dressing of the 'mother' and the manner in which they spoke to / about her.</p>	<p>I loved all of it (truthfully) but my favourite bit was the bit with the women / men with masks and the man on the TV, how the girls interacted with the man on the TV. Also Mrs Horton was a personal favourite character of mine.</p>	<p>Id like to see Mrs Horton's character in the performance, just a little more. I thought she was really funny.</p>
<p>When Mrs Horton? was being washed but it was just branches - it was rather comical. The masks.</p>	<p>The character of Natacha and her sidekick. The bitchiness and schoolgirl attitude of the two. Comical aspect of the piece I really enjoyed</p>	<p>I would like to see the background story and life of Mrs Horton developed and made clearer to the audience. The significance of the voiceover - I would like to see developed as I really liked this.</p>
<p>The winking nun and when 'she' moved - that bit really stood out. When the old woman was being washed and the finger snapped! The masks on the characters stood out as they helped you understand each character.</p>	<p>The live music; the use of the television interaction; the use of accents; the way the audience was placed and moved; the voiceover really worked and the vibrant costumes. The use of twigs to symbolise the old lady.</p>	<p>Where they are and how they got there. Was it an old people's home or not? A thicker plot!</p>
<p>Bathing the old lady - struggled to hold back the tears - found the branches so poignant.</p>	<p>The colour! The madness, so visual</p>	<p>Loved it! (Sorry that's not very constructive!)</p>



<p>The winking nun in the backstage area - it was minimal but very affective. The speech went on for too long - better to concentrate on the physical part.</p>	<p>I loved the main character, Mrs Horton was very clear and powerful. The French lady was also very elegant in her speeches - it would probably be something good to play with the fact they speak different languages.</p>	<p>The context of the play was good but needed to 'get' to us as the audience - I felt quite distracted at times. Overall I loved it and understood it very well. The spacing was very effective as what I got from play is that you didn't want us to feel comfortable just like the old ladies.</p>
<p>Wonderful succession of visual images. Text and visions a mix between Viv Standhall, Beckett and Joyce... Fascinating.</p>	<p>So many visual images: The dark nun - Francis Bacon.</p>	<p>I would very much like to be able to do sketches during one of your productions.</p>
<p>The yellow snow suit!</p>	<p>Loves the washing of the stick mother.</p>	<p>I felt that the second half was trying to tie up loose ends and really tell the story, but for me surrealism is maybe more about triggering than illustrating and thats why i felt that the first part was strongest. It seemed to have more intriguing scenes that held up aside from their involvement with the story: mother washing; stand up comedian; musician lady cats bit; dance; movement bit... etc</p>