

**PIECE FOR PERSON
AND GHETTO
BLASTER
NICOLA GUNN**



ABOUT



“A couple of years ago I got into a fight with a stranger because he was throwing stones at a sitting duck. She was protecting her eggs. The man’s children were collecting stones for him to throw. I asked him if he could please stop because it was ‘unnecessary.’ He told me to mind my own business, or words to that effect. I was in a foreign country and we did not speak each other’s language. What ensued was an angry, abusive and physical confrontation that achieved nothing: he continued to throw stones at the duck and I walked home to write about it on Facebook.”

Piece For Person and Ghetto Blaster is the story of a man, a woman and a duck. It dissects the excruciating realms of human behaviour by calling into question our capacity to make moral judgments and relate to others in an ethical way.

The work is disarmingly simple – exploring in great depth the moral conundrum of what should one do if one comes across a person throwing stones at a duck – but gradually becomes mind-bogglingly complex. Threaded between observations and memories of this brief encounter with a stranger are philosophical musings about peace and conflict, moral relativism, the ethics of intervention and the very function of art. Each new complication is layered into the mix until the ability to maintain different ethical and conceptual paradigms within one’s mind at the same time exhausts itself.

Accompanying the text is a rhythmic sound composition and an unpredictable choreography that shifts from the unnecessary and incongruous to the strangely affecting. The effect is of a mental rhythm playing onto and against a highly impulsive conflation of physical rhythms. *Piece for Person and Ghetto Blaster* slips across tempos, ideas and performance modes - from movement to dance to performance art and back again - to create something inescapably unique. The culmination of these multiple layers is a work in perpetual motion, full of wit, provocation and reflection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

NICOLA GUNN is a Melbourne-based performer, writer, director and dramaturg. Since 2002, she has been making works that blend performance, art and anthropology to explore the fragility of the human condition with subversive humour. Her artistic practice is committed to institutional critique, social engagement and generating works that activate the public sphere by questioning old ways of being or proposing new ones. She uses performance to reflect critically on its place in theatres, to examine power relations in existing organisations, and to consider the relevance and social function of art itself. The starting process is often a written text or idea imagined responding to a self-generated impulse to tell a story or explore a form. She draws mainly from her experience to create autobiographical fiction.

Recent works include: *A Social Service* (2015), *Green Screen* (2014), *In Spite of Myself* (2013), *Hello my name is* (2012) and *At the Sans Hotel* (2010). Nicola has presented her work at the Dublin Theatre Festival, Festival de Keuze (Netherlands), Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Arts Centre Melbourne, Festival of Live Art, Arts House, Performance Space, Vitalstatistix, PICA, Brisbane Powerhouse, Melbourne Festival, Brisbane Festival, The Blue Room Theatre, and festivals in Canada and New Zealand.

She has received 10 Green Room Award nominations and a UK Stage Award nomination. She has won Green Room Awards for Conceptual Realisation, Outstanding Contemporary Performance and Best Performer; Perth Fringe World Best Theatre Award; PACT Best Experimental Performance Award; and The Blue Room Theatre Award for Most Outstanding Theatrical Experience. As a performer and collaborator, she has worked with Tamara Saulwick (*Public*), Ian Pidd, Jessica Wilson and Bec Reid (*Passenger*), and Ridiculusmus (*The Eradication of Schizophrenia in Western Lapland*). As a dance dramaturg she has worked with choreographers Jo Lloyd (*Confusion For Three*), Luke George (*Erotic Dance*) and Shian Law (*Psycho*).

As a teacher and lecturer she has led workshops and seminars at The National Theatre School, Monash University, Melbourne University, Back to Back Theatre, Dawson's College and St Catharine's University (Canada) and at Dublin Theatre Exchange.

Nicola is an Australia Council Creative Australia Fellow and a Mike Walsh Fellow.



INFORMATION

Title: Piece for Person and Ghetto Blaster

Genre: Contemporary Performance; Theatre; Dance

Length: 70 minutes

AWARDS

Green Room Award for Outstanding Contemporary & Experimental Performance - 2015

Green Room Award for Best Performer in a Contemporary & Experimental Performance - 2015

Perth Fringe World Best Theatre Award - 2016

CONTACT DETAILS

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CREDITS

Concept, Text, Direction & Performance: Nicola Gunn

Choreography: Jo Lloyd

Sound Design and Composition: Kelly Ryall

Lighting Design: Niklas Pajanti

AV Design and Outside Eye: Martyn Coutts

Costume Design: Shio Otani

Dramaturgy: Jon Haynes

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Piece For Person and Ghetto Blaster is the story of a man, a woman and a duck. It dissects the excruciating realms of human behaviour in an attempt to navigate the moral and ethical complexities of becoming a better person.

PREVIOUS SEASONS

Brisbane: World Theatre Festival, Brisbane Powerhouse, 23 – 27 February 2016

Perth: PICA, 12 – 19 February 2016

Adelaide: Vitalstatistix, 25 – 29 November 2015

Melbourne: Arts House, 11 – 15 November 2015

Sydney: Live Works Festival, Performance Space, 4 – 8 November 2015

ONLINE VIDEO

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/146959463>

Full-length: <https://vimeo.com/147061162> (password - ghentduck)

"A tour-de-force of moral outrage in which the emotion mainly bubbles close to the surface, and occasionally explodes."

Peter Burdon, The Advertiser

"Gunn has always inhabited an artistic space between theatre and performance art, and here she brings both forms into exquisite tension."

Alison Croggan, ABC Arts



REVIEW EXCERPTS



"It's a moral and physical workout, exhausting for performer and audience in the best possible way. Witty, outright funny, deeply intelligent and, as intended, morally perplexing, Piece for Person and Ghetto Blaster [is a] festival experience I'll long remember."

— **Keith Gallasch, Real Time**

"Sometimes there is a work that is so refreshingly provoking that it leaves you in a state of euphoria."

— **James Jackson, Aussie Theatre**

★★★★ "NICOLA Gunn's theatre is tantalising, entertaining, ridiculous and often bewildering in the best possible way. This marvellously eccentric, charming and mischievous performer has created yet another stylish, inventive and startling work...mesmerising and unforgettable."

— **Kate Herbert, Herald Sun**

"Comic Genius... Gunn's text is intricate and often brilliant, full of unpredictable digressions and curious factoids. It's the verbal equivalent of skimming stones over water."

— **Cameron Woodhead, The Age**

★★★★ "Mordantly witty, and wittily digressive." — **Owen Richardson, Daily Review**

"Dizzily witty" — **Georgia Symons, Arts Hub**

"Gunn's text is an extraordinary juggling act, a play of complex ideas in constant motion around the moral problem of the assailed duck, and it is ultimately — and mysteriously — deeply moving. From her simple premise opens the entirety of contemporary anxieties, drawing in their wake our moral culpabilities in the face of systemic problems like climate change or war.

— **Alison Croggan, ABC Arts**

"Gunn [is a] wickedly funny, self-deprecating ironist and highly inventive artist, playing experimentally with form in ways that makes [her] work rewardingly unpredictable."

— **Keith Gallasch, Real Time**



REVIEW EXCERPTS IN SPIE OF MYSELF

★★★★ “This is a show, like Gunn’s others, that exists on many and complex levels: you can enjoy it simply as a funny clown show, or as a sophisticated comic meta-critique examining the validity of art. And she is perhaps the first artist in history to provide live academic endnotes as a means of contextualising her buffoonery while she crawls into an onstage bed for a nap. It’s hilarious.”

— **Van Badham, The Guardian**

★★★★ “In Spite of Myself is never less than fascinating; a meta-theatrical delight that subverts and entertains in equal measure...” — **Richard Watts, artsHub**

“Without using shortcuts to create a mere piss-take or parody it unwinds itself in an exquisitely sarcastic yet poignant exploration of art, how we consume it, and the cost to the artist of creating it, all the while refusing to take itself seriously. Clever, clever stuff.”

— **Liza Dezfouli, Australian Stage**

“She is...a master of recursion. Gunn possesses, to a profound degree, the ability to suspend contradictory thoughts seamlessly in the same space. At the centre is her riveting performance, which enchants the audience from the moment she appears on stage. If ever an artist manages to have her cake and eat it too, it is Gunn, in spite of herself.” — **Alison Croggon, ABC Arts Online**

★★★★ “What follows is a comic tour de force, a deliciously offbeat blend of physical humour and po-faced ironic monologue that dissects all manner of hideous, navel-gazing theatrical experiments in Gunn’s oeuvre... Given the knife-edge immediacy, lightning wit and sheer unbridled lunacy of the performance, you don’t begrudge a moment.”

— **Cameron Woodhead, The Age**

“That she can come up with something like this and avoid any charge of self-indulgence is extraordinary. In Spite of Myself is original, hilarious and moving. Serious silliness. There’s nothing else quite like it. She’s brilliant.” — **Liza Dezfouli, Australian Stage**

“In Spite of Myself is originally fresh, visually gorgeous and so hilariously surprising that it’s impossible to compare Gunn to anyone else, except maybe the fictional artist Nicola Gunn.” — **Anne-Marie Peard, Issimo Magazine**

“In Spite Of Myself is anything but forgettable.” — **Fleur Kilpatrick, Aussie Theatre**

★★★★ “Her comic timing is impeccable, her writing is bizarre and unpredictable, her content often challenging and her parody of performance art ingenious.”

— **Kate Herbert, Herald Sun**



REVIEW EXCERPTS A SOCIAL SERVICE

★★★★½ “A Social Service unites an acute sense of the ridiculous with a sophisticated appreciation of the ways art effects social change, for good or ill. Its comic brilliance will have broad appeal, but the intricate engagement with the ethics behind aesthetics make this one show every artist should see.”

— **Cameron Woodhead, The Age**

★★★★ “It’s not often that a theatre piece is funny, moving, thought provoking and a political call to action, but A Social Service is all of those things... This piece surreptitiously challenges the status quo, compels vigorous, post-show discussion and entertains in that eccentric and idiosyncratic way that only Gunn and Woods can do.” — **Kate Herbert, Herald Sun**

★★★★ “The greatest challenge of A Social Service, a collaboration between Nicola Gunn and David Woods, is managing your own high expectations going into it... It’s an engaging, topical and well-executed handling of a subject few Australian theatre-makers would go near on a main stage for fear of didacticism.” — **Van Badham, The Guardian**



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