



CAN YOU SEE ME?

Directed by Lucy Cassidy

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

For me and my daughter
For you and your children
And for anyone who has ever been a child . . .

Where did this begin?

A photograph: Elsa, my young daughter in the midst of a room, dancing and singing at the top of her voice completely free and uninhibited. I remember feeling simple joy watching her and yet at the same time, slightly sad for me: a woman and a mother feeling a very long way from the vitality and playfulness of that beautiful and spontaneous freedom of expression. There she was new in the world and completely seen, and there I sat in the shadows feeling self-conscious, masked and slightly hidden. I was struck by our connection but also by this difference. I started to wonder what I might learn from her and other children about refinding this 'being completely there'. Curious, I watched her and her friends ... I noticed they were hiding too, in boxes, in forests and in curtains. Hiding but not particularly well, giggling, laughing and playing with it . . .

Can you see me?

In my theatre-making work I've long been interested in liveness and authenticity. I'm interested in the freedom of improvisation within carefully held structures and I wondered if this balance of unexpectedness within clear outlines could work in a piece with and for children. I suspected it could be exciting – the freedom of play, within the safety of boundaries.

It is fundamental to me to work as collaboratively with the children as artistic partners as I do with the adult creative team. I'm fascinated by this kind of co-authoring – the way the learning flows both ways. So what you are watching is often the realisation of the children's thoughts and ideas; structured, shaped and edited by me. I've been keen to find the strategies that allow the children to play freely within the narrative sense of the piece. It's all grown from genuine play.

I hope we've made something that can be enjoyed by adults and small children alike. I've endeavoured to bring the best of my experimental theatre practice to this, my first piece for early years. I noticed that very young children have a huge capacity to watch what we as adults might dismiss as "nothing happening". We've talked about children knowing beauty when they see it – instinctively and without instruction. I hope that we have honoured our young audience by creating a sculptural and sophisticated piece that leaves space for them to surprise us with what they see.

This piece was initiated by the egg's brilliant Incubator scheme, developed in residence at Knowle West Children's Centre and flourished further in St Andrew's school where my collaboration with three of the children who are now in these performances began. It has been a beautiful, enlightening and rigorous process, working with an incredibly inspiring team and it's been hugely rewarding making something for this heart-warmingly vocal, young audience. I hope you enjoy it.

Lucy



For Can You See Me?

Woman: Kathleen Downie
 Girl: Lucy / Livvy
 Boy: Jack / Zac

Creative Team:

Concept and Direction: Lucy Cassidy
 Designer: Edwina Bridgeman
 Lighting Designer: Anna Barrett
 Sound Designer & Composer: Timothy X Attack
 Dramaturg: Kate Yedigiaroff
 Choreographic Facilitation for Kathleen Downie: Jo Shapland
 Production Manager: Kath Montague
 Stage Manager: Gemma Fowler
 Sound Operator: Chris Menes
 Production Carpenter: Chris Samuels
 Costume Maker: Bianca Ward
 Chaperone: Jeanette Cicirello

Can You See Me? was devised by the company which originally included Laura Dannequin

For the egg:

Director: Kate Cross
 Manager: Lindsay Baker
 Finance Administrator: Emma Bryant
 Chief Studio Technician: Lloyd Evans
 Assistant Studio Technician: Phil Coote

Thanks:

Simon and Elsa Cassidy, Suzette Gibbs, Bath Spa Nursery, Bath Spa University, St Andrews School, St Stephens School, Manely and Sita Calvert-Ennals
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