

Towards a Radio Ballad:
Songs of the Journey

Friday 24 June 2016 8pm

PARK NIGHTS
Serpentine Pavilion 2016
Designed by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG)



The role of the Voice is a central theme of our work. Voice exists in an in-between space; neither located purely in the body, the social or the political. It is constantly in motion, resonating through, from and past us. What happens when we try to take ownership of our own Voices? Where are we when we are in silence? What does it mean to 'speak out'? As the logic of capital increasingly governs our lives, how can we imagine and create a space which challenges the profit-driven motives of the neo-liberal discourses we inhabit and perpetuate?

We are implicated, and so are you.

Implicated Theatre – 2011

Implicated Theatre's workshops are based in the praxis of the Brazilian director Augusto Boal (1931-2009). Boal's conception of the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' explicitly challenges the divisions between active and passive states or subjects in theatre. In his work, Boal argues for a theatre in which we are all spect-actors – spectators and actors who shape and reflect on the world around us. Influenced by thinkers such as Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Paulo Freire, Boal travelled internationally to explore the situation of the *oprimido* – the oppressed – a term which, Boal stresses, should not refer to the condition of being defeated, being victims, but of a struggle against oppression.

Since 2011, these workshops, held as part of the Edgware Road Project, have led to the development of the group, as well as a growing archive of writing, still and moving images, and workshops and performances in community spaces such as the Migrants Resource Centre and with organisations such as Justice for Domestic Workers, English for Action, Unite's Hotel Workers branch and the Migrant Workers Education Programme. Implicated Theatre have collectively created an ethical stage – a shared space to explore the ghosts of migration, history and politics. Initially focusing on the personal, Implicated Theatre has developed relationships and techniques that support investigations into the everyday conflicts and grand historical narratives that shape its participants' lives.

Who are you when you work?

What happens to your story?

What remains visible?

What do you see when you are watching someone work?

What is visible behind the tray?

Here are the stories on the other side of the tray.

THE RADIO BALLAD AND ACTUALITY

Charles Parker was a committed Socialist and Trade Unionist. A decorated submarine commander in WW2, he became a BBC producer, later fired for his radicalism by the BBC in the late 1960s. Over 10 years, he worked with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger and major figures from the folk revival to create a series of Radio Ballads (1958-64), a form of creative documentary with no voice-over weaving the words of working people with old and new folk, jazz, choral singing and chamber music. He founded Banner Theatre in Birmingham in 1973, with a staged performance of *Collier Laddie* derived from his Radio Ballad *The Big Hewer* (1961). Banner began as an amateur theatre group of folk performers, which developed a professional group in 1979 with my appointment as director.

When Charles Parker started at the BBC, the words of ordinary people were spoken by actors, very awkwardly, as if they were speaking a foreign language. Charles began to change his own perceptions, when, for example, he heard the neighbour of a dead rail worker (the hero of the first Radio Ballad, *The Ballad of John Axon*) say that “railways go through your spine like Blackpool goes through rock”. He said that he “didn’t need to go to actors or dramatists to find material for drama; he could go straight to the common people instead”.

Charles formulated the notion of Actuality as the living cultural resource of working class people, whose complex, passionate and intellectual discourse defied the stereotypes of the time. Charles Parker asserted, as did his collaborators MacColl and Seeger, that the folk song tradition embodied the language and discursive structures from long histories of cultural and political life and struggle. He heard this in the stories and conversation of working people.

To prepare for Actuality-based work, practitioners establish contacts and relationships with trade unionists in assorted communities: for Implicated Theatre this has been with Hotel, Restaurant and Domestic workers.

During my 8-year Banner directorship (1979-87), I lived for 18 months on the Lincoln Estate in Corby, North Hants, working with members of the community to create an extensive set of recordings, photographs and contacts for gigs for the *Steel Show* (1979-80). Working together with Peter Yates and Graham Lucas of Banner Theatre, we produced a show telling the story of the rise and fall of the Steel Industry in Corby and of the struggle of the workers to prevent it. It was interwoven with songs and music specially written and projections, Piscator-style, of pictures we took during the Save Our Steel struggle and chosen by Charles Parker. Ironically, forty years later the UK seems to have returned to this moment!

In Corby, we consulted with the steelworkers and their families, debating the politics and content of the show, working to achieve a collective vision. The show was performed all over the UK.

In *Songs of the Journey*, Implicated Theatre is exploring what it might mean to approach the concept of the Radio Ballad today. We are working closely with union members, asking what it means to work with voices of workers today, indeed, what is meant by the 'working class'? How different is the experience of Unite the Union from that of the Steel Union in the 1980s?

Recording sessions have once again immersed me in the richness of working people's speech. Hearing the complexity and vividness of second-language speakers' telling of experiences which I could not have imagined, has returned me to the notion of Actuality.

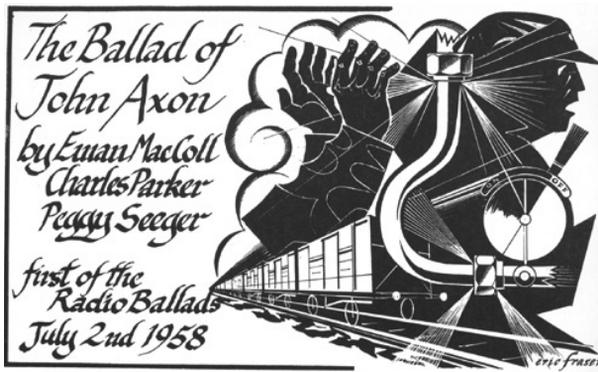
The dominant notion of "restricted codes" is still with us. Now, it goes beyond the "native" working class to later arrivals, part of the justification for the exploitation of the new, poorly paid, migrant workforce.

We have experienced the richness, complexity and passion of their English.

It is Actuality.



Photograph courtesy of the Library of Birmingham



Illustrated by Eric Fraser
Courtesy of the Library of Birmingham

A STATEMENT FROM UNITE THE UNION'S HOTEL
WORKERS BRANCH:

“We are the engine that drives London’s tourism sector. We are the luggage porters, the receptionists, the chefs, the waiters, the bar tenders and the room attendants. We greet the guest and carry their luggage, we check them into their rooms, we cook their meal, serve their tables and pour their drinks, we make their beds and clean their rooms.

We are proud to be professional. We are proud of our skills and our customer service. We deserve to be treated better than we are. We do not deserve to be exploited and taken advantage of by an industry that has adopted an exploitative and wholly unethical business model based on poverty pay and job insecurity.

We want to serve notice on our employers that we are no longer prepared to stand back and watch you mismanage an industry that we want to be able to take pride in.”

LONDON - AN UNETHICAL DESTINATION

The Hotel Workers Branch of Unite the Union has been campaigning for many years to raise the profile of the plight of hotel workers. We developed strategies to organise the hotel workforce in the face of ongoing resistance from employers. The global hotel chains were already well into a corporate model designed to rid themselves of the responsibility of ownership and management by selling their hotel buildings, franchising their operation and concentrating on marketing their brands. What this meant for hotel workers was the destruction of the traditional “hotel team” concept and direct employment and a move into outsourcing employees to sub-contractors, and employment agencies. This has in turn led to the erosion of decent working conditions and a drive down of pay rates to the National Minimum Wage.

However hotels were not content with the massive profits that they were making from the London tourist and visitor market so they sought to squeeze more money from the workers by putting out yearly tenders for contracts leading to agencies competing on labour costs by increasing workloads. This is where the majority of hotel workers now find themselves – a working environment in which they are low paid, exploited and powerless. And so today the London hotel sector stands condemned by its workforce as being the one of the most unethical tourist destinations in the world.

The good news is that workers are beginning to fight back in the realisation that nothing is going to change until they make it change. As part of that fightback unite has given a voice to workers to speak to other workers so as to explain why and how things can change. In this simple document you can learn the facts about how the rich and successful the hotel sector exploits its workforce and systematically denies them access to their basic human rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

65 Million Tourist visited London in 2015

Average room prices up 7.3% to £160 per night

2% year on year increase in profitability for London hotels

68% of hospitality workers paid less than London Living Wage

90% of bar staff, 85% of waiting staff and 80% of kitchen staff paid less than living wage

Staff turnover cost hospitality employers £274 million annually

Out of 993,000 new staff needed by 2022 - 870,000 of those will be need to replace staff who will leave the sector all together

70% of London Hospitality workers are migrant workers

From the upcoming report 'Unethical London' by Unite the Union's Hotel Workers Branch

Performed by	Implicated Theatre members: Alireza Alimohammadi Thierry Bedue Anabel Claro Catherine de Lima Kang Wai Tung Jojo Trevor King Grace McQueen Tunde Molnar Larisa Petkova Hugh O'Shea Atsuto Suzuki
Director	Frances Rifkin
Co-Directors	Nelly Alfandari Graham Lucas Amal Khalaf
Assistant Directors	Nelly Alfandari Amal Khalaf
Stage Manager	Graham Lucas Edd Hobbs
Sound performed by	Patrick Farmer



BIOGRAPHIES

Implicated Theatre has been working since October 2011 on a series of workshops and performances forming part of their residency with the Serpentine Galleries' Edgware Road Project. Instigated by artists from no.w.here and working with theatre director Frances Rifkin, the experimental workshops explore the relationships between political speech and action, the self and the collective, voice and silence. Forming close relationships with migrant's rights groups and unions, Implicated Theatre creates theatrical interventions inspired by real-life struggle, and highlighting issues of social justice.

Patrick Farmer is the co-founder of the online curatorial platform, Compost and Height, co-editor of the new-music journal, Wolf Notes. Curator of *Sound I'm Particular* lecture series, and Significant Landscapes Festival. Published four books and written compositions for groups such as Apartment House and the Set Ensemble. Performed and exhibited internationally with artists such as Angharad Davies, Michael Pisaro, Sarah Hughes, and Jason Kahn. Festival appearances and residencies include Audiograft (Oxford), The Wulf (Los Angeles), LMC (London), I & E (Dublin), Geiger (Gothenberg), Blurred Edges (Hamburg), Forestry Commission England (Cumbria), Q-O2 (Belgium) and MOKS (Estonia). Work has been released on labels such as Another Timbre, Nadukeenumono, and Winds Measure. Current work looks at the nature of the arbitrary; writing compositions that primarily focus on the sound producing means rather than the sound itself, often utilising more and more fantastical methods to create sounds that are themselves, wonderfully ordinary.

Frances Rifkin artistic director of Utopia Arts, is a cultural worker and director in Political and Community theatre. In the 1970s she was director of Recreation Ground Theatre Company and in the 1980s she was director of Banner Theatre, Birmingham and participated as a theatre activist in the anti-fascist movements, disputes and strikes of the time. She trained extensively with Augusto Boal in the early 1990s and works as a workshop leader. Between 1992 and 1997, she was lecturer in Community and workshop theatre in Theatre Studies at Warwick and Lancaster Universities. Since 2011 she has been working with the Serpentine Galleries' Edgware Road Project as the director of Implicated Theatre.

Towards a Radio Ballad: Songs of the Journey
Friday 24 June 2016 8pm

PARK NIGHTS
Serpentine Pavilion 2016
Designed by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG)

© 2016 Serpentine Galleries, the artists and the writers
With thanks to all the participants

PARK NIGHTS SUPPORTED BY



DRINKS PARTNER



SERPENTINE GALLERIES SUPPORTED BY

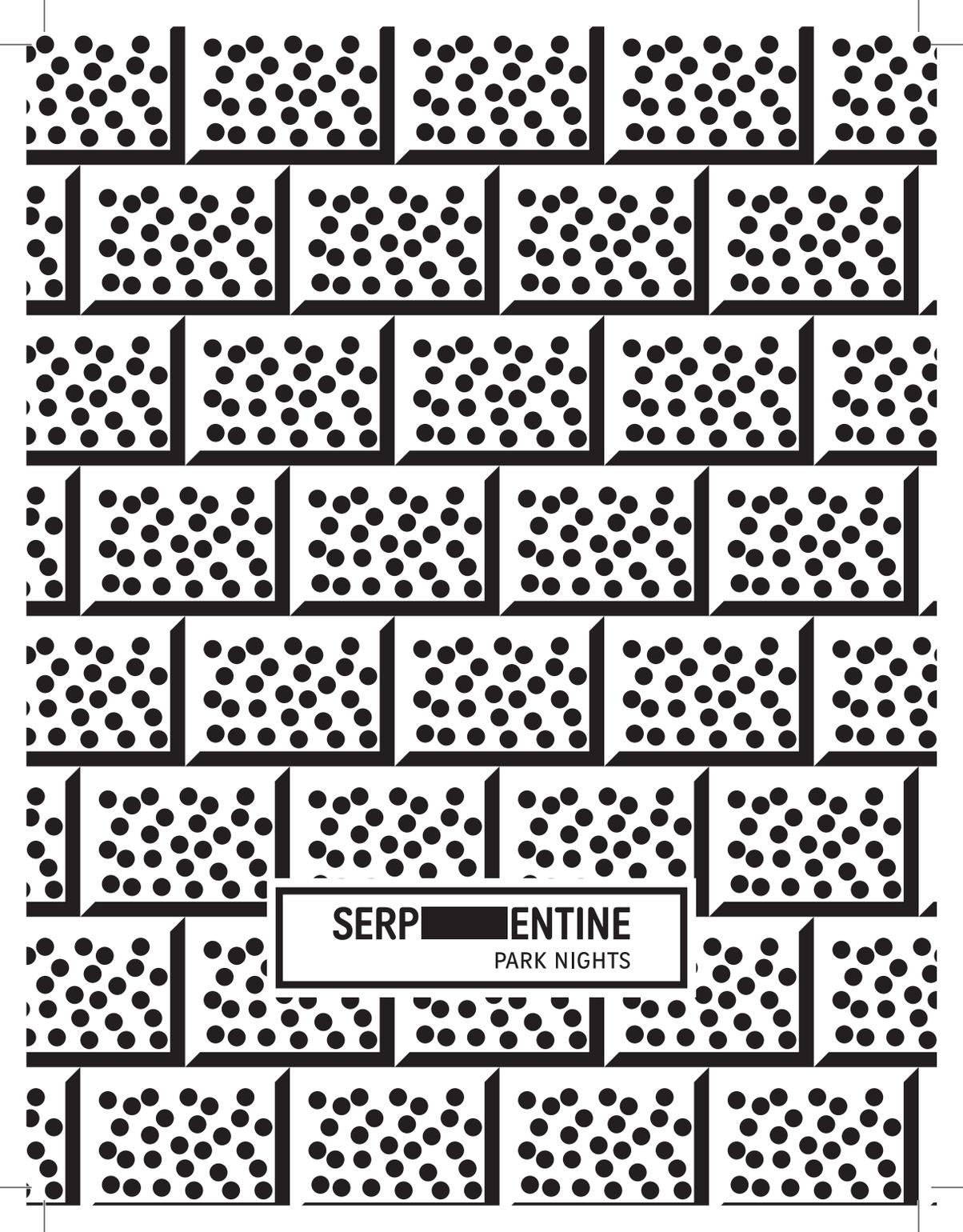


Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Programme designed by Giles Round
Printed by Hato Press, London





SERP  ENTINE
PARK NIGHTS