

Edinburgh Festival Fringe – The Way You Tell Them



Summerhall, 1 Summerhall, Red Lecture Theatre: 3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 15 Aug at 1pm (2pm) Anatomy Lecture Theatre: 19, 21, 23 Aug at 3.30pm (4.30pm) Ticket prices: £10, £8 (conc), £7 (preview 3 Aug)

A spotlight on why we joke from two collaborating performers straddling the line between theatre and stand-up, created and performed by Rachel Mars and directed by Jamie Wood

Theatre maker and joke obsessive Rachel Mars' latest solo performance considers how and why we use and abuse comedy in everyday life. It is a funny, painful and intelligent show that fuses real life stories, the dissection of humour, and strong visual imagery.

Rachel has recently been commissioned by Fuel Theatre, and has performed across the UK at Spill Festival, The Barbican, BFI, Pulse Festival and The Southbank Centre. Jamie Wood's work ranges from the comic and darkly surreal plays of The Frequency D'Ici (Paperweight, Scotsman Fringe First 2008, Director) and is an Associate Artist with Chris Goode & Company. As a long-term collaborator with Goode, Jamie devised and performed in Escapology (2004), the critically acclaimed Homemade (2005) and Longwave (2006), and co-directed Hey Matthew (2008) and 9 (2011). In 2009, he was short-listed for The Stage Acting Award (Best Ensemble) and the Total Theatre Award for Icarus 2.0, devised with Matt Ball.

Setting up and deconstructing the comedy performer, the performance uses theatre to examine the comic form. As research, she interviewed stand-ups, academics, humourists and critics, then toured the London comedy circuit performing a

bizarre act in a wolf suit which in was greeted with huge laughs or total bewilderment depending on the night. The show is for anyone who has questioned why they are laughing or trying to make people laugh.

Rachel deconstructs stand-up, discusses the strange uses of comedy in her Jewish family, and tells jokes as she journeys through the difficult ethical terrain of comedy. She asks where the buck stops, and what happens when you choose to go beyond the easy gag.

Rachel Mars said of the performance: "If you open Leo Rosten's 256 page joke book *The Book Of Laughter* and read out the punchline of any joke, my brother and I can work backwards to tell you the beginning. When my father answers the phone, his first words are not "how are you" but "got any new ones?" My shows are often about human interaction and social behaviour – how we are towards each other and why; families, underdogs, and the lessons we can learn from Tootsie. And they always try to be funny. The idea for the show started when I tried to be serious at work for a whole day and my colleagues got genuinely worried, and it developed when I observed our society's discomfort with anything too serious for too long. I both use and distance myself from my own self-protective, compulsively joking persona. I want to ask – Why do we joke all the time? What are we scared of? Where does the responsibility lie when seeking a laugh? How do our bodies, brains and emotions both protect and betray us when it comes to humour? It's an analytical show. A sad show. A thinky show. And, after all, a funny show. I hope that it is both painful and joyous. A bit like life. But considerably shorter (See? There you go again, brain, always with the jokes. Can't you cut it out for one minute?)"

The Way You Tell Them was originally staged as part of Camden People's Theatre's *Beyond The Joke Festival* in January 2013, and developed on CPT's *Starting Blocks 2012* scheme. *The Way You Tell Them* is directed by Jamie Wood, whose own show *Beating*

McEnroe is also performing at Summerhall. Both artists met through Camden People's Theatre's artist network and are obsessed with human relationships, families, laughter and immense sadness. True collaborators, Jamie directed Rachel's performance and offered up his skills in clowning and genuine liveness, while Rachel offered an objective eye on his show.

The Way You Tell Them was supported with a grant from the Arts Council England and was commissioned by the Basement, Brighton with additional support from CPT, London and the London Comedy Film Festival.