

Reckless Sleepers

Workshops and residencies Education information



Artistic Statement

Reckless Sleepers create original theatre pieces installation projects and interventions for theatres, galleries, museums, site and seasonally specific projects that both entertain and challenge its audiences, viewers and participants.

Research and Development

All of Reckless Sleepers projects are initiated out of a conversation from which ideas form. We test these ideas practically with 2 week intensive periods of research and development, for a time these were developed in our own rehearsal space now we prefer to work in different locations. We use this same way of working to develop projects with Universities, we don't start with a theme, or a set text. We find out what people in a group are interested in individually and then find a way of fusing these interests or obsessions into a collective project.

The graduate programme

One of our newest initiatives **Club Reckless** supports the creation and distribution of new works with large ensembles of young artists. **Club Reckless** is made up of participants from the university residencies that the company has led. The first **This is not America part 3** in 2010 we presented in 8 different UK venues.

It has been followed by projects for the Universities of Hull Scarborough, Kent, Northampton, MMU Cheshire and KASK in Gent.

The residency model

An invitation to present our projects in a town or city is often the catalyst for other activity to take place. We like to promote an idea of the company in residence (in a city and venue) this helps us make connections between organisations and pedagogical institutions based in or close by to wherever we might be presenting our work.

The most successful venue residencies that the company have had are when the artists involved in the group are able to make connections with other people and places.

To start other conversations..

The University model

There have been many invitations to make work with University groups, what we have found that works the best for all of us is that we work with final year or MA Students, that we start the project a month before to meet for a day to start a conversation, to participate in a workshop session that supports the generation of ideas from everyone in the room.

We then say goodbye and then return a month later to spend up to two weeks with the group to help make a project for a public presentation.

Now the scale and duration of this model can be flexible, we like to work with large ensembles, stay in the town where it takes place, show a piece of work, evaluate the work after the performance, go out, make some friends, find some new artists that we can work with in the future, currently 5 members of Reckless Sleepers started their connection with the company through a residency project.

What works best of course is that the Students can see one of our projects in another venue or in the University as part of that residency.

Its good if we can get some decent documentation so that we can propose the project to other Festivals or Universities that's how we started our **Club Reckless** project.

Publications and supporting materials

In 2005 Reckless Sleepers produced a book called **Trial** documenting the processes used in the development of a project called Schrödinger Box. This publication was one of the main factors in remaking and re-touring the performance we now call **Schrödinger**.

Workshops further practical information

All workshop sessions that we present are tailored to that specific group, time, date, space and context within which it happens. This is often established with the group leader, lecturer or teacher who has invited us to lead a session(s).

Our workshops are generally 3hrs in duration, we need no technical support, just a large space, and willing participants. More often than not we are asked to share the devising processes and creative exercises that Reckless Sleepers have developed in its 20-year history.

Our own processes are constantly evolving new forms and strategies are produced each time we create a project. This process of evolution extends into workshops sessions where for example a group might want a particular focus, with advanced lead in contact with a course leader we are able to tap into the bank of processes that we have developed to provide a relevant stimulating bespoke experience for each group.

There are so many different ways of working with a group in a workshop its impossible to list them. Our book Trail focusses on just a fraction of the devising strategies, games and rules that we created in making the Schrödinger project.

Practical stuff

Generally we suggest working with groups of around 15 with an adequate space of 10m x 10m but we have provided workshop sessions for smaller and larger groups.

For the Theatre and Dance workshops the primary focus is providing practical means of supporting participants to create their own work. Sharing our own rules about devising, offering ways of writing text for performances, making works through pre-determined mathematical structures, gestural and physical work using very simple observational techniques. Generally it is a process of doing, observing, interpretation and doing again.

Groups have varied in age and experience and range of art form specialties we've worked for and with, teachers and lecturers, acted as consultants for organisations, created lectures together with students, made projects with visitors to galleries, dance companies, theatre companies, young and established artists and groups.

Many of the processes that we use are about making something together, even when working on solo projects we insist that these are developed in a group.

Our workshops processes are formed out of the strategies that we have developed ourselves in our own rehearsal periods, of course all of these mechanisms can be modified to suit different forms – they are not answers to making work – they are starting points.

Most workshops are led by company director Mole Wetherell a workshop may start with tried and tested workshop games, but often the dynamics of a group mean that new things come out, that's how we make our work happen.

The deal with participants is clear, we are all in the same room to learn something – we can facilitate or kick start the process, when a room is full of people who want to invest in what we provide, then we at Reckless Sleepers will also learn something new too.

Longer residencies support more advanced work, these have included weekend intensives, 2 week creative residencies supporting larger group ensembles with their devised projects, solo performance work, visiting artists, and lecture performances.

Our preference is that workshops are scheduled when Reckless Sleepers are presenting another piece of work, so that participants can see a route from the processes that we share with them to a finished project, and post-show discussion.

We always find time to talk with people who take part in our events, formally with post show discussions or in smaller informal groups after a performance. These points of contact are really important to us, were interested in creating a dialogue, receiving feedback, and giving advice.

Cost

Well a standard workshop we would expect to be paid £250 per day, a 3hr workshop £150. This should include travel and accommodation, if booked in advance its easier for us to organise another workshop or lecture about the work that we make.

Lectures are £150 they are generally 45 minutes long with a Q&A that lasts for 30 minutes. The current lecture is called in the same room, its a powerpoint presentation, a projector a chalk/white board and pens are required.

Supporting letters

Department of Contemporary Arts Manchester Metropolitan University

The Contemporary Theatre and Performance (CTP) degree at Manchester Metropolitan University has enjoyed a long and hugely beneficial relationship with Reckless Sleepers, particularly through the input and activities of the artistic director Mole Wetherell.

Not only has Reckless Sleepers performed at the Axis Arts Centre on campus, previously the Alsager Arts Centre, on numerous occasions over the years, but the company has also employed CTP graduates as performers, technicians and producers, whilst Mole has worked as a visiting artist directing large-scale student projects and contributing one-off discussions and workshops.

However it is through The Artist Project - a semi-independent project initiated and completed by two professional artists each year but substantially built and owned by the third year students - that the company has had most impact. As one of these artists (invited back more than any other) Mole Wetherell has regularly dedicated huge amounts of creative energy to the project, demonstrating his un-surpassed skills in engaging with the creative endeavours of the students and re-investing them with the artist coherence, direction and rigour required of professional standard performance work.

In addition, on two occasions the performance pieces resulting from this process have formed the basis of Club Reckless projects, taken on by the company as professional touring performance works and offering paid performance work to several of the students originally involved.

Mole Wetherell is that unique combination of highly skilled and experienced professional artist, engaging and responsive personality, and tireless enthusiast for the creative potential of young people. As a major figure in the innovative theatre performance sector in the UK and abroad, his educational work challenges students to mine their individuality and creative resources as performers and theatre makers, as much as his theatre work challenges audiences to re-consider the function and functioning of live performance.

Neil Mackenzie Axis Arts Centre/Flare Festival/Plane Performance

Glasgow University.

I am writing to offer evidence of the enormously productive work which Reckless Sleepers have undertaken in recent years, particularly with students and younger audiences.... I am interested in exposing my students to the most challenging, skilful and relevant examples of practice, but where there is a workshop or educational dimension to such a relationship I particularly attend to the quality of engagement between the company concerned and the student group. I have to say that the educational work undertaken has been exemplary in this respect. And this is not always true of other groups, no matter how exciting their performance practice is.

Last autumn we invited you to perform *The Pilots* and run an intensive day workshop with selected Theatre Studies students because we knew that the performance strategies and concerns which characterised the work of Reckless Sleepers engaged imaginatively, practically and theoretically with our curriculum concerns and its pedagogies. Your visit here was remarkably successful – the theatre was full for the performance and students attending the workshop were – intelligently – appreciative of the work undertaken. It was

indeed an excellent, if small, 'case study' of a productive and generative relationship between a university department and a professional theatre company.

I should also point out that as external examiner for the Contemporary Theatre and Performance programme at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) I am very aware of the significant relationship Reckless Sleepers has had with this department over the years. It has been clear to me that the impact you have had with 2nd and 3rd year students and the quality of their work has been substantial. Indeed, the pedagogical model worked out between yourselves and tutors at MMU has been exemplary and one we would aspire to follow and recreate here, if resources allowed. I have remarked on this in my reports as an external examiner.

Dr Simon Murray Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies

Reckless Sleepers Residency - University of Hull Scarborough

Mole Wetherell and Reckless Sleepers were Artists in Working Residence at the School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull (Scarborough Campus), at the subject of Theatre & Performance, during the academic year 2010-11.

Within this framework Mole and his colleagues worked with 28 3rd Year students of the programme over a two-week intensive period in order to produce an original contemporary performance piece.

Mole also conducted a workshop prior to the intensive period, which introduced the students to the project and Reckless Sleepers' working methods. This was followed by a period of independent research and preparation by the students, which was partly supervised through online communication.

The outcome of this creative process was the 60 minute ensemble piece "Die Young Stay Pretty", which was performed at the University of Hull's Scarborough Campus as part of Coastival. The piece was also performed at the Flare International Festival of New Theatre in Manchester.

Mole and his colleagues were excellent in their interaction and exchange with the students, and the performance outcome was of a high quality.

What impressed us in particular was Mole's relaxed but focus way of working, which really engaged the students and inspired them to actively contribute to the development of the work.

We also appreciated Mole's inclusive attitude, which allowed all students to contribute equally to the development of the piece. This included some weak students, and also some students with disabilities and mental health issues.

The deeply collaborative and equitable nature of the process was beneficial to the group as a whole, as well as to the students' development as individual performers and makers. Reckless Sleepers also encouraged and supported the presentation of the work at the Flare Festival.

Mole and his colleagues clearly have a highly developed ability and experience of working with young people in a range of educational contexts.

We would recommend Reckless Sleepers to other Universities without any hesitation.

Dr Maria Chatzichristodoulou

South Cheshire College

We invited Mole Wetherell in to our A2 Drama and Theatre Studies group to deliver a workshop on devising techniques; we shall certainly be booking him again as the results were excellent! Mole built up a relationship with the students quickly and professionally, quietly encouraging them to go beyond initial responses to stimuli/ ideas, to explore in detail and depth both as a group and as individuals. In a short space of time the students were observing and noting subtle movement and vocal changes then going onto work collaboratively to create short dramatic pieces.

The skills developed in this workshop were invaluable when devising their own unit 2 exam performances with the majority of the students describing the workshop experience in detail in their written documentation.

We attended Reckless Sleepers' performance of Schrodinger at Axis Arts Centre which proved to be an inspiring and memorable experience for our students: "I've never seen anything like this – it really opened my eyes to a different type of performance", "such energy and excitement, we need to perform like this in our own work", "I didn't take my eyes off the actors and set for a minute-totally mesmerizing"...

Theatre groups and practitioners of Reckless Sleepers and Mole Wetherell's ilk are invaluable to the education system; they provide a wider context of performance that we are unable to deliver in schools and colleges and inspire the students to a higher level of achievement in their own practice and understanding.

Penny Doyle

UCLAN Drama and Theatre studies

The visit to the performance and the subsequent workshop proved invaluable to the development of the students work. Our course addresses closely the areas of visual, textual and physical performance and 'Schrödinger' offers a clear model of how to intelligently construct work across these forms.

The workshop was a really positive experience for the students. They report that their own ideas and approaches had value and currency, which is a credit to how Mole relates to developing artists in the workshop environment.

Much of the work encountered in a few hours has formed the basis of on-going explorations for the students in their own practice. Keeping these performances and workshop/engagement/mentorship opportunities available and affordable to our developing artists and students is certainly essential in their training.

Christopher Gilligan

[Flickr](#)

[Vimeo 16 bodies MMU 2013](#)

www.reckless-sleepers.eu

[Scarborough Light Blog - Die young stay pretty Blog](#)

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