

Press Release
London, 4 September 2013

Aorta Theatre Collective (UK) & Life Art (Vietnam) present

The UK premiere tour of

STRANGER

Devised by the company

Co-directed by Rob Hale & Pan Y Ly

Scenography by Paul Burgess

What is it to be female? What is it to be male? Who decides?

Co-produced by Aorta Theatre Collective (UK) and Life Art (Vietnam), **Stranger** is a unique and compelling theatrical collaboration between England and Vietnam. It will be presented in the UK for the first time in September 2013 during a short tour in Cardiff, where it will be featured at the World Stage Design 2013, and London, at Tara Arts and The Albany.

Stranger is a visually-led devised theatre performance that explores stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in modern Vietnam and seeks to engage debate. What is the strange unfamiliar land of the other? Are we forever separate or do we belong together?

Stranger experiments with sound, image, language and music to trace the journey of a young woman and man who question the gender roles they are subject to.

Adapted to an international audience, the piece will initiate a programme of workshops and discussions aimed at nurturing artistic dialogue between Eastern and Western theatre practices. In order to fully express its potential the company will engage with the Vietnamese communities living in London and the rest of the UK during rehearsals and performances period. The project wishes to promote Vietnamese stories, culture and art, which are rarely represented in the UK.

Entirely devised by the company, and featuring video performances by Welsh multi-award winning artist **Eddie Ladd**, this theatre collaboration is the fruition of a 10 year period of dialogue between London-based Aorta Theatre Collective and Same Stuff Theatre, a group of extremely brave and innovative young actors in Hanoi who strive to make new theatre outside the traditional state sponsored system.

The seeds of this project started in 2012 with funding from British Council Hanoi, to create a visual theatre piece that would tell stories related to male/female power struggles within an eastern context but be comprehensible across linguistic and cultural borders. Performer and co-director **Phan Y Ly** and actor **Ho Ngoc Bao Khiem** invited theatre director **Rob Hale** and scenographer **Paul Burgess** from the UK to join a devising process, which produced three improvised performances under the title **Stranger** at the BlackBox studio theatre in Hanoi in April 2012. These sell-out performances were received enthusiastically by a young audience who had no previous exposure to devised and improvised theatre.

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Co-director Rob Hale is a theatre maker whose experimental performances and text based pieces have been realised in theatres and gallery spaces in London, Denmark, and Vietnam. Most recent London work has been *What We're Up Against* by Theresa Rebeck at The Old Red Lion Theatre.

Scenographer Paul Burgess has worked across the UK and abroad, mainly as a designer but also as a director of visually-led theatre. He co-founded art-theatre crossover group Scale Project and is artistic director of Daedalus Theatre Company. He has taught at many universities, including Goldsmiths, London, and the National College of Arts, Pakistan. He is on the committee of the Society of British Theatre Designers.

Co-director and performer Phan Y Ly is also the founder and artistic director of SameStuff Theatre, first independent experimental theatre group in Vietnam. After 4 years working for UNDP and INGO'S in Vietnam, Ly pursued MA in Theatre and Media for Development at the University of Winchester. Phan Y Ly's professional experience, creative collaborations, consultancies and independent projects cover Vietnam, the UK, Kenya, Thailand and the Philippines.

Tour dates and details:

- Saturday 14 September 2013, 1.30pm and 6.30pm @ **Scenofest, World Stage Design 2013**, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Castle Grounds, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3ER Wales; tickets £6.
For booking visit <http://www.wsd2013.com/whats-on/same-stuff-theatre-ha-noi-vietnam-stranger/>
- Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 September 2013, 7:30pm @ **Tara Arts**, 356 Garratt Lane, London SW18 4ES; tickets £14, £9.50 concessions.
For booking tel. 020 8333 4457 or visit <http://tara-arts.com/whats-on/stranger>
- Thursday 19 September 2013, 8:00pm @ **The Albany studio**, Douglas Way, Deptford, London SE8 4AG; tickets £12, £10 concessions
For booking tel. 020 8692 4446 or visit <http://www.thealbany.org.uk/whatson>

For more information, interviews and images please contact:

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