

Along came a Spider...

Wednesday 6th May

For five days in September 2008, the streets, docks and buildings of Liverpool were occupied by a fifty-foot high spider. Commissioned by the Culture Company for Liverpool 2008, and brought to the city through a collaboration between creators La Machine, producers Artichoke and production company Unusual, *La Machine* has been hailed as one of the highlights of the Capital of Culture celebrations, uniting thousands of people as they watched *La Princesse* on her journey through the city.

The successful delivery of this show relied on embedding it in the city and the wider region. The context profoundly influenced the creative content, the logistical delivery and the way the show was communicated to the public. The first half of this conference will look in detail at the question of context, both for *La Machine* in particular and for the development of outdoor arts programmes in general.

For the second half of the conference, we will be looking more broadly at some key issues around outdoor arts, including how value can be measured and articulated. A series of facilitated group discussions will encourage delegates to take an active role in the conference while the final plenary session will draw together the major themes of the day.

Conference Programme

- 09:00** **Arrival, registration and tea/coffee**
- 09:30** **Welcome and Opening Plenary**
Spider in the City: Artichoke, La Machine and the City of Liverpool
Helen Marriage and Nicky Webb (Artichoke)
- 10:15** **Breakout Sessions x 3**
- Tunnels and Towers: the creative development of La Machine***
François Delarozière (La Machine) & Helen Marriage (Artichoke)
- Leap of Faith: the operational delivery of La Machine***
Katy Fuller (Artichoke), Alan Jacobi (Unusual), Andy Barr (Liverpool City Council) and Bob Prattey (ACC Liverpool)
- Weaving a Web: the communications strategy for La Machine***
Nicky Webb (Artichoke) and Mark Thomas (Liverpool Daily Post)
- 11:30** **Tea/coffee break**
- 12:00** **Plenary**
Outdoor Arts in Context: three case studies
Fiona Gasper (Liverpool Culture Company), Stella Hall (Newcastle Gateshead Initiative) and Bill Gee (Independent Producer)
Chaired by Michael Eakin (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic)
- 13:15** **Lunch**
- 14:15** **Facilitated Discussion Sessions**
- 15:30** **Tea/coffee break**
- 16:00** **Closing Plenary**
Capitalising on Culture
Mick Elliott (DCMS), Bill Morris (LOCOG) and Dr Beatriz Garcia (Impacts 08)
- 17:00** **Close of conference followed by drinks reception in the Upstairs bar**
- 18:00** **Screening of John Wyver's documentary about *La Machine***
- 19:00** **Close of event**

OPENING PLENARY

Spider in the City: Artichoke, La Machine and the City of Liverpool **Helen Marriage and Nicky Webb (Artichoke)**

As an introduction to the day Artichoke's Directors, Helen Marriage and Nicky Webb, will talk about how Artichoke came to be invited to produce a large-scale theatrical event for Liverpool 08. They will consider what the Culture Company's aspirations were in commissioning *La Machine* and its place in the wider Capital of Culture programme, including the impact on the audience.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS – AM

Tunnels and Towers: the creative development of La Machine **François Delarozière (La Machine) and Helen Marriage (Artichoke)**

As a new commission, *La Machine* was created specifically for Liverpool and its development was, therefore, influenced and informed by the city setting. Francois and Helen will talk about how the show and story were shaped by the historical and cultural context of the city as well as its physical features.

Leap of Faith: the operational delivery of La Machine **Katy Fuller (Artichoke), Alan Jacobi (Unusual), Andy Barr (Liverpool City Council) and Bob Prattey (ACC Liverpool)**

In order to successfully realise *La Machine* Artichoke had to work closely with many local agencies and organisations in the planning and delivery of the show. There was also a concerted effort to integrate a large number of local people into the show as musicians, crew and volunteers. This session will look at these relationships and the crucial part they played in allowing the event to achieve its full potential.

Weaving a Web: the communications strategy for La Machine **Nicky Webb (Artichoke) and Mark Thomas (Liverpool Daily Post)**

As with Artichoke's previous production, *The Sultan's Elephant*, the communications strategy for *La Machine* relied heavily on building intrigue and interest but keeping the central details a secret until the last possible moment. This was only possible through close collaboration with the local media. Nicky and Mark will look at the success of the communications campaign in attracting a local audience, as well as huge interest beyond the city, and will also talk about how the consequent high expectations were managed.

PLENARY

Outdoor Arts in Context: three case studies **Fiona Gasper (Liverpool Culture Company), Stella Hall (Newcastle Gateshead Initiative), Bill Gee (Independent Producer)** **Chaired by Michael Eakin (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic)**

Having looked in detail at how *La Machine* was creatively and practically influenced by being presented as part of Liverpool Capital of Culture, this session will look more broadly at the influence of context on the development of programmes of outdoor work. Three producers will each present a case study on the programme that they have been instrumental in developing. They will consider the impetus behind the programme, the opportunities for artist development and the impact on the audience. A subsequent panel discussion will explore the differences and similarities.

DISCUSSION SESSIONS - PM

The afternoon opens with a series of discussion sessions on different subjects, including:

Capturing Value in Outdoor Events

Facilitated by John Holden (Demos Associate)

How do we measure the value of outdoor events when there is no easy way to capture data and little critical engagement? John will encourage delegates to recognise the values created through their practice and to look at how these can be captured and articulated in a meaningful way, alongside instrumental values, to demonstrate the importance of what they do.

Beyond the Live Audience: representing outdoor arts on screen

Facilitated by John Wyver (Illuminations)

Even with a live audience totalling several hundreds of thousands, the virtual audience for *La Machine*, viewing broadcast and online content of the show, outnumbered this many times over. How can event producers and broadcasters work together and engage with the art in new and innovative ways to capture the spirit of the events and enliven the experience for this remote audience?

There is currently one discussion session for which we have not yet allocated a subject. This is to allow delegates to put forward suggestions for what should be covered in this session. If there is a key issue or burning question you feel could be profitably addressed during this session, then please put your suggestion in the space provided on the booking form. At the end of March we will look at all the submitted suggestions and endeavour to facilitate a discussion on one or more of these.

CLOSING PLENARY

Capitalising on Culture

Mick Elliott (DCMS), Bill Morris (LOCOG) and Dr Beatriz Garcia (Impacts 08)

The final session will draw on the discussions of context and value which have taken place earlier in the day. Dr Beatriz Garcia will present some of the early findings about the outcomes and legacy of Liverpool's Capital of Culture, Mick Elliott will talk about why the DCMS is interested in replicating the benefits in other UK cities by instating a UK capital of culture programme, and Bill Morris will discuss what role cultural activity will perform during the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012.

The panel will then be asked to consider whether outdoor arts practitioners should embrace the utilitarian outcomes the work is often cited as delivering, and, indeed, exploit the opportunities these present, or whether we should be making stronger arguments for the intrinsic value of outdoor arts – its emotional and imaginative power - before the ancillary benefits it might bring.