TOURETTESHERO AND BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ALBANY, BRING JESS THOM’S ACCLAIMED PERFORMANCE OF SAMUEL BECKETT’S NOT I TO HOME MANCHESTER, TUE 31 MARCH - THU 2 APRIL 2020

Following the success of their multi award-winning and internationally touring show, Backstage in Biscuit Land, Touretteshero, in a co-production with Battersea Arts Centre, presents a neurodiverse production of Samuel Beckett’s Not I at HOME Manchester, Tuesday 31 March - Thursday 2 April 2020.

The critically acclaimed show made its UK premiere in 2017, followed by a successful London run in 2018 and a BBC film commission exploring neurodiversity in the arts through the work of Samuel Beckett, and has just returned from a highly successful US tour.
Artist, writer and activist Jess Thom has Tourettes Syndrome, a neurological condition that means she makes movements and noises she can’t control, called tics. In 2010 she co-founded Touretteshero as a creative response to her experience of having Tourettes.

*Not I* is one of Samuel Beckett’s most physically challenging and tongue-twisting monologues. Touretteshero’s production is the first time that someone with Tourettes is performing the playwright’s texts, with the support of The Beckett Estate.

Drawing on references as eclectic as grime, street fashion and cattle auctions, Touretteshero aims to bring diverse, new and curious audiences to Beckett in a way that both honours his work and opens it up to new creative conversations. For its new interpretation Touretteshero has created a radical and relaxed theatrical experience in four parts: a warm welcome to the space, a performance of *Not I* by Samuel Beckett, a short documentary film, and a discussion with the audience.

All performances of *Not I* will be relaxed, which means there is a relaxed attitude to noise and movement in the auditorium. Latecomers will be admitted, and re-admittance will be allowed throughout the show. Ear defenders will be available for those with sensory sensitivities, and a chill-out space is available for anyone who needs to take a break from the space.

Performing as the character of Mouth, Jess wears a bespoke LED-lined hoodie, designed by cutting edge costume designers Kimatica Studio, to strikingly illuminate her mouth amidst a blackout. British Sign Language interpretation is fully integrated to accompany Mouth’s words as another layer of visual expression.

A custom built see-saw structure, created by artist and designer Will Datson, who regularly works with integrated circus company Extraordinary Bodies, is used to suspend Jess in her wheelchair eight feet in the air, as required by Beckett’s stage directions.

The short film that follows documents Jess’ creative processes with the monologue, learning lines at home with her support workers and practising under the tutelage of Beckett scholars and a voice coach. The film also explores the politics of the piece and Jess’s views as a disabled performer on Beckett’s work, and the relaxed nature of Touretteshero’s theatrical experience places a strong emphasis on audience care and accessibility.
In Backstage in Biscuit Land, Jess shared her experience of having been segregated from the rest of an audience because of her tics. Now she and her collaborators are reimagining conventions that dictate how a theatre audience should behave and welcoming everyone to engage with this challenging production and feel free to tic, shout or move about.

This inclusive atmosphere is used to full effect in the final part of the experience, in which Jess leads a discussion around themes of neurodiversity, disability culture, gender politics, social exclusion, isolation, representation and accessibility.

“I’ve long been fascinated by the intensity of Samuel Beckett’s Not I, says Jess Thom. “I have a strong affinity with Mouth, and I’m interested in how a neurodiverse performance works in practice with my unpredictable body and speech.

“We’re claiming Mouth as a disabled character and exploring her experience from that perspective, showing that Mouth is isolated only as much as her community makes her. We want to challenge the perception that only certain work can be made accessible to disabled audiences and ask people to consider who is allowed to perform what, and who gets the final say.”

Not I will be performed on the stage in HOME’s Theatre 1 space; we are unable to offer plus-ones owing to the limited capacity of the performance space for this production.

PERFORMANCE CALENDAR
Tue 31 March 2020, 19:30 (press night performance)
Wed 1 April 2020, 19:30
Thu 2 April 2020, 19:30

TICKETS
£10-£13 (concessions from £5)

https://homemcr.org/production/not-i/
@home_mcr
#NotI
For further information - to request a review ticket (press night performance Tuesday 31 March 2020), images or interviews, please contact: Mike Barnett, HOME Media and Communications Manager, +44 (0) 161 212 3462, or mike.barnett@HOMEmcr.org

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NOTES TO EDITORS

HOME is Manchester’s centre for international contemporary culture. Since opening in May 2015, HOME has welcomed over two million visitors to its two theatres, five cinemas, art gallery, book shop and restaurants. HOME works with international and UK artists to produce extraordinary theatrical experiences, producing an exciting mix of thought-provoking drama, dance and festivals, with a strong focus on international work, new commissions and talent development. After Not I, the next HOME shows are Ten Commandments presented by David Hoyle (9 April 2020); Amsterdam presented by Actors Touring Company; Orange Tree Theatre and Theatre Royal Plymouth (15-18 April 2020); Together Again, Again! performed by Jinkx Monson and Major Scales, presented by Soho Theatre and Tim Whitehead (1/2 May 2020), and If Don’t Worry Me presented by Atresbandes together with Bert and Nasi (5/6 May 2020). HOME’s ambition is to push the boundaries of form and technology, to experiment, have fun, take risks and share great new art with the widest possible audience. The patrons of HOME are Danny Boyle, actress Suranne Jones, playwright and poet Jackie Kay CBE, artists Rosa Barba and Phil Collins, filmmaker Asif Kapadia, and actress and author Meera Syal CBE.

TOURETTESHERO, founded in 2010, is a Community Interest company that celebrates the humour and creativity of Tourette Syndrome and shares this with the widest possible audience. They work online through the Touretteshero blog and across social media, within visual, performing and participatory arts and within the fields of play, youth and disability culture. Additionally, Touretteshero offers training to a wide range of public services and institutions.

Did you know that HOME is a charity? We need your support to bring the best film, theatre and art to Manchester and inspire the next generation. Get involved at www.homemcr.org/support