

A NOTE FROM THE WRITERS.

Miriam Schechter and Ben Price

About two months ago whilst moving an armchair up a hill, Ben and I decided to write a show together made up of short vignettes, just something weird and fun to use up the bounds of time we had since recently graduating from University. We had both written shows before and wanted to write another, and by putting our minds together, we were stunned to see how quickly ideas formed and stories took shape, and we increased our individual productivity multiple times over.

Over several days bouncing ideas we came up with the concept of the show: a small group of people living in a world in which art is illegal continue to perform and defy the rules even in the risk of death. We wrote taglines such as 'art is illegal, but it won't stop', and 'would you risk your life for the sake of something to live for?' It all seemed very sci-fi, distant and whimsical to us, until we did some research.

We found out about a theatre company called Belarus Free Theatre, who are banned in Belarus but still continue to do what they do throughout the risk of imprisonment and death. After finding out about them, Ben and I were close to calling it quits on the show. We thought it would be appropriate and perhaps just mean to write a show about a time and place in which art is illegal, when we have no understanding of empathy with people who are currently fighting this battle not too far from home. We thought about making the show about struggles of and similar to that of Belarus Free Theatre, but without meeting them and in the short period of time we had to make the show, we decided to take a different approach.

Ben and I live in a time and place in which we are very free to make art, and therefore we wanted to take the opportunity to celebrate that, rather than discuss a political issue that we didn't understand or could talk about knowledgeably. So, we set the play in a future time in which due to lack of resource, art is long forgotten. We wondered what someone in this time would do if they had never seen theatre in their lives, but has heard about it from their grandparents, we wondered what they would make and what that would look like.

What we did realise, is that there are a lot of parallels between our imagined world and the world that we are in now. In our imagined world, Juliet, Thompson and Finnegan set up Club Bazaar in an underground cellar, with next to nothing money and resources, because even though they hadn't experienced art in their lives it was still there. In our world, we set up our show in a cellar, with next to nothing money and resources. The show parodies a time decades after funding for the arts has stopped, however we do live in a time in which funding is very difficult to come by, and a lot has to be done for free before even an application for funding can be considered. Most of the props and set in the show are found items. The Legend of Baboonita was inspired directly from the baboon masks we found in the basement!

We have been very lucky due to the tireless effort of our friends to put in many hours for free and to DINA Venue for being endlessly generous with their time and space. Deborah and Malcolm, who set up and run DINA Venue put in 12 hour days regularly to run their independent venue on no funding and little sleep, and they still give us so much time and energy to support our new work. We can't thank them enough for everything they have done for us. Our relationship with DINA begun when I was offered space to hold auditions for a different show, but then a couple days later when Ben and I came up with the concept for Club Bazaar, Malcolm showed us the cellar of DINA and immediately I knew it was the place. We spent several days clearing the space and it has now transformed into what you see around you. In return, Deborah and Malcolm allowed us to use the space for the past couple months for rehearsals and the show, and we are very excited to see what we can do with the

cellar in the future.

All in all, we hope that you enjoy the show. It has all come together in only 2 months from concept to opening night. Our cast and crew have worked very hard in a short amount of time all whilst working or studying or both. The main thing that we have learnt from all this, is that art cannot and will not stop no matter what happens, because people will continue to spend 12 hour days running a venue which supports young artists, or perform in a show in a cold cellar 8 times for no pay, or make theatre in a country which bans it, and that is what we keep living for - whether we have to risk our lives for it or not.