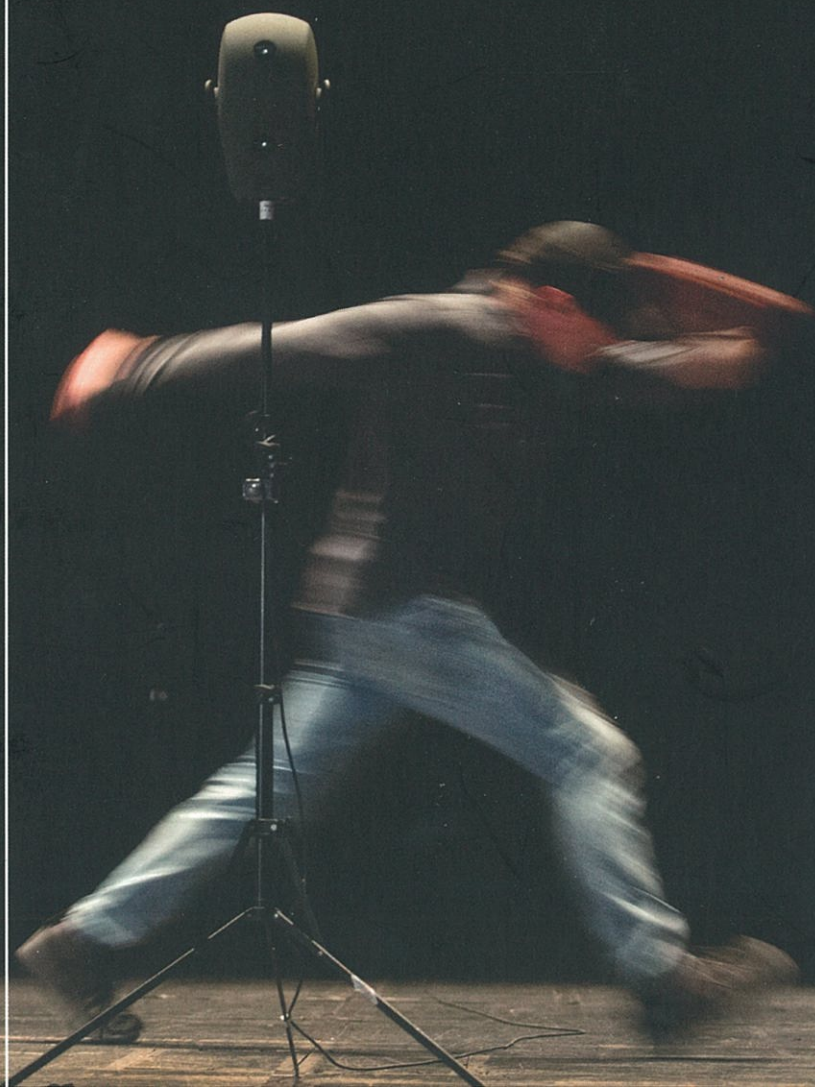


Complicite / Simon McBurney

The Encounter



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Complicite/Simon McBurney

The Encounter

Inspired by the novel *Amazon Beaming* by Petru Popescu

Pages have been omitted from this book preview.

THE ENCOUNTER

Complicite/Simon McBurney

Inspired by *Amazon Beaming*
by Petru Popescu

Note on the Text

The Encounter is performed by one actor and two sound operators. During the introduction the audience are asked to put on a set of headphones, which they then wear for the duration of the performance. Everything they hear is through these headphones. The actor uses a range of microphones that can be modified to create the voice of Loren McIntyre and other characters. The actor also creates a variety of live foley sound effects onstage, and uses loop pedals to create exterior soundscapes and the interior worlds of the characters. The performer also plays some sound and audio recordings live through their mobile phone, iPod, and various speakers. All sounds created or played onstage are picked up and relayed to the audience's headphones through a variety of onstage microphones, one of which is binaural.

Other sound is played and mixed live by two operators who in part improvise in reaction to the performer onstage.

In this text only the most basic indication is given as to which microphones, loop pedals and other effects are used, and when. Most of these decisions have been left for each performer and company to discover.

Characters

LIVE CHARACTERS ONSTAGE, PLAYED BY THE ACTOR

ACTOR, *originally played by Simon McBurney*

LOREN McINTYRE, *a National Geographic photographer, aged fifty-two*

PILOT, *flies Loren into the Javari in 1969*

CAMBIO, *a Mayoruna shaman who speaks both Mayoruna and Portuguese*

BARNACLE, *this is pre-recorded, and heard as Loren's voice reverberating in his own head. It will be characterised throughout the script as 'BARNACLE (LOREN voice-over)'*

RECORDED VOICES

During the introduction, and throughout the piece, we hear the voices of people that Simon McBurney discussed aspects of this show and related subjects with. In order of appearance, they are:

NOMA MCBURNEY, *Simon McBurney's daughter, aged five*

MARCUS DU SAUTOY, *Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science and Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford*

REBECCA SPOONER, *campaigner at Survival International, the global movement for tribal peoples' rights*

PETRU POPESCU, *author of Amazon Beaming*

IRIS FRIEDMAN, *writer, and wife of Petru Popescu*

IAIN MCGILCHRIST, *psychiatrist and philosopher*

STEVEN ROSE, *Emeritus Professor of Biology and Neurobiology at the Open University and Gresham College, London*

GEORGE MARSHALL, *climate-change communications specialist, co-founder of Climate Outreach and author of Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*

JESS WORTH, *writer and activist, campaigner with direct-action theatre group 'BP or not BP?' to end oil sponsorship of the arts*

DAVID FARMER, *oceanographer*

NIXIWAKA YAWANAWA, *member of the Yawanawa tribe, currently living in Bath. He is the voice of himself and the Mayoruna*

ROMEO CORISEPA DREVE, *member of the Harakmbut tribe, currently living in Exeter. He is the voice of Barnacle in Mayoruna*

This text went to press before the end of rehearsals and so may differ slightly from the play as performed.

1. The Beginning

As the audience enters, it seems there is almost nothing on stage. Anechoic soundproofing covers the back wall, but the stage should appear prosaic to the point of dullness.

Onstage are various speakers and microphones. A desk and chair are downstage-right. A binaural head is centre stage, facing the audience.

Multi-packs of water bottles are placed at various spots around the stage.

The opening section is partly improvised.

The ACTOR invites the audience to turn their telephones off, and from this simple announcement begins to talk to them in a conversational manner that suggests the show has not really yet begun. This draws the audience into another kind of attention, through the description of how the evening will unfold.

ACTOR. My daughter is five. She doesn't believe I work at night, so I'm going to take a photo of you all on my iPhone to prove I was really here. I have more photographs of my children here than there are photographs of my entire life. And these are just the ones I've taken in the last week. And there are more photographs on a single page of my phone than I have of the whole of my father's childhood. Looking at these pictures of my children, I feel such a sense of responsibility. Because when they look at them, they feel as though they're looking back at their whole lives.

But it is not their lives, it is only a story. And I worry they'll mistake this for reality, just as we all mistake stories for reality.

There's something uniquely human about telling stories. You might say that stories are what have allowed the human race to thrive. Stories, fiction, are how we explain, organise and agree on the meaning of our lives.

For example, two men who have never met might go to war together to fight and die for something called the United Kingdom. But the United Kingdom does not exist. It's a fictional idea that helps us organise ourselves into... what?

Two lawyers will fight to defend someone they don't know because they both believe in the existence of the law, justice and human rights. But these things don't exist. They're fictions. Stories.

They don't exist outside the collective imagination, but they allow us to organise ourselves by forming narratives we can all agree on wherever we are. They shape everything we see and believe in.

That is why I feel so responsible for the stories I tell my children...

I remember my father reading me bedtime stories as a child that transported me to other places and times. And that was how, for the first time, I started to get inside someone else's head, and imagine what their experiences felt like.

And now I get into bed with my children at night, and tell them stories in the same way. I watch them empathising with the characters, discovering what connects and separates them from other people, other worlds. It is an intimate process.

It seems empathy and proximity are connected, so I'd like to get closer to you. Can you put your headphones on?

The following text is spoken into a microphone and is heard by the audience through their individual headphones. From now on, all narration, dialogue and other text, as well as all sound effects, are heard by the audience through the headphones.

So now instead of shouting I can be as close to you as I am to my children. Closer in fact, because now, instead of whispering in your ear, I am in the middle of your head.

I would like to check your headphones are all working, I will take a walk from one side of your head to the other, without even moving.

Pages have been omitted from this book preview.

The Encounter



- In 1969 Loren McIntyre, a *National Geographic* photographer, found himself lost among the people of the remote Javari Valley in Brazil. It was an encounter that was to change his life, bringing the limits of human consciousness into startling focus.
- *The Encounter* traces McIntyre's journey into the depths of the Amazon rainforest, incorporating innovative technology into a solo performance to build a shifting world of sound.
- Inspired by the novel *Amazon Beaming* by Petru Popescu, *The Encounter* opened at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2015, and received its London premiere at the Barbican in February 2016 before embarking on a world tour.
- '*The Encounter* is a tour de force that shows contemporary theatre at its most immersive and thought-provoking' *Financial Times*
- 'Masterful storytelling from... a company who are incapable of remaining within known theatrical boundaries' *Independent*

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