THE SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE

Born during the hybrid arts lab: Time Place Space 6 and premiering at Melbourne’s Next Wave Festival in 2010, The Short Message Service is an investigation into the creation of an interactive form of theatre that creates a charged power relationship between its audience and performers to investigate power and complicity in 21st century culture. The work parallels a number of infamous mid-twentieth century psychology experiments that occurred in response to both the atrocities of WWII and the assassination of Martin Luther King. These include: Stanley Milgram’s Milgram Experiment, Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment and Jane Elliott’s Blue-eyed/Brown-eyed.

The performance guides audience members through the use of screen-based questions and suggestions. The ‘guidance’ is designed to provoke audience members to SMS dialogue / text, physical actions and directions which are then strictly enacted and spoken by two performers on stage via earpieces. Two ‘controllers’ / technicians / live-dramaturges are also positioned on stage; receiving the text messages from the audience and relaying them to the performers through wireless audio communication.

Photograph by Max Milne.
The guiding questions and provocations for the audience are framed in such a way as to create a loose theatrical arch for the work that creates a trajectory from spoken text and stillness, through to a freedom within the form. This trajectory acts as both a dramaturgical structure for the work and as means to progressively open up the rules and possibilities within the work; creating ongoing interest in the works form for the audience as the works structures are increasingly introduced. As audience members learn the ‘rules’ and structures of the work, a collective understanding develops that encourages the audience to play within the rule set: where they are able to bend and manipulate the rules creatively and in the process moving, the work beyond its theatrical bounds.

COLLABORATORS:

Leah Shelton, Lachlan Tetlow-Stuart, Mish Grigor and Jackson Castiglione.

2010 NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL
DATE May, 2010
LOCATION Black Box, Melbourne Arts Centre, Victoria, Australia
ADDITIONAL INFO 2010 Next Wave Season in partnership with Full Tilt.

CRACK THEATRE FESTIVAL 2009 (THIS IS NOT ART FESTIVAL)
DATE October, 2009
LOCATION Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia
ADDITIONAL INFO Development phase three.

FORMAT FESTIVAL 2009 (ADELAIDE FRINGE FESTIVAL)
DATE March, 2009
LOCATION Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
ADDITIONAL INFO Development phase two.

TIME PLACE SPACE 6 (PERFORMANCE SPACE / AUSTRALIA COUNCIL)
DATE January / February, 2009
LOCATION QUT, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
ADDITIONAL INFO Initial conception and development phase one.