



Volcano Theatre presents

## THE POPULARS

*Dance Party for a Divided Nation*

The Populars is a new kind of theatre show. Conceived during the year following Britain's vote to leave the EU, it is a response to uncertain times and intensified national feelings, which attempts to make sense of the heightened political atmosphere by inviting us to imagine different ways of being together. It is an upbeat exploration of what keeps us together and apart.

You will not find in The Populars an analysis or a re-enactment of what happened in June 2016 or since, or a desire to point the finger at one side or another. Instead we look to the future, thinking about where we go from here and how it might feel when we get there. The Populars are four ordinary young people who dance their hearts out, plumbing the layers of emotion and meaning contained in popular songs, and rejoicing exuberantly in moving to their rhythms, alone and together.

Directed by PAUL DAVIES

Choreographed by CATHERINE BENNETT

Devised by ROANNA LEWIS, NEAL MCWILLIAMS, ELIN PHILLIPS, RICK YALE

The production is built around choreographed dance sequences, text fragments and improvised comic exchanges, performed to a playlist of mostly well-known popular songs. It takes place in a space where the audience can move freely, and may choose to respond to the performers or join in. It is an engagement with difference that avoids amplifying feelings of hostility, suspicion and shame - replacing them with joy, playfulness and shared vulnerability and appealing to collective and individual memory through the emotional trigger of popular music.

### STAGING/TECH

The Populars is light on its feet, having simple technical requirements (it is performed without theatre-specific lighting and requires only a sound system and optional video projection). It can be presented (with audience onstage or staging suitably configured) in theatres, or in non-theatre spaces of various character and scale, best suiting an ambulant audience of up to 120 people (some seating can be incorporated for access purposes as required). The touring company comprises four performers and stage manager/tech operator.

### TARGET AUDIENCES

Groups, especially of young people aged 18-25. Particularly suited to venues with a student audience.

People who enjoy popular music of all eras and genres.

People who like dancing for fun.

People who enjoy site-specific and promenade performances.

### PLAYLIST/SONGS\*

'Alone Together' Chet Baker

'Pelican' - The Maccabees

'You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)' Sylvester

'Jump Around' House of Pain

'Common People' Pulp

'Everywhere' Fleetwood Mac

'Step it Up' Stereo MCs

'Strangers in the Night' Frank Sinatra

'I'm Too Sexy' Right Said Fred



'Material Girl' – Madonna

'Ain't Got No – I Got Life' – Nina Simone

'Just Dance/We Can't Stop' – Lady Gaga/Miley Cyrus

\*May be subject to change

## WORKSHOPS

The company delivers workshops for professional performers, performance students, youth theatre groups and other groups interested in exploring social, political or relational situations using performance techniques, based on the exploration and devising methods used in The Populars. This does not tackle political questions through proposition and debate, dramatization or role-play, but asks specifically how it *feels* to be living in this time and begins with narratives and memories of personal and collective experience prompted by sensory stimuli (especially, in this case, pop songs) and progresses through rules-based play, improvisation and sharing. What is a game? What are its rules? Can we change the rules and therefore invent new games? Can we (re)discover our playful, dynamic child-like selves?

As an outcome of these workshops, participants derive core performance skills which are transferable to other situations requiring creative and imaginative responses, playfulness, co-operation and improvisation.

Workshops are led by Volcano's Artistic Director, Paul Davies, supported by cast members where appropriate. By prior arrangement workshops can include sessions with the company's Movement Director and the co-creator of The Populars, Catherine Bennett, for groups who wish to have a choreographic focus to the work. The Populars is also the subject of a paper by Dr [Angharad Closs Stephens](#), Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at Swansea University – talks can be arranged for those interested in exploring the political contexts of the performance.

Paul Davies has extensive experience of teaching workshops, masterclasses and

residencies in a variety of settings across Europe and in Qatar and Canada. He runs Volcano Youth Company for performers aged 14-22.

He is co-founder of Volcano and has performed in, written and/or directed the company's productions for the past 30 years. He recently taught at the International Festival-School of Contemporary Art 'TERRITORY' in Moscow.

## ABOUT VOLCANO

Volcano is a small, energetic arts company with an ability to move quickly and imaginatively to make things happen, and a track-record in inspiring and engaging others, working in partnership and setting big ideas in motion. We create and tour high-impact small-scale and site-specific theatre productions all over the world. We run youth theatre and dance groups, festivals, workshops, courses, exhibitions, and public events. South Wales is the company's home – we are Welsh internationalists with deep Swansea roots. Our home venue, also called Volcano Theatre, is a re-purposed supermarket building in Swansea High Street that serves as the city's busiest creative community hub.

## THE POPULARS – VIDEO TRAILER

[www.volcanotheatre.co.uk](http://www.volcanotheatre.co.uk)

T [@VolcanoUK](#)

F [volcanotheatrewales](#)

I [volcanotheatreuk](#)

Contact: [Claudine Conway](#)

[Volcano Theatre | 27-29 High Street | Swansea | SA1 1LG](#)

[claud@volcanotheatre.co.uk](mailto:claud@volcanotheatre.co.uk)

T +44 (0)1792 464790

M +44 (0)7918 140124

