



2020 London International Mime Festival in association with Jacksons Lane presents the London Premiere of

## OPPOSABLE THUMB (UK) COULROPHOBIA

### JACKSONS LANE

**Fri 24 - Sun 26 January**

Fri & Sat 7.30pm, Sat 3pm, Sun 5pm  
Sat 25 Jan 7.30 performance, and after-show discussion led by Flick Ferdinando will be BSL interpreted by Jeni Draper

**Runs approx 80 mins, no interval**

Director: John Nicholson  
Performers: Dik Downey and Adam Blake  
Concept and script: Dik Downey, Adam Blake and John Nicholson  
Composer and sound designer: Simon Preston  
Set design: Pickled Image and Emma Powell  
Props and objects: Emma Powell  
Costume: Linda Anneveld  
Light design and technical solutions: Jan Erik Skarby, Marianne Thallaug Wedset and Onela Keal  
Technician & Touring director: Chris Collier  
PR design: Onela Keal  
Film maker and photographer: Adam Laity  
Creative producer: Pickled Image/Vicky Andrews  
Opposable Thumb Producer: Ali Robertson

Production: Pickled Image, Opposable Thumb and Nordland Visual Theatre

#### Artists' Note

coulrophobia  
/ˌkəʊlɹəˈfəʊbiə, ˌkɒlɹəˈfəʊbiə/  
an abnormal fear of clowns.

'We made *Coulrophobia* in the midst of the 'Killer Clown' phenomenon, when people took to dressing as clowns in order to terrify passers-by, leading to a media frenzy about the death of clowning as a profession. We heard people saying how much they hated clowns but we realised that their experience was mainly limited to two extremes: children's party entertainers in

shop-bought costumes, and the horrific, twisted version of this in films such as Stephen King's *It*. We decided to make a piece to challenge these stereotypes and show the real, vulnerable personalities behind the red noses and makeup. And to remind everyone what clowns are essentially about: disruption, anarchy, silliness and giving us all a bloody good laugh.

We created the show in 2014 at the Nordland Visual Theater, on the Lofoten Islands, in the Arctic Circle. It's an extremely remote – and cold! - environment in which to create theatre. Once you've seen the mountains, fjords, Northern Lights, looked for whales, had a sauna in the theatre, and visited the supermarket where you can buy local fish pudding or sweets full of sea water, there's not a lot else to do but work. We took our costumes, make up, a few puppets and a pile of cardboard to see what would happen. Dik, who started his performing career as a clown on the streets of Barcelona in the mid-80s, wanted to revisit the hedonism of just seeing what would evolve from play. Adam, who had quit studying as a bio-chemist to throw himself into clowning, wanted to take his performing to a new level. Our director, John Nicholson, with decades of clowning experience, was charged with making us behave (a bit) and moulding the whole thing into a cohesive show.

At the end of this process, we had the skeleton of a production. Since then, *Coulrophobia* has been performed in 12 countries, constantly tweaked and edited to become the slick, well-oiled machine you are about to watch. This current incarnation is the result of five years' performing and many more years of theatrical experience and highly intensive training in the art of clowning honed into one extraordinary display of skill, discipline, wit and emotional depth. If you think it's just two blokes fooling about then the joke's on you.

Dik has been a clown, fire-eater, actor, escapologist, street performer and lousy juggler, and worked with Desperate Men and Green Ginger before co-founding Pickled Image in 2000, under whose banner the original *Coulrophobia* was made. Dik is also a puppeteer, puppet and mask maker and regularly works at the Royal Welsh college of Music & Drama as puppet overseer on their Design for Theatre course.

Adam has many sticky fingers from all the various pies he's had them in over the years. They all taste different, but he loves the variety. As well as creating other adult dark comedy and clown theatre with the likes of The Wardrobe Theatre, Beyond The Ridiculous and his own solo work, he co-founded Open Attic company who make physical theatre for families. He has a huge amount of love for his work with Wyldwood Arts, a community arts company where he is an associate artist primarily working as an improvised storyteller on inter-generational projects.

Dik and Adam formed Opposable Thumb Theatre in 2019 as a new vehicle for this show and others yet to be made. Recently, Ali Robertson has joined the team as company producer. For 9 years he was Creative Director of the Tobacco Factory Theatre, Bristol, before a stint with Kneehigh and then going freelance. Together they're starting work on their next show to be made on the Lofoten Islands in 2021'.

**Dik Downey & Adam Blake**

Twitter: @OTT\_Theatre  
@DikDowney #coulrophobia  
Facebook: @OTTclowns  
Instagram: dik\_downey



## London International Mime Festival

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London International Mime Festival (LIMF) promotes contemporary visual theatre. Its productions have been nominated for, and won, Olivier Awards and in 2017 the festival was honoured with the *Empty Space - Peter Brook Special Achievement Award* for its work over four decades. Founded in 1977, LIMF is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

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