



fuel

FUEL PRESENTS

A DEAD BODY IN TAOS

BY DAVID FARR

'A DEAD BODY IN TAOS' IS CO-COMMISSIONED BY FUEL AND WARWICK ARTS CENTRE WITH SUPPORT FROM BRISTOL OLD VIC; THE WORK IS SUPPORTED BY ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND AND IS PRODUCED BY FUEL.

A DEAD BODY IN TAOS

The body of a 70-year-old woman is found in the New Mexico desert near the town of Taos, a place of pilgrimage for those seeking and embracing an alternative lifestyle. She is Kath Horvath and on her body they find a message for her daughter, whom she has not spoken to for three years, that reads, 'Sam. Do not grieve. I am not here'.

A Dead Body in Taos tells Sam's story as she travels to New Mexico to bury her estranged mother. Gradually, through a series of present day encounters and flashbacks Sam uncovers the details of her mother's complicated past and the strange story, straight out of science fiction, behind her mother's mysterious message. She learns of Kath's attempts to break away from her stifling small-town upbringing; her role at the heart of the American Civil Rights and Anti-War movements in the 60's; her experiments with alternative lifestyles; and her lifelong, fruitless quest for freedom which, as an old woman, has left her with nothing (and, as it turns out, everything) to live for.

As Sam quickly discovers, her mother has exercised the ultimate right as a consumer and paid not to die. With a hefty bequest to a shady corporation she has downloaded herself onto a hard-drive and been reborn as a cyborg version of her 30 year-old self. Having failed at one life she has bought a whole new one.

Set against a backdrop of late 20th Century American history, **A Dead Body in Taos** is part murder mystery, part sci-fi epic and part love story, that leaves the audience wondering whether, in the 21st Century, freedom is something we should run to or escape from.

A full script is available on request.



BACKGROUND TO A DEAD BODY IN TAOS



Shortly after the First World War, Sigmund Freud wrote: ***"I am more and more convinced that man is a selfish, brutal, bestial animal controlled only by fear and desire."***

Inspired by the documentary ***The Century of the Self*** by Adam Curtis, which explores the life and influence of Edward Bernays "the father of public relations", **A Dead Body in Taos** is an original theatre piece about the psyche of modern living, the application of Freudian psychology to the marketing of things and ideas, and to how we got to where we are today, in the consumerist 21st century.

Freud's ideas around the individual have resonated through the 20th Century and into the psyche of modern living. **A Dead Body in Taos** considers the notion that we as individuals, as selves, are governed by unconscious fears and desires, and that capitalism, commerce, can play on these fears and desires to encourage, seduce and deceive us into buying a version of ourselves.

The last century was one of pure individualism, and where we find ourselves now, at the start of the 21st century is somehow empty, longing for old connections and community but unsure how to reach them in our atomised, customised world. Moreover our obsession with individuality is now extending beyond the grave as people seek physical and technological solutions to the greatest challenge of all - death. If the free individual can conquer all, can it not also conquer mortality itself?

A Dead Body in Taos has its roots in the 60s. It is the moment when 60's counter-culture moved from being a collective reaction against the consumerism of the 1950s, to an individualised obsession with self-expression and freedom. The irony being that the most radical 60's experimentalists, following R.D. Laing and Essalin, would go on to become the self-realised entrepreneurs of the 1980's. And that those entrepreneurs are now at the forefront of the assault against all boundaries to the unrestrained self - even death itself.

CREATIVE TEAM

WRITER

DAVID FARR

DIRECTOR

RACHEL BAGSHAW

DESIGNER

TI GREEN

**LX & PROJECTION
DESIGNER**

JOSHUA PHARO

SOUND DESIGNER

ELENA PEÑA

COMPOSER

NWANDO EBIZIE

DAVID FARR

David Farr is a playwright, screenwriter and stage director, whose plays have been performed all over the world. In recent years he has moved into film and television, working on the long running BBC show *Spooks* and completing his first feature film, ***Hanna***, for Focus Features in 2009. His directorial debut, ***The Ones Below***, with Cuba Pictures premiered at Toronto International Film Festival in 2015 and was released in UK cinemas in March 2016.

David's theatre career began when he became Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre, London, in 1995. His work at The Gate earned him a reputation as one of the most exciting new talents in British theatre, a reputation that he built on when he left The Gate to become Artistic Director of Bristol Old Vic in 2002. His time at Bristol earned him a TMA Award for Best Director for his production of ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***.

In 2005, David took up the post of Artistic Director of the London's Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. David's tenure at the theatre established it as a driving force in high quality visual theatre. During his time there, he wrote and directed a hugely successful adaptation of Kafka's ***Metamorphosis***, as well as directing the acclaimed devised piece ***Water*** with Filter Theatre. In 2009, David left The Lyric to become Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His first productions, ***The Winter's Tale***, ***King Lear*** and ***The Homecoming*** all opened to critical acclaim.

David's adaptation of John le Carré's novel ***The Night Manager***, starring Hugh Laurie and Tom Hiddleston and directed by Susanne Bier, aired on BBC 1 in 2016. A total of 9.9 million people tuned in to watch the series finale and the show earned multiple awards and nominations. David's episode of the Philip K. Dick series *Electric Dreams*, entitled *Impossible Planet*, aired on Channel 4 in 2017 and his BBC 1 and Netflix epic miniseries ***Troy: Fall of a City*** aired in February 2018. He is currently adapting his film *Hanna* into a television series for Amazon.





RACHEL BAGSHAW

Rachel is a director who makes innovative theatre which uses sound to tell stories. She is co-founder of Blazon Theatre, established to showcase theatre by female artists and which is currently developing *Icons* by Paula B Stanic. She is currently Associate Artist at the Unicorn Theatre.

Past work includes ***Midnight Movie*** at The Royal Court Theatre for the 2019 Christmas season, the critically acclaimed ***The Shape of the Pain*** which won a Fringe First at Edinburgh, was revived at BAC and went on to tour the UK this year. Other productions includes ***Hamlet*** (Young Vic), ***Resonance at the Still Point of Change*** (Unlimited Festival, Southbank Centre), and ***The Rhinestone Rollers, Just Me, Bell*** (Graeae).

She was previously Associate Artist at the Bush Theatre, Associate Artist at Wilton's Music Hall, Resident Assistant Director at the Young Vic, and led the education programme at Graeae. She was also director of Access to Acting, a national programme of work for disabled and non-disabled young people led by RADA.



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FUEL

Fuel leads the field in independent producing in the UK's live performance sector. We work with brilliant artists to make fresh experiences for adventurous people. To date, many of these experiences have been theatre, whether that's in an actual theatre, on the streets, in community settings, or in purpose-built structures. All of the artists Fuel works with produce shows, performances or experiences which have clear, direct and playful relationships with their audiences. They appeal to the emotions and the intellect. Things that make you laugh and cry. These artists see the world in a different way; they respond to challenges and difficulties with ingenuity and ideas; they create something unexpected which articulates something new to audiences. Fuel was founded in 2004 and is led by **Kate McGrath**. Fuel is supported by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation, Fenton Arts Trust, the Garrick Trust, the Backstage Trust, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Garfield Weston Foundation, and the Wellcome Trust through Sustaining Excellence.

Since our story began in 2004, we have produced over **143** shows, **7** festivals, **4** films, **36** podcasts, an app and three books. We have supported the development of **107** artists and companies, reached over **700,000** live audience members, **660,000** online audiences and **8,750** participants, and won **18** awards.

Some of the artists Fuel has worked with include Will Adamsdale, Inua Ellams, Encounter, Fevered Sleep, Lewis Gibson, Gyre & Gimble, Nick Makoha, Racheal Ofori, Frauke Requardt, David Rosenberg, Andy Smith, Sound&Fury, Melly Still, Tom Stuart, Uninvited Guests and Melanie Wilson.

"The most exciting and indispensable producing outfits working in British theatre today."
- The Guardian

www.fueltheatre.com

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TOURING 2021

CONTACT

To learn more about the show contact

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