

Since 2006, science-arts collective Boho has been creating interactive performance focusing on the sciences collectively referred to as Systems Science. Working in collaboration with CSIRO scientists and other researchers, Boho productions have explored science concepts from Game Theory, Network Theory and climate / global change. Boho is now seeking funding toward the first production of a new interactive performance entitled 'Best Festival Ever: How To Manage A Disaster', to be staged in London and Melbourne over October - November 2014.

## BACKGROUND

In 2011, writer and Boho co-founder David Finnigan travelled to the UK to undertake a research residency at the University College London Environment Institute. Over three months, David carried out intensive research into one of the key branches of Systems Science: climate and social modelling. The result of this research, published in a report by UCL, was a proposal for how interactive performance could use the form of a particular kind of model (known as a 'participatory co-model') to communicate key ideas from systems science to a general public audience.

Joined by fellow Boho member David Shaw and Sydney artists Nathan Harrison, Nikki Kennedy and Rachel Roberts, David returned to the UK in 2012. In partnership with climate-art organisation Tipping Point and theatre company Coney, Boho created a new interactive work that showcased concepts from systems science in an accessible performance format. The residency concluded with a week-long season at the Battersea Arts Centre, where the work-in-progress performance was presented to the public with an extraordinarily positive response.

In July 2013, Boho further developed the work during a two-week residency at Arts House in Melbourne. The five artists intensively reworked the show, tightening the interactive interface, deepening the science content and refining the performance techniques. Best Festival Ever is now ready to be taken into a production phase and presented to public audiences.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Boho have been invited to undertake the final production phase and first public season of Best Festival Ever at the London Science Museum in October 2014. The museum is providing a rehearsal space in London for the five week production and rehearsal period, concluding with three work-in-progress showings at the Battersea Arts Centre as part of BAC's 2014 Scratch season. In November, Boho will present a three week season for school groups and general public audiences at the London Science Museum as part of their Changing Climate program. The Museum will invite prominent climate scientists to respond to Best Festival Ever in public lectures as part of the program. Boho is also in conversations with Contact Youth Theatre, the Nominet Trust and the Stockholm Resilience Centre about additional performance opportunities in Manchester, Oxford and Stockholm during November.

During this UK development Boho will collaborate with artists from UK interactive performance company Coney, including dramaturg Tassos Stevens and designer Gary Campbell.

After the UK season, Boho will return to Australia in November to present Best Festival Ever at Arts House in Melbourne, as part of Arts House's Greenie in Residence program. In 2015 Boho will seek touring opportunities for Best Festival Ever with venues and festivals around Australia.

## THE WORK

Best Festival Ever: How To Manage A Disaster takes place around a table for a playing audience of 25. Part theatre show, part performance lecture and part board game, the show introduces the audience to concepts from systems science through the scenario of managing a music festival.

On the table is a model landscape of a countryside complete with hills, fields and rivers. This is the site for a brand new music festival, of which the audience are the managers. Through a series of hands-on games, the audience take control of every aspect of the festival's management, from picking the bands and sponsors to overseeing crowd security. Each of these games illustrates a key concept from the systems sciences, including ideas of tipping points, feedback loops, trade-offs and resilience. As the game and the show progress, the challenges of managing an interconnected system such as a music festival begin to mount.

The scientific concepts presented in the production are central to the study of real world issues such as climate change and the ways in which we understand and respond to its impacts. By presenting them in the context of a hypothetical music festival, Best Festival Ever allows us to share and unpack these concepts without the politicisation that surrounds discussion of the changing climate.

Best Festival Ever moves fluidly between three performance modes. At points it is a lecture, with science concepts shared and discussed explicitly rather than buried in metaphor. At other times, it is a theatrical performance, telling the story of the characters within the fictional festival as they struggle to avert potential catastrophes. Throughout, the show uses interactive techniques drawn from boardgaming to facilitate the audience's involvement in the story.

Best Festival Ever draws upon an interactive performance tradition fostered by organizations such as the Battersea Arts Centre and Arts House. Boho fits into a growing trend of Australian work including PVI Collective, Pop Up Playground, Applespiel and No Show, but separates itself through its focus on conveying scientific concepts through interaction and group gaming.

## THE ARTISTS

Boho's David Finnigan and David Shaw have worked together creating interactive science performance since 2006. Best Festival Ever was co-devised by Finnigan and Shaw with Nathan Harrison, Nikki Kennedy and Rachel Roberts from Sydney-based performance collective Applespiel. In this final production

phase, Finnigan and Shaw will co-direct and Harrison, Kennedy and Roberts will perform.

Boho will collaborate with two artists from UK interactive performance company Coney in the creation of this work. Coney makes responsive interactive performance and play, mixing live and digital. Coney co-director Tassos Stevens will continue to act as dramaturg for this production, supporting the artists in integrating the narrative, interactive and performance lecture components of the work.

UK designer and Coney associate Gary Campbell will continue to work as designer on the project. Gary worked with Boho on the creation of the prototype set for the work-in-progress showing, and has committed to designing and constructing the final version. As well as conjuring up the setting for the show, the creation of the tactile game pieces are a key element in inviting the audience to interact with the work. Gary will source materials and construct a versatile, evocative tabletop set which will pack down into two road cases.

## CONCLUSION

Boho has a proven track record of delivering high quality interactive performance works, and this project represents the next evolution for the company. Travelling to the UK to undertake the first production of Best Festival Ever is an extraordinary opportunity for Boho, with high profile and well connected partners such as the London Science Museum and Coney connecting us to new partner organisations and audiences. The opportunity to work with leading UK artists such as Tassos Stevens and Gary Campbell is key to our further growth as interactive performance makers.

Best Festival Ever has had a long and focused development process, and this critical next stage will bring together all the learning and experimentation of three years of work. The result will be a significant work of interactive science-theatre, with the potential to tour extensively to Australian festivals and venues, starting with Arts House Melbourne in 2014 and continuing into 2015-16.