



#TheFoolEater

The Fool Eater

An Interactive Story about Urban Loneliness

written and directed by Florian J Seubert

illustrated by Selma Hafizovic

17th of May 2019, 7 pm at Goldsmiths

The performance is made accessible through captions and visuals

Join the panel discussion with mental health experts and artists

for young non-binary men and any lonely Londoners



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
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Director's Note

Hans Sachs was a medieval German shoemaker and wordsmith for popular performances in pubs, inns or on the market stage. Whether his *meistersang* ('master song poetry') or his farces, his texts were crafted for oral presentation. Sachs belonged to a guild of *Meistersinger*-poets that would consider their creative craft as akin to their daily work as handymen. He was a *poeta faber*. His language was that of the working people. From a contemporary perspective, his writing shows a mix of camp exaggeration and grotesque body drama. His plays are full of jealous men, gluttons, *Columbinas* and *Capitanos*. **Cardinal vices are lustfully portrayed in excess, before they get tamed in a quick finale with a nod to the religious morals of the day.**

Exaggerated stereotype and vulgar excess do not only function didactically in a normalising sense, but also help to take the edge off of stigma, vice and related feelings of isolation. **Grotesque relocation brings taboo topics into the open with joyful exaggeration and counterbalances moral shame with freeing laughter:** this tendency gains therapeutic value within a society that still often struggles with finding the right or wrong words around topics such as sexual identity, promiscuity and obesity and therefore remains silent or enshrouded in clumsy political correctness. **To start a conversation, it is important to find words at all - any words.** I think we can learn from the open discourse of the Middle Ages to bring our own social problems forward. This discourse was grotesque and, at times, overtly incorrect, yes, but it was also inclusive, unafraid and playful. It incorporated the marginalised into the stage mainstream and changed power dynamics in carnivalesque reversal.

A recent instalment of German culture, the film comedy *Toni Erdmann* (Maren Ade, 2016) also shows a version of grotesque laughter as inclusive social therapy. Even when capital takes over and ethnic gaps seem to widen, the bizarre main character says in a very inappropriate situation: **"Don't lose your humour."** It's about the encounter between people. Don't be too strict, it seems he implies, when facilitating opportunities to bring people closer together.

My modernised adaption of Hans Sachs' 16th century farce *Der Narrenschneider* (lit. 'The Fool Cutter') about a man who ate too many fools (or vices) follows a similar

aim. We are all fool eaters in this metaphorical sense, and the question remains whether some of our mental health worries are really that scary to deal with once we have learned to laugh about them individually, because **we are supported within a warm-hearted community of collective laughter that does not judge who we are and how we express it.** Unafraid laughter can be the beginning of change.

I hope that *The Fool Eater* brings some contemporary questions into focus around mental health, urban loneliness and other modern ‘vices’ that many people in our society have to deal with and still often feel shame about. Through the story’s defamiliarizing aesthetic and gentle humour, it might become easier to talk about these questions - they become bigger and therefore more visible and easier to touch. My adaption is not about hiding, it is about showing. If the depictions spark controversy, that’s great. If they spark fierce debate, that’s even greater. And if they spark anger, that is something out of my control as a writer and director. **But whatever reaction *The Fool Eater* sparks, please don’t lose your humour.**

Florian J Seubert

London, May 2019

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM



Writer, Director and Storyteller -

Florian J Seubert works as a freelance writer-director and performative storyteller in London, where most of his stories are set. With his practice work, Florian explores the intersection between immersive theatre event and dramatherapy. He regularly collaborates with local artists and charities in East London such as *Powerhouse for Women*, *Arc in the Park* and *ReWrite* for his non-mainstream and disability music theatre projects. For his practice-based PhD at Goldsmiths, he rethinks the concept of the *auteur* director within a British musical and inclusive drama context.

“You cannot win against loneliness, but you can survive it.”



Producer and Stage Manager -

Rosie Staley is a musician, singer-songwriter and freelance community theatre producer currently living in East London. Previously, Rosie has stage managed several shows for the National Youth Theatre and went on to learn how to produce and develop projects as an intern at FUEL Theatre. Rosie enjoys collaborating on projects that emphasise building diverse and resilient community groups and currently runs a music group in Hackney for refugees and asylum seekers. She also works on several music-based projects as an independent artist (@RosieAshMusic). In September she will be beginning studying for an MA in Sound Design at the Royal College of Art.

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.” - Maya Angelou



Storyteller -

Fran Bushe is an award-winning playwright, performer and comedian. She is currently a Pleasance Theatre Associate Artist and she has been resident artist at Arts Depot and Theatre Deli. Fran's solo show *Ad Libido* had a sold-out run in Edinburgh 2019 (★★★★★ *The Guardian*, one of *The Guardian's* top shows to see at the Edinburgh Fringe) and will run

at The Soho Theatre in May 2019 ahead of a 2020 tour. She is a sketch writer for Comedy Central's all female sketch show *Laughing at Salad* and *Ad Libido* is currently in development with Shiny Button Productions for television. Her first play *The Site* won a Hampstead Theatre playwriting competition and was performed at The Roundhouse. Fran's writing is represented by Knight Hall Agency. Follow @franbushe on social media.

“Father McKenzie, writing the words/ Of a sermon that no one will hear/ No one comes near” - The Beatles



Storyteller -

Amari Harris is a theatre-maker and facilitator. He is passionate about incorporating theatrical techniques into mainstream creative education. He has worked with Half Moon Theatre, Punchdrunk, Oval House and The Old Vic Theatre.

“In Solitude, everyone must face themselves.” - Arthur Schopenhauer



Illustrator-

Selma Hafizovic is a London-based artist. Selma studied painting at the School of Visual Arts in New York and is a recent graduate of Goldsmiths MFA programme with gender as a focus of her work. Her practice questions whether an artist can control the response of the viewer and explores what might be considered voluntary and involuntary involvement. Her art often plays with the idea that in considering her work, you might complete the creation the artist has begun.



Panel Member -

Stella Toonen is a producer for the Creative People and Places network, which supports communities in places with low cultural engagement to choose, create and take part in art experiences in their cities. She is also a PhD student based both at Tate Modern and King's College London, studying how museums and communities might co-create cultural programmes together.

Previously, Stella has been an arts producer for various museums, organising participatory events, learning programmes, exhibitions, installations and festivals. She sits on the board of Young People in the Arts as an adviser, having stepped down as one of its executive directors in 2018. She is also a trustee of Culture24.

“When so many are lonely as seem to be lonely, it would be inexcusably selfish to be lonely alone.” - Tennessee Williams, *Camino Real*



Dramatherapist and Panel Member -

Dan Skili graduated as a dramatherapist from the Sesame Dramatherapy course at Central School of Speech and Drama in 2000 and has nearly 20 years extensive experience working with children, young people and adults in various settings. He is employed by the London Borough of Sutton as a dramatherapist for the Sutton Clinical Health Team for People with Learning Disabilities and has worked there over twelve

years. He also supervises Dramatherapy Roehampton University students. He teaches Introduction to Dramatherapy at the established City Literary Institute in Covent Garden and recently worked with women and men who experience domestic abuse for ‘Tryangle Project 2011’. Dan’s more recent work includes facilitating ongoing therapy and therapeutic discussion groups for men.



Photographer -

Ayodeji Alaka

What seems on the surface a random encounter: a spontaneous series of street-photography moments and conversation at the Tate Modern is a discovery. I met Florian and found out about *The Fool Eater* as a result. I use documentary photography to support my design research practice for clients at OsanNimu.com. Being part of *The Fool Eater*’s multi-disciplinary

production team is about the use of documentary photography to tell evocative narratives: behind the scenes and live performance. Documentary photography for this narrative design experience is a valuable prompt for audience participation; as it is a way to integrate photography documentary into the story design process.

“When I discover who I am, I’ll be free” – Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*



Filmmaker -

Kit Hung graduated with an M.F.A. from the Department of Film, Video and New Media, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Lecturer of the Academy of film, Hong Kong Baptist University, his films have won numerous international awards and were screened at over 120 international film festivals. His debut feature *Soundless Wind Chime* was nominated for the Teddy Award at the Berlin International Film Festival,

released in more than 16 countries in 6 languages. He is currently a research student in the department of Media and Communication at Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK.

“I am not afraid of being alone, but the worst is feeling lonely when I am surrounded by people.”

With thanks to

Dr Guy Stevenson for carefully reading the script and for his encouragement, Gati Gorska for helping us coordinate rooms and rehearsal spaces, and to the Arts Council England for supporting the project.



Illustration from *The Fool Eater*: Lonely in front of the Shard

A Note on Loneliness – A Dramatherapist’s Perspective

I think there can be many different reasons for loneliness. Someone can be surrounded by a lot of people every day; they may have a family with a partner and children and parents too and still feel lonely inside and they may have very specific reasons to feel this way.

One of the main reasons for loneliness I think however has to do with not being a part of a supportive community, a community that acknowledges and appreciates the individual and offers the individual a sense of value and belonging. In large cosmopolitan cities such as London it can at times be a very difficult challenge finding a stable community where one feels a sense of belonging. It is here important to look for like-minded people to associate with and spend time with based on one's own sense of identity. This kind of community is based on shared interests or beliefs.

Some people do indeed manage to find a community or to build one around them; but one of the main characteristics of a cosmopolitan city is its tendency to be a very transient place where members of such a community will come and go within a relatively short time frame.

Dan Skili

Gay & Bi-sexual Men's Wellness and Support Group

Dan runs a support group for men who identify as gay or bisexual at CityLit in Covent Garden every month. You can find more information about the group, the themes for every session and dates and times on Facebook and MeetUp.

Need Further Advice and Support?

Goldsmiths Students:

Daily Wellbeing drop-in: Register to meet privately for a 15-20 minute appointment. Appointments are offered on a first-come first-served basis. The drop-in is in RHB 123.

Registration	Appointments
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Mon-Thu 2-3.15pm	2.30-3.30pm
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Fri 9.30-10.15am	9.30-10.30am
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The drop-in runs all year except when Goldsmiths is closed for Christmas and Easter.

Contact the Wellbeing Team at wellbeing@gold.ac.uk to ask a question or book an appointment at a time that is convenient.

Nightline: You can call or chat online to trained students who will listen in confidence to whatever is on your mind. Being students, they understand university life isn't plain sailing. Call 020 7631 0101 or go to nightline.org.uk to find out how to IM or Skype them.

Lewisham Residents:

SLAM Lewisham. We accept referrals from GPs in the borough of Lewisham. If suitable, your GP may refer you to us. You can also self-refer online: <https://bit.ly/306SJTa>

SLAM 24-hour mental health helpline on 0800 731 2864

Everyone:

www.getselfhelp.co.uk A selection of leaflets and guides

www.nth.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp A selection of booklets. This site also contains a lot of leaflets in other languages.

Campaign Against Living Miserably <https://www.thecalmzone.net/> includes a helpline for men.

Phone: 08 08 802 58 58, available 5pm-midnight

Samaritans 24-hour mental health helpline: 116 123

Let's be lonely together.