

Our Carnal Hearts

Rachel Mars

Project and Touring Information [Carnal](#)





About the Show

Our Carnal Hearts is a performance about envy and competition by Rachel Mars, with an original surround-sound live score for 4 female singers by Louise Mothersole.

It is performed on a square stage with audience on 4 sides, and a singer centrally placed in each audience block.

It is **part capitalist satire and part emotional vivisection**, an exploration of envy across politics, status, career, sex and family. It is **provocative, cathartic and very darkly humoured**.

The show weaves together:

- the live audience-performer space which examines the current state of envy and competition through spoken and sung texts and darkly comic ritual actions. It is direct address, satirical and religious in feel.
- a Hungarian folk story of a fairy who visits you bearing a wish, but whatever you wish for, your neighbour gets double.
- the story of an arsonist as she destroys larger and larger institutions

This all culminates in a highly visual finale ritual involving two rubber chickens.

The show also invites communal singing with the audience in the manner of a religious service [for example, the first hymn of the invocation of the spirit – ‘Gold’ by Spandau Ballet]. It makes us sing the unspeakable, disrupting the individualism and solo nature of envy with the [illusion of] a community of harmonious voices.

VIDEO

Full video of the show - <https://vimeo.com/rachelmars/ourcarnalheartsfullshow> password: carnal

Trailer - <https://vimeo.com/178337349>

What are the guts of the project?

Rachel:

I've been obsessed with the state of envy across the personal and the political for the past few years. It remains a shamefully taboo emotion. Whilst in some societies there are rituals to cope with envy, in the West, we are without. With ***Our Carnal Hearts*** I am riding our current - very perfect - [shit]storm of envy: a culmination of fears of scarcity, isolation born from technology, the move from collectivism to individualism and status anxiety derived from consumerism. It is a passionate act of exorcism, reimagining envy aside from the humiliation and guilt that it has been imbued with by religion, and the contortions through which politicians mangle envy to serve agendas of wealth accumulation.

At its guts the show continues the line of questioning I pursue across my work - how do we cope? How do we cope with being bombarded with language and imagery that aims to inspire us to comparison? What are the social protocols involved in navigating these evaluations? Where is the space of resistance?

One singer is placed centrally in the front row of each bank. By experimenting in this set up we invoke and trouble: a surround-sound live choral score; the atmosphere of AA meeting; a shape-note singing convention; a 70s performance happening. This audience face-off set-up invites a comparison - a personal and collective showdown- both imagined and played out in the piece, which speaks to the comparative direction of envy.

The central role is a departure from Rachel's previous work where she performs a 'version' of herself. In this project she is rupturing modes of character - trickster priestess, ideological frenzy-whipper, threatening charismatic leader and finally the flick-knife wielding fairy of the Hungarian folk story.

Sing It! Spirit of Envy! Associated Participatory Project.

Sing It! Spirit of Envy! is a participatory singing project, which forms a new choir with each appearance. The melodies and harmonies are set and the lyrics are rewritten every time to be made up of a list of the participants' envies. It is a chance to bring a group of people together to learn a new composition featuring their experiences. It has been performed across the UK and in Austin, with pre-existing choirs or groups put together specially for the project.

You can see footage of the piece here : <http://www.rachelmars.org/sing-it-spirit-of-envy>

You can listen to a BBC Radio 4 Feature about it here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05sz8z7>

Sing It! Spirit of Envy! can tour alongside *Our Carnal Hearts*.

Who helped it happen

Our Carnal Hearts is co-commissioned by The Junction, Cambridge, CPT London with additional support from Ovalhouse, Shoreditch Town Hall and ART, Boston. It is made possible through a grant from Arts Council and South East Dance in partnership with Jerwood Charitable Trust. It was developed at The Royal Court Tottenham Residency, The Orchard Project, NY and Playwright's Workshop, Montreal.

Information for touring

The show is available for touring in late 2017 and 2018.

Performances to date:

US Fusebox Festival, Austin | Oberon, A.R.T Boston

UK London: Shoreditch Town Hall | CPT | The Albany | CHORUS festival Southbank Centre;
Around the Country: Watch Out Festival Cambridge | Royal Exchange, Manchester | Theatre Royal Margate | Norwich Arts Centre | Harlow Playhouse | The House, Plymouth | LAB Leeds | Chapter, Cardiff |

People:

5 performers and touring technician on the road

Or Alternative International touring model:

2 Performers and 3 local singers rehearsed for 2 days in situ prior to the show

Running time:

1 hour

Space:

Minimum 3 x 3m square flat stage, audience on 4 sides. This can be in a traditional theatre space or a disused church, community hall, historic building.

LX:

Company tour their own LX desk. Generic rig plan available on request.

Sound:

Operated on Qlab on Company Laptop

Get in: 1 day with pre-rig, 2 days without.

Get out – 30 mins

Artist Profile

Rachel Mars is a performance maker borrowing from theatre, live art and comedy.

She has been making work for 7 years and has performed across the UK, including at the South Bank Centre, Brighton Festival, Barbican, Tate Modern, Forest Fringe and Summerhall. Her company Mars.tarrab is the 2017 winner of the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award.

Most recently she has been commissioned by Fuel Theatre, Ovalhouse London, Wellcome Trust and undertaken residencies at The Orchard Project and Asylum, New York; Playwrights' Workshop, Montreal and Cove Park, UK. She has shown work at festivals internationally including at Fusebox, Texas; Wildside, Montreal and Hot! NYC. Rachel is a regular on BBC Radio's 'Pause for Thought' and has written for The Stage, The Guardian and The Jewish Chronicle.

Rachel is an artist fellow of Birkbeck University. She has taught at various universities and artist development courses around the UK.

Rachel's work is supported by producer Lucy Jackson in the US



Feedback / Critical Writing

<http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/review-carnal-hearts-shoreditch-town-hall/>

<https://www.fuseboxfestival.com/blog/rachel-mars-wants-to-trick-you>

Both joyful and delightfully painful. Moved me to celebrate what is terribly human with song and revelry, delivered masterfully.

Ari Barbanell, Theatre Producer, American Repertory Theatre

Our Carnal Hearts is a magnificent ode to our fucked up times.

Mattieu Goeury, Vooruit, Belgium

A show of wit and verve that -aptly- hides a dark heart. It made me question my own relationship to envy and how the pace of our online lives is overtaking our emotional capacity to connect with our own interiors, never mind other people.

Louise Stephens, Deputy Literary Manager, Royal Court Theatre, London

A gorgeous, gleeful rummage through our darkest urges. Funny, intimate and sinister with a beautiful choral score. It leaves us shaken, smiling and even perhaps a little kinder.

Jonathan Wakeham, Board Member, CPT, London

CONTACT

www.rachelmars.org | Rachel@rachelmars.org | +44 (0) 7855 776 991

Producer (US): Lucy.jackson@gmail.com | +1 917 565 5097