

Welcome to this introduction to 'SHOWMANISM' by Dickie Beau, directed by Jan Willem Van Den Bosch. The audio-described performance at Hampstead Theatre is on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. There is a touch tour at 12:45, the introductory notes will start in the auditorium at 2.15, and the performance at 2:30pm. The performance runs for approximately 90 minutes without interval and the live audio description will be given by Miranda Yates.

Information on Hampstead's website tells us... ***'Spend an evening in the company of stage and screen legends - Ian McKellen, Peter Sellars, Fiona Shaw and many more - as you have never seen, or heard them before. Channelling a compelling collection of voices, Dickie traces a path through the world of performance in all its permutations, from Greek theatre to nightclub drag queens, from politics to puppetry. Showmanism is an audiovisual love letter to performance that talks to us about art, about the world, and about being human.'***

**Please note - this production contains brief mentions of death, abuse and sexual assault. There are sudden loud noises, flashing lights, use of haze and incense.**

The performance's creator Dickie Beau is in his mid-40's with a slim athletic build and a pale complexion. His chiseled features are clean shaven, and he has short light brown hair that's slightly unruly and a trimmed moustache. His lean physique is supple and graceful.

The design has a deliberate minimalism, filled by symbolic objects that make the space feel both theatrical and surreal, like stepping into someone's imagination, memory, or subconscious. The atmosphere created is part theatre, part dreamscape, and at times part séance. There are moments when the space feels like an empty theatre, a recording studio, a shrine to lost voices, or a playful dressing room. The stage becomes a living archive with objects serving as gateways for transformation.

The performance unfolds in a large central section of the black painted stage that's about 10 metres wide and 6 metres deep. This area is about 50cm lower than the surrounding stage floor and is framed at the back and sides by tall black voile curtains that at times can be lit to look solid enclosing the space or become semi-

transparent. Occasionally the curtains are flooded by vibrant glowing red, and cool blue tones, as well as becoming the backdrop for a variety of projections, including cave drawings of animals and a deep-space star-filled horizon.

Behind the curtains where the floor is slightly higher is a gap or wide corridor of a few metres where the workings of the theatre are visible, including stage lights hanging in a metal framework of tall lighting poles, ladders, pulleys and equipment cases.

In the centre of the floor in front, enclosed by the voile curtains is a 4-metre square platform with a pale surface, is raised about 50 cm from the surrounding floor. This acts as the central focus point where most of the action takes place.

Surrounding the raised platform is a shadowy space, where the floor is textured by a heavy dusting of black rubber crumb. Scattered about this liminal space are symbolic objects and props, each playing an important role. Some standing on the ground, others suspended at various heights in the air.

In pride of place in front of the platform in the centre is a reel-to-reel tape, echoing the theme of recorded voices and memories replayed. In the front left corner is a large black flight case, like a touring storage box, the size of a large trunk. When opened the trunk becomes a dressing up box revealing within its lid a stage mirror surrounded by working light bulbs. Inside there are a number of items, including a red robe, white platform boots and a shiny silver tray.

In the back left corner is a white enameled bath filled with black soil and a modest orange tree sunk into the soil at one end. To the right of the bath is a single plain black chair and just behind, on top of a tall metal pole is a white space helmet. At the back of the white platform to the right a tall metal ladder extends high into the space. Hanging slightly forward suspended on a long wire is a large conch shell surrounded by a soft focused spotlight.

At the back on the right - initially covered by a black voile cloth - a tall mop with fluffy white mop-head resting upright, sits in a yellow industrial style mop bucket.

On the floor a couple of metres in front is a large red book, the size of a large portfolio folder. To the right two small TVs are stacked one on top of the other. Towards the front on the right a gold toned garment is nestled amongst the black

rubber crumb of the floor with a pale white skull nearby. Further to the right a garden spade rests against a metal frame.

Suspended high at the back are several objects. On the left, a single chair hangs in isolation. To the right, a portable record player sits alongside an old-fashioned radio, its display casting a soft, glowing light. Further across against the right side is a second portable radio. Scattered among these are a couple of small TV screens, which occasionally catch fragments of the projections, sometimes flickering with the image of a curious, roving eye as it scans the space, or flashing a test pattern or alignment grid.

The lighting is highly atmospheric. At times the space is brightly lit in a clean theatrical wash, while at others it becomes shadowy, focusing on individual objects or the performer. There are frequent blackouts where the entire stage plunges into darkness between scenes or during pivotal moments. The curtains become projection surfaces for fleeting images – sometimes abstract patterns, sometimes ghostly traces of figures, or textures, like flickering cave paintings, theatrical swords or static.

Dickie appears in multiple forms throughout the show. In the preshow he wears a white boiler suit, with high top white boots with wing decoration at the heels and wanders high above the audience in the theatre's lighting grid and looks down into the auditorium - visible to the audience through the metal mesh floor - as they take their seats.

Later he wears a gold toned garment that he shapes in different ways depending on the character, for example, wrapped around his body and draped across one shoulder as a toga, worn open and split at the thigh creating a luxurious and sensual gown, and then worn with the lower sections tied up to create a bottom skimming couture outfit with wide elongated kimono style sleeves - adding to this is a huge fluffy mop head as a stylised wig.

Another simple outfit, this time pulled out of the dress-up trunk, is a vibrant red robe. This is accessorized with a pair of glasses, over the glasses clear lenses are two dark lenses that can be flipped up or down independently to represent a number of different characters, each accompanied by a shift in posture, energy and gesture.

When Dickie first steps out of his white boilersuit he stands, lean framed in just his white underpants, with a belt-like band of glittery fig leaves fastened around his hips.

The performance uses pre-recorded voices of well-known figures including Ian McKellen, Patsy Rodenburg, Peter Sellars, Fiona Shaw, Steve Nallon, Mimi Denissi and Ram Dass. Dickie lip-synchs their voices. In the scenes where Dickie is interviewing people, he doesn't lip synch his recorded voice just the other speakers whilst adopting their physicality and mannerisms. As Ram Dass, he takes on a stylised energy his movement becomes choreographed, echoing the rhythm and tones of his speech pattern.

### **Cast and Production Credits**

SHOWMANISM is created by and stars **Dickie Beau**

The Director is **Jan Willem Van Der Bosch**

The Designer is **Justin Nardella**

The Lighting Designer is **Marty Langthorne**

The Sound Designer is **Dan Steele**

This is the end of the introduction to Showmanism at Hampstead Theatre. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the box office on **020 7722 9301**