

everything theatre

An honest and unpretentious guide to theatre in London and beyond



Credit: Clara Larrea

Review: Entrañas (Insides), The Pit, Barbican Centre

Author: Mary Pollard in Physical theatre, Reviews, West End 8 February 2024 0

Summary



Excellent

A visually breathtaking body of work – or work of the body...

MimeLondon continues to gift us with remarkable, fascinating productions— this time hosting Spanish company **El Patio Teatro**, who bring us *Entrañas (Insides)*. This exquisitely visual but quirkily thought-provoking production delights and stimulates in equal measure. A uniquely evocative piece of visual theatre, it considers the human body and explores extended ideas of what – and indeed where – it is to be human.

The set, itself reminiscent of a series of frames, is initially breathtaking because the striking lighting design creates a feeling of chiaroscuro, almost as if the stage is a living painting – perhaps a Caravaggio. It's here we are presented with a sequence of ordinary, inanimate objects, brought alive and made quite beautiful through extraordinary contemplation.

The show is performed by duo **Izaskun Fernández** and **Julian Saenz-Lopez** in Spanish with surtitles, and their melodic accents, removed from the sense of the words in the translation, have a beautifully distancing effect, rendering the visual power of the performance all the more significant and enthralling.

Using handmade props and physical gestures, the two initially consider ideas of what a body is in terms of physical constitution. Anatomical sketches on boards are matched to their own bodies to hint at what lies beneath the skin, and immediately, a space of disclosure and discovery is established. Taking a scientific tone, they examine the literal composition of the elements of a human being, but then introduce a wealth of fascinating, eccentric facts regarding corporal mechanics – the fluctuations of the body from day to night, from life to death. It all offers an intriguing insight into how there may be more to our human existence than first appears.

This translates beautifully into magical moments of humorous, mischievous trickery and object manipulations that suggest how bodily realities can be understood differently. Magnetism and puppetry are used to animate unlikely things, and at one point, an assemblage of objects is reframed so that they are perceived in a quite different form, as an imagined aquarium complete with swimming fish. Further theatrical flourishes punctuate the production and challenge perceptions of where a body exists in space and time: a performer sinks down headfirst into the set, a disembodied hand emerges from the desk, or someone's jacket is put in spotlight and they have existence within it although no longer present themselves.

Ideas of embodiment are further explored as the pair contemplate what a human is beyond the physically visible: how a person can exist in different objects and spaces. There's discussion of phantom limbs, nostalgia, of scars as memory, how memories are formed and where they reside. Much of this is done using anecdotes that bring a wonderful personal and human dimension to the evening. Their warmly engaging stories interweave intricately with the more scientific content of the delivery to give a fabulously blended atmosphere of fact and imagination that leaves you contemplating truths in multiple ways, perhaps never quite settling on a conclusion, but leaving ideas suspended, like dust in a sunbeam.

Entrañas (Insides) is a quite beautiful collection of reflections on physical, cerebral and sensible ways of being. It's a truly delightful performance that will leave you charmed and intrigued.

Artistic direction and creation, script and dramaturgy: Izaskun Fernández and Julián Sáenz-López

Lighting and Set design: El Patio Teatro

Costume design: Martín Nalda

Music composer: Nacho Ugarte

ABOUT MARY POLLARD



By her own admission Mary goes to the theatre far too much, and will watch just about anything. Her favourite musical is Matilda, which she has seen 16 times, but she's also an Anthony Neilson and Shakespeare fan - go figure. She has a long history with Richmond Theatre, but is currently helping at Shakespeare's Globe as a steward and in the archive. She's also having fun being ET's specialist in children's theatre and puppetry, and being a Super Assessor for the Offies! Mary now insists on being called The Master having used the Covid pandemic to achieve an award winning MA in London's Theatre and Performance.

Review: ENTRAÑAS, The Barbican Centre

El Patio Teatro's first UK show asks: what does it mean to be a human, and what does it mean to be human?

By: Franco Milazzo Feb. 07, 2024



Performed for the first time outside Spain, El Patio Teatro's *Entrañas* asks two simple questions: what does it mean to be a human, and what does it mean to be human? The deceptively simple title roughly translates as "Insides" and obfuscates the intellectual and emotional breadth and depth of this stunningly innovative work.

The company was founded by Izaskun Fernandez and Julian Sáenz-Lopez in 2010 in Logroño, the capital city of La Rioja province in northern Spain. They come from different backgrounds: Fernandez has a degree in Artistic Pottery and has won two acting awards at the La Rioja's Young Theatre Festival while Sáenz-Lopez studied technical set up, lighting, audio and theatre direction. Their first show *A Mano* (By Hand) brought together theatre, puppetry and modelling and is still being toured around their native country. Appearing as part of this year's [MimeLondon festival](#), *Entrañas* is El Patio Teatro's fourth show.



Photo credit: Clara Larrea

Within a deceptively simple wooden frame, the pair take us on a tour through the different parts of our bodies, throwing in a raft of fascinating facts about the brain, cells, intestines and pretty much everything else. Did you know we are born with 300 bones but end up with 206 by the time we are adults? That there are only 11 elements in our body? That your left lung is smaller than your right to accommodate your heart? Or that our noses and ears continue to grow while our eyes and bodies shrink?

Biology is blended here with biography. What could just be a fun science lesson is brought to earth by relating stories of the actors' past and their family. In their eyes, scars are the happy memories of childhood adventures, the sorry reminders of bad luck and ill health or, in the case of belly buttons, a direct connection to our mothers. A lost limb can be like a missing parent in the way it still holds space in our minds if not in the physical world we can see and touch.

The theatrical elements take *Entrañas* beyond what could be a whimsical lecture. The precise motions as the pair move around the small set are a joy to watch and are matched by the seductive Spanish storytelling. Parlour tricks using bedsheets and magnets enliven the narrative while the detailed otional ties between what is said and what we feel. This is the first time the show has used surtitles but there is no noticeable disconnect between what the actors are saying and what is shown above in English.



Photo credit: Clara Larrea

MimeLondon's high-quality curation has once again delivered a clever, memorable and engaging show about the human condition and, based on what I saw in *Entrañas*, I look forward to seeing what they bring to the UK next.

Entrañas is at The **Barbican Centre** until 10 February. More information on the MimeLondon festival can be found [here](#).

Photo credit: Clara Larrea

Entrañas (Insides) at the Barbican

by Monica Cox

Izaskun Fernández and Julián Sáenz-López are an enchanting duo as they take us on a journey to try to understand what a human body is.



El Patio theatre showcase creative prowess in using strong visual and auditive elements to create a kooky and intriguing world. The performers state openly at the beginning that they are left with more questions about the human body than when they began, immediately setting the philosophical tone of how this piece will probe the audience. The combination of personal accounts, interesting facts and thought provoking questions changes our perspectives as the performers construct and deconstruct how we see a body both metaphorically and physically. The piece being in Spanish with English surtitles can most be appreciated if you speak the original language due to the profound nature of how they embark the story however even the light humour is accessible to an English speaking audience as the universality of a human body can be felt by all.

The imagery parallels with nature are exquisite and the textures they bring to life are highlighted by the intimate and warm lighting. The set is full of surprises giving it an even more magical feel and which ties in nicely with the theme of how mysterious the human body is. The performances, although a little intense at times, is cohesive with the Amelie and Wes Anderson-esque feel of the piece. The music allows the audience to breathe at the same time as the story as well as subtly adding to the tonal shifts which make the narrative journey so dynamic.

A truly original concept which brilliant stagecraft creating a heartwarming experience for anyone who has the privilege of watching.

Monica Cox VOICE REVIEWER

Monica is a theatre and film director, writer and dramaturg with a particular interest in queer and female stories. She has a degree in Spanish and Russian and a Masters in Theatremaking.

Entrañas (Insides) – MimeLondon, Barbican, London

Reviewer: Maryam Philpott



Image: Clara Larrea Quemada

Creators and Directors: Izaskun Fernández and Julián Sáenz-López

A journey into the human body, Izaskun Fernández and Julián Sáenz-López's *Entrañas (Insides)* is part biology seminar, part theatrical musing on the complex physiology and emotional responses that shape who we are. Performed in the Barbican Pit Theatre as part of MimeLondon, *Entrañas (Insides)* takes the audience from the creation of atoms and cells over millions of years, to birth, illness, dreams and death, revelling in the wonder of our composition and the different kinds of love that feed through a life. There is something of the nineteenth-century natural history enthusiast about this production with its detailed anatomical drawings and glass-boxed organs used to showcase the working skeleton, tissues and muscular structures that exist beneath the skin of the performers, and there is plenty

of instructive insight into the way these are held against their bodies. On a structured stage set designed by El Patio Teatro, there are matching nooks for performers Fernández and Sáenz-López to deliver separate chapters as well as central space for larger demonstrations and the show's key set pieces.

As the title suggests, *Entrañas (Insides)* is not interested in the physical surface at all and, despite a brief mention of skin, the show focuses entirely on the invisible interior of the body, finding considerable wonder in the enduring physical structures and the less tangible origins of nightmares and emotions that emanate from the brain. As well as a birth-to-death timespan, the piece is also punctuated by segments devoted to our chemical composition, water, bones, scars and the mechanical connections that motor it all, relayed as reams and reams of facts.

This presentational style feels like a lighter Royal Society Lecture, presenting all of this information in an accessible way, but it means the theatricality of the show is often secondary to its scientific value. Both Fernández and Sáenz-López draw in personal family stories that bring some of these concepts to life and *Entrañas (Insides)* would benefit from more of these. So, while this celebrates the collective notion of the uniform body we all share, the drama and spark exists within the quirks and foibles of individual bodies and how we utilise, respond to and feel differently within them.

The creators use a bit of puppetry, some role play and plenty of props to illustrate the story they want to tell about human interiors and in a 50-minute show, each section is necessarily brief, and one of the themes is the ways in which the body still defies scientific and medical knowledge in the origins of its functions and responses. There could be clearer delineation between physical function and the deeper, more existential mysteries of emotions and imagination and here theatrical techniques would be better suited to exploring how those unanswered questions about behaviour are put into daily practice.

Nonetheless, *Entrañas (Insides)* has an enjoyable, educative value that seeks to deepen rather than explain what we are, how we are made and what a body is.

Jan/
Feb 24
Guide



Telling stories without words

Explore themes of creativity, the mysteries of the human body, the universe and a unique retelling of a familiar tale, as MimeLondon shares innovative theatre from across the world.



El Patio Teatro: *Entrafas (Insides)* © Clara Lameo Guzmán

Get your new year off to an exceptional start with four works of cutting-edge theatre, as we welcome MimeLondon to our stage with four shows from astonishing international companies.

Showcasing remarkable productions that embrace the unspoken through extraordinary visual performance, you'll encounter a mesmerising puppet show about the twists and turns of life, an animated film coming to life on stage, the mysteries of the human body told through beautiful handmade objects, and a blend of shadow puppetry, animation, music and projection.

MimeLondon is a new curatorial project created by Helen Lannaghan and Joseph Seelig, the directors of London International Mime Festival (LIMF) which ended in 2023 after five decades of award-winning success.

French company Les Anticlastes (who were here with *The Waltz of Hummelettes* in 2019) open proceedings with *Ambergris*, a strikingly visual retelling of the story of Pinocchio inside the belly of a whale. Set inside a giant perfume cabinet which is part ribcage, part musical organ, a perfumer dissects a lump of ambergris, a rare ingredient found in the intestines of a sperm whale that's used in scents.

Told through a unique blend of puppetry, masks, machines and music, it shows the perfumer unbottling the very essence of being from some of literature's most life-changing journeys.

In *Stereoptik's Antechamber*, an animated film comes to life as two brilliant visual artists create a transformative love-story live on stage through sketching, painting and film.

This love-letter to the creative process charts the start of an idea, an animated film, a show and an exhibition all at once. It tells the tale of a hard-working young man who reconnects with his childhood and falls in love after coming across an old photograph.

Following their handmade spectacle, *Stellaire*, here in 2022, *Stereoptik's* shows are built under the eyes of its audience, live.

What are we made of? What is a body? Where does it go when we die? *Entrafas (Insides)* by renowned Spanish puppet company El Patio takes us on a poetic journey through the human body in a profoundly personal way using handmade objects, images and a moving original soundtrack, reminding us what it means to be human.

Finally, encounter cowboys, pianists, disco-dancers and more in a playful shadow puppetry performance about the universe and everybody in it from an award-winning duo that will fill you with wonder.

Directed and performed by New York-based Phil Saltanoff and Steven Wendt, *This & That* sees one performer manipulate objects live on stage, while another mixes atmospheric sounds and orchestrates live music. Observe the creation of each event, act and gesture on the spot in this dream-like production, which puts its creators' search to make and discover meaning and beauty on show.

This refreshing quartet of innovative theatre is just the tonic, and will start your arts journey in 2024 on the right note.

Les Anticlastes: Ambergris
23-27 Jan

Stereoptik: Antechamber
30 Jan-3 Feb

El Patio Teatro: Entrafas (Insides)
6-10 Feb

Phil Saltanoff/Steven Wendt/Cie 111: This & That
13-17 Feb
See page 7 for details

POSTED ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

I saw the most lovely show at The Barbican in London tonight. *Entrañas* (Insides) by Spain's El Patio Teatro is about the human body, and what makes people people. With two actors/storytellers, the show is a mere 45 minutes long, but is a perfect length for its occasionally humorous meditation on grief, death, and, above all, life. Presented by MimeLondon, this is a warm and comforting performance, filled with charm. There's a show tomorrow, and two on Saturday, and I'm not sure you'll spend a more delightful (under an) hour in the theatre this year. <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2024/event/mimelondon-entranas-insides> #theatre #spain #London #MimeLondon

Arratoon (@arratoon@beige.party)
beige.party



La compañía española El Patio Teatro irrumpe en el Mime, el reconocido festival internacional de mimo de Londres, con 'Entrañas'. EFE/ Guillermo Garrido

'Entrañas', una clase de anatomía teatral que sacude el Festival Mime de Londres

9 febrero 2024

Londres (EFE).- La compañía española El Patio Teatro irrumpe en el Mime, el reconocido festival internacional de mimo de Londres, con 'Entrañas', un "espectáculo de más preguntas que respuestas", en el que el público explora en su interior, según afirman a EFE sus componentes.

El dúo de actores de Logroño Izaskun Fernández y Julián Sáenz-López dan en el teatro londinense Barbican una clase de anatomía donde se cuestionan qué nos define, lo visible o lo invisible, nuestro físico o nuestras entrañas.

Una dualidad presente en cada una de las partes del cuerpo humano que con un juego etimológico de las palabras las interseccionan y guían al público que completa el aforo en cada sesión.

Divulgación y emociones

La variedad del temario va de lo puramente científico “que tiene un punto de divulgación, hasta un poco también las emociones”, señala Sáenz-López a EFE.

Por ejemplo, que el pulmón izquierdo es algo más pequeño para hacer hueco a nuestro corazón, que el tórax originalmente en griego significa coraza y es ese escudo que en ocasiones uno se enfunda para protegerse.

La puesta en escena es minimalista, donde destaca la plasticidad del juego de luces sobre maquetas hechas a mano y sus sombras, rayos X o antiguas diapositivas y supera la barrera del lenguaje con el público no hispanohablante de este certamen no verbal.

“Es un lujo y un regalo brutal estar en el Mime festival, y en el Barbican, es un teatro con renombre”, afirma Izaskun Fernández a EFE, al reconocer su sorpresa por la participación.

El viaje introspectivo es en español, pero “hay algo en la plástica o en la visual que les llega”, afirma Fernández, que es lo que caracteriza a este festival de “lenguajes que trascienden un poco al verbal y que te llevan a otros lugares”, que se celebra hasta el 17 de febrero en la City.

Más preguntas que respuestas

El dúo teatral logroñés invita a un diálogo muy personal, donde las preguntas van más allá de lo fisiológico y, según explican, “a cada ser humano les influye de una manera”.

“Hablamos de nuestras propias cicatrices, algo muy universal, porque todos tenemos”, sostiene Sáenz-López, que apelan a recuerdos o sentimientos del público que se encuentran en nuestras entrañas.

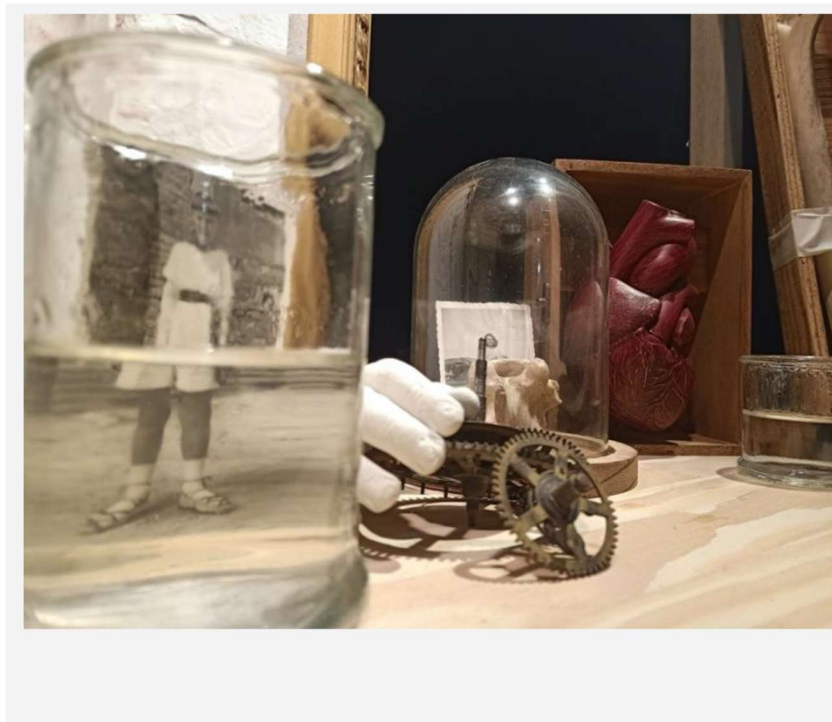
“Es un espectáculo de más preguntas que respuestas”, define su compañera Fernández, en el que espera que el espectador no “salga con mucho peso y que de alguna manera en alguno de los temas que tocamos encuentren alivio”.

‘Entrañas’ es una conversación teatral de cuarenta y cinco minutos, en la que Izaskun y Julián intentan establecer una comunión con los presentes de esto que “a todos nos ha sucedido alguna vez” de forma liviana y ligera y “salir con una sonrisa”, explica Fernández, que se despide mañana con doble sesión.

The day's performance was crowned with *Insides*, the new show by El Patio Teatro, which had its premiere in Catalonia. Izaskun Fernández and Julian Sáenz-López, as they explained after the show, decided one day to begin a process of research into human anatomy. And they were trapped. In their search for the answer to questions such as "What are we made of?" or "How can a collection of matter come to life?", the two authors, trapped by the scientific language and their strange poetry, were fascinated, until the problem was to filter the amount of information they were handling, to narrow down a question that was threatening to bury them.

The researcher's eagerness to discover ancient treatises on the human body was similar to that of the adventurer when he came across ancient books and engravings on geography or natural sciences, with maps of remote places and exotic and mysterious names. The questions about this unexpected universe pile up and the more he delves into them, the more questions arise, which are the dramatic catalyst of the book. In *Insides*, the game of contrasting the scientific, material, empirical, rational, empirical plane with the emotional plane, that of feelings, works perfectly. It works thanks to the fact that Fernández and Sáenz-López overcome the challenge of guiding the spectator on an apparently complex journey, which combines the two plans, with the artistic language we already know and which is creating a school. The show won the **Drac d'Or for the best stage design**.

Dani Chicano- from the website: www.escenafamiliar.cat



***Entrañas (Insides)*, by El Patio Teatro**

Continuing our journey through the shows seen at the Fira de Titelles, it's time to take a look at the latest play, just out of the oven, by the award-winning and renowned Logroño company El Patio Teatro, created in 2010 by Izaskun Fernández and Julián Sáenz-López. It is called ***Entrañas (Insides)***, and it answers a question that we have all asked and continue to ask: what are we inside, how does our body work? A question, certainly, that we think we have answered and know, when the truth is that we are totally and utterly ignorant.



Image of 'Insides'.

What happens with this type of question is that when one asks it and begins to really get to grips with it, a universe opens up that is as infinite or even more infinite than the cosmos we inhabit, or at least just as uninhabitable. It is a veritable treasure chest of surprises that fascinates the explorer and that becomes a fractal ramification of questions that arise without any satisfactory answers.

This is what happened to Izaskun and Julián, when they decided to talk about love and certain feelings, but they did it inside the body and inside their emotions. The world that opened up to them was so vast, complex and attractive that the tremendous breadth of an unexplored knowledge overwhelmed them. This is how they explained it in a small colloquium after the performance. But at the same time, they realized that the magnitude of the enterprise demanded such a gigantic exercise in openness that the strictest restraint was essential if they were not to lose their way. This tension between the infinity of knowledge and the restraint demanded by stage creation is surely the dramaturgical engine of the precious adventure on which the two intrepid explorers have embarked.



Image of “Insides”.

A tension that is very difficult to resolve, as is easy to imagine, and which is the main challenge faced by the two author-performers-puppeteers of El Patio. And it is the results that allow us to state the enormous mastery that these two creators have achieved.

In fact, **Insides** is a precious journey made with four hands and two voices through the interior of the human body, which the Logroño artists create together riding in vehicles with a multidimensional vision, showing us realities of multiple facets, in which the fragmentation of scientific rationality, which divides everything in order to measure and study how it works, is counterbalanced by the poetic image and metaphorical resonance, which speaks of the body but also of many other things that have to do with feelings, imagination and a synthetic knowledge that is based more on intuition than on reason. This is why some of the images of science from the 18th and 19th centuries, and even some older ones, which, with their primitive analytical pretensions, now appear to us more as poetic images of the imagination than of the inner reality of living organisms, go hand in hand.

Undoubtedly, the great challenge has been to balance all these perspectives and angles of observation, with their infinite metaphorical and imaginary resonances, and to achieve a rhythm of staging capable of seducing the spectator. A challenge that El Patio Teatro has met with a sophisticated mastery of plastic art, objects and visual language, always with grace, simplicity and an extraordinary elegance, fruit of the respect and poetic elevation with which they have approached the subject.



Image of “Insides” at the 34th Puppet Festival in Lleida.

The work is in itself a highly valuable and sophisticated tool that Izaskun and Julián have created in order to carry out an artistic project aimed at a deep understanding of things, in this case of the interior of the human body, and which asks the spectators fundamental questions that are still unanswered: what are we humans really? What is life? How can a bunch of mineral elements and a little water make up a living being that eats, runs around the world, thinks and imagines other worlds?

A reexamination that makes El Patio one of the most interesting and portentous companies on the creative scene in the country.

Toni Rumbau | May 10th, 2023 www.putxinelli.cat