

4 July 2011

The Wellcome Trust 75th Anniversary Summer Series

Still Life Dreaming 15th – 19th August at Pleasance Courtyard, Forth, Edinburgh

The Wellcome Trust is pleased to announce the premiere of *Still Life Dreaming*, a topical play co-produced and directed by Spare Tyre, based on the human stories and history behind the scientific study of how the brain ages.

On June 4th 1947, almost every Scottish schoolchild born in 1936 sat an intelligence test as part of the Scottish Mental Survey 1947. Between 2004 and 2007, 1091 of them re-sat the test and became known as the Lothian Birth Cohort 1936. This ongoing research, funded by Age UK, is aimed at revealing how thinking skills change with age, and uncovering fascinating findings about the brain's white matter - nerve fibres in the brain – and its significance in the ageing process.

Still Life Dreaming is inspired by the human stories behind the data being revealed. Co-produced by theatre company **Spare Tyre** and the **Wellcome Trust**, to mark the Trust's 75th anniversary, the play has been developed by Spare Tyre working with original members of the cohort and the scientists involved in the ongoing research into cognitive ageing at Edinburgh University.

Writer Pete Lawson's script reflects on the curiosity that drives human beings to explore ideas and interact with each other. It is a story about science infused with humour and humanity. Spanning two centuries, the play draws on the stories of the individuals involved in the study, as well as those in the bigger picture; philanthropists like Andrew Carnegie and Sir Henry Wellcome, and scientists like Godfrey Thomson and Professor Ian Deary, who heads up the team at the University of Edinburgh Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology.

The Spare Tyre cast of four older performers will each play a number of characters. In line with Spare Tyre's mission to make work that is as accessible as possible, the piece will be multi-art and interactive in form, and will use projection, lighting, sound and smell to create a multi-sensory experience for the audience.

Director Arti Prashar, said: "This is an epic story about chance connections, between one study and another, and between individuals, be they subjects or scientists. It has been a privilege to work with Professor Ian Deary and his team at Edinburgh University, and has made me appreciate how science and art behave in

similar ways. We all move from an initial idea, to taking risks and developing ideas in creative ways”.

Clare Matterson, Director of Medical Humanities and Engagement at the Wellcome Trust said: “The Wellcome Trust believes that the arts are a great way to engage the public in questions about science, and Spare Tyre’s *Still Life Dreaming* brings to life the biomedical science research that the Trust supports to bring about improvements in health and wellbeing. The story of the Lothian Birth Cohort 1936 and its members, who are now part of this research study into cognitive ageing, has special resonance for us in the year of our 75th anniversary”.

Frederick Lowrie, a member of the original cohort, said: “When I sat the test in 1947, I never imagined I’d be here again now, part of another study and also part of a play. It’s great to meet up with people from back then, and to feel part of something much bigger.”

Still Life Dreaming will premiere at the Pleasance Courtyard, Forth, Edinburgh, 15-19 August 2011. www.pleasance.co.uk/edinburgh/events/still-life-dreaming

Cast:

Vicky Lee
Margaret Liddell
Sieska Cowdrey
Jim Mulligan

Creative Team:

Writer: Pete Lawson
Director: Arti Prashar
Producer: Bonnie Mitchell
Designer: Rajha Shakiry
Music: Tayo Akinbode
Lighting Designer: Crin Claxton
AV Technician: Genetic Moo

Ends

Contacts

For more information about the *Wellcome Trust 75th Anniversary Summer Series*, individual event releases (including dates and venues), biographies, imagery and all other information please contact

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Notes for editors

The Wellcome Trust

The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. It supports the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. The Trust's breadth of support includes public engagement, education and the application of research to improve health. It is independent of both political and commercial interests.
www.wellcome.ac.uk

Spare Tyre

Spare Tyre uses and makes theatre that enables voiceless communities and individuals to share and celebrate their untold stories transforming lives and challenging prejudice. Spare Tyre's history of producing bold and powerful theatre that inspires and challenges communities, artists and audiences stretches over thirty years. Spare Tyre has developed inclusive, enabling and challenging new ways of working, based upon harnessing, capturing and valuing life experience.

Currently Spare Tyre works with:

- older people
- adults with learning disabilities
- women who have experienced sexual violence

www.sparetyre.org

Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology

The University of Edinburgh Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology is part of the cross council Lifelong Health and Wellbeing Initiative. CCACE explores changes in the ageing brain with the aim of preventing or reducing cognitive disability and its negative effect on health and wellbeing. www.ccace.ed.ac.uk and www.mrc.ac.uk/llhw

Lothian Birth Cohort 1936

In June 1947, every 11 year old school child in Scotland - over 70,000 of them - took the Scottish Mental Survey, a test that measured their cognitive abilities. The Lothian Birth Cohort 1936 (LBC1936) is a group of over 1,000 of these individuals, now in their 70's, who are helping scientists at the University of Edinburgh investigate the ageing brain. By taking the same test again at age 70, 73 and 76 and contributing exhaustive information about their lifestyle, health, genetics and biology the LBC1936 are helping us to build an understanding of cognitive ageing. This work is funded by Age UK as part of a project called The Disconnected Mind.

Age UK

Age UK is the lead funder of The Disconnected Mind project, a unique study that will unlock the solutions to healthy mental ageing. For more information or to make a donation to support the project please call 0800 1698787 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk

The Pleasance Theatre

For more information on The Pleasance Theatre go to www.pleasance.co.uk