

Text

The process of writing a text for **Mainstream** began, for me, in conversations during which Graham, Nick and I talked about how we felt our work should become more personal. We felt that the reason we were experimenting with theatre forms was because the way we experienced the world didn't coincide with the way that a traditional play and its production presents the world.

In Tobermory on the Isle of Mull, the workshop ideas were all related to performance. We explored the way in which life feels like a performance in which we constantly fail to remember our lines. We asked ourselves what it might feel like not to perform at all - to just be. We quickly realised that any situation in which two people were present was a performance - that the people were acting for each other. 'Acting' is a pejorative word: 'It's all an act,' 'He puts it on,' 'It's all for show.' But no matter how much we might hate ourselves for it, we can't avoid performing. In every encounter with every other person - we're putting on a show. The interesting question is to ask what lies underneath the performance.

After fourteen days of workshops, in Mull and London, and two days of brainstorming in Glasgow, I was given a definitive brief for producing the text of **Mainstream**. I had to write an encounter between two characters. The two characters would be played by four actors. Sometimes the characters would be men, sometimes a man and a woman, sometimes two women. Their encounter was to be ordinary (ish), brief and yet also somehow resonant.

I started to focus on the idea of one person asking questions of another. From opinion polls to casual encounters in the pub we present ourselves in answers to questions. Sometimes the question doesn't even have to be asked before we attempt to answer it. Faced with a question we have a strong urge to reveal ourselves truthfully but, interestingly, there is an equally strong urge to give the answer we think the other person wants to hear.

This theme seemed to me to mirror the work we had been doing about performance: the questioner as a kind of audience, the person answering as a kind of performer, eager to please. The moment the writing for **Mainstream** began to take off was the moment I realised that every scene would be the attempt of one person to find out who the other is; and the attempt of the other person to answer correctly.

David Greig, January 1999