

“MENTAL” - THE VACUUM CLEANER

Colchester Arts Centre, 1st April 2015

Charlie *We've just come out— I was in there as well... what did you think?*

Audience Member
Female 1. *It was brilliant - yeah - really liked it!*

Charlie *And what has it left you feeling like? Literally - I know this is only two minutes later...*

Audience Member
Female 1. *It just kind of makes you think about (v long pause)... people with mental health really. cos I work with people with mental health.*

Charlie *Do you? So you understand a lot of the things that were going on?*

Audience Member
Female 1. *Yeah, yeah... So it just kind of makes you , umm, see it from a more personal point of view... Yeah*

Charlie *Yeah.. What about as a piece of theatre? We've come to see it as... a piece of theatre. How does it strike you as theatre?*

Audience Member
Female 1. *Ummm ... different! (laughs) Unique.*

Charlie *Have you ever seen anything like it before?*

Audience Member
Female 1. *Yeah, But that was like... I didn't like the thing that I saw like that before. But this one was engaging—it kept your interest.*

Charlie (now asking Male 1 who has been listening) *We've just come out... and, what do you think?*

Audience Member Male 1. *It was fantastic.. I really enjoyed everything. I mean for me to see that. I have always wondered what it must be like for people to have mental health issues.And what the reasons... and why people do what they do.*

Charlie *Have you had any experience... of like friends and family who have been in that position?*

Audience Member Male 1. *Yeah - yeah I have, yeah. And for me it was always difficult to find out, why they felt the way they felt, you know? So yeah. It was an eye opener for me.*

Charlie *As far as I can see - it's a piece of theatre, but we KNOW that it's real life, don't we? I mean.. it's not made up, is it?*

Audience Member Male 1. *Do you know at one point I thought it was made up - until he showed off the bit that he had, um, carved some things on his back. And I realised then that it's real. Yeah*

Charlie *Yeah, yeah. I mean - I think if I was in your position and you were me. I think I'd say "it's shocking". Do you feel like that?*

Audience Member Male 1. *Was I shocked? No! Because I've seen people with mental health before - so it's just for me, it was an eye opener, it wasn't shocking. But it was an eye-opener to what... the things that they have to go through. What, what their day to day lives consist off. So it was an eye-opener.*

Charlie *That's great - thanks!*

Charlie *We've just come out... what, what are your instant reactions... it's what.. about four minutes ago?*

Audience Member Female 2. *Umm ...Very moving.. thought-provoking..umm, sensitive - It was good!*

Charlie *If it's thought-provoking - err..what thoughts, in a nutshell?*

Audience Member Female 2. *Well... just how little I probably know about mental-health.*

Charlie *Have you ever had experience of those kinds of things like with members of friends and family?*

Audience Member Female 2. *No... no - nothing remotely like that.*

Charlie. *If I was you and you were me right now - I'd say "shocking" - "I'm shocked". Has it struck you like that?*

Audience Member Female 2. *Ummm - a little bit yeah, yeah - I've just no idea what the people go through. No..*

Charlie (Male 2, who has been listening) *I'll turn to you- you've been listening to us. What were your instant reactions?*

Audience Member Male 2. *err... It was evocative - and also fearful. Because - I think it's easy to see how things are... (long pause)... difficult for people.*

Charlie *Yeah.. Have you ever had experience of these issues with people that you know - or friends or family?*

Audience Member Male 2. *Errr.. (long pause) - I've had dark thoughts.. (pause).. err, that's all I'm willing to say.*

Charlie *Yeah, yeah.. no, that's fine... obviously... Like you heard that I was saying.. that I found it kind of shocking - did you find it shocking at all?*

Audience Member Male 2. *Um, yes..yeah...(Pause)... Yeah it was, err.. shocking how many people cared! Outside of ... more people seemed to care outside of the mental health institutions than inside! And the one person who cared was told not to, basically! That was the worst thing.*

Charlie *And yet.. they're the professionals.*

Audience Member Male 2. *Yeah... And it was heartwarming to know that there was always someone about for him.. For James. Which is good... but not everyone has that... so..*

Charlie *One of the things that I found shocking about it was the, umm, agents of the state.. and the surveillance that was going on. Not so much because of his mental health issues, but because of his political activities. What did you think about that?*

Audience Member Female 2. *Err - not particularly surprising.. err.*

Charlie *Really? Did you know that those kinds of things go on?*

Audience Member Female 2. *I kind of had an idea, yeah – but I don't know if I know much about it, but yeah.*

Charlie *I wondered that as a piece of art and as he's involved in theatre he seemed to be saying, but he never actually said the words, that doing this is setting him free in some kind of way that doing this is really helping him in a therapeutic kind of way. How did that strike you - that idea?*

Audience Member Female 2 *yeah, yeah - he seemed to have apparently found his own therapy - none of the other systems seemed to be helping him at all. In the end he kind of got on with it himself.*

Charlie *Did you find that believable?*

Audience Member **Yeah, absolutely , yeah.**
Female 2.

Charlie **And what about you?**
(to Male 2)

Audience Member **Yes that argument works that, yeah.. it struck**
Male 2. **me that up until the point when he sort of**
 wrote his own Mental Health Act - I was
 comfortable that something was going to come
 up that wasn't really a surprise. But writing
 your own Mental Health Act - that was a
 surprise! That was good to see. But it did
 strike me that that was his own therapy.

Audience Member **Yeah - taking charge of it.**
Female 2.

Charlie **Taking it into his own hands..**

Audience Member **Yeah.**
Female 2.
