

Tong, Howard (1954-)
 See also: *Car, Five Concert Pieces, Lindsay Moran, The Street*
 Howard Tong was studying Interiors at Maidstone (see *Art Schools*) and was sent to mime artist Lindsay Kemp (Tong insists his work with Kemp was "dreadful"). He liked the work of Nice Style and sculptor/performance artist Bruce McLean and joined Ting after taking part in Anthony Howell's *workshop*. He recalls that he and Howell were the group's mainstay till the arrival of Fiona Templeton and the establishment of a *Core Group*. The Theatre of *Mistakes*.

The Ting at Artists Meeting Place, November 1974
 Photo: Bob Janz? The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



Howard Tong in *Preparations for Displacement* (April 1975)
 Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Tong shared an apartment with Mickey *Greenall* (see *Mud Man*) and remembers them holding many dinner parties and eventually married Anita *Urquhart*. He went on to become Chief Visual Merchandiser at Harvey Nichols, creating many of their famous window displays. He has since co-founded a collective of designers (see www.ksht.co.uk) with former partner Kathryn Scanlan, which specialises in window- dressing, shop-fitting, displays, and creating environments for exhibitions.

Table Moves

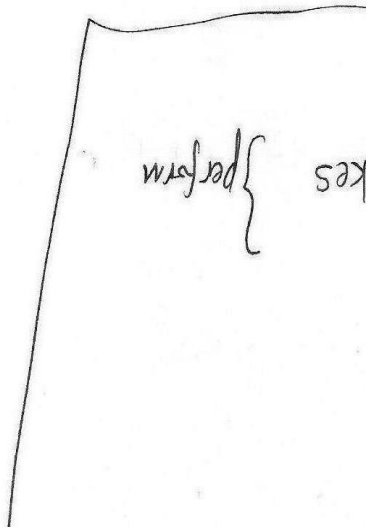
Tea
 Templeton, Fiona
Three Act Piece
 Theatre
 Time
 Ting
 Tong, Howard
 Toren, Amikam
 Toren, Christina
 Triggers
 Trio
Two Freedoms
Two Journeys
 Unattributed
 Unexplained
 Unknown
 Urquhart, Anita
 Venues

U O I S M F I P



An A-Z of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes – T & U

Marie-Anne Mancio



2009-09-03

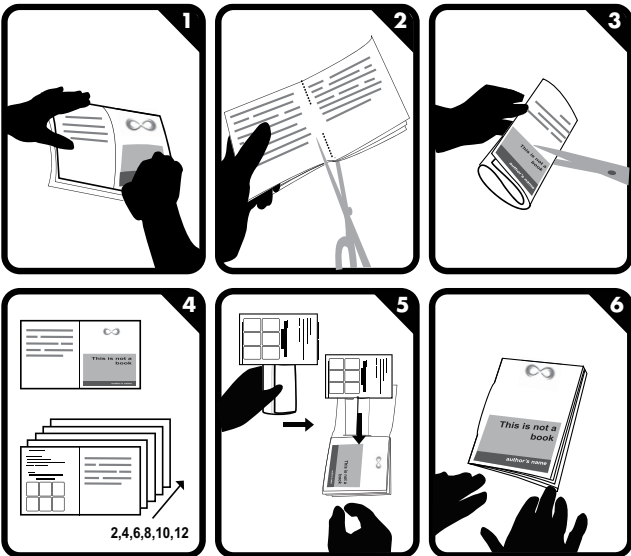
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Theatre of Mistakes Program for Jeannette Cochrane Theatre, March 1981
The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

“A skilled performer, her mathematical abilities and her talent for logical analysis helped pioneer the development of the company.”

(Interview: Andrew Eden & Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24th Nov 2008)

Andrew Eden: “Fiona was a key person in the development of The Theatre of Mistakes.”

(Conversation: Peter Stickland, London, Jan 2009)

“Fiona is a strategist; her father made crosswords. If you read *Elements of Performance Art* you get a fantastic sense of Fiona’s voice.”

with the **Ting** in March 1975. **games**; co-founder of The Theatre of Mistakes who began work Grillet, Fluxus, Gertrude Stein; the really beautiful one; adept at *nouvelle roman*, the work of Oulipo, Georges Perec, Robbe-

has been described as:
Templeton, Fiona (1951-)

(Interview: Peterborough, 24th Nov, 2008)

ability to manage people: “She made sure people had breaks and cups of tea and things.”
otherwise. b) Andrew Eden and Susan Bonvin praise Templeton’s cups of tea rather than water in *Waterfall*. She persuaded him

Tea
Table Moves (1981) See **Anthony Howell**

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an **A-Z**

T-U

Marie-Anne Mancio



Fiona Templeton with Robert Janz's *Six Sticks* c.1975
 Photo: ©Bob Janz?/ The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

"Fiona had a big input in writing as well; she was very strong in her ideas."
 (interview: Lindsay Moran, London, 6th Nov 2008)

Interview: Victoria Chick and Marie-Anne Mancio, London, 4th Nov 2008:
 VC: She was marvellous. She'd been a dancer, had she?
 MM: No, I don't think she had.
 VC: She was very physically competent.

A member of the **Core Group**, former partner of Anthony Howell, Templeton remained in **New York** after The Theatre of Mistakes toured *Going* there. Though she returned to tour with the company in Europe, she had already begun developing her solo practice and went on to create and perform seminal works such as *YOU-The City; Lie, The Medea* as well as continuing to write **poetry** (she was senior writer-in-residence at Cambridge University), academic papers, and contribute to *Grey Suit*. Currently MA Convenor in Performance at Brunel University and director of **The Relationship** in New York with whom she developed *Coming with Going* (2008):

"Two acts of *Going* are replaced with *Coming*, a work that takes the task and structure of The Theatre of Mistakes' earlier *Homage to Pietro Longhi*. Like the latter, *Coming* relies heavily on improvisation. There is Katy Brown's terrifying boot camp leader who screams her way through a grueling set of physical exercises, drenching herself with bottled water; Stephanie Silver's leap from a table top in high heels. The audience is co-opted – asked to hold a spool or choose a playing card, to put on lipstick. Structure is less legible. Spatially, *Coming* leaks beyond the taped borders of *Going* as a performer exits the intimate theatre to the street. Like boisterous revelers, others clamber over swags of ribbon, toss shreds of paper, skid on a slippery wet floor."
 (Review by Marie-Anne Mancio *RealTime Arts* 88, Dec/Jan 09)

Unwritten

My fantasy book of essays on The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes would include:

The Theatre of Mistakes Relationship with Conceptual Art

Michael Newman

A Conversation Between Two Anthropologists Re-Visiting Ting

Professor Signe Howell and Professor Christina Toren

Urqhart, Anita (1957-)

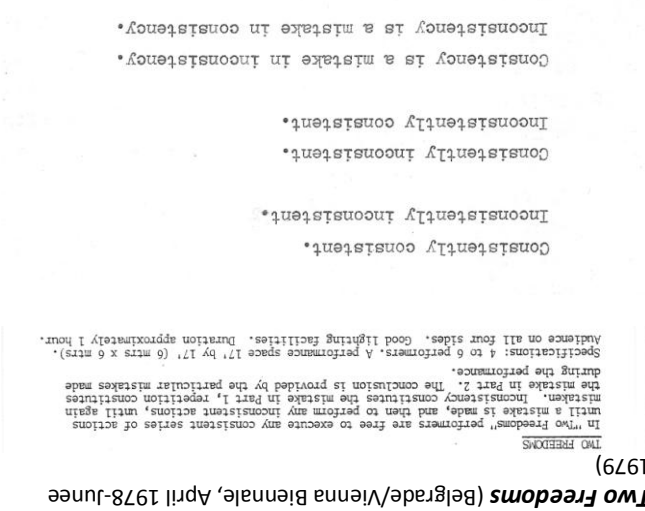
Anita Urquhart was a member of the 1975 **Core Group**, participating in works such as *The Street* and *Five Concert Pieces*. The girlfriend of Howard Tong and the only one who hadn't gone to art school, no-one is quite sure what to say about Anita. Miranda Payne recalls she and Howard lived in a flat with hessian covered walls and a cat who climbed them; Anthony Howell remembers she was beautiful. Others implied she was a bit out of her league, not interested in debates about **structure**. Married to Tong for a while, Urquhart went on to St. Martin's School of Art and now designs lingerie.



Photo of Anita Urquhart, nd, courtesy of Howard Tong

Unattributed
 See also: **Gossip, Memories, Secrets** Piece
 Some indiscretions are best whispered. They ought to be repeated for the information they contain but to repeat them also risks enacting betrayals. Some disclosures were made in confidence. Their veracity cannot be guaranteed:
 "It was like a dictatorship."
 "We used to get our dope from Mike [Nyman]. He always had the best stuff"
 "We all had egos"
 "She always forgot her lines"
 "She wasn't much fun"
 "He sat on the fence"

Notes in The Theatre of Mistakes Archive
 Courtesy Fiona Templeton



Unexplained

No-one can explain why wigs were worn for this performance of **Going**.



Unknown

The increasing number of participants in Ting workshops throughout 1974 means some names have been forgotten.

See: **Nameless**

Union

"Anthony [Howell] as never keen on the Artists Union, not at all. One side of him was quite conservative though several of his friends at the time were involved."

(Interview: Andrew **Eden** & Susan **Bonvin**, Peterborough, 24th Nov 2008)

However, as Anthony Howell is keen to point out, The Theatre of Mistakes was never "vapidly apolitical"; they just believed that the politics resided in the **structures**, in the notions of **Mutuality**.

Cf Signe Lie Howell's belief in the personal as the political.

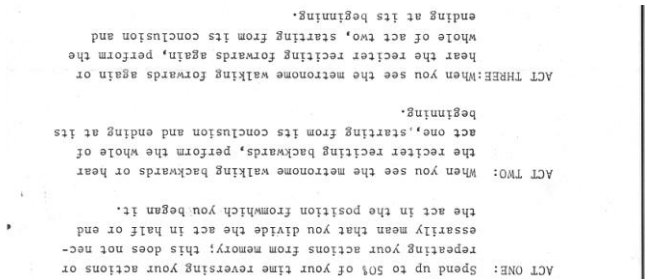
"I was interested – and still am in how the **Ting** utilized ideas of duration and repetition. I liked the critique of "theatricality", of inauthentic forms of performance and I remember how, after a while, even the most pared down Beckett performance would seem too theatrical and contrived to me."
 (Pat **Murphy**, Response to **Questionnaire**, Dec 2008)

Theatre
 "We are not acting. We are not timing. Nothing is characterized."
 ('Afterword' **Preparations for Displacement**, 1975)

See also: Anthony **Howell**, **Art Schools**, **London** Exhibition, Julian **Maynard** Smith, **Miranda Payne**

It was described in press releases as "a demonstration of fate in action."

with its **metronome** prefigures **Going** and its thorough **documentation** marks a shift in professionalism for the company.



See: **Bibliography**, **Five Concert Pieces**, **Going**, **Manifesto**, **Mutuality**, **Preparations for Displacement**, **The Street**, **Three Act Piece**, **Waterfall**

Further reading:

Champagne, Leonora (ed.) *Out from Under: Texts by Women Performance Artists*, Theater Communications Group, US, 1991

Three Act Piece (1976)

Featuring: a table, a chair, a blindfold, and a **goldfish** (whose life, Lindsay **Moran** recalls, was often endangered by the performers' uncompromising adherence to rules...)



Fiona **Templeton** and Lindsay Moran

Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

The complex **structure** of this work -

Trio (Aug 1976, Artists Market, London and Galerie Farideh Cadot, Paris). See Photographers.

Extract from *Three Act Piece* (1976) The Theatre of Mistakes Archive
 out the three acts.
 Alternate the above triggers for moving after a freeze through-
 reciter has paused then begun again or vice versa.
 move again only after a second performer has moved fast or the
 fast or the reciter has paused or begun again, then start to
 without altering position as soon as another performer has moved
 The second time this happens to you perform DYNAMIC TENSION
 paused or begun again after a pause.
 after another performer has moved fast, or after the reciter has
 The first time this happens to you only start to move again
 If you touch, or are touched by, another performer both freeze.

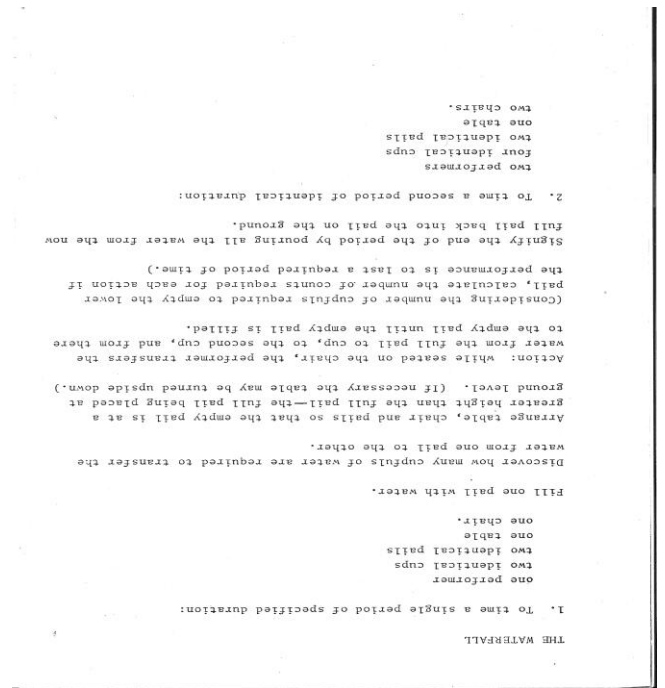
Extract from *Active Circles*, nd, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

The first personal subject pronoun shouted twice by a performer
 moving fastest in any rotation directs the performer at the other
 end of the line to choose for performance any of circles, but
 this time walking backwards or revolving in a reverse of the pre-
 vious direction (that is, performers start walking the new rot-
 action backwards).
 (Only a double shout denotes a circle to be walked backwards.
 After a circle walked backwards a single shout will always denote
 a circle to be walked forwards, only another double shout will
 keep the circles rotating in reverse.)
 Directly after a single or a double shout, and before any fresh
 circle may be embarked upon, the performers at either end of the
 line stand still and wait until the others have completed their
 last orbit and are standing in line again—a performer may judge
 whether he or she is standing in line by the amount that the
 bodies of adjacent performers obscure a view of the others.



Two Journeys (The Slade, UCL, 27th May 1976)

"The structure was this. One person made their journey covering the space of the Slade/UL portico. Then two performers worked in the same space and so on. In the second journey all the performers repeated what they had done in isolation the first time around, but all in the space at the same time. The entire piece was being "timed" by a further group of people performing the **WATERFALL**. The second journey was predicated on the fact that mistakes would inevitably occur as performers blocked and crossed each other and had to interact and figure out what to do as they attempted to repeat their first journey. Although the work manifested as formal/abstract/structural, I feel that there was in fact a narrative element in the way audiences, understanding the structure, anticipated conflict or projected a narrative onto the unfolding performance. The piece worked with tensions around the perception of the mistake before it actually happened."
 (Pat **Murphy**, in response to **Questionnaire**, December 2008)



Waterfall was originally conceived as a timing device, utilising natural time.

(Julian **Maynard Smith** in www.vizlang.co.uk/readings/Smith)

theatre doesn't really apply."
 procedures which give a plasticity to time and space which in
 was repeated, inverted done backwards - all the kinds of musical
 figure. The material was improvised within that structure, but it

distinction to be made - the aesthetics which guide the decisions we make are often not 'theatrical' at all."
 (www.vizlang.co.uk/readings/Smith)

Whilst texts (programs, press releases, and so forth) produced in the early days of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes reference notions of mutuality and collaboration, later ones appear to contradict this, presenting the company as a more traditionally structured organism with a 'writer' and 'director':

THE THEATRE OF MISTAKES at the JEANNETTA COCHRANE THEATRE

Monday 16 March — Saturday 21 March

Written and Directed by Anthony Howell

with: Michael Greenall, Julian Maynard Smith, Miranda Payne, Peter Stickland, Fiona Templeton.

Homage to Morandi: 1.15 p.m. tickets £1 (Monday to Friday)
 GOING: 8.00 p.m. tickets £1.50 (Monday to Saturday)
 The Table Move: 2.30 p.m. tickets £1 (Saturday only)

The Theatre of Mistakes, whose verse-plays incorporate stage directions which have been developed into a precise choreography, is in effect a body of thought, a synthesis of the many improvisational exercises and formal structures contributed by its performers. Out of this collage of disparate notions, **Anthony Howell** has created a company with a distinct method and a repertoire of plays which are fusions of visual aesthetics, action, poetry and philosophy. These plays demand meticulous rehearsal and considerable skill from the actors.

Program notes 1981, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

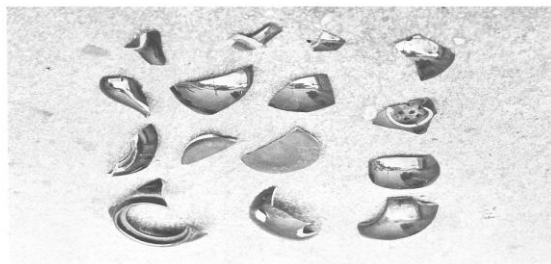
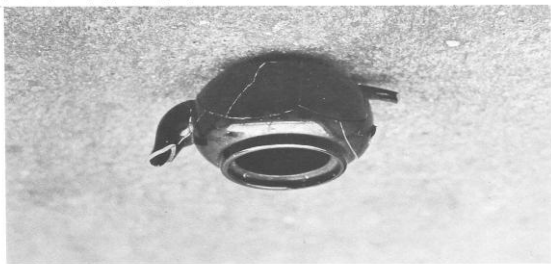
Time

Susan **Bonvin** recalls the weekend at **Purdies** farm, August, 1974:
 "It was an experience in time. It wasn't one thing finished and another began. The installation of the things was part of it."
 (Interview: Andrew **Eden** and Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24th Nov, 2008)
 "The time-structures were all fairly conceptual in the way that music is. There was a piece that was constructed exactly like a

Triggers
 "The triggers are there to create fundamental agreements between performers"
 (Program notes *Preparations for Displacement*, April 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)

Toren, Christina
 Anthropologist, then wife of Amikam Toren, friend to Signe Lie Howell. Participant *Birth Ballet Chorale*. See also: *Anthropology*, *Unwritten*

Serpentine Summer Show Invite Card



An object found broken, and restored

Triggers

- a) if bust touches bust
 Rotate once as a line
 - b) if bust touches torso
 Jump immediately on contact
 - c) if bust touches leg
 all but the leader turn 180 degrees on the spot, bend from the waist and straighten, while the leader bends simultaneously in the original direction then turns 180 degrees — the lead now being reversed.
- d) if torso touches torso + the.

Anthony Howell's Notebook, nd
 ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Standing stone between Lochs of Asta and Tingwall
 Photo: Mike Pennington



Ting

See also: **Conceptualism, Diagrams**

5. To time a fifth period of identical duration:
 five performers
 ten identical cups
 two identical pails
 one table
 five chairs.
 As before—leaving three cupfuls. (By now the table on top of the chairs may have to have the additional chair placed on top of it.)
 Further periods of identical duration will require proportional increase in cups and furniture.

Adjust equipment so that the same conditions as before apply, leaving the pail now full again on the ground but raising the height of the empty pail.

Action: while seated on a chair and/or standing, the first performer transfers the water from full pail to first cup, and then the water passes from cup to cup until poured into the empty pail by the second performer.

Otherwise as before, leaving one cupful of water in the pail on the ground: the end of the period again signified by pouring all the water from the now full pail back into the pail on the ground.

3. To time a third period of identical duration:

- three performers
- six identical cups
- two identical pails
- one table
- three chairs.

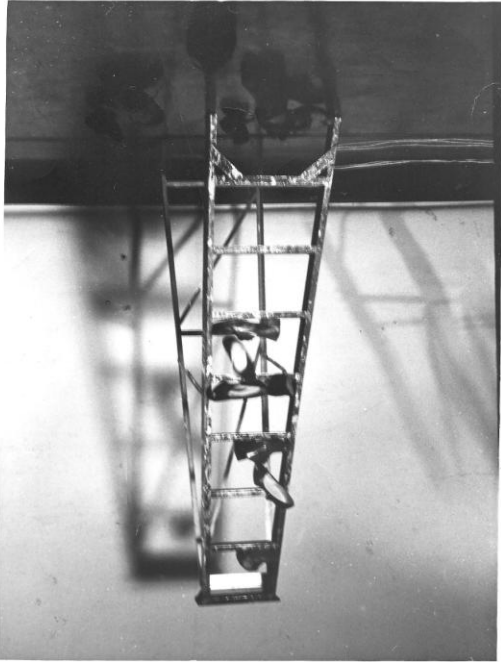
As before, again raising the height of the emptied pail and signifying the end of the period in the same manner. Leave two cupfuls in the lower pail.

4. To time a fourth period of identical duration:

- four performers
- eight identical cups
- two identical pails
- one table
- four chairs.

As before—leaving three cupfuls. (By now the table may have to be placed on the chairs.)

Tong created performance/installations including one with Richard Rayner-Cannon (photographer) at *Filtro di Luce* (Acme gallery, 10th August 1978) where Howell also performed on the 11th.
Photo courtesy of Howard Tong.



Toren, Amikam (1945-)

See also *Ballet for Cars*, *Birth Ballet Chorale*, *Five Concert Pieces and a Free Session*, *Purdies*, *Two Journeys*
Artist involved with **Ting** and co-founder/editor of *Wallpaper*.
See: www.anthonyreynolds.com/biogs/toren.htm for biography
Sargent Fellow of the British School at Rome in 2009.

March-July 1975:



PATH OF BOXES

One sculptor (Amikam Toren) to lay his boxes alongside of each other or on top of each other, in a regular path over the performance space.

PATH OF DUSTBINS

Adaptation of *LINE OF BOXES* used in *The Cambridge Performance* ("Preparations for Displacement")—the action disguised by employing three plastic dustbins instead of boxes. These dustbins to be moved slowly across the factory pavement, taking three hours to cross the width of the performance space once.

Extract from *The Street* (1975), comb-bound book
©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

The Ting Theatre of Mistakes is a group of approximately 25 performers, drawn together from diverse occupations, arts and disciplines, who meet twice weekly to create large scale performance exercises—both physical and verbal—are generated and redefined.

Extract from notes for *Summer Pieces*, 1975
The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

“an Icelandic or Norse word meaning magic container, I think. The Ting was initially a group of artists whose work ranged from poetry to film, painting, performance and sculpture, coming together to explore the potential of extending their work beyond the studio into a group performance-focused situation. Some people didn't see it as more than that and they felt that their work was enriched by their experience in those sessions. There were no rehearsals as such. Each week was seen as a performance. I was conscious that this was something special. Coming from a fine art background, I was art and experimental theatre. As a dancer dissatisfied with a lot of 1970s performance rigour and discipline to each session. He also had a vision of how the Ting could develop. At the same time, those early sessions were quite anarchic – with lots of improvised movement and weeks in which each person would direct a session. However, Anthony was definitely the leader and as that summer went on, we were influenced by the vocabulary of movement and language which he developed.”

Ting -
Pat Murphy in response to Questionnaire, December 2008:

In the early **Seventies**, Anthony **Howell**'s then wife, Norwegian Signe Lie **Howell** introduced him to the Norse Ting: a governing assembly of free people in a province, presided over by the King or a *law-speaker* who would memorise and recite the law. It represented the democratic ideal; it was usually a site deployed for rituals; a place of meetings where weapons were left outside a ring of stones and anything could be said therein.

A flyer for Ting (c.1974):

“The Ting is a community of artists of all descriptions working within an arena of ritual coincidence in an attempt to build a ceremonial performance on a traditionally operatic scale of grandeur while adhering to the concepts that have spurred the development of theatre since the days of Artaud”



The Ting: An early workshop
Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive