

Grosse Halle Reitschule
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BBC-Dokfilm
Me, My Mouth & I

Produktion: BBC Performance Live
Koproduktion: Touretteshero, Sunshine Pictures

Sprache: Englisch mit englischen Untertiteln
Dauer: 1h

2017 inszenierte Jess Thom den selten gespielten Monolog «Not I» von Samuel Beckett. Hier spricht ein Subjekt gewordener Mund in einem Affenzahn, losgelöst des Körpers, scheinbar von der Sprecherin nicht kontrollierbar. Thom hat sich auf gespenstische Weise wiedererkannt in diesem Text und es reizte sie herauszufinden, was passieren würde, wenn ihre Ticks auf Beckett treffen. Der von der BBC in Auftrag gegebene Dokumentarfilm Me, My Mouth and I verfolgt Thom's künstlerischen Prozess, als sie sich auf die Rolle des Mundes in «Not I» vorbereitete, und zeigt ihre Haltung als politische Aktivistin für Menschen mit Behinderungen auf.

Einfach gesagt:

Der Dokumentarfilm zeigt, wie Jess Thom ein Stück von Samuel Beckett probt. Man erfährt dabei viel über ihr Leben. Es gibt viele Hürden, wenn man Tourette-Syndrom hat. Aber auch viel Lustiges und Schönes.

BIO JESS THOM / TOURETTESHERO [E]

Writer, artist and part time superhero, Jess Thom co-founded Touretteshero in 2010 as a creative response to her experience of living with Tourettes Syndrome.

Jess has written in the mainstream and disability press including The Guardian, The Observer and Disability Now. In 2012 she published *Welcome to Biscuit Land – A Year In the Life of Touretteshero*, with a foreword by Stephen Fry.

Jess has performed at Glastonbury, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, DaDaFest, Unlimited Festival and Shambala. She gave her Broadcast from Biscuit Land as part of On Stage: Live from Television Centre on BBC4 in 2015. In 2018 her one-hour film *Me, My Mouth and I* was broadcast on BBC2.

In 2016 Jess took her award winning stage show *Backstage in Biscuit Land* on an extensive UK tour before taking it to the US, Bosnia, Ireland, Canada, and Australia. In the same year she received a Wellcome Engagement Fellowship became an Arts Council England Change Maker and received an honorary degree from the University of Wolverhampton.

In 2017 Touretteshero hosted *Adventures in Biscuit Land* at Tate Modern as part of their Tate Exchange programme. In the same year Jess debuted her critically acclaimed performance of Samuel Beckett's short play *Not I* as well as hosting and curating *Brewing in the Basement* at the Barbican Centre. In 2018 Jess took her stand-up show *Stand Up, Sit Down, Roll Over* to the US and Switzerland, hosted *Heroes of the Imagination* at Southbank's Imagine Festival and *Brewing in Battersea* at Battersea Arts Centre. The year ended with *Hacks for the Future*, a residential theatre project for disabled young creatives in the highlands in association with National Theatre Scotland.

Jess has spoken widely in the media about her life with Tourettes, including on *Woman's Hour*, *This Morning*, and *The Saturday Night Show* in Ireland. She has given a TEDx talk on *The Alchemy of Chaos* at the Royal Albert Hall and features in *Annalisa is Awkward* documentary on BBC Radio4.

Jess is a visual, performing, and participatory artist based in London. She graduated from The Royal College of Art in 2005. She has worked as an artist educator and workshop facilitator for Tate Galleries, The South London Gallery and The Chisenhale.

Jess is committed to increasing opportunities that allow the experiences of people living with Tourettes Syndrome to be heard, and to 'changing the world one tic at a time.'

PRESS

Not I review – Jess Thom gives Beckett's motormouth extra bite

This revered blast of babble, uttered by a woman who is obscured but for her mouth, is given an unforgettable twist by *Backstage in Biscuit Land*'s Jess Thom

Beckett's *Not I*, a monologue delivered by Mouth, a woman who has been largely voiceless but who suddenly speaks, is frequently presented as a virtuoso turn. It is often talked about in the same terms that we use for a feat of stunning athletic prowess. It is theatre's triple axel. Those who have attempted it point out the difficulties of verbal articulation, the training needed in order to breathe at the right moments during the express-train delivery, the way the body must be strapped and contained so that all the audience sees is the spot-lit mouth suspended eight feet in the air. Performances of *Not I* are often measured by the speed with which they are delivered. So what happens when it is performed by a disabled woman?

Jess Thom, best known for the delicious *Backstage in Biscuit Land*, is not particularly speedy and she definitely isn't virtuoso, at least not in any traditional theatrical sense. There is also the fact that Thom has Tourette syndrome and the verbal and physical tics that accompany it, so when she performs *Not I*

she is incapable of sticking entirely to the script. On occasion Beckett's words are punctuated with cries of "biscuit", which Thom says thousands of times a day.

If, for many performers, Beckett's play feels like something that must be beaten, in Thom's performance it becomes something that is broadened. This Mouth is a disabled woman, whose body has disappeared and whose voicelessness has suddenly given way to a babble of desperate words. Thom makes Mouth feel more ordinary, more suburban – and I mean that in a good way – and definitely much more human than is normally the case. We relate to her; we all know this woman.

All performances, both in Edinburgh and when it goes to Battersea Arts Centre next spring, are bound to be relaxed, because the performer has no control over her tics and recognises that the audience might not do either. It takes away the reverence that surrounds Beckett's work and makes it accessible to everyone, at the same time raising questions about cultural curation, particularly of classic texts, and about who has access to the theatre and who can perform it. All power to the Beckett estate for agreeing to it.

This is a cleverly constructed package – even the shadowy figure of the auditor in Beckett's monologue is transposed into the signer – that includes not just the performance, but context, a film and a discussion. It reminds us that it is the silenced who often have the stories most worth hearing.

Lyn Gardner, The Guardian, 24. August 2017

www.touretteshero.com

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